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The Search for Felicity in *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* and *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*: A Comparison of the Rational Religion of Abu Nasr al-Farabi and the Rational Mysticism of Ibn Tufayl

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An abstract of
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Abstract

This essay examines al-Farabi's and ibn Tufayl's presentation of the journey to human felicity within al-Madinat al-Fadilah and Hayy ibn Yaqzan. Al-Farabi's project is best understood as rationalist religion which leads him to posit the need of community. Ibn Tufayl's project, on the other hand, dismisses the notion of society and encourages rational-mysticism which is individualistic in scope. Upon delineating their religious notions, I will present the implications these variant understandings had on their understanding of the importance of community.

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Introduction

Al-Farabi's *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* and ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* are two works on which scholars have spilled a considerable amount of ink in Arabic, English, and French. Yet, scholarship that addresses the two works together is underdeveloped. In fact, most, if not all, of the scholarship that mentions both al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl is primarily scholarship on ibn Tufayl himself. This is because *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* contains criticisms of al-Farabi and is the only extant philosophical text of ibn Tufayl. Al-Farabi, by way of contrast, left behind numerous writings which are still being studied today. Publications of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* reached a heyday in the 1960's and 70's with Lenn Evan Goodman's English translation (1972), as well as Sami Hawi's doctoral dissertation; *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism, a Philosophical Study of Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (1974). Both of these texts, however, are impossible without the "masterful" French edition and translation by Leon Gauthier (1909).[1] Since this heyday, research on ibn Tufayl is less common. One exception is a compilation of papers published in *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hayy ibn Yaqzan (*1996). Most recently, however, Samar Attar gave considerable attention to ibn Tufayl's influence of Europe in *Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl's Influence on Modern Western Thought* (2007).

[1] Charles Butterworth, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy Today," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 17, no. 2 (n.d.): 165.

Much of the earlier scholarship on al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl together, as noted by Sami Hawi, was concerned with translation, notes supplementing the text, or introductory surveys.[2] The recent collected essays of Attar highlight the unique influence of ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* upon the European Enlightenment. Attar goes so far as to say that *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* "could be considered one of the most important books that heralded the beginning of modern science in Europe."[3] Other scholarship, however, focuses on the harsh criticism that al-Farabi receives at the hands of Ibn Tufayl and whether or not such criticism is wholly deserved.[4] Interestingly, however, no scholarship gives a detailed comparison of a central concern in *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* and *Hayy Ibn* Yaqzan: human happiness. Why then, give such attention solely to al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl?

My curiosity began when I noticed the dissimilar methods that both al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl employed to communicate their message. That is, a dialectical treatise for al-Farabi and a philosophical novel for ibn Tufayl. Upon reading the respective texts, my question became: how is it that two medieval Islamic philosophers viewed the process of attaining happiness so differently? This is the question I intend to explore.

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[2] Sami Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl: On the Existence of God and His Attributes," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95, no. 1 (March 1975): 58.
[3] Samar Attar, "The Man of Reason: Hayy Ibn Yaqzan and His Impact on Modern European Thought," in *Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl's Influence on Modern Western Thought* (United Kingdom: Lexington Books, 2007), 52.
[4] For an example of this, see *Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predecessors and Their Influences on His Thought* by Sami Hawi.

For my project, I primarily engage with Richard Walzer's translation of *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* and Lenn Goodman's translation of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan.* When ambiguous terms appear in English, I will note the original Arabic of al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl, to the best of my limited Arabic ability, in the footnotes. As for secondary scholarship, regarding al-Farabi I rely heavily on Richard Walzer's extensive commentary, Mohammad Azadpur's *Reason Unbound, Spiritual Practice in Islamic Peripatetic Philosophy,* as well as *Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* by Herbert Davidson. With regard to ibn Tufayl, I draw from Lenn Goodman's commentrary, Sami Hawi's *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism*, and the compilation of papers in *The World of ibn Tufayl,* edited by Lawrence Conrad.

Al-Farabi, also known as the "Second Master" in the wake of Aristotle, left behind an extensive corpus which continues to influence Islamic philosophy today. The Greek philosophical tradition heavily influenced al-Farabi, especially that of Aristotle and Plotinus. In fact, al-Farabi's goal, at least to some extent, was to reinvigorate the "scholarly study of philosophy as practiced by the Alexandrian school of neo-Aristotelianism."[5] Al-Farabi developed one of the first, if not the first, Islamic utopias in his treatise *Mabadi' ara' ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah,* or *On the Perfect State.* Here, al-Farabi posits the need of a city, ruled by the philosopher king, to guide humanity to

[5] Jon McGinnis and David Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources* (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 2007), 55.

perfection. Perfection, in this sense, is the *telos* of the human and is treated synonymously to happiness/felicity, because it is only upon attaining perfection that humans are happy and in a state of felicity. Throughout this essay, I will use the words perfection, felicity, and happiness interchangeably.

Although ibn Tufayl does not possess an honorary title of his own, his work *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*[6], literally "*Living, Son of Awake*", would survive long past his death. Pico Della Mirandola translated the work into Latin in the late 15th century.[7] Another Latin translation was produced in 1671 by Edward Pococke. Shortly thereafter, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* was translated into Dutch and into English as *The Self-Taught Philosopher*. Ibn Tufayl's work demonstrated the opposite hypothesis of al-Farabi. Ibn Tufayl believed humans ought to flee the confines of society and use their rational ability to free themselves from the epistemological constraints of societal living .[8] Unlike al-Farabi, however, ibn Tufayl presented his theory within what is considered an early philosophical novel and likely the first philosophical Arabic novel.

In this thesis, I compare the two authors' proposed methods of attaining felicity. Although both al-Farabi and ibnTufayl were medieval Islamic philosophers and understood religion as symbolism that pointed to a higher truth, they developed strikingly dissimilar methods with regard to felicity.[9] It is my argument that the different

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[6] "حي بن يقظان"

[7] The date of the translation is unknown, however, it is known that Mirandola lived from the year 1464 to the year 1494.

[8] *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* literally means Alive, son of Awake.

[9] In this paper, felicity and perfection will be used interchangeably

approaches to attaining felicity presented in *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* and *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* ought to be understood as a rationalist approach with al-Farabi versus a rational-mystic approach with ibn Tufayl. Furthermore, their different approaches necessitate their scope so that al-Farabi's project is universal whereas ibn Tufayl's is ultimately individualistic. Additionally, this project will briefly explore the implications of the rational-mysticism of ibn Tufayl that led him to choose to communicate his ideas in a novel as opposed to a dialectical treatise such as al-Farabi's. Through this, I will fill a lacuna in the current scholarship by comparing the theories on their own terms, rather than pitting one against the other or standing in defense of one thinker's ideas over the other.

Drawing on the work of many scholars, I intend to compare, and consequently shed light on, two contradictory methods for attaining felicity. In the first chapter, I will provide the historical background of both al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl as well as comments on the respective texts. Chapter two contains a brief presentation of Neoplatonism, as it was the dominant school of thought in the Middle Ages. I will examine and present Neoplatonism in its most basic form, highlighting the basic cosmological structure. In the conclusion of this section, I will highlight al-Farabi's unique adaption of Neoplatonism. There, I will present al-Farabi's complex metaphysical system. Understanding this is necessary in understanding al-Farabi's project and structuring of society. In chapter three, I will summarize the first twenty-eight years of Hayy's life. This chapter will lay the rational foundation on which ibn Tufayl built his rational mysticism.

The fourth chapter is broken into four sections. The first elucidates al-Farabi's and Ibn Tufayl's differing conceptions of the First Cause.[10] The second section examines al-Farabi's and ibn Tufayl's enlightened characters, that is the philosopher-king and Hayy. In this section, I explain how both al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl understand humanity and how this human then progresses to felicity by practicing reason. The third section highlights the shortcomings of reason according to ibn Tufayl. The final section of chapter four presents al-Farabi's rational religion and ibn Tufayl's rational mysticism. Chapter five not onlycompares the political structure in al-Farabi and the lack thereof in ibn Tufayl, but also delineates al-Farabi's philosopher-king. Furthermore, in chapter six, I compare their varying understandings of society and its role in the attainment in human perfection. From there, I shift to the role that the philosopher plays for al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl. Finally, in chapter seven, I contrast mediums through which the philosophers communicate their ideas and highlight the implications it has on modern scholarship. To be clear, this project will not attempt to criticize the philosophical content of either al-Farabi or Ibn Tufayl. Rather, I intend to present them on their own terms with an eye toward straightforward comparison. Thus, the focus of the paper is on al-Farabi's and ibn Tufayl's works and ideas, not the cohesiveness and validity of their arguments.

Chapter 1: Historical Background and Comments on the Text

[10] First Cause can be understood as God, the Unmoved Mover.

Historical Background

Both Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Farabi and Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad Ibn Tufayl were influential philosophers in the Islamic Golden Age, that ranged from the 8th century to the 13th century CE. Al-Farabi was born around the year 870 CE, most likely in Turkey, and spent the majority of his life in Baghdad. Ibn Tufayl, on the other hand, was born around the year 1105 CE in Andalusia and spent much of his life in Gaudix, a small city near Granada.

Little is known about the early lives of either al-Farabi or Ibn Tufayl. Al-Farabi lived the majority of his life in Baghdad during the time of the 'Abbasid caliphate.[11] Al-Farabi did not express his feelings on Baghdad, but scholars suspect that al-Farabi revealed some of his opinions in *al-Madinat al-Fadilah.* The translator and commentator of the text, Richard Walzer, also states that it is not far-fetched to understand sections of *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* as expressing some of these opinions. For instance, al-Farabi speaks of "the philosopher who is compelled by circumstances to live in a 'defective' state like an exile, maintaining his integrity and patiently awaiting a change."[12] Walzer, however, states that although it is easy to interpret many of the characteristics al-Farabi gives the 'ignorant' state as descriptive of Baghdad in the 10th century, one should not

[11] The 'Abbasid Caliphate was the third caliphate after the Prophet Muhammad. They ruled from their capital in Bagdad after taking authority from the Umayyad caliphate in 750 CE.

[12] Farabi, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State = Abu Nasr Al-Farabi's Mabadi' Ara Ahi Al-Madina Al-Fadila ; a Revised Text with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by Richard Walzer*, trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

get carried away in doing so. Al-Farabi did eventually leave Baghdad by invitation of Sayf al-Dawla, who founded the Emirate of Aleppo in 944 CE. Al-Farabi joined al-Dawla's court in Aleppo but died shortly thereafter in Damascus, in the year 950 CE.

Ibn Tufayl was born a few hundred years later, around the year 1100 CE in Gaudix, Spain. Ibn Tufayl was a physician and served as a minister to the governor of Granada and to other members of the Almohad Caliphate.[13] Ibn Tufayl eventually became minister and chief physician to the Sultan, Abu Ya'qūb Yūsuf.[14] Although primarily a physician, Ibn Tufayl was also learned in philosophy, metaphysics, and Islamic studies. In addition to his vast knowledge, he also introduced the Sultan to Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes in the Latin tradition. Ibn Tufayl retired from the Sultan's court in the year 1182 CE and died three years later in 1185 CE.

Since al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl were medieval Muslim philosophers, they shared certain ideas about the world and God. For example, both men accepted Neoplatonism to varying degrees, adhered to apophatic understandings of God, and believed that the ultimate goal of man was happiness. Of course, as I will demonstrate, these similarities are broad and not altogether unique. The differences between al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl, namely in the pursuit of perfection, are the primary interest of this paper. In fact, ibn

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[13] The Almohad Caliphate was a Moroccan Berber Muslim movement originating in the 12th century. The Almohads overthrew the Almoravid dynasty. Marrakesh was the first city conquered and from their they extended their power all over the Maghreb by 1159. Andalusia was taken by the Almohads by 1172 CE.

[14] Lynn Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* (United States: Twayne Publishers, 1972), 3.

Tufayl knew the works of al-Farabi and was harshly critical of his work. Ibn Tufayl considered al-Farabi to be godless and argued that his writings encouraged disbelief. Additionally, ibn Tufayl claimed that al-Farabi's writings were full of contradiction, thus leading to intellectual confusion.[15] Such confusion, according to ibn Tufayl, necessarily inhibits mankind on their journey to felicity.[16] Another key difference, but treated secondarily in this paper, is the medium through which al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl communicate their ideas.

Comments on the Texts

As Richard Walzer states in the introduction to his translation and commentary of *al-Madinat al-Fadilah*, the treatise/text is written by a philosopher *qua* philosopher. Walzer continues to say that al-Farabi was not condescending to the lay reader in his work nor was he writing to professional philosophers. In fact, *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* was widely read and "continuously studied from the tenth century CE down to the eighteenth and beyond."[17] Furthermore, al-Farabi was not translating a Greek or Syriac original nor was he solely adapting the work of those philosophers before him. Thus, *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* was al-Farabi's own answer to the "intellectual as well as the

[15] Sami Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predecessors and Their Influence on His Thought," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 1 (January 1976): 93.
[16] While Ibn Tufayl was correct in pointing out certain contradictions in al-Farabi's corpus, that is not the focus of the present paper. For reading on this topic, see Sami Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predecessors and Their Influence on His Thought."
[17] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 4.

religious and political questions of his century."[18] Despite the elucidations Walzer applies to al-Farabi's text, *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* presupposes considerable understanding of both Plato and Aristotle as well as the multiple ways they were interpreted by philosophers both prior to and after Plotinus, (205-270 CE). [19] These presuppositions necessitate a sophisticated reader; indeed, Walzer, supposes that such an audience must have existed. Moreover, al-Farabi does not use Islamic language but strictly uses philosophical Arabic language.

Similarly, Ibn Tufayl does not employ exclusively Islamic language in his project. The medium through which he communicates his ideas, however, differs markedly from al-Farabi. Instead of writing a discursive philosophical treatise as does al-Farabi, Ibn Tufayl imbeds his philosophical message within a short novel titled, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan,* which relates the tale of the character named Hayy. Yet, before Ibn Tufayl ventures to communicate his views of the truth, he offers an introduction to his novel.

Ibn Tufayl's introduction criticizes Islamic philosophers before him such as, al-Farabi, as well as two Persian philosophers from the Islamic Golden Age, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and al-Ghazzali. He also examines the benefit of their works to his project. Thus, the introduction disallows the reader from dismissing *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* as an amateur attempt at philosophy. Instead, the narrative aspect of Ibn Tufayl's project is his attempt to keep his audience interested in the subject matter and "to reach every

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[18] Farabi, 5.

[19] Plotinus was the founder of Neoplatonism and lived in the 3rd century CE

kind of seeker, from the most intellectually sophisticated to the simple and unadventurous layman."[20] Nonetheless, Ibn Tufayl's work remains a difficult undertaking. In fact, Ibn Tufayl himself states that anyone who wishes to know the truth must be willing to work diligently in pursuit of it.[21] From this, Ibn Tufayl intends to demonstrate that there is no need for "prophets, sacred texts, religious mediators, or conventional religion," because all humans are endowed with the rational capacity, which separates them from all other beings on earth."[22] Furthermore, whereas in al-Farabi's view the perfect state is a necessary condition for people's ultimate happiness, Ibn Tufayl denies the need for such a state. The isolated character of Hayy was able to reach such heights of being as an individual, removed from language, nationality, tribe, or religion.

In addition to such contrasting outcomes, the two thinkers have greatly different points of departure. Al-Farabi begins with the metaphysical structure of the universe above the moon, the realm which is eternal and unchanging. Ibn Tufayl, on the other hand, begins with Hayy and the corruptible material world. These differing starting places render a systematic presentation difficult. Owing to the medium Ibn Tufayl chooses to communicate his ideas, readers are left without a systematic approach to his metaphysical system. At any rate, in examining the respective thinkers' method to

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[20] Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predecessors and Their Influence on His Thought," 91.
[21] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 95.
[22] Attar, "The Man of Reason: Hayy Ibn Yaqzan and His Impact on Modern European Thought," 46.

attaining perfection and happiness, I will not compromise their approach. That is to say, the order of the ascent to happiness and human perfection is essential to understanding the model each author presents. For al-Farabi, in order to know how to craft a well-structured society, one has to know the order of the cosmos, which is considered more perfect in essence than the sublunary world, inasmuch as the sublunary world was matter-infected. Thus, as we metaphysically descend through the cosmos with al-Farabi, we will ascend with Ibn Tufayl. Simply put, al-Farabi begins with the First Cause, or God, and descends through the levels of being, eventually reaching the world of matter. By way of contrast, ibn Tufayl begins with the individual Hayy and ascends to God.

Chapter 2: Neoplatonism and al-Farabi's Metaphysics

Neoplatonism

Before examining al-Farabi's unique adaptation of Neoplatonism, I will briefly present Neoplatonic cosmology. Plotinus (204/5-70 CE) is considered to be the founder

of Neoplatonism, which subsequently flourished into the seventh century CE.[23] Despite Neoplatonic appropriation from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers to describe how God created the world, the pagan Neoplatonists did not believe in a moment of creation. Rather, they held that the universe was eternally emerging[24] in stages from the First Principle (or simply God) because it seemed preposterous to them for the universe to come into existence in some inextricable way, such as from the words or thought of God. Crediting God with active creation would demonstrate notions of anthropomorphism, which was simply unacceptable to the pagan Neo-platonic conception of the First Principle.

Regarding the First Principle, Plotinus, like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and a number of other ancient philosophers, held that *nous*[25] is beyond being, thus "ontologically prior" to corporeality.[26] In fact, little can actually be said about the First Principle, other than that it is absolute Unity, and as such, is referred to as the One.

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[23] The term "Neo-Platonism" is one that scholars have since applies to Plotinus' school of thought. The Neo-Platonists understood themselves to be Platonists, following the Platonic philosophical doctrine.

[24] It is important to clarify the nuance present in the words "emerge" and "emanate" often used in describing the process of descending levels of being. It is often stated that all subsequent being emanate from the First Principle. This term emanate, however, does not imply any work on the part of the First Principle. It is more accurately described as "falling out." Thus, while each level of being is credited, in a sense, with "creating" the level that has "emanated" from it, it is more appropriate to view it as a kind of "falling out" naturally from the being that preceded it within the hierarchical chain of being.

[25] *Nous* is usually translated as mind, intelligence, or intellect.

[26] Christian Wildberg, "Neoplatonism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/neoplatonism/.

Each stage emanates from the One and serves, to a certain degree, as the creative force of the realm immediately after it. Of course, this rests on the assumption that every activity in the world is double. That is to say, there is both an inner and an outer aspect to the activity.[27] Christian Wildberg, author of "Neoplatonism" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, uses the example of the sun. He states, "the inner activity of the sun (nuclear fusion, as we now know) has the outer effect of heat and light, themselves activities as well."[28] This is not to say that the inner activity occurs simply for the outer effect to happen. Instead, the two naturally accompany one another. Furthermore, these outer activities produce other outer activities "that are ontologically more remote and derivative: fruit serves as nourishment or poison for other individual life forms, and human speech and action constitute, over time, a person's biography or a society's history."[29] Wildberg provides these examples to demonstrate that an object's inner activity does not produce a random outer effect. Rather, it is an outward demonstration of the inner activity. This led Neoplatonists to hold to a "chain of causality" in which the existence of something is prefigured higher up the ontological chain.[30] Returning to the One, we must remember that It is beyond Being and almost nothing can be said of It apart from its One-ness. Its effect is clear, however, as it produces the entire universe through the stages of emanation. The universe cannot be

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[27] Wildberg.
[28] Wildberg.
[29] Wildberg.
[30] Wildberg.

the primary effect of the inner activity of the One, as stated above, because this would imply the universe's spontaneous, non-rational creation. What, then, is the One's primary effect?

If the One is pure intellect, then its effect must also be some form of *nous.* Removed from pure intellection and given a more experiential connotation, the first effect of the One is best translated as pure Consciousness.[31] Pure Consciousness is the highest form of reality, especially considering that the One is beyond Being. Yet, with pure Consciousness we are still dealing in the realm of pre-matter and thus cannot understand pure Consciousness as being corporeal. Rather, it signals a distinct realm of existence that results from the One. The inner activity of Consciousness is to understand, and in doing so "turns back" towards its creative principle, the One. Consciousness then becomes aware of the One and a duality arises in Consciousness. From this, identity and difference are formed, and "in a way not fully explained," this is how the Platonic Forms come into being.[32] The outer effect of the activity of Consciousness, on the other hand, is Soul.

It is important to note that the Neoplatonic conception of the Platonic Forms was different from that of Plato's Academy. In the time of Plato (428/7-348/347 BC), the Forms were abstract principles that served as a "blueprint" of the material world. In contrast, the Forms, as understood by the Neoplatonists, were "noetic entities teeming

[31] Wildberg.
[32] Wildberg.

with conscious life."[33] Such Forms constituted the cosmos, which, appropriately understood, was a noetic being as well. It is the invisible Forms that are materially manifest in the world of matter. The material world is the outer effect of Soul, but Plotinus is not very clear on how this is the case. Soul, however, is essential to Neoplatonism. Soul, being the outer effect of Consciousness, itself affects the material world. The material world in Neoplatonism is "an essentially good and beautiful place."[34] Finally, we arrive in the realm of matter. Matter is the lowest on the chain of being and as a result has no inner activity; it is strictly passive. Yet it is in this realm that humanity is able to experience and perceive the activity of Soul, the outward activity of Consciousness.

Neoplatonism was the dominant philosophical system throughout Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages. Furthermore, Neoplatonism was a highly adaptable system, so various Christians, Muslims, and Jewish thinkers adopted some form of it to propagate their views. It influenced Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Basil, and Thomas Aquinas. Additionally, the Neoplatonists influenced Islamic thinkers such as al-Kindi, Ibn Sina, and our own al-Farabi.

Al-Farabi's Cosmology

[33] Wildberg, "Neoplatonism."
[34] Wildberg.

Heavily influenced by Greek thought, it is no surprise that the Second Master adopted the Aristotelian notion of causation as well as the Neoplatonic concept of emanation of all being from the One. Al-Farabi's unique adaptation to Neoplatonic cosmology lies in the fact that his emanationist schema takes place within Ptolemy's ordering of the known planets.[35] Al-Farabi's hierarchical understanding of the universe, however, is not limited to the cosmos, as his political philosophy is also hierarchical in nature. As the cosmos is not composed of corruptible matter, the planets and stars are ordered perfectly. Life on earth, then, composed of matter, is to mimic the hierarchical nature of the heavens when functioning as it should. Therefore, it is necessary to understand al-Farabi's cosmology in order to understand both his political philosophy and epistemology.

In al-Farabi's emanationist scheme of the universe, there are ten Intellects that derive from the First Cause. None of which exist in matter. Rather, these Intellects all exist within an incorruptible celestial body. For al-Farabi, the incorporeal First Cause is identified as God, who is pure intellection, eternally thinking Itself. From the uniform thought of the First Cause, the incorporeal First Intellect is eternally emanated. As a result, the First Intellect thinks both itself and the First Cause, presenting a multiplicity of thought. Such a multiplicity presents a degree of separation from the absolute unity of the One, which is understood as unified, pure intellection. This multiplicity also produces the Second Intellect, which in Its thinking Itself, the First Intellect, and the First

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[35] McGinnis and Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, 56.

Cause, gives rise to the Third Intellect, which is associated with the realm of the fixed stars. Each celestial Intellect is less perfect than the one before it and cannot actualize itself by its own thought. Therefore, each Intellect must think both Itself and the First Cause. In thinking Itself, an inferior Intellect is produced. After the first three Intellects, seven of the remaining eight Intellects, are to be associated with the planets in Ptolemy's solar model: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon.[36] Al-Farabi refers to the tenth and final Intellect as the Active Intellect, which governs the sublunary world of "generation and corruption."[37] This is the world associated with plants, animals, and human beings.

Thus, the Neoplatonic emanationist aspect of al-Farabi's thought is evident. Al-Farabi is unique, however, in that each incorruptible celestial body is associated with a planet in Ptolemy's solar model. This understanding of al-Farabi's cosmology is important in understanding how each realm of Intellect is necessarily less perfect than the one ontologically prior to it. God, according to al-Farabi, cannot be reached. God is even considered as beyond being. This is an important notion to remember when considering how individuals are able to know God. Metaphysically descending through the Intellects, then, finally leads us to the sublunary realm, which is associated with corruptible matter and humanity.

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[36] Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon.
[37] McGinnis and Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, 57.

Chapter 3: Rationalism

Hayy's Rational Foundations

The material world is exactly the world with which Ibn Tufayl begins his philosophical tale. With the early part of the story, ibn Tufayl lays the rational foundation of Hayy's religious beliefs. This foundation is the edifice on which ibn Tufayl builds towards his rational-mysticism. An essential difference between al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl is found in the ability to know God. Thus, in the summary of the first years of Hayy's life, it is important to pay attention to Hayy's slow progression away from matter to the interconnected nature of the incorporeal.

On a certain island off the coast of India and situated below the equator lived the man born without parents, Hayy.[38] His home was an island where "humans are created without a father or a mother and where trees bear women as fruit."[39] Ibn Tufayl holds that such miraculous births are possible because this island has the most perfect of conditions in all the regions of earth.[40] Fortunately for Hayy, there were no predatory animals on the island and he was nursed by a doe until the age of two.

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[38] Ibn Tufayl provides another narrative for those who do not accept the spontaneous birth of Hayy. In this second version, Hayy's mother gives birth to him in secret because she was the sister of the King and was not supposed to marry until the King found her a match. She does, however, get married in secret and secures Hayy in a basket which she then places in the sea. A current caught the basket and carried it to the aforementioned island. From this varying point, the stories are the same.

[39] Ibn Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Muhammad Ali Khaldi, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 99.

[40] Islamic geographers separated the world into seven zones. The fourth zone was the central zone and was considered the most temperate and fit for human habitation. (See *Encyclopedia of Islam* entry on "iklim")

The mother doe eventually began to age and weaken, much to the dismay of Hayy. The two underwent a role reversal and it was now the boy's turn to take care of the doe. In time, the doe perished and Hayy was "terrified, and his soul nearly welled over with sorrow."[41] In a state of panic, Hayy desired to discover the source of the problem and bring her back to life. He found nothing wrong with her visible limbs and inferred that the problem must be an internal one. Hayy reasoned that the body must have an internal organ that all of the other organs depend on and if that organ had a defect, so would all the others. Due to his own experience fighting with beasts, he learned that he guarded his chest from them instinctually. Hayy was able to imagine himself living without hand, foot, ear, nose, and eye. Hayy even reasoned that he could exist without his head for some time.[42] Thus, he realized that the primary organ must be located in the chest.

With this knowledge, he cut into the doe's chest and found the organ he was looking for, the heart. It must be the heart, he inferred, because of its "fine location, superb shape, compactness, and the toughness of its flesh, as well as the fact that it is protected by this membrane,[43] the likes of which [he] had not found around any other

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[41] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 107.

[42] Taken from the notes to the text from Lenn Evan Goodman's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* pg 195, note 100: Alexander of Aphrodisias knew that an organism might survive without its head, even if for a short time. Ibn Rushd writes "I myself have seen a ram with head cut off run this way and that again and again." Thus, Goodman notes that it is likely Hayy gained his knowledge empirically also. Goodman also notes, that, unlike Alexander, Hayy is evidently unaware that the body can go on for a short time without the heart.

[43] The myocardium is the tough muscular wall surrounding the heart

organ."[44] Upon cutting it open, Hayy discovered two chambers. The right chamber displayed traces of congealed blood whereas the left one was empty. Its emptiness could not be in vain, could it? Of course not, for each organ has an action specific to it, especially the heart. The only answer Hayy was able to arrive at was that whatever was in this chamber had abandoned it, thus bringing about the death of the body. This began a pivotal turn inward for Hayy. He learned that the body was merely a tool that something uses. But what was this thing? How was it united to the body? What caused it to separate from the body? With these questions in mind, Hayy began to disregard the body. In fact, he no longer viewed the physical doe to be his mother. Rather, whatever had left her heart chamber was his mother.[45]

One day Hayy discovered fire as a bush spontaneously burst into flame. It amazed him and he stretched out to touch it in hopes of taking some of it with him. He found that it burned him and instead turned to a nearby stick with which he transported the fire. Furthermore, he noticed that the fire was climbing upwards. Perhaps, he thought, it was trying to return to the celestial substances. Thus, his wonder for fire grew and he began to consider the possibility that fire, or something like it, was the very substance that left the heart of the mother doe.[46] To test his hypothesis, Hayy took a live animal and cut it open in order to remove its heart. In the left chamber, the boy

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[44] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 109.
[45] Tufayl, 111.
[46] Here Hayy preserves the ancient worship of fire in the Stoic and Aristotelian notions. The Stoa held that the matter of the soul is fire whereas the Aristotelians were amazed by the celestial sphere

discovered a white vapor. Moved by curiosity, Hayy stuck his finger into the chamber and was immediately burnt, as he was when he touched fire. When he stuck his finger into the left chamber, the animal simultaneously died. Naturally, Hayy reasoned that the vapor gave the animal life.[47] In this way, all animals, no matter how different, were a unity by virtue of their uniform life-giving spirit, the animal spirit.[48] Each organ does the bidding of the one spirit, thus confirming Hayy's suspicion that the body is a vessel of the soul. Hayy reached this level of rational speculation when he was twenty-one.

During this seven year period, Hayy began to reflect on all the bodies around him: "animals of all varieties, plants, minerals, rocks, soil, water, steam, snow, hail, smoke, ice, flame, and heat."[49] All of these things had characteristics both in common and contrary to one another. When he considered what distinguished these physical entities from one another, existence appeared to be "an uncontainable, sprawling expanse."[50] Hayy then turned to himself and observed the multiple functions that are specific to each organ. It seemed possible to divide each organ into many parts. As a result, Hayy reasoned that both the essence of entities around him, as well as his own, were multiple.

From the opposite point of view, however, he found that despite their multiplicity, his organs formed a unity. That is, only their differing actions separated

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[47] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 131.
[48] This is not to say that all animals are the same. Rather, the unity of being is significant here.
[49] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 115.
[50] Tufayl, 115.

them from one another, but they were all united by the one animal spirit. With this line of thinking, Hayy decided that he himself was also of one essence. Hayy further understood that the numerous individuals of one species were similar to the numerous organs of one body. Thus, it was the same animal spirit in the many hearts of individual animals of a particular species.[51]

Again, however, problems arose when Hayy considered all the different species of animals. He noticed that they had certain characteristics in common such as "perception, nutrition, and [the volition to] move wherever they wished."[52] These commonalities were much more pervasive than the slight differences that the various species demonstrated. Furthermore, the differences they did demonstrate were not "highly specific to the animal spirit."[53] From this, Hayy arrived at the conclusion that the animal spirit "common to the entire genus of animals was one in reality."[54] To make this more understandable, Ibn Tufayl steps back from the narrative and uses the example of a sole source of water divided amongst many containers. Some of the containers, however, were colder than others, making the water appear different, which Ibn Tufayl relates to the "specificity of the animal spirit in one species."[55] The water is to be understood as the animal spirit, then. Thus, just as the animal spirit is one source, so too, is the water – it is simply divided throughout multiple containers.

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[51] Tufayl, 116.
[52] Tufayl, 116.
[53] Tufayl, 116.
[54] Tufayl, 116.
[55] Tufayl, 116.

Hayy used the same rationale to realize that entire genus of plants was also one. From here, he juxtaposed the animal and plant genus. Hayy observed that both plants and animals are nourished and grow, yet animals are perceptive, capable of sensation, and motion. Hayy reasoned, however, that plants do something quite similar. For example, when a flower turns toward the sun or when roots grow towards nutrients. Thus, even though animals possessed these characteristics more perfectly, Hayy reasoned that plants and animals are one.[56]

Next, he asked himself: What of bodies that lack perception, nutrition, and growth? Such bodies are rocks, water, air, and flame, and they all contain certain dimensions. Of course, they differed in some ways, such as temperature and color, but ultimately Hayy came to view them all as one because they had physical bodies. In his mind, Hayy then combined animals, plants, and bodies that lacked growth and perception and found that they were ultimately one. All bodies, then, were one thing, whether capable of motion or not.

Although Hayy reasoned that all bodies were one, he still faced the problem that they seemed a boundless multiplicity. As a result, he conducted experiments with simple bodies and could not escape the earlier contradiction – "at times they appeared to be one thing and at other times an endless multiplicity."[57] He noticed that bodies either rise, such as smoke and air, or descend, such as animals and clods of earth. These

[56] Tufayl, 117.
[57] Tufayl, 118.

bodies would persist in this action until something impeded them. Thus, Hayy searched for a body with equilibrium, that neither rose nor fell. Unable to find such a body, he reasoned that all bodies must either have heaviness or lightness. Another question arose with this inference: "Do they belong to body as such? Or do they belong to a concept added to that of body?"[58] Hayy decided the answer must be the latter of the two options, because if these properties belonged to body, then surely at least one body would possess both properties. Such a realization had great significance for Hayy. These abstract characteristics of lightness and heaviness, then, were joined to body. He then contemplated more complex bodies and realized that all bodies have at least one abstract concept added to them. Thus, the incorporeal forms appeared before him and they were the first thing to appear to him from the spiritual realm. From this, he reasoned that the animal spirit, which resides in the heart of the animal, must also have an abstract concept that enables it to carry out specific movements, which are unique to that particular animal. The abstract concept that supplied the animal spirit is known as the form of that animal spirit, or simply, the animal soul.[59] The same principle, of course, applies to plants and it is called the vegetative soul, and for inanimate objects, which is called its nature. Thus, Hayy realized that the "reality of the animal spirit" consisted of a particular form which was added to a body, and that the form body was ultimately

[58] Tufayl, 119.
[59] Tufayl, 120.

without shape unless inhered with a particular soul. Hayy, then, ceased to be interested in bodies and he began to fixate himself on soul.[60]

As he focused on the soul of bodies, he examined "simplest perceptible" bodies he had found: earth, water, air, and fire.[61] For this particular experiment, he focused on water. Hayy noted that if water was left to "what its form dictated," it was noticeably cold and "moved downwards."[62] If the water was heated, the coldness would leave it but the downward movement would remain the same. If it was heated further, however, it would move upward. Thus, the form of water was no longer existent and instead another form had appeared, taking on actions specific to that particular form. As a result, Hayy learned that all events must necessarily have a cause. From this, Hayy inferred that even the forms must have a cause. Hayy continued examining everything with a tangible body, hoping to find something "free from "origination," yet he found no such thing.[63] As a result, Hayy turned to the cosmos, which corresponded to his twenty-eighth year.

Thus, ibn Tufayl demonstrates in the first twenty-eight years of Hayy's life a progression from the material towards the incorporeal. In looking for the life-giving principle, Hayy looked inside the body, specifically the heart. From here, he dissociated life from the body and attributed it to an inner fire of sorts. Hayy found that this life-

[60] Tufayl, 120.
[61] Tufayl, 123.
[62] Tufayl, 123.
[63] Tufayl, 124.

giving spirit exists more perfectly in animals than it does plants because animals possess the faculties of nutrition, appetite, sense, and motion more perfectly. Despite this, Hayy reasoned plants and animals to be one. Furthermore, because animals, plants, and even inanimate objects all share matter, they are also all one. Thus, Hayy held all matter to be one.

Yet, Hayy then realized at least one abstract quality such as heaviness or lightness was added to body. This led him to the forms, or the soul of each particular. Matter, then, was ultimately without shape unless filled by a specific form, such as that of a deer or a tree. Yet, Hayy conducted experiments and found that form could change. Thus, even form must have a cause. Unable to find a material one, Hayy turned to the heavens.

In these early stages of the text, ibn Tufayl provides the rational foundation for contemplating the heavens. Ibn Tufayl, then, realizes the need for a First Cause. Unable to find one on earth, ibn Tufayl has Hayy turn to the heavens. Yet, without this necessary rational foundation, there can be no progression to the incorporeal. Thus, reason is a necessary base from which Hayy begins his search for the First Cause.

To the First Cause

Both Ibn Tufayl and al-Farabi find a First Cause to be necessary, they simply understand humanity's relationship to the First Cause quite differently. The following

section will focus on al-Farabi's formulation of the First Cause and the heavens, which I will then compare to Ibn Tufayl's.

On the incorporeal nature of the First Cause, al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl are in agreement. In contrast, al-Farabi states that only the First Cause is understood to be One.[64] Furthermore, he claims that "The First Cause is different in Its substance from everything else, and it is impossible for anything else to have the existence It has."[65] Since the First Cause is unlike anything else that exists, al-Farabi holds that humanity cannot know It directly, that is, without the gradation of the Intellects. By his apophatic explanation of the First Cause, al-Farabi displays the inextricable nature his epistemology shares with his metaphysics. The First Cause cannot be divided into speech, because the explanation would indicate the parts that make up the whole. That is to say, the One cannot be appropriately described because of the belief that the terms used to define a being actually constitute that being. In this way, the One, or First Cause, must be understood as one essence existing as pure simplicity.

If the First Cause were constituted of parts, the First Cause would be divisible by speech. If the First Cause were divisible, then the parts of It would be a cause for the substantiation of Its existence. As a result, the First Cause would cease to be the First Cause because It would have a causal existent prior to It, *ad infinitum*. Such an idea is a

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[64] This is not so straightforward for Ibn Tufayl, who seems to hold to the idea that concepts such as "one," "many," etc., are not predicates that can apply to God. However, such language is necessary in talking about God, in order to conceptualize such an entity who is wholly other

[65] McGinnis and Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, 59.

logical impossibility for al-Farabi, there simply must be a First Cause. Although classifications such as "genus and difference" do not enable humans to know the First Cause, classifications of this sort enable human beings to know other existents' ontological reality. Furthermore, these classifications enable humans to talk about them by pointing to their constituents. As a result, al-Farabi's hierarchical schema of emanation of "being and intellect can be analyzed in terms of classification by division into genera and species."[66] Regarding the other Intellects, each gradation represents a further separation from ultimate perfection, which is a trend consistent in Neoplatonism at large and among Islamic Neoplatonists in particular. For instance, the Sixth Intellect is less perfect than the Fourth Intellect because the Sixth must intellect Itself, the Fifth, the Fourth, the Third, the Second, the First and finally the First Cause, or God. All of these Intellects, however, are more perfect than the human intellect due to the fact that they are "always actually intellecting."[67]

Such an elaborate cosmology is not found in *Hayy ibn Yaqzan.* Rather, Hayy is just now beginning to leave the material world behind as he realized that that matter was without shaped unless filled by a specific form. Just as matter has a cause, so too must form. Thus, in searching for this cause, Hayy turned to the heavens and contemplated its spatial finitude and shape. Hayy determined that the heavens are finite by geometrical proof. Furthermore, the rising of the moon and sun in the east and

[66] McGinnis and Reisman, 58–59.
[67] McGinnis and Reisman, 60.

setting in the west proved the spherical nature of the heavens. Lastly, he observed that the planets, too, must exist in their own sphere with their own orbital pattern. Therefore, the heavens consisted of many spheres all within one greater sphere.[68] This led Hayy to see the universe as one interconnected entity, with all the bodies (earth, water, air, plants, etc.) existing within it. As a result, Hayy began to see all of existence as like one animal. This is a rejection of the tenet al-Farabi holds, namely that only the First Cause can be one. According to ibn Tufayl, everything exists within this First Cause and is permeated by it, because of this, all things are, in fact, one. Such conclusions led Hayy to question whether the universe was eternal or originate.

Hayy postulated the implications of both the originate universe and the eternal one. After many years of thinking, he decided that, regardless of the temporal state of the universe, the idea of the existence of an incorporeal agent remained intact. For if the perceivable universe were originate, it would require a Creator. That Creator, however, must be incorporeal and incapable of being perceived by the senses, for, if not, He would be just like His perceivable creation. On the other hand, if the universe were eternal, it would also follow that its motion was eternal. This would contradict Hayy's earlier discovery that all motion requires a Mover, or a Cause. The Cause, however, cannot be a body because every body is necessarily finite, as Hayy discovered

[68] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 127.

in his reflection on the planets. Either way, Hayy reasoned that the First Cause is incorporeal and this idea places him in agreement with al-Farabi.[69]

In summary, both thinkers believe that a First Cause was necessary and by the nature of Its existence, incorporeal. Yet, al-Farabi holds that a gradation of intellects is the only way that individuals can know God. God, however, is truly unknowable because He cannot be broken into speech. That is to say, one cannot name "parts" of God that then constitute a whole. Thus, humanity's knowledge is imperfect as each gradation of Intellect becomes further removed from unity. This is a trend that shapes al-Farabi's structuring of everything else, from society to the human body. If reason, the highest of human faculties, is necessarily hierarchical, then all other existents must also be hierarchical when functioning as they should. By way of contrast, ibn Tufayl rejects the Neoplatonic/Farabian emanationist schema. For him, all things are one and exist within the greater One. No gradation of Intellect is necessary for ibn Tufayl because individuals exist within God and ought to be able to apprehend God/the Divine.

This difference foreshows the use of the rational faculty for al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl. Whereas al-Farabi understands reason as the stepping stone which leads to an understanding of the One, Ibn Tufayl invokes an apophatic understanding which must be experienced. For al-Farabi, individuals can only understand the One negatively, because nothing can be said of It. God, then, "exists" on a different plane altogether, unable to be experienced. According to Ibn Tufayl, however, everything exists within the

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[69] Tufayl, 129.

One. That is, ibn Tufayl rejects the gradation inherent in al-Farabi's metaphysical schema that allows God to be known by reason. In al-Farabi's and ibn Tufayl's thought, then, the question becomes: to what extent does the rational faculty enable individuals to know God?

Sufficiency of the Rational Faculty

Al-Farabi states that common to every individual is the rational faculty. According to al-Farabi, the goal of all rational beings is to be perfected, insofar as they are able, by the act of continuous and actual intellection. Thus, humanity is capable of the highest perfection in the sublunary world.[70] Furthermore, human perfection can be understood as a journey among the stages of human intellection. The rational faculty is a power of the human's corporeal soul and is only a passive, or material, intellect in its natural state.[71] This passivity can be understood as potentiality, thus meaning that it is not intellecting or being intellected although it possesses the potential for both. According to al-Farabi, the passive intellect of humanity, although consisting of matter, is by its very nature prepared to "receive the imprints of the intelligibles."[72] Having this potentiality separates humanity from other matter, such as plants and animals, which

[70] Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 49.
[71] The rational faculty can be referred to by many names: material intellect, passive intellect, potential intellect.
[72] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 199.

are not inhered with the rational faculty, and as a result they are incapable of intellection. Unlike other material objects, the human rational faculty is "prepared to receive the imprints of the intelligibles." However, like matter, an individual's rational faculty cannot actualize itself. Rather, the material intellect of the human needs an agent to actualize it from a passive intellect to an actual intellect.[73]

As mentioned, every human being possesses the rational faculty which can also be referred to as the material intellect. That is to say, it is an intellect that is stuck within matter (the human), and does not contemplate the incorporeal. At this stage, the human intellect is only a potential intellect. With the aid of the Active Intellect, however, the human intellect becomes an Actual Intellect in that it is actually intellecting. This stage is an intermediary stage in the process of intellection. The final stage of intellection is called the Acquired Intellect, which is the highest degree of human intellection and focuses on the incorporeal. But as noted, the human intellect is by nature only a potential and material intellect and thus requires conjunction with the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect, then, is by necessity an actual intellect in that it is both being intellected and is always in activity, separate from matter. Furthermore, it is the most proximate Intellect to that of the human. Because of its proximity to the human intellect, it is the Intellect that initiates the actualization of the human intellect while it exists in its material stage.

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[73] Farabi, 200.

Al-Farabi compares the relationship of the Active Intellect with the material intellect to that of the light of the sun actualizing eyesight. Without light, eyesight is only a potential activity because it exists in matter. Furthermore, the colors that the eye can see are also only existing in a potential state. Neither the eye nor the colors are able to actualize themselves. The sun, however, provides the light enabling vision to the eye. The light also illuminates the potential colors and enables them to be actualized and therefore seen by the eye. As a result, the light from the sun brings from potentiality to actuality both the ability of the eye to see and the color that the eye sees. Finally, the source of light, the sun, is also able to be seen by the eye. In the same way that the sun provides the light so that vision can actually see, so too does the Active Intellect provide the "light" that actualizes the passive intellect of individuals. In other words, the material intellect, like the eye, becomes aware of the Active Intellect which imprints what were potentially intelligibles on the material intellect. Thus, the material intellect becomes both an actual intellect and actually intelligible.[74]

Ibn Tufayl's presentation of how humans come to know the divine is markedly different, as he does not mention an Active Intellect that actualizes the rational faculty in man. In fact, Ibn Tufayl rejects the notion of the Active Intellect, therefore distancing himself from other Muslim Neoplatonists such as ibn Sina and ibn Bajja.[75] Rather, instead of conjunction with the Active Intellect as al-Farabi purports, ibn Tufayl

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[74] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 203.
[75] Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predecessors and Their Influence on His Thought," 117.

describes a direct union with God, "excluding all intermediaries."[76] Upon Hayy's realization that the Necessary Being, God, is the Cause behind every other existent's being, and that this Being is perfect in every way, Hayy wondered how he gained knowledge of this Being. If all beings, other than God, had matter in common, how did Hayy come into knowledge of Him? Hayy found that his senses were unable to apprehend anything that was also not matter. Thus, God, separate from matter, could only be apprehended by something also removed from matter. The only possible conclusion for Hayy, then, was that he apprehended Him by his own essence.

This essence, however, is Hayy's true essence, differentiated from his apparent essence that apprehends matter. Here, for the sake of example, Ibn Tufayl compares the true essence to that of the bodily senses. In the same way that al-Farabi presents actual and potential intellects, as highlighted above, Ibn Tufayl does so with sensation. For example, the eye is potential when it is not opened and actively seeing. When the eye is opened and seeing, it is actualized. The eye returns to its state of potentiality when it is closed. Having seen, however, the eye longs to be actual again. This is the same with Hayy's essence. Having been actual, in that it apprehended God, it desperately longs to do so again.[77] The examples the two thinkers use is indicative of their thought. For al-Farabi, the rational faculty is the highest of human faculties. Thus, it is no surprise that

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[76] Sami Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predeccessors and the Influence of These on His Thought," in *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1974), 79.
[77] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 133–34.

the example he provides is that of the intellect. Ibn Tufayl, on the other hand, is able to apprehend God with his essence. Effectively, ibn Tufayl is suggesting one cannot think God. Rather, God must be experienced. The more perfect the object is, the more the respective sense longs for it. It is no surprise then Hayy's essence longs for God, who is the most magnificent of all. Perfection of Hayy's essence, then, is perpetual apprehension of the Necessary Being.

Of course, al-Farabi's presentation of role of the Active Intellect is quite different from Ibn Tufayl's ecstatic union with God. This mystical union will be addressed in greater detail in the following section, titled "ibn Tufayl's Mysticism." The Active Intellect is not simply responsible for actualizing the potential human intellect. Returning to al-Farabi's Neoplatonic emanationist schema, we must remember that each Intellect, in the act of intellection, emanates another Intellect from its activity. The Active Intellect, as the Intellect that governs the sensible realm, also "infuses the sensible world with intelligibility."[78] These emanations from the Active Intellect are common to each and every human intellect. Thus, the world is inhered with reason as it is emanated through the causal chain of the Intellects. But humanity, along with the aforementioned rational faculty, possesses other faculties, or powers, due to the individual's corporeal soul. Among these faculties is the imaginative faculty, by which the material human intellect "retains the objects of sense," which exist in the world of

[78] Mohammad Azadpur, *Reason Unbound: On Spiritual Practice in Islamic Peripatetic Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2011), 50.

matter.[79] The sense perceptions collected by the material intellect are only potentially intelligible thoughts because they are still connected to matter. When the light, so to speak, of the Active Intellect shines on the sense perceptions in the material intellect, the sense perceptions become the intelligibles in actuality. That is, the sense perceptions of the material intellect are united with the form of that object being intellected by the Active Intellect. In this way, they lose their connection to matter and exist as intelligible thoughts in the rational faculty of the individual.[80] Upon this happening, the common intelligibles emerge, which are common to all individuals.

Al-Farabi states that the first intelligibles are of three kinds:

> (a) the principles of productive skills, (b) the principles by which one became aware of good and evil in human's actions, (c) the principles which were used for knowing the existents which are not the objects of human's actions, and their primary principles and ranks: such as the heavens and the first cause and the other primary principles and what happens to come to be out of those primary principles.[81]

Herbert Davidson equates these to (a) mathematics, (b) ethics, and lastly (c) physics and metaphysics.[82] The reception of the first intelligibles does not constitute perfection for al-Farabi. Rather, they lay a foundation for individuals to build towards the ultimate goal

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[79] David Reisman and John McGinnis, "Al-Farabi," in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources* (Indianapolis: Hacket Pub Company, 2007), 62.
[80] Davidson, *On Intellect*, 51.
[81] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 204–5.
[82] Davidson, *On Intellect*, 52.

of felicity, i.e. human perfection.[83] In other words, the Active Intellect actualizes the rational faculty in humans, thus bringing one to the stage of Actual Intellect and one step close to felicity.

From the stage of Actual Intellect, the impetus falls on individuals to develop their rational faculty and progress from the stage of Actual Intellect to the highest level of intellection, the Acquired Intellect. Developing one's rational faculty is understood to be a voluntary action, according to al-Farabi. Voluntary actions can be either intellectual or bodily, they are "not indiscriminate actions but…defined and determined actions which arise out of definite and determined dispositions and habits"[84] In other words, these are actions one deliberately chooses which can then become ingrained in one by the formation of habit. The voluntary actions that lead to felicity are the virtues, whereas those actions that inhibit felicity are considered vices.[85] Thus, one can habitually practice either virtue or vice. Furthermore, the actualized rational faculty of individuals is "partly practical reason and partly theoretical reason."[86] In other words, human reason in the actualized stage consists of both practical and theoretical reason. Practical reason is the human faculty that enables individuals to know how to act in the material world. Theoretical reason, however, is more abstract and involves speculation that looks to explain the particulars. Practical reason is subservient to theoretical reason

[83] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 205.
[84] Farabi, 207.
[85] Farabi, 207.
[86] Farabi, 209.

whose purpose is to bring individuals to felicity. According to al-Farabi, felicity, in this world, can only be attained by conjunction with the Active Intellect.

Ibn Tufayl's rejection of the Active Intellect as a necessary medium for knowledge of God is a major differentiation between al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl. Ibn Tufayl's rejection ultimately results in the rejection of the primacy of reason that al-Farabi maintains. The rational faculty enables individuals to make sense of the world. The Active Intellect supplies the world with reason. It is not an accidental consequence of the activity of the Active Intellect that the material world aligns with reason. Rather, the sublunary world consists of material imprints of the incorporeal reality being thought by the Active Intellect. Thus, because the sublunary realm is less perfect in its essence from the realms above it, the material sort of "falls out" of the Active Intellect. In this way, the material in the world of matter is merely representative of the incorporeal reality within the Active Intellect. Yet, because humans possess material intellects, they are only capable of recognizing something materially at first. Actualization of the human intellect only happens when the Active Intellect "shines a light" on the material intellect of the individual. From here, the individual becomes cognizant that his or her material intellect is now perceiving the incorporeal form being thought by the Active Intellect. In other words, the doe is no longer simply matter. Instead, the material intellect is now cognizant of the incorporeal form of doe, the more perfect doe.

Whereas al-Farabi holds that individuals could climb the ladder of intellect, so to speak, there is no ladder for ibn Tufayl. Instead, he offers the notion of direct union with God. In his view, one would be "attempting the impossible" in trying to "explain the relationship of God to the phenomenal world through emanationism."[87] The relationship, then, must be experienced by the individual and not merely thought, which leads to the mystical element of ibn Tufayl's thought.

Chapter 4: Mysticism

[87] Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predeccessors and the Influence of These on His Thought," 79.

Ibn Tufayl's Mysticism

Hayy realized that "the perfection of his essence and its joy" was only possible with the "constant help" of God.[88] Thus, Hayy reasoned that he must always have an actualized vision of God. That is to say, he must not be distracted by the material, but instead be solely focused on God. Trouble arose for Hayy when he found perpetual actualization difficult. For when Hayy set out to reflect on the Necessary Being and nothing else, something perceptible always interfered, such as hunger, coldness, and other states of being. As a result, Hayy turned away from the perceptible world and instead began to focus on the planets and celestial spheres. Unlike other forms of matter,[89] the planets and stars were constant in their motion and impervious to corruption as was sublunary matter. Hayy had no way of knowing about the planets empirically but he had a strong intuition that, like him, the planets had essences separate from their bodies. Not only did they share this incorporeal essence, but their essences were aware of the Necessary Being. Hayy believed that because he existed in the sublunary world, he was capable of material corruption. Thus, his essence was necessarily less perfect than that of the planets. Since the planets do not exist in the sublunary world, they are purer in being than he and they are always aware of the Necessary Being.

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[88] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 135.

[89] Remember Hayy's realization that matter such as earth, water, fire, wind, all potentially change shape. That is to say, one form can replace another form in succession. The planets and stars, Hayy found, were not like this but rather displayed consistency

Due to his similarity to the planets and their cognition of the Necessary Being, Hayy thought it reasonable to imitate them in their actions. Hayy, however, found that he shared a similarity to the animals in that he had a corruptible body. Furthermore, he realized that he was also similar to God in some way, otherwise Hayy's essence never would have become cognizant of God. Due to these similarities, Hayy found it necessary to imitate each level of being to reach felicity, or an actualized vision of God. Of course, the imitation of the animals could only hinder him from reaching the constant vision of the Necessary Being. This was unavoidable, however, as Hayy had to preserve the body, the house of the animal spirit.[90] Unlike the animal spirit of animals, which did not possess the use of reason, Hayy's animal spirit was nearer in nature to that of the planets. In short, Hayy's animal spirit existed in equilibrium, making him balanced and differentiating him from the animals. Imitation of the planets would enable Hayy a more "constant vision," but one that was impure because it was not focused on the Necessary Being Itself. Finally, Hayy noted the importance of imitating the Necessary Being. This constant vision would "obliterate" Hayy's own essence and he would be absorbed into the Necessary Being. Thus, Hayy's ultimate goal was the third form of imitation. He realized, however, that he must focus on the second form for a long period of time in order to arrive at constant vision.

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[90] The animal spirit, as we have seen in the mother doe, is also possessed by animals. The difference is, the animal spirit does not exist in equilibrium in the doe as it does in Hayy. That is to say, Hayy's animal spirit is balanced, making him like the celestial spheres. This is not the case with animals, who are not cognizant of the Necessary Being

Hayy went about imitating the planets in three ways. First, Hayy reasoned that because the planets provided "essential warming, accidental cooling, lighting, evaporation, and condensation" to the earth, that he too, was to tend to the existents around him. Thus, when he came across an animal or plant in distress, he tended to its needs. Secondly, he considered the planets free from corruption and contamination. As a result, Hayy kept himself exceedingly clean and applied fragrances from plants and oils to himself. Lastly, Hayy observed that the planets' vision of God was constant, always yearning for Him. Furthermore, they never moved "except by His volition and within His control."[91] Consequently, Hayy imitated them by closing his eyes and shutting his ears. In doing so, he attempted to focus exclusively on the Necessary Being, curtailing his imagination. Additionally, Hayy quickly spun in circles, causing the perceptible things to flee from him while his essence was strengthened.[92] These actions enabled him to have a vision of God. However, the vision only lasted so long before his bodily faculties presented their needs and he was "cast among the lowest of the low."[93]

From this position, Hayy restarted and imitated the three categories above again. Every so often he conquered his bodily weakness and arrived at the third stage of imitation. From here, he "examined the attributes" of the Necessary Being.[94] Hayy found these attributes to be both positive and negative. Among the positive were

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[91] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 143.
[92] A common goal found in Sufism
[93] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 144.
[94] Tufayl, 155.

"Knowledge, Power, and Wisdom." Whilst amongst the negative attributes Hayy found "exemption from corporeality and its dependents and anything remotely related to body."[95] God's freedom from matter, of course, meant that his positive attributes could not be circumscribed by matter, because that would indicate a plurality. These positive attributes did not make the essence of God a plurality. Instead, the positive attributes reduced into a singular concept, that is, God's true essence.

Hayy, then, intended to imitate the positive and negative attributes of the Necessary Being. Hayy was able to do this because he learned that God's self-awareness is not distinct from Godself. In fact, God's identity is God's self-consciousness and this self-knowledge is, in fact, Godself. That is to say, because God is pure unity, His thought is Himself and therefore not distinct from Him.[96] This meant that if Hayy could come to know God, then Hayy's knowledge of God would not be distinct from God's essence, but would be identical with Him.[97] Imitating God's negative attributes meant that Hayy removed himself even more so from material concerns. Hayy reasoned that practices concerned with corporeal things only interfered with his vision of God. As a result, Hayy withdrew to his cave, shutting out all of his senses and fighting off unwanted thoughts.[98]

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[95] Tufayl, 155.
[96] Aristotle, "De Anima," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. One (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 685.
[97] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 147–48.
[98] Similar both to Plato's allegory of the Cave and Muhammad receiving his first revelation in a cave.

"At the height of his struggle," however, Hayy could not escape cognizance of his own essence and this greatly perturbed him. He longed for his own "obliteration" in the essence of the Necessary Being.[99] When Hayy finally achieved this, "the heavens, earth, and everything in between them receded from his recollection and reflection…his essence receded along with the rest of the essences; all vanished and faded away."[100] The only essence to remain was the one true essence, the Necessary Being. Thus, according to Ibn Tufayl, Hayy became the first human to reach this ecstatic union with God.

Eventually, however, Hayy woke from this state. He then reasoned that his own essence was not separate from God's. Thus, Hayy's true essence was the essence of God's, whereas what he formerly considered his essence was, in actuality, nothing. Consequently, "there was nothing but the essence of [God]."[101] In this way, God became like the light of the sun and Hayy the body which reflects the sun's light. If the body were to no longer exist, there would be no more reflection, but the light would persist. Therefore, the body that was once capable of reflecting this light would have no meaning, but the sun would go on casting its light, unchanged. There is nothing then, but sun, just as there is nothing but God. Hayy, then, was one in the same as God.

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[99] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 146.
[100] Tufayl, 146.
[101] Tufayl, 147.

Fortunately for Hayy, "God in His mercy" corrected such wrong thinking and directed him back towards the truth.[102] In Islamic theology the idea that Hayy was one in the same as God would be blasphemous because it would forego he holy otherness of God. Such a discrepancy from the truth indicated to Hayy that the material still had a place within him. He then realized that adjectives such as "many, few, and one; singularity and plurality; union and discreteness, are all predicates" that apply to the material things.[103] The incorporeal things that knew God, however, were neither one nor many. This was because multiplicity merely indicated essences that were distinct from one another, such as Hayy's material essence and true essence. Unity, then, can only occur by contact.[104] Here, Ibn Tufayl admits to the difficulty of communicating this idea. For he had been speaking of non-corporeal entities as a plurality but they are not a plurality at all. Yet, one cannot use singularity to describe them either because that implies unity, which is also impossible.

At this point, Ibn Tufayl takes a step outside of the story to communicate from his own perspective, not that of Hayy. Ibn Tufayl addresses potential attacks on his project, such as the idea that his project is "stripped of the nature of rational creatures and cast off rational judgment… One of the judgments of reason is that something is either one or many."[105] Ibn Tufayl implores these supposed doubters to adopt the line

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[102] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 148.
[103] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 150.
[104] Tufayl, "Hayy Bin Yaqzan," 148.
[105] Tufayl, 148.

of reasoning that Hayy had, in that by different lines of reasoning one arrives at antithetical conclusions. Singularity and plurality, according to ibn Tufayl, are descriptive of the material realm, but such language does not suffice in talking about the divine realm and could only be a misrepresentation. Thus, no one can understand the divine realm without seeing it for one's self. [106] Hayy, then, was not one with God. This, of course, is the blasphemy of which God corrected Hayy. Rather, Hayy contacted the divine, but in this life, the contact would never be complete. He must pass away in order for his soul to unite with God's, thereby finally attaining ultimate perfection.

The mystical element is greatly important to ibn Tufayl. The rational edifice, however, is also in his view essential for one to be able to arrive at knowledge of God. Yet, reason is inherently limited and one must then employ mystical practices to know God. The mystical element is not something that is explainable. Rather, it is an experience. This is a blatant rejection of al-Farabi's notion of knowing God by gradation.

Al-Farabi's Rationalism and ibn Tufayl's Rational-Mysticism

Both philosophers hold reason in high regard. But they diverge: whereas al-Farabi believes reason is capable of illuminating God, ibn Tufayl believes it impossible

[106] Ibn Tufayl warns the reader about taking his words literally. In fact, his words are only mere representations of what Hayy saw. For those wise enough to heed this warning, Ibn Tufayl is willing to go on and describe what it is Hayy saw.

for reason to do so. Thus, a glaring discrepancy arises in the journey to felicity with regard to the rational religion of al-Farabi and the rational-mysticism of ibn Tufayl.

There is no direct union with God according to al-Farabi. One can only ever know God through intermediaries. Unsurprisingly for the "Second Master," then, God is much like Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. That is, God knows only Himself and is pure intellection. In this way, God is an undefiled unity; He only thinks and knows Himself. Yet, individuals are only able to know God by exercising their rational faculty. Al-Farabi states that felicity "is achieved only by certain voluntary actions, some of which are mental and others bodily actions,[107] and not by indiscriminate actions but by defined and determined actions which arise out of definite and determined dispositions and habits."[108] In other words, al-Farabi rejects short-cuts to felicity, such as asceticism or mysticism.[109] Instead, by developing one's rational faculty, individuals are to choose the actions that will ultimately lead to felicity.

Reason also plays a role for ibn Tufayl on the journey to felicity. In the previous section, however, it was demonstrated that reason can only take the individual to a certain level of knowledge of God. After reason has been exhausted, mystical practices must be employed. To reiterate, for ibn Tufayl, there are no intermediaries by which one comes to know God. Rather, he maintains that there is a mystical contact with God Himself, a union which language fails to communicate and requires one to be satisfied

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[107] "بعضها أفعال فكرية و بعضها أفعال بدنية"
[108] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 207.
[109] Farabi, 412.

with symbols. In other words, descriptions can only ever fall short of the reality of which they are being used to describe. Such a contrast between al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl, then, raises questions about the nature of religion according to the two men. How are individuals able to know God? And for whom does religion exist, the community or an individual?[110]

Al-Farabi does not condemn religion by any means, as he himself was a Muslim. Therefore, he does not reject the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad. Prophecy, according to al-Farabi, belongs to the imaginative faculty, which is subordinate to the rational faculty. Naturally enough, the Prophet Muhammad cannot be considered a "logician or a philosopher…nor can one place the Qur'anic verses among the results of the discursive reasoning of the mind."[111] In al-Farabi's mind, religion, in all of its manifestations, is subordinate to philosophy. How can individuals know God, then? For al-Farabi, the answer is necessarily reason because, "if a claim does not ultimately appeal to reason, on what grounds can it be accepted?"[112] This is not to say that al-Farabi's God of reason is an idealized anthropomorphic conceptualization who was removed from the religious sensibilities of the practitioner. Rather, what is being stressed is al-Farabi's subordination of all religious sensibilities to philosophy and reason.

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[110] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 25.
[111] Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predeccessors and the Influence of These on His Thought," 55.
[112] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 26.

According to al-Farabi then, for whom does his highly technical rational religion exist? To this question Goodman states that, "considering the complexity of the concepts generated and their high degree of abstraction from the workaday world it might seem that the appeal would be to a small, specially trained intellectual elite."[113] This may be true to some extent owing to the complex tenets of belief often characteristic of rational religion. In theory, however, rational religion is universally applicable because all of humanity possesses the rational faculty. Regardless of an individual's intellectual background and "whether a certain intellectual agility is requisite…it still remains possible for any human being…to participate in the rational search for God. And every human being is invited to do so by the universal claim of rational religion: it seeks a truth for all."[114] Thus, as a rational religionist, al-Farabi believes that reason is universally accessible and the only way for individuals to truly know God.

From this, the question of how the rational religionists seek this universal truth, still remains. Part of the answer, for al-Farabi, is found in the work of the First Master himself, Aristotle. Within the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that because felicity is the highest goal of life, it cannot be reached by base activities, or activities primarily concerned with matter. Therefore, the activity leading individuals toward felicity must be related to the highest of the virtues, which belong to the incorporeal intellect.

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[113] Goodman, 30.
[114] Goodman, 30.

Intellect, then, is the "best thing" in humanity and is what guides individuals toward the noble and the divine. Intellect, of course, is not an activity, but is considered by Aristotle to be "our natural ruler."[115] The highest activity, which is associated with intellect, is contemplation. Thus, for both Aristotle and the rational religionist whom al-Farabi envisions, the contemplative life is the best life because it leads to felicity, which is the perfection of man.[116] Contemplation, however, is only the name of the activity. What is the object of contemplation? To be sure, it "is not reflexive, it is not mere introspection, not navel-gazing, for the contemplation is of God, not of the mind itself, and the obligation of self-knowledge [for the rational religionist] implies…an obligation to become like God."[117] For the rational religionist, then, practicing religion is deeply contemplative.

Reason also plays an important role for ibn Tufayl, but reason alone cannot lead one to God. Rather, reason ought to be treated as a stepping stone, one that leads to mysticism. Ibn Tufayl demonstrates this when Hayy attempted to leave behind his material concerns in order to imitate the heavenly bodies. Therefore, it is impossible to simply label ibn Tufayl a pure mystic because within *Hayy ibn Yaqzan,* ibn Tufayl refuses the notion that reason should sacrifice its role in the religious experience as would a pure mystic.[118] Hayy had to practice reason in order to develop his natural capacity of

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[115] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1860.
[116] Aristotle, 1862.
[117] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 31.
[118] Goodman, 40.

reason, whose objects are arranged hierarchically (from the material to the abstract) before he arrived at mystical practices. This progression from reason to mysticism is demonstrated in the many seven year periods of Hayy's growth.

While the rational religionist primarily relies on reason to know God, the mystic believes God to be palpable. Lenn Goodman, within his introduction to his translation of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* presents an excellent description of the mystic:

> The mystic has come within sight of the godhead. From his heights anything in the finite world of men looks ant-like; and even human reason, even the law itself may seem petty and laughable. He scorns reason and looks down on the weak efforts of those who put their faith in it. After his direct confrontation with reality, the processes of reasoning and even the service of obedience seems wasted ingenuity, wasted devotion. Their results are veils, illusions that keep the mystic from contact with his God. He not only rejects the truths of reason and the duties of obedience, but toys with their opposites: he becomes a lover of paradox and rebellion and may even utter the ultimate paradox, *credo quia absurdum* or commit the ultimate disobedience, antinomianism. The rationalist knows God as a study…but for the mystic, God is a friend, a lover.[119]

From this, a stark difference arises between rational religion and mysticism. While rational religion is, in theory, intended for all, mysticism is religion for one. This distinction is made evident in the mystic's scorning of reasoned, organized belief. Such a

[119] Goodman, 36.

doctrine of reason only limits and veils the religious experience in the opinion of the mystic.

According to ibn Tufayl, reason is "not merely a less perfect way of knowing God than intuition…it must be our first means of knowing Him."[120] In this sense, reason is the necessary foundation for the mystical encounter because without reason, Hayy would have no knowledge of God's existence. This is evidenced within *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, as ibn Tufayl devotes much of the narrative to Hayy's reasoned discovery of God. Perhaps building the reasonable foundation for the mystical experience is why ibn Tufayl states that a desire to know the truth without defect[121] requires one to seek the truth diligently.[122] Such a diligent seeking requires certain principles to have been illuminated by reason. This is to say that just as reason alone cannot account for the religious belief, neither can unrestrained mysticism, according to ibn Tufayl. This is demonstrated when Hayy uttered the blasphemous notion that he was one with God. It follows, then, that a mystical experience may result in an individual arriving at blasphemous conclusions. These conclusions would be impossible if individuals were simply given proper intellectual training.[123]

Consequently, the question remains: how does ibn Tufayl marry rationalism and mysticism? That is to say, what is rational-mysticism for ibn Tufayl? Interestingly, as

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[120] Goodman, 41.

[121] "whoever wants the truth with clarity must seek it and work diligently to acquire it: ان من أراد الحق الذي لا جمجمة فيه، فعليه بطلبها والجد في اقتنائها

[122] *حي بن يقظان*, ابن طفيل, Third Edition (Beirut: دار المافاق الاجديدة, n.d.), ١٠٦.

[123] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 41.

Hayy progressed along the hierarchy of imitation, he began by imitating animals, then the heavenly bodies, and finally God. In imitating the animals he tended to his material needs, such as feeding himself. Imitating the planets and stars, however, required that he keep himself clean and spin in circles. Lastly, Hayy's imitation of God involved perpetual contemplation of God and only God. Thus, the highest activity is that of contemplation, which is the practice of the rational religionist. Goodman, however, asks, "does Hayy contemplate through reason or intuition?"[124] There is no straightforward answer to the question, of course, because both practices are evident in Hayy's journey to truth and cannot be clearly bifurcated. For, as ibn Tufayl demonstrates, Hayy was consumed by direct contact with God, yet all the while his mind was contemplating God. The problem remains, however, that "surely no mere analysis of the focal point of his mind could reveal accurately whether intuition or reason were at any given moment the window through which his vision [of God] was perceived."[125] Thus, a symbiosis is formed between reason and mysticism. Reason remains a foundational element to the religious experience and protects mysticism from outlandish blasphemies. Mysticism, however, picks up where reason is insufficient for discovering truth. Yet, like rationalism, ibn Tufayl seems to hold that rational mysticism is intended for everyone. All people possess the rational faculty which lays the

[124] Goodman, 42.
[125] Goodman, 42.

foundation for the solitary mystical experience. Thus, a hopeful paradox is born in which a religion experienced by one then becomes a religion held by all.

In summary, a glaring difference in the thought of al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl is ibnTufayl's addition of mysticism to the religious experience. Al-Farabi rejects the notion of mysticism or a direct contact with God because the imaginative faculty is subordinate to the rational faculty. Instead, by exercising one's faculty of reason, individuals come to contemplate truth and then align their lives with it. Individuals are able to contemplate the truth upon the actualization of their material intellects. From there, they are no longer limited to matter but begin to contemplate the incorporeal forms. Thus, individuals know truth and the virtues because the Active Intellect has impressed it on his or her intellect. Individuals, then, are no longer focused on matter but on the incorporeal. The more an individual exercises the rational faculty and separates him/herself from matter, the nearer he/she is to felicity.

This is only half of the picture for ibn Tufayl. Upon building the foundation of religion on a rational edifice, the individual progresses to mysticism in contemplating truth. The nature of this contemplation is complex, but it results in a union with God. Unfortunately, ibn Tufayl does not expound on how Hayy contemplated God. Was it primarily through reason or mystical intuition? It is clear, however, that reason is insufficient according to ibn Tufayl. Reason guided Hayy to knowledge of God but limited Hayy because it prevented his rising above image representation. Therefore, Hayy's knowledge of God was insufficient. All the while, however, Hayy desired to be

like God. Reason ultimately failed him and this failing led Hayy away from the material realm. He began to imitate the planets, and finally God. From the outside looking in, however, it is hard to say which part of Hayy's contemplation is rational and which part is mystical. What we are left with is a mystical contact, which is a notion al-Farabi firmly rejects.

Such an encounter with God is impossible according to al-Farabi. Rather, individuals are to conjoin with the Active Intellect. To find an individual existing in conjunction with the Active Intellect, however, is uncommon according to al-Farabi. In fact, one must be predisposed by nature to receive intelligibles from the Active Intellect and "[individuals] endowed with this nature will be found one at a time only," this person is the ruler of the excellent city and it is necessary for this individual to also be a philosopher[126]

Chapter 5: King, Philosopher, Politics

Characteristics of Al-Farabi's Philosopher-King

[126] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 247.

The ruler of the city must have two conditions: "[one] should be predisposed for it by [one's] inborn nature," and "should have acquired the attitude and habit of will for rulership which will develop in an [individual] whose inborn nature is predisposed for it."[127] This person is above all people and, by way of natural endowment, is not to serve anyone but to be served. The ruler's natural predisposition enables the ruler to receive all of the particulars and the intelligibles from the light of the Active Intellect. Al-Farabi is not stating that the human intellect receives the abstract concept of stones or plants, rather the basic scientific principles. In this way, the rational faculty becomes the material substratum for the passive intellect, thus actualizing the passive intellect. Upon reaching the stage of Actual Intellect, the ruler attains the first stage of human perfection. The ruler has been supplied by the Active Intellect with these intelligibles in order that he or she might use them to reach the ultimate perfection of the human soul, which is an independence from matter. This progression to the Acquired Intellect is one of voluntary choice for those that are predisposed with the capability to arrive at this stage. For this person, however, those choices leading to felicity are the good choices, those inhibiting it, the bad. The ruler, then, does not act indiscriminately but with deliberation and clear intent. Having been supplied by the Active Intellect with all of the intelligibles, the ruler then habituates his/herself in alignment with the virtues which involve acting for the sake of felicity alone and refraining from what is bad. This is not an

[127] Farabi, 239.

easy undertaking. Thus al-Farabi believes it necessary that the ruler also be a philosopher because philosophers alone have such intellectual capacity.

To be a philosopher-ruler, however, one must reach the stage of Acquired Intellect and must have done so voluntarily by choosing what is good as opposed to what is bad. Of course, the philosopher-ruler is the pinnacle of humanity and his or her nature predisposes this individual to reaching the stage of Acquired Intellect. To describe how the philosopher-ruler is able to choose the good, al-Farabi presents the interrelated nature that the various human faculties have and how they serve one another in choosing the good. Just as the world is best ordered when following the hierarchical structure of the cosmos, it follows that the human faculties of the corporeal soul are arranged hierarchically as well. The nutritive faculty is the servant of the body alone, while the sensual and representational faculties serve the body and the rational faculty as well. The rational faculty receives most of its support from the body. In turn, these three faculties (nutritive, representational, and sensual) depend upon the rational faculty. The rational faculty is bifurcated into theoretical reasoning and practical reasoning. Of these, practical reason is to serve theoretical reason, whereas the job of theoretical reason is to lead the individual to felicity. Al-Farabi then introduces the appetitive faculty to those he has already mentioned (rational, nutritive, sensual, representational). The appetitive faculty works in tandem with the faculty of sensing, imagining, and deliberating, for they do not have the ability to act unless a desire for what they have perceived becomes known to them. Theoretical reason comes to know

felicity and the appetitive faculty sets it up as an aim and a desire. Following this stage, the faculties of representation and sense assist the deliberative faculty in learning how to attain felicity. The faculties associated with the appetitive faculty (sense, imagining, and deliberation) then perform the appropriate actions. In this way, all of the actions of the ruler will be virtuous.[128] When this is the case, the Active Intellect has descended upon the ruler, who has now attained the state of Acquired Intellect.

The ruler, then, in al-Farabi's *al-Madinat al-Fadilah,* holds the highest rank of humanity. This individual alone knows which actions lead to felicity. In addition to two conditions for rulership, al-Farabi puts forth twelve qualities with which the ruler should be endowed from birth. First, the ruler is to be fit and healthy. In the second place, the ruler ought to be intelligent and grasp concepts that are communicated to him or her. Following this, the ruler must have a good memory. A quick wit is the fourth quality. Fifth, the ruler must be able to communicate beautifully and effectively. In the sixth place, the ruler should enjoy learning. Seventh is the quality of loving what is true and hating what is false. Following the seventh is self-control and avoiding gambling and lusting. Being confident is the ninth quality while an aversion to wealth is the tenth. In the eleventh place, the ruler must love justice, avoid injustice, and exact punishment on the unjust. Finally, the ruler is to be brave and courageous in decisions and not crippled by self-doubt.[129] As noted, it is difficult to find an individual that possesses these

[128] Farabi, 209.
[129] Farabi, 249.

qualities, so much so that a philosopher-ruler can only be found one at a time. In fact, it is so difficult that if such a person cannot be found, the city will either be ruled by a diarchy or six men together, each possessing one of the necessary qualities. Yet, in every situation, a philosopher must be present in the government. If not, the city will "undoubtedly perish."[130] The natural endowment of this individual necessarily makes him or her the ruler in al-Farabi's ideal state.

The King and Hayy

At the stage of the individual, the differences between al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl's views will prove to be stark. Both philosophers support the idea that all humans possess the rational faculty. They also agree that certain individuals possess a greater aptitude than others. Additionally, they differentiate humanity from matter and animals by the rational faculty. According to al-Farabi, humans are a potential intellect, which animals are not. Similarly, Ibn Tufayl states that humans and animals are differentiated on the basis of their essence. That is, humans share an essence with God whereas animals do not. It is not by the rational faculty alone that one comes to know God, but by the similar essence that humans and God share. Of course, this indicates a difference in humanity's relationship with God in the two thinkers. For al-Farabi, there is a necessary degree of separation from the One. That is, individuals cannot know God directly, but indirectly by the Active Intellect as it intellects the Intellects more perfect than It. God is

[130] Farabi, 253.

the most perfect Intellect and the human intellect can only know God imperfectly. The journey to felicity in al-Farabi's schema, then, is a journey among the various stages of human intellection. These stages are the Material Intellect, Actual Intellect, and finally the Acquired Intellect. Felicity is attained on earth at the stage of Acquired Intellect, which is a state of perpetual intellection.

By way of contrast, Ibn Tufayl presents a much different relationship between God and humanity. There was no need for the Active Intellect for Hayy. Hayy came to know God by sharing an incorporeal essence with God. Instead of perpetual intellection alone, human perfection is a sort of union involving perpetual intuition and intellection of God.

The desired state of constancy is also different for al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl. Both men, however, recognize that attaining this level of constancy requires diligent work. Al-Farabi states that it requires voluntary effort to progress from Actual Intellect to Acquired Intellect, and that the impetus falls on the individual. To some degree Ibn Tufayl agrees, yet with a noticeable difference. Perfecting his essence and its joy is only possible with the constant help of God, taking away some of the responsibility of the human and placing it in the hands of God. Of course, this does not relieve Hayy of his responsibilities.

The philosopher-king attained perfection by becoming independent from a reliance on matter. Again, he arrived at this perfection by aligning himself with the virtues his theoretical reason enabled him to know and his appetitive faculty enabled

him to yearn for. Ibn Tufayl understands the process rather differently. Instead of following certain virtues, Hayy imitated those beings with which he shared characteristics in common: the animal, the planets, and God. A major difference to consider here is the environment in which the philosopher-king and Hayy existed. The philosopher-king resided in civilization. His responsibility was an ethic by which he was to do the appropriate actions that bring him to felicity. Hayy, on the other hand, did not have a social ethic in the way the philosopher-king did. Hayy took care of the natural world around him, but as he distanced himself from the material realm, his care for ethics diminished altogether. Hayy shifted his focus to imitating the planets and God in order to become more like them.

These variances present interesting implications on how al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl understand the soul's pursuit of perfection. Admittedly, the "highest" subjects in question (the philosopher-king and Hayy) are even yielded by their authors as rare cases. Al-Farabi holds that only one philosopher-king can be found at a time. Ibn Tufayl, too, states that Hayy was the first man to have achieved this level of being in relation to God.

As we have already seen, al-Farabi views the Active Intellect necessary in inhering humankind with the intelligibles and actualizing the individual's intellect. There is no direct relationship with God. Rather, there is the gradation of the Intellects above the realm of the moon. In al-Farabi's emanationist schema, the Active Intellect is the closest Intellect to that of the human. Consequently, the Intellect which actualizes the

human intellect must necessarily be the Active Intellect due to its proximity to the human intellect in the schema. This process takes a considerable amount of work, as al-Farabi mentions. Richard Walzer, in his commentary, presents al-Farabi as anti-mystical. Walzer states that although al-Farabi believes that a connection of some sort takes place between the Active Intellect and the human soul, it is not a "real substantial self-identification of the human soul with the divine entity."[131] The individual does not leave the sublunary realm, and it is a felicity that necessarily remains on earth. In fact, al-Farabi describes it elsewhere as an "utmost nearness of the human mind to the Active Intellect[132]…and characterizes this state as man's supreme felicity."[133]

Ibn Tufayl criticizes al-Farabi for holding this definition of felicity. There is no intermediary between God and humanity for Ibn Tufayl. In opposition to al-Farabi, Ibn Tufayl advocates for a type of rational mysticism. The natural world around Hayy allowed him to come to knowledge of God. From this position, Hayy began to contemplate God's attributes. Rationalism, however, only goes so far, which is where mysticism begins. Ibn Tufayl's type of mysticism "helps the enlightened few discover

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[131] Farabi, 442. There are, however, objections to the view of al-Farabi's anti-mysticism claims Bernd Radtke, within *How Can Man Reach the Mystical Union*. First of all, he states that al-Farabi himself is inconsistent on this topic. He continues, "Second there is the question as to whether the distinction between ontological and intellectual union is at all relevant. Third, the question needs to be considered as to whether Islamic mysticism at the time of al-Farabi knew of an ontological union, an issue Walzer and others have taken for granted." See pg 175 of Bernd Radtke, "How Can Man Reach the Mystical Union?," in *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, ed. Lawrence Conrad (Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1996), 165–94.

[132] أقرب شيء إلى العقل الفعال

[133] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 443.

that there is a deeper truth to things: that of pantheism and oneness of all Being."[134] It is a happiness, then, that one spends one's life cultivating, but it is always imperfect within the confines of material existence. The soul is perfected when the soul parts from the body and is finally united with God.

At this point, however, it is important to note Ibn Tufayl's harsh criticism of al-Farabi's position on happiness, which Ibn Tufayl thinks is limited to this life. In his criticism, ibn Tufayl states that when al-Farabi discusses human happiness, "he says that it exists only in this life… and that all other claims are senseless ravings and old wives' tales. This makes [humanity] at large despair of God's mercy. It puts the wicked on the same level with the good, for it makes nothingness the ultimate destiny of us all."[135] In truth, Al-Farabi addresses two aspects of happiness: the happiness of this world and the happiness of the one to come.

Perhaps it is beneficial to draw a parallel with Plato's *Phaedo.* Socrates stated that the good philosopher spends his life practicing for death. In this way, the soul is not be attached to the material, but instead spends its existence contemplating the eternal Forms. For this, the soul is rewarded in that it is not fated to give life to an undesirable body. Instead, the good philosopher's soul will depart the body and meet with the souls of other good philosophers. Of course there are differences, namely that the soul, according to both al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl, does not go and spend its time with other

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[134] Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predecessors and Their Influence on His Thought," 91.
[135] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 100.

philosophers after death.[136] Instead, death is conceived of in a more Stoic fashion, in that after death Hayy's soul will 'return' to God. The similarity, however, arises in the art of preparing the soul for this reunification with God. Hayy began to withdraw from the material insofar as he was able. As a result of his material existence, Hayy practiced in order to build up endurance to contemplate God. In his contemplation, much like Socrates, Hayy distanced himself from the material and grew in communion with the incorporeal. Al-Farabi presents death in a similar fashion. The soul of those ignorant of the philosophical truths will not be punished for their ignorance. Instead, they will simply cease to exist. The good soul, the soul which practiced philosophy and chose the virtues, will be spend eternity free from matter. The bad soul, however, aware of the philosophical truths but acting in ignorance of them, will spend an eternity in an unpleasant state, addicted to matter. Felicity, then, for both al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl is complete after death, in the soul's freedom from matter for al-Farabi and its reunification with God for ibn Tufayl.

Yet on earth, the philosopher-king and Hayy existed at the highest stage of humanity. Their journey to this stage, however, differed significantly. Once the material intellect was actualized, the philosopher-king developed the ability to contemplate the virtues and incorporeal forms. The philosopher-king then became aligned his or herself with the virtues and progressed to the stage of Acquired Intellect. At this stage, the

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[136] Plato, "Phaedo," in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 1997), 49–100.

philosopher-king has habitually practiced all of the virtues and cut themselves off from a dependence upon matter. Hayy, however, did not reason his way to the incorporeal forms and virtues. Rather, his reason led him to imitate the heavenly bodies. Thus, instead of knowing God by having received an impression of the intangibles, Hayy reasoned that it was best to simply imitate God by perpetual intellection.

Yet, the soul could never be truly perfected on earth for either al-Farabi or ibn Tufayl. There were certain earthly conditions, however, that were conducive for the development of the soul. In what setting, then, do these enlightened individuals find themselves? Does al-Farabi's rational religion necessitate a different environment from the rational mysticism of ibn Tufayl?

Politics or A Lack Thereof

Al-Farabi's philosopher-king knows every action by which to attain felicity. He or she is also an excellent speaker with a unique ability to bring the imaginations of the community's people to life. Cooperation, according to al-Farabi, is one of the most important qualities in the excellent society. When individuals come together, they cooperate by alleviating one another's needs and making life easier. Thus, while one individual of the community specializes in crafting pottery, another individual makes clothing. In this way, no one person is burdening all of the tasks of existence. Rather, the individuals of the community are working together and helping each other meet their living requirements. In this way, the ruler of the city is similar to the First Cause. For the

First Cause is the highest of the incorporeal beings, which are followed by the heavenly bodies, and lastly the material bodies. The city is also related to the body as there are faculties of both that are inferior by their very endowment. In the same way that the faculties of the body conform to the aim of the heart, all existents act in conformity to the First Cause. They "follow it, take it as their guide and imitate it" insofar as their natural capacity allows them to do so. The excellent city, according to al-Farabi, is arranged in such a manner that all of its inhabitants imitate their ruler as he or she guides the community toward felicity.[137]

To simplify his political philosophy and ideal state, al-Farabi compares the perfect state to a healthy human body within *Al-Madinat al-Fadilah.* The limbs and the organs of the body are not equal in their excellence according to their natural endowment. But among the various entities of the body, there is only one ruling organ, the heart. The heart is the most excellent of all the organs of the body. In order for the body to be healthy, the faculties of its parts must align themselves with the aim of the ruling organ. The organs that are second in rank perform their functions in direct relation to the aims of the heart. In other words, there is "no intermediary between themselves and the ruling organ" from which their aims are derived from.[138] However, the organs that are third in rank align themselves with the aim of those in the second place, thus having an intermediary between themselves and the ruling organ. This chain

[137] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 239.
[138] Farabi, 233.

of command continues until specific organs do not rule but only serve the aim of those more excellent in nature than them. The city is ordered much in the same way according to al-Farabi. There is a ruler who alone is the most excellent, just as the heart is, followed by those who are close to him in excellence. But the parallelism of the body and the city only goes so far. The faculties of the body are naturally compliant; therefore, they cooperate with the aim of the heart. This is not the case for the inhabitants of the city. While the city itself might be natural, the actions of those within it are not. Al-Farabi defines their actions as voluntary, in spite of the fact that they are naturally endowed with faculties that enable them to do certain things but not others.[139] As a result, the people of the community require someone who can lead them to understand and perform the virtuous actions.

In fact, for al-Farabi (but not for ibn Tufayl) human beings are incapable of virtue apart from a community. If individuals are incapable of behaving virtuously, then they cannot attain felicity. Community, then, is an imperative in the views of al-Farabi. This is due to the fact that humans have many needs which they cannot provide for themselves. According to al-Farabi, humans are social creatures in need of community, in contrast to Hayy, who lived apart from human community. They have come together in all the "inhabitable parts of the world" and need one another to strive towards perfection.[140] Al-Farabi states that there are three kinds of perfect societies: great,

[139] Farabi, 235.
[140] Farabi, 229.

medium, and small. The great society involves the union of all the societies in the world; the medium is the union of one nation in one part of the world; and lastly the perfect, small society is the union of the people of a city in the territory of any nation in the world.[141] Therefore, the first stage of communal perfection must be realized in a city, as it is the smallest of societies that is able to attain perfection.[142] But this to say neither that all societies are perfect nor that is felicity possible in every society. To do what is good is a voluntary choice, and as the patrons of one city might cooperate to do what is good, the inhabitants of another city might aim at what is bad. The societies that aim for felicity, whether great, medium, or small, are excellent in nature.

Within *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* al-Farabi makes it clear that lasting happiness only occurs in the next life. The virtuous city, however, plays an important role in the realization of that happiness. In fact, "the virtuous life in the virtuous city liberates the soul from the dictates of bodily indulgence and enables it to comprehend the realities of the separate intelligences; the soul thereby becomes conditioned to acts of virtue and is in no more need of a body."[143] Consequently, happiness in this life is not final; therefore, lasting happiness is only possible in the life to come.

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[141] Farabi, 229.

[142] Furthermore, Farabi recognizes societal entities that are smaller than a city, such as a quarter, village, street, etc., but these are simply parts of the city in the same way a city is part of a nation.

[143] Hawi, "Ibn Tufayl's Appraisal of His Predecessors and Their Influence on His Thought," 96.

As we have seen, there is no notion of communal happiness in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan.* Rather, for Hayy, happiness is unequivocally individualistic. Thus, it is no shock that there is no political structure for Ibn Tufayl. For in order to have a political structure, naturally there must be more than one individual. Throughout the majority of Hayy's life, he did not contact a single individual like him. This changed in Hayy's fiftieth year when a man called Absal wandered onto Hayy's island.

Ibn Tufayl relates that there was an island near the one Hayy grew up. The inhabitants of this island were followers of "a certain true religion, based on the teachings of a certain ancient prophet."[144] Among the inhabitants of the island were two men, one named Salaman and the other Absal. Both were adherents to the above mentioned religion. Furthermore, the men spent time together studying the religion's descriptions of God as well as other subjects. The two men differed in their approach to the religion. Absal desired to get "down to the heart of things," and was eager for a symbolic interpretation.[145] Salaman differed in that he was far more interested in keeping in line with the literal interpretation. The teachings of this religion suggested a life of "solitude and isolation," and that by these practices "salvation and spiritual triumph could be won."[146] Other statements from the same religion suggested the contrary, that society and civilization were better for mankind. As one would expect, Absal valued the teachings regarding solitude, whereas Salaman held to the teachings

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[144] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 156.
[145] Goodman, 156.
[146] Goodman, 156–57.

recommending society. Thus, these differences in commitment led the two men to part ways.

Desiring to flee society and live a life of contemplation of God, Absal boarded a ship and arrived on Hayy's island, where Absal thought he was alone. He worshipped God, taking only as much food as necessary and lived "in most perfect happiness and intimacy with his Lord."[147] Simultaneously, Hayy was on the island, hidden in his cave, worshipping God. Hayy only left once a week to find food and because of this he and Absal remained ignorant of each other. By chance, however, the two men stumbled upon one another. Absal reasoned Hayy to be another eremite and maintained his distance. Hayy, on the other hand, had no idea what Absal was, for he had never seen a fellow human before. Being pursued by Hayy, Absal fled. Hayy backed off and allowed Absal to believe he had escaped. Hayy, however, stalked Absal as he would an animal and came upon him lost in a state of worship. From this distance, Hayy recognized Absal to have the same form as himself and upon hearing Absal's singing and chanting, reasoned that he must also know God. Hayy, then, desired to get closer but Absal awoke from his worship and vainly attempted to flee from Hayy. Absal examined Hayy and noticed his clothing of animal hides, his unkempt hair, and his animal like strength and speed. Such qualities instilled Absal with fear and he begged for mercy from Hayy. Hayy understood nothing that Absal said because, apart from animal cries, Hayy did not know

[147] Goodman, 157.

language. In time, the two became acquainted with one another and Absal set out to teach Hayy the art of language.

In due time, Hayy was able to converse with Absal, who then began to plague Hayy with questions about himself. Regarding his origins, Hayy related that he knew of no parents apart from the doe. Hayy then related to Absal the story of his growth in learning and wisdom, as well as his knowledge of the incorporeal realm. Lastly, Hayy described the Necessary Being and the joys of reaching God. Upon hearing these things, Absal knew that this was the allegorical interpretation that he was seeking. Hayy knew the reality of that which Absal's symbolic religion communicated and "the eyes of [Absal's] heart were unclosed" upon hearing Hayy's description.[148] Hayy, of course also wanted to know about the life and beliefs of Absal. Absal related the behaviors during the period of the *jahiliyyah*[149] as well as the current state of affairs. Then, Absal presented the descriptions of the divine realm, the judgment, and "the scales of justice and the straight way."[150] Furthermore, Absal described the actions of "prayer, poor tax, fasting, and pilgrimage."[151] Hayy heard these things and found no contradiction to his

[148] Goodman, 160.
[149] The period of the *jahiliyyah* is often translated as "Age of Ignorance" and refers to the polytheistic environment of the Arabian peninsula before the spread of Islam.
[150] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 161.
[151] Goodman, 161. These five actions are the 5 pillars of the Islamic faith

own experience of the divine. He reasoned that the one who related these descriptions must have been a messenger[152] from God.[153]

While Hayy found no contradiction to these teachings, he was still perplexed by two things. In the first place, he could not understand why this messenger used symbols to portray the divine realm. Such a portrayal could lead men into believing that the Necessary Being is corporeal, which is a grave misunderstanding, particularly from an Islamic perspective Secondly, why were the above duties chosen while at the same time men were allowed to hoard money and commit gluttony? Such activities led to an idleness that distracted people from God and demonstrated that they really did not understand Him.[154] For if the people understood, such trivialities would be of no concern to them. Consequently, Hayy resolved to pay a visit to the island of Absal in hopes of saving them from their errors.

In summary, al-Farabi holds that society was necessary in guiding humanity toward perfection. The members of the city all share the burdens of existence, which frees up time for individuals to exercise their reason or religious practices. This city, however, is hierarchical, much like the cosmos as well as the body. At the top of the hierarchy is the philosopher-king whose job is to lead the people toward felicity. There is

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[152] فعلم ان الذي وصف ذلك وجاء به محق في وصفه، صادق في قوله رسول من عند ربه؛ فآمن به وصدقه وشهد برسالته "he knew that he who described that (religion) and came with it (the description) is correct in his description, trustworthy in his words, a messenger (Rasul) from his God, so he believed in him and trusted him and bore witness to his message." My translation.

[153] ابن طفيل, *حي بن يقظان*, ٢٢٧.

[154] Goodman, 161.

no alternative in the beliefs of al-Farabi. His rational religion precludes what he considers shortcuts to perfection and Truth; therefore, the city is necessary and hopes of achieving felicity outside of it are misguided. Yet, ibn Tufayl claims just the opposite. Absal had a falling out with his friend Salaman and the two went their separate ways. Absal desired an allegorical interpretation of his religion and fled a society burdened by the literal interpretations. Absal arrived on Hayy's island and the two men eventually meet and discuss the nature of God. With this ibn Tufayl demonstrates that society negatively affects the individual's pursuit of God. Here, it is clear that the mystical aspect of religion influences ibn Tufayl's view of society. The pursuit of truth and perfection are individualistic, a religion for one. With these key differences in mind, I will turn to al-Farabi's delineation of the different kinds of societies as well as Hayy's teaching excursion to Absal's island. These differences are the results of their variant understanding of religion applied to society.

Chapter 6: The Role of Society in Attainting Felicity

Society

In line with his hierarchical thinking, al-Farabi posits a structuring of society which has five parts. The fifth and lowest class consists of the warriors and they defend the city. Those in the fourth class concern themselves with material gain, bringing wealth into the city. Third are the mathematicians, physicians, astronomers, etc. Those skilled in the art of oration and poetry hold the second position. Al-Farabi deems the members of the second class the "upholders of religion." And in the first class are the philosophers. There is no enmity amongst the classes, and the soldiers, as opposed to the time of Plato and Aristotle, are considered full citizens in al-Farabi's excellent city.[155] This hierarchy mirrors both al-Farabi's metaphysical understanding and his earlier comparison with the body.

There are also cities that are opposed to the excellent city and they exist in four primary modes. Namely, the "ignorant city," the "wicked city," the "city which has deliberately changed its character (erring)," and lastly the "city which has missed the right path through faulty judgement."[156] More or less, those states are ignorant of felicity, and even if rightly guided, they would neither believe it nor understand it. The inhabitants of the ignorant cities mostly concern themselves with physical pleasures,

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[155] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 438.
[156] Farabi, 253.

honor, and power. Its rulers and inhabitants do not adhere to the "standard of true philosophy."[157] The wicked, the deliberately changing, and the errant cities differ in the fact that they are products of knowledge and deliberate choice rather than debaucheries. Those in the wicked city even share the views of the excellent city. They know felicity, God, and are even cognizant of the cosmic hierarchy. However, these inhabitants choose to ignore it. Those cities that deliberately change their views previously shared ideals with the excellent city but have radically changed their way by turning to different views and practices. Lastly is the errant city. This city aims at felicity but misses the path, owing to their ruler being deceitful and a cheat.[158] Al-Farabi is the most critical of this state and chastises the ruler for falsely claiming to receive revelation. This ruler, according to al-Farabi, is damned to a miserable afterlife.[159] But al-Farabi does not support political uprisings or violence of any kind to bring about political reform. Education through philosophy is of the utmost importance in reforming these cities.[160]

Philosophy, for al-Farabi, is not subservient to religion. Religion does not point to a higher truth than philosophy. Rather, there is only one truth in the mind of al-Farabi, albeit multiple ways to express it. Based on his hierarchical structuring of society, the stance al-Farabi has regarding philosophy and religion is unambiguous. That is to say,

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[157] Farabi, 451.
[158] Farabi, 259.
[159] Farabi, 456.
[160] Farabi, 451.

that he holds philosophy in higher regard than religion. Philosophy involves understanding the truth as it actually is, whereas religion simply presents the truth in symbolic language. This is because al-Farabi's explicitly states that not everyone is capable of philosophical understanding, but only those naturally endowed. Yet, there are things "which all the people of the excellent city ought to know."[161] In the first place, the inhabitant of the excellent city should have thorough knowledge of the metaphysical schema spelled out earlier. Additionally, the citizen should know about the generation of humanity, the activities of the Active Intellect, the first ruler, and the ultimate felicity of the people of the excellent city.[162] But if one is not naturally endowed, how might they know such lofty topics? Al-Farabi states that these things can be known in two ways: "either by being impressed on their souls as they really are or by being impressed on them through affinity and symbolic representation."[163] Only the philosophers are able to know things as they really are. There are those close to the philosophers that are able to know by the insight of the philosophers, thus trusting their views, but they have not arrived at this knowledge by their own ability. The rest of humankind is left to know by symbolic representation, understood to be religion.

The symbols of religion are imitations of the philosophical truths. According to al-Farabi, however, they are different depending on one's geographical location. Simply put, religion differs from nation to nation but aims at the same truth. Those that create

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[161] Farabi, 277.
[162] Farabi, 279.
[163] Farabi, 279.

the imitations of the philosophical truths produce them from "those symbols which are best known" to the people.[164] From this, al-Farabi concludes that both excellent nations and excellent cities exist that espouse different religions. The aims of these cities are the same: ultimate felicity. But in the mind of al-Farabi, there is only one felicity, one God, and one truth. Therefore, all of these religions are trying to express the same idea, the same God, but the language and symbols differ from nation to nation. Al-Farabi demonstrates this by saying, "It is possible that excellent nations and excellent cities exist whose religions differ, although they all have as their goal one and the same felicity and the very same aims."[165]

Hayy demonstrated similar views to al-Farabi when he visited Absal's home. At first, Absal was hesitant to agree to Hayy's teaching excursion, which would lead Absal back to his home. Eventually, he reasoned that it would be agreeable for Hayy to attempt to teach a group of the best men from Absal's home island, a group full of men that were "nearest to intelligence and understanding."[166] If these men were unable to learn, then the masses would be all the more doomed. Now ruler of this island, and chief amongst the group of men, was Absal's friend, Salaman. Hayy, then, began to teach this select group of his wisdom but they disapproved of his teaching the moment he began to speak abstractly. Despite being good men who genuinely desired the Truth,

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[164] Farabi, 281.

[165] Farabi, 281. فلذلك يمكن ان تكون أمحم فاضلة ومدن فاضلة تختلف ملل(؟) فهم كلهم يؤمون سعارة واحدة بعينهما ومقاصد واحدة باعيانها.

[166] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 162.

their "inborn infirmity" prevented them from grasping God as Hayy did. Instead, the men desired to know God as they would know a human.[167]

Hayy's hope for the men was dashed and he began to study the rest of people on the island. He could not believe how base their passions were. The entire civilization was overcome with greed for more material belongings. They went about their days focused on their own business, paying no thought to God. As a result, Hayy reasoned that the majority of people "are no better than unreasoning animals."[168] Furthermore, he realized that his teachings would bring them no benefit. The only help that would aid them and that they would understand was already present to them in the teachings of their prophet and traditions. Thus, Hayy went to Salaman and apologized for his own teachings, telling Salaman that he and his group were, in fact, correct in their beliefs. Additionally, Hayy told the group to reject innovation and never to veer from the literal interpretation of the text. With this, Hayy and Absal returned to their isolated island to worship God in the true and right way.

It is important to note that some scholars, such as Marco Lauri, have likened the role Salaman plays here to al-Farabi's philosopher-ruler. This would render the exchange between Hayy and Salaman as a criticism aimed at al-Farabi. Hayy praises Salaman for leading his subjects according to the literal teachings of their religion, thus keeping the

[167] Goodman, 163.
[168] Goodman, 164.

people "reasonably happy and able to hope for a sort of salvation."[169] There are problems with this view because the philosopher-ruler of al-Farabi knows the philosophical truths themselves whereas Salaman does not. On a practical level, however, this criticism is getting at the nature of the state itself rather than its ruler. While Salaman's rule is virtuous and the people are concerned with religious symbolism, Ibn Tufayl suggests that the philosopher can be an outsider in this virtuous city. This stands in contrast to al-Farabi. While the philosopher could be out of place in the ignorant cities, never was that the case in the virtuous city.

Returning to the universal nature of religion, however, neither Al-Farabi nor Ibn Tufayl are among the first to support this view, which has roots in Ancient Greece.[170] An example of this is the *Corpus Hermeticum*[171], which is a collection of Egyptian-Greek texts primarily from the 2nd century CE which are based on the teachings attributed to Hermes Tirsmegistus (Thrice-Great). In essence, the *Hermetica* presents a single theology that is manifest in all of the world's religions and states that reason (*logos*) and speech (*phōnē*) are quite different. Reason itself is shared by humanity but speech is different throughout the nations. It goes on to say that humanity is one, and "in the same way reason (*logos*) is one, but is translated into different languages, and one discovers that it is the same in Egypt and Persia and Greece."[172] Therefore, language in

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[169] Marco Lauri, "Utopias in the Islamic Middle Ages: Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Al-Nafis," *Utopian Studies* 24, no. 1 (2013): 28.
[170] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 476.
[171] Within the *Hermetica*, topics from the cosmos to alchemy are addressed.
[172] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 476.

this example takes the role of symbol because it is an audible imitation of thought or reason. Furthermore, the Stoics built a proof of God that was contingent upon the example of all the nations. All of the nations pray, they build temples, and agree that divine beings exist, they simply describe them in variant ways.[173] Plutarch perhaps presents it most accurately:

> "In the same ways as sun and moon and heaven and earth and sea are common to all, but called differently by different people, so, although one divine mind orders the universe and one providence governs it, there are different honors and different names according to law and custom, and men use religious symbols that are sometimes value and sometimes more distinct, showing the mind the way towards the divine."[174]

Plutarch's example further demonstrates the relationship that language and culture have with religion. There is a shared truth for which all religions are trying to aim, but the respective religious terminology can do nothing but gesture towards and imitate the truth. Al-Farabi's excellent city operates under the same understanding as the examples given above. Ibn Tufayl also adheres to this understanding for those intellectually capable.

Yet, the activity of propagating this truth puts al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl at odds once again. As demonstrated, when Hayy attempted to teach the people in the ways of

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[173] Farabi, 477.
[174] Farabi, 477.

his wisdom, he was not met with any acceptance apart from Absal. Education, then, appears to play no role in the attainment of happiness according to Ibn Tufayl, likely owing to the individualistic aspect of it. At least no education in any organized, systematic, or corporate/communal way. One could make the case that Hayy did, in fact, teach Absal in the ways of his wisdom. Absal, however, was predisposed to reach the mystical heights that Hayy taught him. Al-Farabi, too, believes that people have their inborn aptitude but that each could attain happiness insofar as their nature allowed. The difference is that the city, according to al-Farabi, is important in the attainment of happiness. The people, however, must be taught what to do in order to attain their appropriate level of happiness. Such differences raise questions regarding the role of the philosopher in al-Farabi's and Ibn Tufayl's varying forms of the ideal.

The Role of the Philosopher

As the rational religion of al-Farabi is universally applicable, it follows that proper education is of great importance in al-Farabi's excellent city. An educational system is to begin with the ruler of the excellent city and trickle down through the subordinating classes of society. By habitual practice of the virtues, the ruler's soul now exists in a sort of conjunction with the Active Intellect which results in his being a philosopher-prophet-ruler. The addition of prophet enables him to speak of future acts. These qualities, in tandem with his natural endowment to lead, constitute a love of justice and equality.

Thus, the way the excellent cities attempt reform is not by violence or political upheaval, but by providing inhabitants a proper philosophical education.

Not all people, however, are capable of understanding truth as it is: the majority of humankind must learn the truths through religious symbolism. Given the religious majority, there is no room for religious dogmatism in al-Farabi's perfect state. Religion, in his view, "is vulnerable and open to objection" in a way that the proofs of philosophy are not.[175] Furthermore, those teaching are the philosophers, the poets, and the orators, who are all skilled in presenting truth through the representational imagery and symbols common to their nation. It is conceivable, then, that multiple excellent cities co-exist in a state of religious pluralism. Because their leaders are philosophers, they understand the truth as it is. As a result, the respective rulers peacefully co-exist while ultimately aiming for the same felicity. This role makes the philosopher essential to the societal structure of the perfect state. Only the philosophers know truth as it really is and are then able to communicate it using symbols so that the masses are able to understand it insofar as their natural aptitude allows them.

Conversely, the rational-mysticism of ibn Tufayl leaves no room for the philosopher in society. Therefore, there is no need for formal education, as is demonstrated by the failure of the "most capable group" to understand the Truth as it really is. This reality was antithetical to Hayy's hopes. Hayy thought that if individuals were educated properly, they would then be able to progress to the mystical encounter

[175] Farabi, 480.

and have an intuition of God without error. Unfortunately for Hayy, his teaching fell on inept ears and he returned to his island with Absal. On the surface, Ibn Tufayl communicates that individuals are best served by fleeing society because the proofs of religion are insufficient and impede true knowledge of God. Perhaps, however, another layer emerges if the example is taken further.

Ibn Tufayl himself lived within society, not on a secluded island removed from civilization. Thus, instead of fleeing society, it is likely that Ibn Tufayl is advocating to intellectually flee from the epistemological constructs of society. Instead of relying on one's culture to learn of reality, Ibn Tufayl appears to advocate for a questioning of one's religious, political, and cultural understanding. After all, Hayy, having to wait 35 years before learning language, is an example that "it is thought that creates language; not language, thought." Furthermore, "it was man that invented society, not society which created man."[176] Perhaps, then, Ibn Tufayl is not advocating for a literal fleeing of a society at all. Rather, in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, he presents a dramatic example of his idea of fleeing the epistemological confines of society. By these lights, it is not necessary literallyvto flee society. Instead, one should intellectually cast off the epistemological shackles imposed by society and seek reality for his or her self. The way this translates into an educational system, however, is not addressed by ibn Tufayl. Perhaps the mystical element of his thought precludes an educational system altogether, rendering

[176] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 85.

ibn Tufayl's book an esoteric undertaking addressed to those predisposed to understand its contents.

There are certain similarities in al-Farabi's and ibn Tufayl's understanding of society. Both men hold that religion is subservient to philosophy. It seems more true to say of ibn Tufayl, however, that organized religion is subservient to philosophy. That is to say that religion, for both al-Farabi and ibn Tufayl, communicates something like the truth, but not the truth itself. Perhaps bluntly, religion is philosophy for the intellectually inept. Yet, because he is a rational-religionist, al-Farabi believes that reason should rule and that a well ordered society was necessary for felicity. Al-Farabi states, "man cannot attain the perfection…unless many (societies of) people who co-operate come together who each supply everybody else with some particular need of his, so that as a result of the contribution of the whole community, all the things are brought together which everybody needs in order to preserve himself and attain perfection."[177] Of course, this is a society structured hierarchically with the philosopher-king at the top. As this is the case, the philosopher-king is to lead the people of the kingdom "along the right path to felicity and to the actions by which felicity is reached."[178] It follows that in the well-ordered society, individuals will yield and even look to the leadership of the philosopher-king. He disseminates the philosophical truths which become less abstract as they move down the societal hierarchy.

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[177] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 229.
[178] Farabi, 247.

Such is certainly not the case for ibn Tufayl. Upon Hayy's visit to Salaman's island, Hayy attempted to teach his ways to the elite of the island. King Salaman and his court disapproved of Hayy's teachings because they were not able to rise above the literal interpretation of their religious text. Thus, Hayy, the mystical-philosopher, served no purpose in society. In fact, he went and apologized to Salaman for his teachings, telling Salaman to disregard them and focus on the literal interpretation instead. Ibn Tufayl's work appears to end in disappointment as Hayy's rational-mysticism was not accepted by the people. Ibn Tufayl's religion results in an esoteric community that consists of Hayy and Absal. This is hardly a formula for society. Even if we are to interpret *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* as a dramatic presentation which encourages epistemological freedom, the message is subversive. In other words, whereas al-Farabi's philosopher-king dictates the epistemological norms of society which in turn lead to a well ordered society, ibn Tufayl's Hayy rejects them and desires to seek truth for himself.

Chapter 7

Medium of Transmission

Implications on the Medium of Transmission

Out of these differences, interesting implications arise regarding the mediums through which al-Farabi and Ibn Tufayl opt to communicate their ideas. On the one hand, al-Farabi's perfect state is all inclusive and every inhabitant is encouraged to seek the level of happiness appropriate to his or her nature. Here, the philosopher-king is necessary so that he or she may communicate the philosophical truth via the use of symbols to the inhabitants lesser in nature. Interestingly, however, al-Farabi communicates these ideas in a philosophical treatise likely inaccessible for those without philosophical training. From this, it is obvious that *al-Madinat al-Fadilah* is addressed to a very specific audience. Thus, while in theory al-Farabi's idea is universally applicable, his medium of communication suggests otherwise.

On the other hand, Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* appears to be inherently individualistic and serves no immediate benefit to society in general. Furthermore, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* is considered a philosophical novel, in that it is not a syllogism but more akin to the Platonic Dialogues.

Above all, al-Farabi's treatise is an exercise of reason. Nowhere does he talk about "feelings or experience."[179] Furthermore, throughout *Al-Madinat al-Fadilah,* al-

[179] Farabi, 4.

Farabi uses language that is not exclusively Islamic; instead, he uses philosophical language, giving the text a universal message.[180] For that reason, al-Farabi employs a "sober and clear style…and [he] made no attempt at achieving literary brilliance."[181] His project is a reasoned approach to the religious, intellectual, and political circumstances of his generation.[182] In agreement with his universal, rational-religionist approach, al-Farabi views his project as universal in scope with the hope of bettering society. Thus, by communicating his ideas through a well-ordered, systematic treatise, al-Farabi presents a project that was straightforward and concise. He did not aim to confuse his readers or hide his intentions. Just as reason, in theory, is accessible to all, so too is *al-Madinat al-Fadilah.*

Such is not the case with ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan.* One early point of difference is that ibn Tufayl addresses the text to his "noble brother, dear, kind friend."[183] Additionally, ibn Tufayl is proposing to answer questions about the content of the secret of "Oriental philosophy."[184] From the beginning, ibn Tufayl's project is notably different than al-Farabi's, having used language to root his tale geographically in the Orient. Any attempt to explain why ibn Tufayl chose this dramatic medium of

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[180] Alireza Omid Bakhsh, "The Virtuous City: The Iranian and Islamic Heritage of Utopianism," *Utopian Studies* 24, no. 1 (2013): 41–51.
[181] Farabi, *Al-Madina Al-Fadila*, 6.
[182] Farabi, 5.
[183] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 95.
[184] ١٠٦ ابن طفيل, *حي بن يقظان*. The phrase translated as "Oriental Philosophy" is originally الحكمة المشرقية which is likely an intentional break from the Greek philosophical tradition, which was known as *falsafa (*فلسفة). المشرقية literally translates as Eastern.

communication would be frustrated by the "impenetrable inward self."[185] At any rate, perhaps ibn Tufayl desired to create a way for his reader to journey alongside Hayy toward felicity. Sami Hawi suggests that "ibn Tufayl intends to introduce philosophy indirectly to the general public and urge them to seek its truth, each according to his or her own individual capacities."[186] Yet, a problem arises from this when we consider the conclusion of ibn Tufayl's philosophical novel: the people do not understand. Only Absal is able to learn the secrets of "Oriental Wisdom" from Hayy. Thus, while the influence of reason on ibn Tufayl's project makes it, in theory, universal in scope, his mysticism limits the scope to those who can see beyond ibn Tufayl's method of concealment. This, then, is a possible explanation as to why ibn Tufayl chose the dramatic method. Only those predisposed to grasp the hidden meaning would be impacted by it. He was able to disseminate a subversive message in the guise of a philosophical tale and criticize the contemporary epistemological literalism found in certain Islamic thinkers. However, a series of questions from Taneli Kukkonen become relevant in response to ibn Tufayl's conclusion of Hayy disappearing back to his own island:

> "Is it really enough for the philosopher to contribute to the universe's perfection by seeking to perfect his own intellectual nature? Or is it in some way natural to expect more? In other words, is it enough for those who are wise to be good – to

[185] Sami Hawi, "The Lineage, Literary Aspects and Methodical Structure of the Treatise of Hayy Bin Yaqzan," in *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism* (Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1974), 32.
[186] Hawi, 33.

> exist in the most excellent state – or should we expect them to do some good as well?... Or is the highest kind of excellence the kind that remains wholly undisturbed by that which lies lower than itself?"[187]

Conclusion

We may now conclude that al-Farabi's and ibn Tufayl's differing paths to felicity arise from the discrepancies between rational religion (in *al-Madinat al-Fadilah)* and rational mysticism (in *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*). By setting these two specific works in comparison, I have not simply addressed the points of difference in these two treatises. Rather, I have attempted to explain why al-Farabi's and ibn Tufayl's understanding of *human perfection* differs. Furthermore, I have tried to show that the differences in their understanding of religious truth affects their respective theoretical societies: one of universal relevance, the other limited to the individual.

Rational religion aims at universal relevance. No matter the difficulty of the tenets of rational religion, it is theoretically intended for all. Thus, al-Farabi structures his society as a mirror of the cosmos. All Being is emanated in a hierarchical fashion from the One, or Necessary Being. Al-Farabi's metaphysical schema descends through a number of Intellects before arriving at the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect is the Intellect existing in closest proximity to that of the human intellect. The difference,

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[187] Taneli Kukkonen, "No Man Is an Island: Nautre and Neo-Platonic Ethics in Hayy Ibn Yaqzan," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46, no. 2 (April 2008): 197.

however, is that the human intellect is only potential, because it is inhered in corruptible matter. In order to be an Actual Intellect, it must be actualized by the Active Intellect. From this stage, the individual must progress his or her rational faculty by contemplation of the virtues. Upon the cognition of these, one reaches the stage of Acquired Intellect, which is the highest stage of human intellection.

A person existing in this state is rare, but al-Farabi posits the philosopher-king, the one to elucidate the philosophical truths from the Active Intellect to the rest of the people. Just as all Intellects emanate from the Necessary Being, less perfect depending on their degree of separation, truth disseminates from the philosopher-king and becomes a mere symbol, and thus less perfect, as it loses abstraction. Yet, despite its status as imperfect, it still benefits the masses who are inept at contemplating the philosophical truths. Their inability to contemplate the truth, in part, renders society necessary in attaining perfection for humanity. Within the societal structure, individuals work together and alleviate one another from the material burdens of existence. That is to say, by their various roles within the society, each member ideally meets the needs of another and vice-versa. Yet, most important, the members of the higher realms of society teach those lower than them the philosophical truths. From this, the society supports itself as a body that depends on various parts to meet the various needs.

By way of dramatic contrast, ibn Tufayl's approach to God was strikingly individualistic. Unlike al-Farabi's philosopher-king, Hayy was born on an island and knows nothing of humanity. Also different from al-Farabi, ibn Tufayl begins with the

material world and metaphysically ascends. As Hayy philosophically progressed, he left the material world behind and began to contemplate the intelligibles and finally, God. Reason, however, only allowed Hayy to go so far in his understanding of God and he began to employ mystical exercises in efforts to know God and reach felicity. He progressed through the stages of imitation and finally began imitating God. This last stage led Hayy away from the material realm altogether as he sat in a cave and contemplated God. By chance, a man named Absal appeared on Hayy's island and Hayy eventually learned language from him, which enabled the two men to communicate. With his newly learned language, Hayy related the philosophical truths to Absal who recognized this as the truer expression of a "certain true religion" practiced on his home island. Absal returned to his island and brought Hayy with him. Hayy longed to bring the truths of philosophy to the peoples of this island; however, Hayy's hopes were dashed by a people who rejected the abstract teachings of Hayy. The people much preferred the literal. Hayy, with Absal, returned to his island and spent the remainder of his days contemplating God, removed from society.

Of course, the result of community versus individualism is the outcome of the different understandings of religion by the two philosophers. Al-Farabi is a rational religionist and devises a path and a political system that aids all of humanity in attaining perfection. Ibn Tufayl, on the other hand, attempts a universal project. Yet, ibn Tufayl demonstrates that the religion of society ultimately disappointed Hayy and he returned to his island to contemplate God in peace. Thus, whether ibn Tufayl advocates for a

literal fleeing of society or a metaphorical rejection of the epistemological constraints of society (and I have argued for the latter), his project ends individualistically.

Perhaps, then, the motivations of a universal religion or individualistic one, influenced the ways in which the two men communicate their ideas. For al-Farabi, it does not necessarily matter whether or not his project is universally accessible. Rather, it is only important that the elite are able to understand and comprehend, because they are the ones who ultimately structure society. Thus, al-Farabi presents his project in a straightforward and sober philosophical treatise. There is no guise or attempt at esotericism. The same cannot be said of ibn Tufayl, who admits to disguising his true meaning behind a "thin veil."[188] His project, then, addresses the intellectual elite predisposed to sympathize with his mystical enunciations. Of course, his intentions for writing such a project will never be known, yet the audience *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* acquired the years leading up to the European Enlightenment would have likely shocked ibn Tufayl himself.[189]

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[188] Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 166.

[189] For extensive consideration of this topic see *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* by Samar Attar

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