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**The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Two Journeys of the Spirit: Comparing Plato's *Republic* and Ibn
Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan***

A Thesis Submitted by

Zeina Abdallah Jehama

**Submitted to the Department of English and Comparative Literature
August 20, 2020**

**In partial fulfilment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts
in English and Comparative Literature
has been approved by**

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ABSTRACT

Both Plato's *Republic* and Ibyn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* explain to the reader how a spiritual journey can bring about an understanding of the Divine. However, both works also show us that the spiritual journey depends on an inquiry into the nature of the human soul as it engages in the process of learning. In the first chapter of the thesis, Plato's *Republic* is explored, particularly in terms of the Allegory of the Cave, which suggests how the notion the Divine goes beyond everyday life experience. In the second chapter, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* is presented as a spiritual narrative that helps us view the importance of observation, leading to the knowledge of the natural world, the beginnings of self-discovery and meditations on the Divine. My Conclusion argues that these two works help the reader understand the reality of the Divine through different conceptions of the soul, which imply different but comparable views of education.

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DEDICATION

For Mom – Thank you for your acceptance, belief, and support. You always see the positive light side in my darkness and believe that my present self is the best version to be.

For Dad – Thank you for accepting my journey, even though it is strangely different from yours. You always add a new and unique perspective to my life, and I am grateful for that.

Chapter One: Plato's *Republic*

Plato's *Republic* records Socrates's numerous theories and ideas that are intended to create a solid basis for community and government. This text discusses the political, spiritual, and social aspects of an ideal community but focuses on Socrates's views on justice and law. Through his philosophical reflections, Socrates is shown to be a man who does not believe in polytheism. Unlike the majority in the society in which he lives, Socrates is a monotheist. At the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates is shown to be enjoying a Greek religious festival, and yet it seems that he was only interested in attending out of curiosity rather than out of a devotion to the gods. As the dialogue begins to unfold, we witness Socrates beginning to discuss law and order in Polemarchus's house.

Justice

Socrates through his unique style of debate seems to express the view that justice and doing good are universal. He believes that justice is an internal compass that should divert all human beings from acting unjustly, even to those who are regarded as enemies. A just person is virtuous; in other words, such a person has a well-ordered soul. However, based on the debate that leads to a tentative definition of justice, we come to see that Socrates was opposed to any argument that sees justice as a matter of external authority. Cephalus stated that a just person is someone who follows the rules, pays his debts and is always honest. This view of justice is very basic and would have us follow the law in order to consider ourselves to be just. It implies that someone who can't pay his debts and follow the rules is necessarily an unjust man. Polemarchus offers another definition of justice by stating that justice is the act of helping our friends and causing harm to our enemies. This definition is problematic, however, as it creates a very large class of enemies. Socrates stated that definitions of friends and enemies are a subjective matter

and defined differently in each society. The enemy of society is sometimes savagely portrayed but nonetheless fully human. The idea of helping society is also difficult to determine with clarity because the person you assist in using your help may not be just. All of the ideas about justice that were proposed to Socrates are about pleasing some external authority. However, Plato abruptly finishes Book One by letting the reader know that a just person possesses a virtuous soul, while an unjust person possesses an evil soul.

Socrates mentions that the soul is the main thread that connects everything together. It is the main function that diverts and controls all the aspects of individual comportment. The soul uses the ear to hear, the eyes to see, and so on. Socrates argues that a virtuous soul will use the senses to execute justice. However, if these aspects of the soul are used unjustly, then the soul falls into evil. Socrates uses this argument with Thrasymachus when he refers to how the eyes could lose the capacity to see whenever a man behaves unjustly:

Socrates: “Could eyes ever do a fine job of their work if they did not have their proper virtue but, instead of the virtue, vice?”

Thrasymachus: “How could they?” he said. “For you probably mean blindness instead of sight.”

Socrates: “Whatever their virtue maybe,” I said. “For I’m not yet asking that, but whether their work, the things to be done by them, will be done well with their proper virtue, and badly with vice.” (*Republic*, 33)

At the end of this conversation, we learn that Socrates believes that justice and doing good is intrinsic and an innate part of human nature. He uses his argument with Thrasymachus to show

us that our eyes and ears are defective if we misuse them and indulge in vice. The senses clearly lead us astray to the degree that they are uninformed by the guidance of reason.

Plato ends the discussion about the soul abruptly, making Socrates apologize for incompletely expressing his ideas. However, in the second book of *The Republic*, Plato continues to develop the meaning of justice through an extended discussion with Glaucon and Adeimantus. The meaning of justice needed to be further developed, because Plato is trying to build the main fundamentals for the ideal city. The main aim that Plato would like to develop is that justice should be pursued and admired for its own sake, regardless of the rewards and the social agreement that it brings. As understood by Glaucon, however, justice is a socially acceptable construct that people agreed upon to create accord between them so that no one is harmed. Yet, Glaucon argues whether or not the will to act justly comes from within or is forced. Glaucon believes that societies engrave the idea of justice within the hearts of their members in order to promote what is socially acceptable. For Glaucon this is not justice because acting according to other motives does not guarantee that a person is just.

Glaucon uses the story of the Ring of Gyges's ancestor to clarify his notion of justice. This ring could grant invisibility to a person to find himself liberated to pursue whatever he/she pleases. Glaucon believes that such a person would probably be unjust. On the other hand, a person who uses this ring and still acts as he or she would if observed would be truly just. Glaucon is trying to get us to reflect on those who are in power and in the public eye, saying that they *appear* to be just; however, when they can act without being observed, they prove themselves to be unjust. Those who are actually just, however, will act without concern for social acceptance. The latter persons are usually the ones who are outcast, ostracized and thrown into poverty.

Glaucon: “Now if there were two such rings, and the just man would put one on, and the unjust man the other, no one, as it would seem, would be so adamant as to stick by justice and bring himself to keep away from what belongs to others and not lay a hold of it, although he had license to take what he wanted from the market without fear, and to go into houses and have intercourse with whomever he wanted, and to slay or release from bonds whomever he wanted, and to do other things as an equal to a god among humans. And in doing so, one would act no differently from the other, but both would go the same way. And yet someone could say that this is a great proof that no one is willingly just but only when compelled to be so.” (*Republic*, 37)

Glaucon then goes and tests justice by contrasting the unjust man, who will continue his unjust deeds with the best resources and best reputation, with the just man, who will continue his just deeds with the worst resources and worst reputation. Glaucon argues that this situation proves that justice is not only self-defeating but unlikely to prevail because it goes completely unrewarded. However, I believe that Plato is introducing this allegory to say that in a very materialistic society, justice, which is the capacity to do what is naturally good, is going to be defined incorrectly. The distorted view is that the unjust man somehow better approximates justice better than the just man. But this is incorrect for Plato because doing good is an act that should imbedded naturally inside of us. Therefore, if doing good is only pleasing others, the result is not just. Socrates clearly makes use of this allegory to help us better understand how virtue can be identified, even when Glaucon suggests that it is not possible.

In *Infamies of the Soul and Their Treatments*, Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami discussed sixty-nine infamous traits that lead the soul to stray from transcendence and purification. He

believes that in following these evil traits, the person who is on a spiritual journey will go down a path that is wicked; the result will be the complete corruption of the human soul. Boasting obedience is among the infamous traits that Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami examines in terms of how the questor is led astray as he pursues spiritual truth: “Among the infamies of the soul is showing its obedience,” in such a way that people come to “see him [as] being obedient, and their having the opinion that he is adorned with obedience” (*Infamies of the Soul*, 40). The author explains that such self-exaltation is indeed disrespectful of Allah and the words of the Prophet himself. More specifically, we learn that the Prophet clearly argues that we must learn to see good deeds *as other than* the deeds of those who imitate him falsely. He separates himself from those whose deeds appear to flow from him but have their origin elsewhere.

When Socrates defined justice as innate to our essential nature and as something that should not be sought because of the rewards that it brings, I believe that he was protecting the soul against its corruption. Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami asks us to contemplate our actions, especially the actions that we consider to be good deeds. He asks his readers to distinguish what is good from what is merely associated with the good. The latter corrupts the soul because it constricts it to only do a good thing in appearance, rather than in accordance with the words of the Prophet. In a similar way, when Socrates first mentions the virtuous soul and the evil soul, he refers to the possibility of going astray. The soul can become infamous, even when it appears to be doing good, because its deeds are not pure. The unjust soul might manipulate society into thinking that it is doing good and constantly seek admiration and social approval. However, whenever someone associates deeds with rewards, that person focuses on the advantages; the earthly world tends to imprison the soul, thus corrupting it. The just soul, in contrast, does good

just because it is good. This is basically how Socrates derives an understanding of justice and injustice from the allegory of the Ring of Gyges's ancestor.

Divisions of the Soul

Important aspects of Socrates's ideal city are presented in Plato's *Republic*, Books Three and Four. In these books, Socrates discusses justice in terms of both society and the individual. Political justice in Socrates's ideal city is based on one main principle, namely, that everyone should pursue the task that he or she is naturally born to perform. The citizens of the ideal city should not focus their energies on other tasks. In the ideal city, there are three classes of citizenship, the producers, the auxiliaries and the guardians. The producers are farmers, doctors, and craftsmen; their main goal is to satisfy life's basic needs. The ideal city's citizens are there to balance and complete each other, as each citizen is in need of the other. The farmer will need the builder to help build his home, while the builder will need food from the farmer. However, Glaucon disagrees and asks for a much more luxurious city, which Socrates contrasts to his own ideal city. Socrates's main argument against the luxurious city is that it is a city that knows no bounds. This city will continue to grow and increase in production and produce an overflow of needs. The couches and tables will no longer be necessity, but paintings and art will become increasingly important. Socrates's main argument that one each person is to fulfill one task is also applied on the luxurious city. The ideal city only fulfills basic needs, while the luxurious city opens up the possibility of extravagance.

The auxiliaries and the guardians tend to go hand in. In the ideal city, the guardians will be picked carefully and will be monitored closely. Socrates focuses on the guardians' education. Guardians will protect the citizens of the ideal city not only in war, but also in their thinking and their art of consumption. The guardians will eventually purify the city from any unjust theories

or principles that have developed in time. The education of the guardians will be very closely monitored. Socrates believes that picking the guardians based on their nature will not suffice, as they need to grow and develop. Therefore, the education that Socrates creates for these guardians might seem harsh, but it serves a higher purpose. Their education is rigorous and systematic. Since the guardians are the protectors of the city, Socrates states that their education should be honed to enhance and develop their innate abilities. The role of imitation in such an education is contrasted to what is assumed to be the goal of traditional literature, which presents us with narratives in which the good suffer injustice and the unjust reap rewards. In contrast to this situation, the guardians will be trained to only imitate the best, thus guaranteeing that good habits will prevail later on in life:

Socrates: “Our guardians must give up all other crafts and very precisely be craftsmen of the city’s freedom and practice nothing other than what tends to it—they also mustn’t do or imitate anything else. And if they do imitate, they must imitate what’s appropriate to them from childhood: men who are courageous, moderate, holy, free, and everything of the sort: what is slavish, or anything shameful, they must neither do nor be clever at imitating, so that they won’t get a taste for the being from its imitation. Or haven’t you observed that imitations, if they are practiced continually from youth onwards, become established as habits and nature, in body and sounds and in thoughts?” (*The Republic*, 73-74)

According to Socrates, the guardian’s education should be free from all corrupt imitations, and the stories that they grow up listening to should primarily represent virtue. The stories that misrepresent and celebrate unjust gods and mortals should be banned. The stories that the guardians will read will shape their personalities. Therefore, if the guardians are to imitate

anything, they need good role models that represent the just in this world. Socrates mentions that imitation will turn into a habit, which explains why he viewed the presentation and imitation of injustice as likely to lead to a corrupt soul. The imitation of injustice in this world stems from the need to please and appease, which Socrates believes becomes a bad habit that is passed from generation to generation. For this reason, he would like his guardians to have good souls, which is why their education needs to be purified from any association with corruption that otherwise might attach to the soul. The focus on the soul is indeed crucial to Socrates's entire argument. The purpose of introducing the analogy of the city to the composition of the soul is finally stated as serving a pedagogical goal:

Socrates: "Now let's complete the consideration by means of which we thought that, if we should see justice first in some bigger thing that possessed it, we would more easily catch sight of what it's like in one man. And it was our opinion that this bigger thing is a city; so we founded one as best as we could, knowing full well that justice would be in a good one at least. Let's apply what came to light there to a single man, and if the two are in agreement, everything is fine. But if something different should turn up in the single man, we'll go back again to the city and test it; perhaps, considering them side by side and rubbing them together like sticks, we would make justice burst into flame, and once it comes to light, confirm it for ourselves." (*The Republic*, 113)

After relating political justice on the larger scale to the shape of the ideal city, Socrates then discusses how this concept can be related to the structure of the individual soul. The human soul is divided into three main aspects. There is the first part of the soul that longs for truth and knowledge. This is the rational soul. The second part of the soul is more concerned with honor.

This is the spirited soul. The third part of the soul lusts after the material elements, such as money and food. This is the appetitive soul. These three parts, according to Socrates, are divided differently amongst human souls. Socrates explains that these parts coexist in everyone; however, one part is dominant and more apparent than the rest. Socrates connected the human soul to the class of citizens in the ideal city. The rational side of the human soul is more dominant in the guardians. The spirited side of the soul is dominant in the auxiliaries. Finally, the part of the soul that lusts after materialistic pursuits is more dominant among the producers.

This division of the soul and its importance to human beings is echoed in the idea of the relationship between the mind, soul and body that can be found in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*. Ibn Tufayl made Hayy go through various changes when it came to getting to know the world that he inhabited. At first, Hayy experienced the world with his body, holding on to his basic survival instincts. After a while, Hayy started to experience and observe the world by using his mind; he started to ask numerous questions and to seek answers. In the last stage, Hayy acknowledges the Divine presence. He begins to connect to his soul, which he felt was centered in the heart. Finally, Hayy's bodily and mental functions start to change. He decreases his food intake, which he felt limited his spiritual capacity. He asks fewer questions when he becomes more certain of the truth. Therefore, the division of the soul that Socrates discussed can be related to how the individual establishes a deeper connection to the world around him.

Socrates's main intention is to create a healthy city where everyone feels at home. He relates a dominant trait to each of the citizens to make sure each feels fulfilled and connected to the truth. Even when he views the producers' souls as dominated by one trait above all others, he tries to show why they would be prevented from moving forward to seek the truth. The ultimate

truth lies with the guardians as they are the ones who will constantly seek the truth, just as Hayy activates his rational nature when seeking the truth about the Divine.

The Forms

Socrates: “And therefore I answer that I am right, Simmias and Cebes, in not grieving or repining at parting from you and my master in this world, for I believe that I shall equally find good masters and friends in another world. If now if I succeed in convincing you by my defense better than I did the Athenian judges, it will be well.”

(The Dialogues of Plato, 119)

This conversation occurred between Socrates and his two interlocutors in *The Phaedo*. This conversation records the last moments of Socrates, while he was imprisoned and sentenced to death. In this dialogue, the Theory of the Forms is once again discussed by Socrates. Socrates mentions how unafraid of death he really is. Socrates knows that his soul will still be present in another dimension; he knows that he has nothing to fear. Socrates is leaving the body when death comes, but his soul will experience another world that he did not experience before. This conversation is worth mentioning as Socrates shows and hints at the fact that there are other worlds that we cannot see. This other world is surrounded by peace and goodness. Socrates also mentions in this conversation his Theory of the Forms.

I want to focus on Socrates’s view on death, as it shows that his last days were filled with knowledge that his soul will depart peacefully into another world. Relating this to the Forms, Socrates explains that this world is a manifestation of the Divine. Everything in this world is a particular manifestation of the Divine. When Socrates speaks about his soul departing from this world and moving on to another dimension, he shows and proves that the world that he speaks

about is the world of the Divine. Socrates's Forms are based on the notion that any idea, being, or object in this world has its original state in this spiritual realm. Socrates believed that this original state is a manifestation and representation of the Divine, which cannot be directly expressed.

However, Socrates's main focus on the ideal city and its citizens should not distract us from recognizing his belief that it was very easy for people to stray from the original manifestation of the Divine. Socrates believed that the more people strayed away from the original blueprints that the Divine world manifested, the more they will lose their connection to the Divine. This explains the fact that in describing the ideal city, Socrates started with the situation in which each citizen fulfills his/her basic needs. The luxurious city for Socrates is one where people are absorbed in the material world and forget the Divine manifestation in the world that they inhabit. In this case, people constantly distort the Forms that they are originally given and try to reshape and recreate them to fit their crude desires. In order to prevent this from happening, Socrates aims to reshape the citizens of the luxurious city and create classes for the people that fits their souls to try get the people back to the original Forms that the Divine manifested in this world.

Socrates stood against the poets when it comes to education in his ideal city. This is a perfect example of how Socrates indicates the danger of straying away from the Divine manifested Forms. Socrates believed that the tragic poets misrepresented the gods and goddesses, giving them human qualities and flaws. They also misrepresented good and evil deeds, in which the winner is the one who is unjust, while the loser is the one who represents virtue. Socrates believed that this is problematic since it poisons the minds of youths, making them stray away from the good, which is associated with failure and loss. Evil also strays away from Divine

models but is now associated with success and heroism. The poets divert people from original manifestations of the good so that it fits their stories, thus resulting in a complete disconnection with virtue itself. Therefore, when Socrates wanted to eliminate the poets from the education system and only allow literature that represents the Forms in their originality, he was trying to help the citizens return to their original humanity without being disturbed by what was added and became a tradition later on.

The Allegory of the Cave

The dangers of the Forms that Socrates believed in is best represented in Socrates's Allegory of the Cave. The Allegory of the Cave that is mentioned in *The Republic* highlights the journey of seeing the truth clearly. The Allegory represents the process of enlightenment and the ability to view the Forms in their original manifested stages. The Allegory also highlights the obstacles that one faces when attempting to distinguish the truth from appearances. The Allegory begins in a dark cave, where of all the people inside the cave are shackled and confined. The people inside the cave are told that their reality is the only one that exists. They do not mind being confined because they are distracted by the shadows on the wall. The shadows on the wall represent the negative results of recreating and reshaping the authentic Forms. They also represent the endless cycle that people tend to fall into when following their material interests.

In Plato's narrative, one person breaks free from this life, leaving its confines and briefly experiences a new world. He starts his journey of enlightenment with crucial observations. He observes the shadows around him when his shackles fall away. Initially, he is able to turn and look around, which makes him realize that the source of these shadows was the fire behind him and the sunlight above him. Realizing this, he looks for the exit to the cave. Seeing daylight for the first time, his eyes have difficulty adjusting to the light. However, according to Socrates, the

quester will be able to view the night-time and its skies, and his eyes will adjust gradually. Once he can see clearly, he will find the beauty in this world, and will experience it fully and even feel at peace. He will never go back to the darkness of the cave because his eyes have seen beauty. But in returning to the cave, he will realize that the people inside are fairly content with the lives that they are living. They will accuse him of having lost his mind. When he goes away, they also keep debunking all of his theories. As a result, Socrates believes that the man who undertakes this long journey would be rejected and even murdered for saying that reality is not what it is believed to be by the people inside the cave.

The Allegory of the Cave represents the change that someone goes through in order to reach the truth. This allegory represents the idea that not everyone has the power to change, and that many of those who do have the option probably will not change, as they are accustomed and find comfort in the reality that they are living. The people inside the cave are the citizens that Socrates wants reach in building the ideal city; they are the ones who do not have the power to seek change on their own. The shadows inside the cave stand for what diverts people from the divine Forms that Socrates discusses elsewhere. Socrates uses the shadows to highlight the problems that diversion from the Forms creates. People who diverge completely from the truth will not be able to change because the path will be blocked due to their stubborn inability to experience the world in a new way. The outside world represents the original and authentic Form that Socrates discusses. The hero who goes outside will have a difficult time making sense of things. However, once he finally sees the Forms clearly, he will experience the beauty and peace of this world.

The Theory of the Forms gives Socrates a way of showing that this world is connected to a higher mode of being. We go beyond the realm of the senses as soon as we learn that the

Forms themselves are a manifestation of the Divine. But this means that it is only through the world that we can experience and connect with the Divine. However, unfortunately, just as someone who undertakes the spiritual journey returns to the cave to enlighten his fellows, Socrates eventually comes to understand that he himself will die. The fact that the people inside the cave are shackled indicates that they have no power over what they think and believe, and whoever controls the narrative of society will end up controlling them. Socrates recognizes his own fate in the fate of the spiritual traveler who necessarily fails to enlighten his fellows.

Socrates's ideal city may have flaws, but its main aim is to free people and help them reach the truth and the beauty of this earth; these are noble aims. However, even in the ideal city, the truth is determined by the philosophers, who then provide the people with what has been learned through their quest alone. The entire world wants to reach a truth that brings them peace and helps them experience beauty. But in this situation, the philosophers bring the truth to people who do not go through the experiences that gives the truth meaning. Unless they arrive at the truth through experiences of their own, people will not be able to experience peace and beauty in mundane contexts. I believe, therefore, that philosophical instruction will give some people a shortcut to the truth, but others will never experience it as part of everyday life. The over-reliance on philosophical instruction goes against the idea of using the truth as a means to free the people.

The ending of the Allegory of the Forms, just like the ending of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, hints at the possibility of giving up on people. Both stories show their heroes abandoning an unjust and highly imperfect society. However, Socrates tries to use language in clever ways to persuade people to become virtuous. Seeking the truth is a difficult and lonely journey, but it ultimately allows the person who takes this journey to connect with the world. Seeking this journey is not a

priority for some people. Nonetheless, the world is experienced by those who are open to the experience and controlling the views of others to accept a truth that is not experienced at first hand seems contrived. Everyone has his/her own path and journey, and our destination is the same, but how we seek it differs from one person to the next. Seeking the truth requires a deepening of awareness that finally leads to the moment of insight. No matter how close that truth may be, some people will accept their shackles and chains rather than seek the key that opens a new stage of life. At his most profound, Socrates understood that in order for the world to be healed, people needed to see the truth with their own eyes, even when others are not ready to be free.

One marvel of the world
is the sight of a soul sitting in prison
with a key in its hand.

Covered with dust,
with a cleansing waterfall an inch away

(Rumi, *The Sight of Soul*)

Chapter 2: Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*

“You must know from the start that if you want the truth without flummery you must seek it and seek it diligently” (Ibn Tufayl 95).

The Enlightened State

In writing *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, Ibn Tufayl begins by addressing the reader. The reader asks Ibn Tufayl to unfold the secrets of his religious philosophy, which every reader of this book would like to know. Tufayl's response contains a warning and an intoxicating description. He starts with the warning first, telling the reader that this state can only be reached through diligence. Ibn Tufayl begins the book early with this warning, because for Ibn Tufayl, diligence is a crucial element in allowing the mind to let go of the materialism of the senses. Ibn Tufayl asks the reader to rethink various issues on a fundamental level in order to reach the truth, as changing one's fundamental belief system is a hard process.

After this warning, Tufayl continues by describing the state that is experienced when the reader attains the truth about his or her religious philosophy. Ibn Tufayl states that while he was contemplating the reader's curious question about the enlightened state, he entered into a state of sublimity, a state that the tongue cannot describe. This state for Ibn Tufayl belongs to a different world, a different order of being; it involves a different dimension. This state of ecstasy is full of expansiveness, joy, delight and bliss. Once a person reaches this state, joy and mystery are hard to conceal, and euphoria entails a feeling of oneness with the entire world. Thus, the enlightened person who experiences intense light-headedness and joy is sometimes overtaken by a sense of confusion. Indeed, confusion can even enter the minds of those who are still trying to maintain their basic religious beliefs, making it hard for them to identify the correct path:

But the joy, delight and bliss of this ecstasy are such that no one who has reached it or even come near it can keep the secret or conceal the mystery. The light headedness, expansiveness, and joy which seize him force him to blurt it out in some sweeping generality, for to capture it precisely is impossible. If he be the sort whose mind has been sharpened by intellectual pursuits, he may speak unwisely. Thus in this state one said, "Praise be to me, great am I!" Another said, "I am the Truth"; another, "There is within this robe nothing but God!" (Ibn Tufayl 95)

However, Ibn Tufayl mentions that sometimes a person in this state might emit phrases that go against the principles of religion. Phrases such as "I am God," or "I am the Truth" may arise. Such a mentality is perhaps due to the fact that the mind has not been sharpened while being overwhelmed with these sublime emotions. This is why, upon acknowledging how this state operates, Ibn Tufayl begins with a warning.

The intellectual pursuit in which Ibn Tufayl is engaged refers to the pursuit of knowledge concerning religion. In the introduction to the Arabic-translated version of the text, the reader learns that Tufayl, born a Muslim, studied numerous things. He studied biology, chemistry, architecture, logic and Greek philosophy. According to Lenn Goodman, Ibn Tufayl was also well-educated in natural and metaphysical philosophy. Ibn Tufayl then continues with a debate about the mental and spiritual path that leads to the truth. Thus, when Ibn Tufayl speak of a mind that has not been sharpened by intellectual pursuits, I believe that he refers to a mind that is not experienced enough to practice and understand the meaning of Islam. A sharpened mind for Ibn Tufayl is a mind that constantly aims to get to know the creator in everything that he or she

studies. The sharpened mind aims to seek God with the educational tools that he or she has. This echoes the story about the first words and Surah of the Quran (*Qur'an* 96:1-5). The sharpened mind that Ibn Tufayl asks the reader to reach is a mind that constantly reflects on the knowledge given to him in order to reach what his mind does not know. The sharpened mind needs to keep the Name of the Lord in mind, the knowledge that helps understand this world that God created and try to reach Him. Ibn Tufayl ends this thought about the dangers of the unsharpened mind by showing his readers the mental and spiritual path that leads to the truth.

Those who have reached this state and believe that they have attained truth are people who developed spiritual egos. However, while developing spiritually, these people did not abandon the material sense. The material sense allows the mind to take control of itself and to make contact with the world. At the same time, this material sense can be confusing because it operates on a purely instinctive level and tends to restrict the soul spiritually. It allows the person to follow the physical senses but does not grasp *why* the senses are there in the first place. Ibn Tufayl made Hayy rely constantly on his natural senses and instincts, but if we limit these senses to the bodily, we will not fulfil our spirituality. Ibn Tufayl believes that it is up to the individual to 'deconstruct' the material sense and sharpen the mind to open up the possibility of achieving the truly enlightened state.

The material sense is a state best described by St. Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine* as a state that distracts us from our true purpose. The material sense makes us forget that we are too accustomed to this temporary world to seek and get to know God. The unsharpened mind that Ibn Tufayl warns about allows the person to seek delight in this temporary world and makes the person forget the creator of this world as he immerses his senses in worldly delights. Therefore, it creates confusion and prevents people from achieving the enlightened path:

Suppose, then, we were wanderers in a strange country, and could not live happily away from our fatherland, and that we felt wretched in our wandering, and wishing to put an end to our misery, determined to return home. We find, however, that we must make use of some mode of conveyance, either by land or water, in order to reach that fatherland where our enjoyment is to commence. But the beauty of the country through which we pass, and the very pleasure of the motion, charm our hearts, and turning these things which we ought to use into objects of enjoyment, we become unwilling to hasten the end of our journey; and becoming engrossed in a factitious delight, our thoughts are diverted from that home whose delights would make us truly happy. Such is a picture of our condition in this life of mortality. (Augustine 4)

Augustine contrasts the mind that wanders in the world of the senses to the mind that realizes that its true home is in the spiritual and eternal world of God. Ibn Tufayl in a similar manner wants the reader to deconstruct the material sense and any thoughts and principles that do not serve the pursuit of truth. A possible bridge between Augustine and Ibn Tufayl may be the neoPlatonic tradition, which contends that the spiritual world *emanates* divine Truth in a manner that facilitates a journey to higher levels of spiritual being. However, Ibn Tufayl asks the reader to *understand* in order to deconstruct our attachment to the world of the senses. We need to grasp the principles of religion so that the person on a spiritual journey can live through the heart, the window of the soul.

The Path of Pursuit

After suggesting the Enlightened state, Ibn Tufayl shows us the ways that might enable us to reach it. According to Ibn Tufayl, there are two ways and means to be employed if we wish to

reach the truth. The first one is the path of the mind; the second is the path of the heart. Here is a brief allegory that Ibn Tufayl used to help clarify the differences between the two paths and how they are dependent on each other:

Imagine a child, growing up in a certain city, born blind, but otherwise intelligent and well endowed, with sound memory and an apt mind. Through his remaining channels of perception he will get to know the people as well as all sorts of markets—eventually well enough to walk through the city and without a guide, recognizing at once everyone he meets. But colors, and colors alone, he will know only by descriptive explanation and ostensive definition. Suppose after he had come this far, his eyesight were restored and he could see. He would walk all through the towns finding nothing in contradiction to what he had believed The colors he encountered would conform to the guidelines that had been sketched out for him. Still there would be two great changes, the second depending on the first: first the daybreak on a new visual world, and second his great joy. (Ibn Tufayl 97)

Tufayl first describes the path of reason. It is the path of continual questioning and observation of the world. This path deals with the logic of Islam and its principles (al-sharia). Ibn Tufayl states that this path will lead you to the truth but that it is not always accompanied by genuine understanding. He states that whoever follows the path of reason alone is the blind person in the allegory. Just like the blind person, the person on this path continually seeks the truth through the mind. However, the problem with this path is that what is learned along the way could be different from what is the truth. If the blind person does not have the correct map and instructions, once his sight has returned, he or she could be vulnerable to misunderstanding

the truth and could be misunderstood by others. Therefore, the person who pursues the path of reason must be very careful. Continual questioning without meaningful observation allows the mind to become intolerant and bigoted as he or she follows one school of thought and disregards the rest, which goes against Ibn Tufayl's understanding of a sharpened mind. Thus, in such instances, the person who pursues the truth should always observe and connect various observations to what he or she has learned in the sharia and according to the principles of Islam. In this way, the believer should be able to reach the truth and be connected to the Divine.

The other path that Ibn Tufayl states is the path of the heart. In this path, we find two types of people. First, there are those who are naturally born seeing the truth, who are called the Patrons or the Custodians of Allah – Awliya. These Awliya are born with an innate nature of knowing and seeing the truth. These Awliya see the truth as clear as day. The second type of people are those who reach the truth through the use of reason. Ibn Tufayl used an allegory by Avicenna to clarify the path of these people in which he said that while walking, these people will notice small flashes of light and then their field of perception will go dark. He then continues by saying that these flashes will grow until they become a more permanent light that is strongly present. However, once a person becomes preoccupied with comparisons and the materialism of this world, the light will disappear. Once he or she is freed of these comparisons, however, the light will then come back and will drive away any doubt until the questor can see the truth as clear as day, without interruption.

For Ibn Tufayl, both the heart and the mind play an important role in the quest for the Divine. The mind provides our starting point: we start by experimenting with the truth as we begin to observe it. However, in order to attain to transcendence, the mind needs to see the map

and thus to follow the practices and the laws of any religion. Once this is understood, the heart will then be nourished enough to taste and see the truth about the Divine.

It is clear that the heart plays an important role in the path of seeking the Divine. The mind creates ego-based belief systems that aim to serve personal goals. However, anyone who is restricted to the mind alone will only come to a dead end. Such a person will not be able to transcend what is already there. Ibn Tufayl believes that the mind should be used in gathering and translating what we see into information. On the other hand, if I use my mind as my only tool in experiencing life and the unfolding of its truth, I will only be limited to theories and principles. I will only learn how to label and identify things. When it comes to experiencing and getting to know the self, the mind will be quick to identify one aspect of a problem; this identification process will only reinforce the power of the ego. The heart, however, is different. The heart and the spiritual path that Ibn Tufayl mentions seem to be free of this identification process. The heart plays an important part in this quest, because, like the mind, it has its own awareness, too. In order to tap into this awareness, the person who seeks the Divine should go beyond labelling the world and seeing things in a purely objective manner.

The heart is mentioned in the Qur'an as a device that can see and has a mind of its own, a device that can see and grasp the enlightened path; it is a portal that connects our souls to the Divine. When Ibn Tufayl used the blind man allegory, he wanted the reader to understand that it is important for the mind to recognize the principles of Islam during the time when his heart is blind. However, when the heart of the believer finally awakens, spiritual insight is restored. The Awliyah are those who can see with their hearts and use the heart to understand the world naturally. Meanwhile, the path of reason constantly aims to reach the portal of the heart; it ultimately tries to achieve a sharpened mind that serves Islamic principles. This will create a

sense of familiarity, allowing the heart to know how to use its eyes to see the world: “So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts” (*Qur’an* 22:46).

The problem is that if you tapped into the heart without giving the mind its proper structure, the essence of the truth would vanish. The essence of the truth would vanish because the gathered information that the heart acquires through the mind would be incorrect. The heart will only process and manifest what it is provided, but nonetheless it is a powerful tool, according to Ibn Tufayl; it can open up personal awareness and enable us to see the truth, even if it is easily blinded by the ego. The heart is the gate to the soul and to the Divine, but if it is not properly nourished and fed, this gate closes off forever, making a person lose his connection to the awareness of truth. As a result, the heart turns into a rigid stone and the soul is completely engulfed in material existence:

Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. (*Qur’an* 2:74)

An Appeal to the Reader

Hayy Ibn Yaqzan is aimed towards a reader who seeks to attain a certain kind of truth. Ibn Tufayl assumed that every reader of this book would like to know more about the truth of his philosophy. However, I believe that Ibn Tufayl also assumes that not every reader who reads this book has attained the Awliya stage. This book is aimed towards the reader who wants to

experience and communicate with the world, not only through reason, but through the heart as well.

The reader's journey mirrors exactly the journey of the book's protagonist, who is Hayy Ibn Yaqzan himself. The average reader who begins the book will still be in the state of reason, which is why Ibn Tufayl wants to deconstruct any obstacles that arise in the reader's path. It is hoped that by the end of the story, the reader can arrive at the beginning of a properly spiritual state. Ibn Tufayl started by deconstructing an aspect of the reader's awareness. In this initial stage, the reader no doubt experiences a sense of uneasiness; moreover, Ibn Tufayl states that even though this state is full of ecstasy and joy, it cannot easily be reached. Someone who wants to reach this state must seek it constantly and diligently.

Ibn Tufayl states that the path of reason needs constant vigilance and an inner self-reflection. He tries to encourage the reader to ask whether or not the laws and practices of religion have been understood and correctly applied. Ibn Tufayl's introduction attempts to prepare the reader to better understand Hayy's journey and to prevent him from proceeding in a biased manner.

Hayy's Journey

Hayy Ibn Yaqzan is an allegorical tale that aims to inform the reader about his religious perspective on life. The story itself does not overtly state or try to prove any particular philosophy; however, Ibn Tufayl wrote this tale in the attempt to highlight and shed light on the path of the truth. Ibn Tufayl started with a discussion to prove to the reader that the way to the truth is reached through a nourished heart. The heart's awareness is the main source of

communication with the Divine and provides an opening to the truth. Through practice, we learn to let go of any ego-centered view that hinders this process.

After this discussion, Ibn Tufayl introduces us to Hayy and his journey towards spiritual enlightenment and the truth about the Divine. Hayy's story of origins is not clear. Some believe that he came into existence without a mother or father in an equatorial island near India, where the climate is perfect to form human beings: "Our forefathers, of blessed memory, tell of a certain equatorial island, lying off the coast of India, where human beings come into being without father or mother" (Ibn Tufayl 103). This creation story resembles what is found in the tradition of neoPlatonism in the West. The other story, which is both Biblical and Koranic, resembles the origin story of the Prophet Moses, is that Hayy's mother gave birth to him yet had to give him up due to the fact that her brother was a tyrannical king who did not want his sister to get married before him:

They say that opposite this island there is a large island, rich and spacious, and inhabited by people over whom one, a proud and possessive man, was king. Now this king had a sister whom he forbade to marry until he himself should find a fitting match. But she had a kinsman named Aware, and he married her secretly, but lawfully, according to their rite. She soon conceived and bore him a son, fearing exposure of her secret she took the infant after nursing him, put him in a tightly sealed ark [and] brought him at nightfall down to the sea. (Ibn Tufayl 105)

Whichever story the reader might believe, Hayy ends up with a doe who nursed and raised him as one of her own after mistakenly thinking that his crying meant that he was her lost fawn.

The two stories are a representation of the two paths through which someone might reach the truth. The equatorial island is a representation of the path of people who are naturally born with an innate understanding and awareness of the truth; their hearts are already nourished. This representation of Hayy's birth represents the people who could clearly see the truth because their awareness and thinking processes are open and respect other points of view. Ibn Tufayl uses science to communicate exactly how this island could give birth to a human being. This suggests that these naturally enlightened people are always gathering information and absorb it, displaying an openness that is beneficial to their belief systems. Ibn Tufayl does not fear these people, who have an innate grasp of the truth and pursue it consistently.

The other representation stands for the path of reason, showing that Hayy's birth is natural and conforms to scientific method. Birth by the mother represents the path of reason because the explanation is limited and therefore appeals more to common sense. I would not argue that this is necessarily an incorrect interpretation; however, we could consider other possibilities. I believe that an over-reliance on reason is what Ibn Tufayl was trying to overcome. Nevertheless, both origin stories lead to the unified and universal truth, which is that the doe raised and fed Hayy as one of her own.

Hayy and the Animals

After introducing the reader to Hayy's origins story, Ibn Tufayl discusses Hayy's understanding of the world and how he perceives himself. The doe is a mother figure to Hayy; Hayy does not see any differences between him and her and he can even communicate with her. However, the communication that occurs between them is very primal and instinctive. Hayy only communicates his primal feelings to the doe when he is threatened, confused, hungry, signalling out his location, and this is only done through sound. A direct expression of thought or a state is

never communicated. Despite his inability to find a language or sound through which he could fully express himself, Hayy is completely satisfied with the life that he lived with his mother doe. Therefore, Hayy naturally presumes that he is like her.

Hayy grows up and then enters puberty. Hayy is growing and cannot feel the warmth of the doe as he used to. He starts to notice differences between him and the other animals that he used to play with in his earlier years:

Hayy saw the fawns his age sprout horns from nowhere and grow strong and swift. But in himself he could discover no such change. He wondered about this but could not fathom the cause. No maimed or deformed animal he could find was at all like himself. All other animals, he observed, had covered outlets for their bodily wastes – the solid by a tail, the liquid by fur or the like. And the fact that the private parts of an animal were better concealed than his own disturbed him greatly and make him very unhappy. (Ibn Tufayl 110)

Hayy starts to differentiate and compare himself with the other animals. Hayy notices that other animals have fur that covers them and keeps them warm, unlike Hayy, who was constantly dependent on the doe to protect him. He also notices how other animals have tails and claws that are able to protect them from any danger. Hayy is quite upset by this fact as he constantly feels afraid that predators might attack him. He also lacks speed; the other animals are much faster than him and this always makes him feel inadequate. Hayy's observations at this stage are all about instincts and physical appearances; he starts his journey focusing on the material sense.

Seeing that he is less than the other animals, Hayy decides to cover himself and become like them. He begins by using dead animal skins to cover himself. He then takes two wings from

a bird and an animal's tail, attaching them to his body. The look that Hayy assumes turns him into an unrecognizable and unnatural creature. All of the animals that see Hayy are afraid and stay clear from his path. The fear that he instils is not due to his power, but to his unnatural appearance.

This animalistic transformation is symbolic. Ibn Tufayl uses this transformative analogy to show what will happen to a human being if he follows his instincts and desires alone. In this context, Hayy was just following his material senses, never really having the awareness that allows him to self-reflect and reach a genuine sense of knowledge. Hayy was just reproducing his material and animalic surroundings with no intention of ever questioning their adequacy for him. I believe that what Ibn Tufayl is trying to communicate here is that sometimes the material senses consume us, even if they are helpful. Hayy had no mirror that could help him reflect on himself as he was constantly making sure that his material and primal senses are satisfied. Hayy was the only human being on the island and did not see that he was different. His immersion in his environment tended to give his identity a spiritual grounding instead of serving a higher purpose.

Hayy's island also represents different stages of awareness. Hayy familiarizes himself and sees himself as one of the animals; however, once he learns more about himself and listens to his thoughts, he becomes more human. Hayy, along with all the other animals at this stage, represents benighted beings and creatures. These beings, I believe, represent those who become materially grounded in this earth, only caring about their survival and their basic needs. Hayy during this phase of his development represents the stage of being benighted, when people are ignorant and oblivious to the truth yet act as if they are knowledgeable. Hayy acts as if he is omniscient because his self-esteem comes from material things; he now knows that no other

animal would dare come near him. However, I believe that they might not want to come near him because he was transformed into something unnatural. In seeing Hayy, the animals did not see a man, nor did they see another animal.

The Body is a Machine

After Hayy's transformation, his doe mother died. This is a disorienting event for Hayy. Ibn Tufayl wanted Hayy to start thinking; he wanted him to become aware about the truth and to realize that human beings and creatures are not controlled by a body; the body, in some respects, is just a machine.

Hayy came and saw his mother doe stiffly laying on the floor, which filled him with grief. Hayy knew that her lifeless body was dead, as he saw with other animals that he hunted. All the animals that were dead had died of fatal wounds; however, his mother did not have any wounds on her. This time for Hayy is unlike other times, but he remains curious, and his curiosity leads him to notice different things. In order to determine the cause of death, Hayy realized that something blocked his mother's survival. Hayy remembered that if he blocked his eyes or ears, he did not see or hear anything. However, once this block is removed, the bodily functions would start up again and continue to serve him. With this insight, he decided that if he could discover more about what had blocked his mother's life, she might wake up. Yet the lack of an apparent wound made the block hard to find. Hayy comes to reflect on the importance of the heart, as he always unknowingly tried to protect it when he was fighting other animals. This made him realize that the heart could be the source of the block.

The process of narration that soon occurs after Hayy experiences this traumatic incident involves a rapid cause and effect relationship between reflection and observation. Ibn Tufayl

portrays Hayy in this stage as making various inferences. Hayy learns how to use his observational skills and starts to use logic and come to conclusions by thinking, observing and reflecting:

What made him think there was something he could “take away” was his own past experience. He knew that when he shut his eyes or covered them, he saw nothing until the obstruction was removed; if he stopped his ears with his finger he could not hear until the obstacle was gone; and if he held his nose he would smell nothing until the passageway was clear again. (Ibn Tufayl 111-12)

The way that his bodily functions can be blocked leads to a clear conclusion: “When the block was removed it [the bodily sense] would return to normal functioning” (Ibn Tufayl 112). Soon Hayy began to notice things about himself more quickly and rapidly. All the observational information was in front of him, and this time around, information leads him to learn more about the soul. Instead of noticing things out of weakness or out of the need to survive, he notices things out of curiosity. This curiosity begins the path to Enlightenment.

Hayy ends the benighted stage because he realizes, after several experiments in dissection, that the heart is the chamber that holds the soul. Hayy is still unfamiliar with the name; however, he realizes that the soul goes away from the body when the body ceases to live. When the body is dead, the soul becomes the master of the body. The benighted stage also ends symbolically when Hayy learns how to bury his doe mother when he sees a raven burying a fellow raven that he engaged in fighting. The struggle between the two ravens echoes the story of Cain and Abel as narrated in Islamic tradition: “Then God sent a raven digging the ground, to

show him how to cover his brother's corpse. He said, "Woe to me! I was unable to be like this raven, and bury my brother's corpse." So he became full of regrets" (*Qur'an* 5:27-31).

This burial can be interpreted symbolically as marking the time when Hayy walks away from his animal instincts and moves towards a higher mode of thinking. Ibn Tufayl uses the raven allegory to echo the regret and shame that Hayy must have felt in focusing on his material and animalic senses, which allowed him to forget his duties towards the doe. Burying her is Hayy's way of expressing his grief towards remaining in the material world for too long. Birds were constantly burying each other in Hayy's environment, and he could not really understand what this meant until a living being close to him died as well. It took a traumatic experience involving the death of a loved one to enable him to start seeing with his heart and to observe the world differently.

The Learning Stage

Hayy learns by observing and experimenting. After his mother doe dies, Hayy wanders on the island alone and almost becomes a reclusive outsider. Instead of seeing himself as one of the animals, he now sees that he is different and does not feel that he needs to associate with them. This is evident because when he starts living in a cave, instead of the jungle; he started to feel more at home; he felt safer and did not feel that he needed protection, because he started to grasp that the world is meant to be used rather than indulged. Hayy also starts to use the animals around him to his own advantage and begins to tame wild ones. He starts to hunt for food after he is introduced to fire. Hayy identifies animals that are there for his own advantage because he needs to use them for his own survival. Hayy is no longer interested in proving his superior

status to other animals and does not even try to communicate with them but detaches himself from the sounds and noises of their animal communications.

Hayy taps into his awareness and logic when he realizes that there is a soul. Hayy comes to the conclusion that there are different types of souls. Everything that dies has a soul. Hayy starts to differentiate between the beings and organisms that have souls by organizing them into different levels. The first level contains the plant kingdom; the second is the animal kingdom. Having made these observations, Hayy realizes that he is different because he does not find any animal that is similar to him; he realizes that his system of categories is inadequate, yet he knows that he has a body and must belong to some group of living beings. Hayy is now on the path of reason that will eventually lead to the truth about God. Hayy is constantly living in a process of eliminating and observing the world around him; he is trying to solve a puzzle and he is constantly trying to see which pieces fit. Ibn Tufayl made Hayy dedicate all of his time to think about God and to prove that the path to God must be pursued diligently.

Hayy then comes up with the concept of oneness and unity. Hayy realizes that each organism, from plants to animals, despite their bodily differences, have a common soul. However, this common soul is restricted to the functions of the body. Hayy also unifies the animal and plant kingdom as he realizes that, in each kingdom, we find different species that share common bodily functions, but all of these species belong to one kingdom, which is the common soul. Seeing this oneness and unity, he realizes that there is a source for all of these kingdoms. He realizes that they are connected somehow and belong to the same class of things. This insight contributes to Hayy's awareness of Divine unity, or *tawheed*.

This stage of experience is what Ibn Tufayl refers to as the path of reason. Hayy is starting to study and understand the world around him. However, Ibn Tufayl strips Hayy of everything that might confuse his logic and might have a negative influence on this new stage of spiritual enlightenment. Hayy's main source of observation is nature. Hayy's environment represents him with all the pure and truthful information that will help him become more aware in the next stage of his journey; however, when he only focused on the material senses, the natural environment was not much help. Hayy is still a blind person, according to Ibn Tufayl's analogy, but once his eyesight has returned, the truth will perfectly align to his prior knowledge. Moreover, as a student of nature, Hayy knows that nature was produced by God and he soon begins to see the promise of a more perfect harmony.

There are numerous things that Hayy learns at this stage. He learns about dividing and uniting and about the physics of the world. All the things that he learns lead to one source, and the more that Hayy walks towards this source, the more he realizes how connected he is with this world, despite the fact that he knows no one who resembles him on the island.

Hayy and Absal

Before he begins communicating with his own kind, Hayy learns about the Creator. This knowledge is initiated when Hayy identifies all of the elements in the world. After his mind is sharpened by intellectual pursuits rather than physical ones, Hayy sees that the universe is a vast unified entity. Coming to this realization, Hayy relates this thought to time and space. He understands that everything has a beginning and an end; therefore, he starts to wonder about the passing of time that occurred since the Creation. Following through on this train of thought, Hayy realizes that there must be a Maker who transcends the rules of this universe, a Maker to whom the physics of time and space do not apply.

Coming to this conclusion, Hayy's physical needs start to change. Instead of focusing on his bodily needs, Hayy starts to focus more on his spiritual needs. Hayy feels that nourishing these needs will help him feel more connected to the Maker. As a consequence, he lessens his food intake, using only the food that he needs. Hayy started to see his body as an object that he needs to maintain and use in order to reach the truth about God. Hayy started to only eat the foods when his body told him, rather than indulging in more food than he can digest. I feel that Hayy wants his body to be less connected to the material world, which is why he started to eat even less; he does not want to be limited merely to this earth.

Having developed a deeper connection with the world, Hayy finally meets Absal. Absal sought isolation and wanted to live the life of a recluse in a secluded place. But meeting Hayy, Absal decides to teach him language and how to communicate. As a result, Absal begins to better understand Hayy's thinking process. The story of Hayy learning words and language shows that he can finally express himself in an elevated manner, rather than by using animalic primal sounds. The acquisition of language also relates to the analogy that Avicenna provided about those who became enlightened through the path of reason. Hayy's path is now fully enlightened; however, his enlightenment is tested through the people he meets while preaching for God in Absal's land.

The land that Absal comes from is a land where people are completely captivated by their material senses. These people were Muslims; however, they were constantly trying to focus on the rules of the sharia and principles that could give them leeway to indulge themselves even more in the material world. When Hayy first came to this land, the people did not want to listen to what he was trying to say. Hayy was asking the people that they should just focus on the words of God, as this is all they need. Hayy became very angry with these people as he felt they

were wasting time on principles that shows what is permitted and what is not, while completely forgetting about God. Hayy soon came to the realization that the people around him were completely immersed in their material senses and had forgotten their basic essence and nature. Hayy felt that arguing with them leads nowhere and that he should just leave them to the sharia and hope that they can follow it, as it could be the path allowing them to recover the natural essence that had been given to them by God.

Absal and Hayy represent two different paths that lead to the truth. Hayy represents the way of reason, while Absal represents the Enlightened path. Hayy became aware of the truth through pure logic and reason. Absal is the figure for those who are born with an innate sense of truth and are able to see it more immediately. When Hayy finally transcends the path of reason, Absal accompanies him in his Enlightened state to achieve fulfilment.

Both Hayy and Absal wanted to go beyond dependence on others. When they tried to integrate themselves into society, they saw that people were grounded in their egos and in material concerns. Seeing that most people are not even able to reach the path of reason, Hayy comes to see that the majority can only connect to God by following the religious laws uncritically. Ibn Tufayl ended this allegory with Hayy and Absal going back to their island and leaving the people behind. The return to the island is symbolic because it proves that the enlightened path is not a path that is generally pursued. The enlightened path is a path that is not understood by many and will be attacked. It is a path that is bestowed upon a few and aims to unify God and glorify His creations.

Every prophet is patient in dealing with his people, no matter how much they have sinned. In the Qur'an, Jonah becomes so angry with his people that he left them and went away

in a ship, and that angered God. God therefore ordered a whale to swallow Jonah. Jonah knew exactly what he did wrong and understood that he was a wrongdoer. Jonah admitted his guilt and because he was an exalter of God, he was restored back to his island. He returned and spoke to a hundred thousand of his people, even more. Although Ibn Tyfayl is not optimistic on this issue, I believe that Hayy and Absal should behave like the prophets and have patience with all of the people that they encounter, and thus to spread the truth more broadly as a way of serving God.

Conclusion: The Spiritual Journey

The narratives of both Plato and Ibn Tufayl show that human beings seek to experience and be connected with the Divine. However, in comparing these narratives, we can see that each writer has his own beliefs and views that help people understand connectedness. Plato and Ibn Tufayl stressed the importance of being self-aware and observant, which marks the start of the spiritual journey. When you start to look and think critically about your inner life and align it with what you observe, you set yourself on a certain path. Yet, the observation and understanding of the inner world, according to both writers, leads to a spiritual journey and ultimately to an experience of the Divine. The spiritual journey in both *The Republic* and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* ends with unveiling the truth and instilling a deep connection with the Divine. However, after reading both works, I came to the conclusion that critical self-awareness might not always lead to spiritual experience. Spiritual experience not only relies on internal criticism, but it also relies on having the courage to align ourselves with what we *believe* to be true.

The Constitution of the Soul

Plato explained work on the inner self through his metaphor of the ideal city. Plato, through the ideal city, showed us that the soul and our inner world are deeply connected. In Plato's ideal city, each citizen is to know his role in society and abide by it. Applying this to our inner world, we need to achieve harmony in the three aspects of the soul, which are the body, mind and spirit. We need to understand that, like the ideal city, these three aspects of the soul are all intertwined. Plato discussed the feverish city as a contrast to the ideal city. This is a city that is growing rapidly. While the survival and basic needs in this city are being fulfilled for every individual, this result is that the citizens of the feverish city end up focusing more on material

needs. The metaphor of the feverish city highlights what happens when we lose the interrelations among the three aspects of the soul. In the feverish city, the ego is not able to grow as everyone aligns his or her inner being with natural survival. In this situation, the three aspects of the soul become misaligned because we do not have a specific aim. The mind might observe the arts while the body is well nourished with minimal effort, but in the meantime, the spirit loses its connectedness to the natural world.

The ideal city as a metaphor showed us the importance of understanding the three aspects of the soul upon which the city depends to function properly. Plato explained that three parts makes up the soul, which creates a harmonious effect on the inner self. The intellectual part, the spirited part and the appetitive part are all aspects that makes us who we are. We all have these three aspects; however, one part could be dominant over the other two. For instance, in some individuals, the intellectual side of the soul is much more highly developed, leaving the other two aspects of the soul unable to shape the person in clear ways. A second person may be inspired by honour in a way that proves to be detrimental to a balanced life. In someone else, the appetitive side of the soul may threaten the unity of the soul altogether, resulting in an unruly disposition. However, this does not make any aspect of the soul unimportant. All three aspects need to be nourished. It is a lack of overall unity that creates division and, in the long run, results in a state of disequilibrium and the succumbing to a condition in which the soul is filled with purely material needs.

Ibn Tufayl, on the other hand, took us through a narrative journey to show us that the key factor for a healthy inner life begins with the observation of nature. For Hayy, each event in spiritual life is a transformative one. Hayy constantly related what he had observed to the situation that he currently experienced, creating a continuous journey of self-discovery. At the

beginning of the narrative, Hayy did not realize that he is not the same as the animals surrounding him. Hayy therefore identified and communicated with the animals in his local environment. And yet, he first realized that he was different when he observed that animals, unlike Hayy, had fur covering their bodies and did not need clothing. He then applied what he saw to his understanding and concluded that he was unlike any other animal. When his doe mother died, Hayy concluded that her soul was stored in her heart. He came to this conclusion because he observed that whenever he was fighting, he would automatically protect his body by covering his heart. Based on this analysis, he realized the importance of the heart, thus understanding that it is the container that holds the soul. However, subsequent speculations on the nature of the Divine engage the notion of causality, which is important to philosophical definitions of God in the scholastic tradition. Hayy therefore allows us to grasp the nature of the Divine on the basis of deep reflections on the role of cause in the structure of the universe.

Plato started his conversation with the meaning of justice, which lead him to create an entire city as a metaphor that was intended to clarify aspects of the human soul. In this manner, Plato proves the importance of the soul and its education so as to manage and enrich this interconnectedness within ourselves. Plato used various metaphors to help us realize his point of view. On the other hand, Ibn Tufayl created an allegorical tale that is filled with events to help us realize the importance of observation. Observations of the natural world eventually led to speculations on how the Divine can be understood, through analogy, on the basis of a system of causation. Although Plato and Ibn Tufayl adopt different *methods* for achieving insights into the Divine, they arrive at similar conclusions. Both of them show that the human soul is best understood in relation to the Divine as a principle and experience that allows the individual to

pursue a satisfying life. The goal is also shown to be attainable when a certain vision of community is clarified as the appropriate setting for spiritual development.

The Ideal in the Spiritual Journey

Ibn Tufayl and Plato both wanted to reach and connect with the ideal and the Divine. I believe that their goal is similar; however, the way each writer presented the Divine is different. Plato explained the element of the Divine by first explaining the element of being good that starts with justice and the ideal city. He also explained the element of the Divine through the Theory of the Forms. The Theory of the Forms is the understanding that every idea, object, sound, and all living and non-living beings originate from a Divine source. Everything that was made is not an invention, but a discovery, as it was already created in the ideal. However, the idea of the Forms gets more complicated when Plato explained that even an original Form that directly manifests the Divine is still not fully original; it was copied from the ideal, which cannot be seen or imagined by any mind. Plato's main argument to connect us to the Divine is that everything that is circulating in this world is just a copy of the Divine, and yet we cannot grasp the originality of these forms through everyday observation.

In Sufism, there is a well-known saying that whatever you perceive God to be is always the opposite to what God really is. This statement aims to counter whatever views we may have about God, which is an ideal that no living being could realize. This idea echoes in the Theory of the Forms as any concrete thing could be completely different from its ideal Form. It seems that Plato, like certain thinkers in the Sufi tradition, is saying that our everyday encounters with the world are almost invariably misleading because they show us what better is known on the basis of its ideal origin. In removing ourselves more and more from the ideal state, we end up getting

further and further away from the Divine and miss the truth because we remain locked in the everyday mindset. The result of a mundane focus on things of this world is, in both cases, a failure on the level of knowing.

Ibn Tufayl helps us understand the Divine in a special light. Hayy acknowledged that there is a Divine, after experimenting and coming to understand the principles of life and natural law. Hayy, after many observations, realized that God and this entire world manifest traits of the Divine, and in order to get to know these traits, you need to know and observe the world and the inner self. The philosophies of Plato and Ibn Tufayl overlap on the question of the Divine. Plato asks the reader to believe in the Divine through philosophical arguments and understands that the Forms are not accessible to everyday experience. Hayy reached a similar understanding in the end because he ended up knowing that there is a God that his eyes cannot see. He identified God with perfection. Ibn Tufayl stated that whenever Hayy laid his eyes on something, he automatically saw the manifestation of the Divine. At the same time, when Hayy continued his self-discovery, he realized that God is above our understanding in perfection and beauty. Therefore, I believe that Hayy ultimately reached Plato's Theory of the Forms, where beauty is above our understanding and resides in the ideal.

Narratives that Educate the Spirit

The process of education and learning is fundamental for anyone who goes on a spiritual journey. Both Plato and Ibn Tufayl stress and highlight the importance of education. Plato's process of education ensures that the citizens are educated with the works of literature that enrich their spiritual journey instead of interfering with it. The crux of Plato's main argument is that if they are not exposed to the correct reading, children will misunderstand and confuse good with

evil. For Plato, traditional reading material (as exemplified by the Homeric epics) misrepresents the gods as mischievous and perpetually changing. Plato believes that education directly affects our soul and could influence it to either do what is naturally good or naturally bad. Problematic models create confusion, particularly in the young, who are inclined to imitate what they see. Such confusion might result in harming one's soul, which as a result might hinder the spiritual journey.

The Allegory of the Cave is a great educational model, but it begs questions that are difficult to answer. The cave dweller who ventures forth and climbs out of the cave achieves an unprecedented level of enlightenment; the things of this world, directly perceived, are analogous to the Forms that dwell in the heaven above us, guiding the knower in the quest for a more perfect truth. However, the one who seeks enlightenment is told by Socrates that a return to the cave is imperative. The fate of the enlightened one is therefore hard to determine but certainly will be a hard one, according to this narrative. Two questions arise in the course of our reading. First, why does one person rise to the occasion and leave the cave, while others remain inside? This question is important because it shows how intellectual curiosity might perform a crucial role in the process of enlightenment. Second, how can an enlightened person sustain a strong interest in education if his or her efforts are foredoomed to fail? This second question becomes no less urgent when we consider how the spiritual journey apparently isolates the knower from those who have not yet achieved enlightenment.

For Ibn Tufayl, in contrast, the main source of knowledge derives from the observation of nature, at least in the early stages of the spiritual quest. By observing nature closely, Hayy learned about the unity of life and discovered the coherence of nature's laws. Later, Hayy developed a more mature understanding of the Divine, which stemmed from a deeper application

of how causation operates in the universe as a whole. In contrast to Plato, Ibn Tufayl takes nature as the starting point for a mediation on the Divine that drew inspiration from scholasticism and from the great philosophers in the Islamic tradition who wrote in Arabic during the medieval period. However, Ibn Tufayl comes to many of the same conclusions as Plato. For both thinkers, the universe is a living whole that is animated by the Divine. The person who seeks spiritual knowledge cannot in either case neglect the task of studying the world and the attempt to communicate this knowledge to possible knowers.

The task of educating oneself changes our relationship to others. Plato viewed education as a spiritual journey that can result in a kind of understanding to be enjoyed only by the few. In the Allegory of the Cave, he showed us the struggle involved in departing from the cave, indicating that not everyone is able to easily leave the comforts of tradition and familiarity that are aspects of maintaining a norm. Hayy reached a similar conclusion when he saw how some people would be unwilling to change, even if the truth was right in front of them. Ibn Tufayl allows the reader to realize that we may not be able to reach the same level of knowledge, whereas Hayy helps us understand that there are different levels to apprehending the Divine. However, Ibn Tufayl also shows us that Hayy needed Absal to acquire language, which is crucial to Hayy's mature grasp of Divine perfection. By emphasizing the social dimension in the acquisition of knowledge, Ibn Tufayl goes beyond Plato and suggests how knowledge involves sharing as it moves to higher levels of understanding. The presence of gradual levels of knowledge make us see that we should all aim to reach beyond what we currently know, because the more we learn, the more we realize that our knowledge is incomplete.

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