

Ellenchos Practices in Classical Islam: Hayy b. Yaqzan of Ibn Tufayl

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Abstract

Scholars have considered the story of Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) in Western context as equally comparable to that of Hayy b. Yaqzan by Ibn Tufayl (1110-1185) in Islamic philosophy, or vice versa. Both imaginative and allegorical tales feature different fictive figures who lived alone in a remote island. They both covers how human being could absorb divine and profane knowledge based on their own experience with particular level of intellectuality and intention of knowledge seeking. Both tales also stand for the way both authors, followed later by many writers and novelists, employed imagination and allegories to reconstruct ellenchos to emphasise lessons learned and wisdoms from both stories. Although both Ibn Tufayl and Defoe practiced assorted styles and methods in different time and cultural contexts, both have set trends in writing such imaginative and allegorical stories in world literature. This paper examines the practices of ellenchos in classical Islam, by taking the case of "Hayy b. Yaqzan" by Ibn Tufayl. Starting with a postulation that the fundamental difference between Islamic philosophy and Western one is at the starting line of neo-platonism, this paper reorients the understanding of Ibn Tufayl's philosophical contribution that is peripheral in Islamic philosophy. It includes his neo-platonist orientation which is the general alignment of Muslim philosophers.

Keywords: *Ellenchos, Islam Klasik, Hayy ibn Yaqzan, Ibn Tufayl.*

Abstrak

Para cendekiawan telah mempertimbangkan kisah Robinson Crusoe karya Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) dalam konteks Barat setara dengan kisah Hayy b. Yaqzan karya Ibn Tufayl (1110-1185) dalam filsafat Islam, atau sebaliknya. Kedua cerita imajinatif dan alegoris ini menampilkan tokoh fiktif yang hidup sendirian di pulau terpencil. Keduanya mencakup bagaimana manusia dapat menyerap pengetahuan ilahi dan duniawi berdasarkan pengalaman mereka sendiri dengan tingkat intelektualitas dan niat mencari pengetahuan tertentu. Kedua cerita ini juga menunjukkan bagaimana kedua penulis, yang kemudian diikuti oleh banyak penulis dan novelis, menggunakan imajinasi dan alegori untuk membangun ellenchos guna menekankan pelajaran dan kebijaksanaan dari kedua cerita tersebut. Meskipun baik Ibn Tufayl maupun Defoe menggunakan gaya dan metode yang berbeda dalam konteks waktu dan budaya yang berbeda, keduanya telah menetapkan tren dalam menulis cerita imajinatif dan alegoris dalam sastra dunia. Makalah ini mengkaji praktik ellenchos dalam Islam klasik, dengan mengambil kasus "Hayy b. Yaqzan" oleh Ibn Tufayl. Dimulai dengan postulat bahwa perbedaan mendasar antara filsafat Islam dan Barat terletak pada titik awal neoplatonisme, makalah ini mengarahkan kembali pemahaman tentang kontribusi filosofis Ibn Tufayl yang bersifat perifer dalam filsafat Islam. Ini mencakup orientasi neoplatonisnya yang merupakan keselarasan umum di kalangan filsuf Muslim.

Kata kunci: Ellenchos, Classical Islam, Hayy b. Yaqzan, Ibn Tufayl.

Introduction

Scholars have immensely indicated that Muslim philosophers are always presents within the frameworks of Neoplatonism, a philosophical stream which tried to combine Aristotelian and Platonic teachings where in practice, the latter had more proportion and share. Awad has emphasised this notion by exploring al-Kindi's and al-Farabi's works and their efforts in bridging Aristotelian and Platonic accounts.¹ Meanwhile, Wildberg has interpreted the "more proportion and share" by saying that Neoplatonism is the Plotinus' interpretation of Plato.² As one of the principal features of Neoplatonism is monism, Islamic Neoplatonism also shared the idea of the "oneness" of God as the ultimate and essential principle that all realities derived from a single origin.³ Therefore, the question of origins (of everything) has been the fundamental problem in Islamic philosophy.

Scholars have shown historical and theological reasonings why Muslim philosophers had more opportunities to embrace and explore Neoplatonism than other streams such as Aristotelianism or Stoicism. Harris argues that Neoplatonism was more available right after the early development of Islam, than Aristotelianism. The encounter and adjustment of Islam and Neoplatonism, hence, had more occasions. Furthermore, Neoplatonism is a religious philosophy by origins. Given that Neoplatonism also shares Aristotelian rational metaphysics, Neoplatonism is still religious and theological in many matters.⁴ These are the main reason why Muslim philosophers easily found their ways and traces to Islamic interpretation of Neoplatonism.

On the basis of this feature, Muslim philosophers fundamentally and ultimately think and imagine philosophically and at the same time theologically. However, philosophy and Islamic theology sometimes ended in eternal differences, tensions, or even contradictions. As a matter fact, Muslim philosophers were known for their efforts to minimise the tensions by exploring a number of principal philosophical issues in relation to theology, including the matter of origins and emanations. Even, according to Leaman,

¹ Najib G. Awad, *Al-Falsafa wa Aslima al-Ma'rifa: Qirâ'a Tahlîliya fî Fikrah Falsafa Islâmiyya fî Daw' al-Mafhûm al-Falsafa wa Târîkh al-Fikr al-Falsafî fî al-'Asr al-Islâmî al-Mubkir. Munster Journal for Islamic and Philosophical Studies* 3: 1-2, pp. 16-27.

² Christian Wildberg, "[Neoplatonism](#)", in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2021).

³ Najib G. Awad, *Al-Falsafa wa Aslima al-Ma'rifa*, p. 15.

⁴ Look at R. Baine Harris' Preface in Parvis Morewedge (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), p. viii.

the whole projects of Islamic philosophy including the mystical and illuminationist (*ishrâqi*/emanations) schools of Muslim philosophers streamed and ended at this ultimate point.⁵ Interestingly, Gouthier's observation on Ibn Sina's and Ibn Tufayl's versions of Hayy b. Yaqzan indicates most similarities on the ideas of illumination or *ishraqiyya*.⁶

This is the main context of Muslim philosopher find solutions for many fundamental and principal philosophical questions including the origins, creations, live, God, nature, and the likes. Ibn Tufayl is one among Muslim philosophers who explores his philosophical ideas through stories and tales. This paper revives discursively the question of origins by exploring Ibn Tufayl's philosophical account Hayy b. Yaqzan as an *ellenchos*. The famous story and romance of origins is indeed not unique to Ibn Tufayl. Some Muslim philosophers including Ibn Sina and other philosophers, introduced such metaphors of origins. This paper also explores to what extent Ibn Tufayl metaphorically presents Islamic reasonings of these issues that have been the foremost features of Islamic philosophy. Regardless of its great contribution to Islamic philosophy, this effort is imperative as, although the philosophical tale of Hayy b. Yaqzan receives great scholarly attention,⁷ the interpretation of the use of these allegories and parables is understudied as Hawi⁸ and Conrad⁹ argue. Hourani mentions that only Gouthier, an Algerian scholar, had studied the treatise very seriously compared to other scholars.¹⁰ For the sake of this paper, I use Amin's Arabic edition of Hayy b. Yaqzan.¹¹

⁵Oliver Leamen, *Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

⁶Leon Gouthier. *Ibn Thofail: Sa vie, ses oeuvres*. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909), pp. 59-61.

⁷Conrad listed most works related to Ibn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan. The details are as follows: there are 11 manuscripts of Ibn Tufayl works that are hosted world libraries and collection; 21 editions of the treatise Hayy b. Yaqzan; 38 translations of the tale in world languages; 134 modern studies on Ibn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan. See Conrad E. Lawrence. Research Resources on Ibn Tufayl and Hayy ibn Yaqzan. In L.E. Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 267-293. Conrad missed many more works on this subject written in Bahasa Indonesia.

⁸Sami S. Hawi, Ibn Tufayl: On the Existence of God and His Attributes. *Journal of the Americal Oriental Society* 95: 1, p. 58.

⁹Conrad E. Lawrence. The World of Ibn Tufail. In L.E. Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 1.

¹⁰George F. Hourani, The Principal Subject of Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 15: 1 (1956), p. 40.

¹¹Ahmad Amin (ed.). *Hayy b. Yaqzan li-Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufayl wa al-Suhrawardi*, (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1952)

Ibn Tufayl as Philosopher

In Islamic philosophical discourse, Muslim philosophers are often divided into two different territories according to their regional origins.¹² The Eastern Muslim philosophers include al-Kindî (185 252 W 806 873 AD), al-Fârâbî (257 337 H./870 950 AD), Ibn Sînâ or Avicenna (370 428 H./980 1037 AD) and Abû Hâmid al-Ghazâlî (450 505 H./1058-1111 AD). Meanwhile, Ibn Tufayl (506 581 H./4110 1185 AD), Ibn Bâjjah or Avempace (475 533 H./1082 1138 M.) and Ibn Rushd or Averroes (520 595 H./4126-1198 AD) were identified as Muslim philosophers in the Muslim Western world.

Ibn Tufayl whose complete name is Abû Bakr Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Tufayl al-Qayshî, is a Muslim philosopher with a very petite information on him. Otherwise, various information on one aspect of his life is available. In general, some scholars write different period of Ibn Tufayl’s life, which was between 506-581 H. / 1110-1185 AD. Amin emphasises that Ibn Tufayl was born before 506 H.¹³ Different information is given by Hillel Fradkin, namely between 504-581 H. / 1110-1185 AD.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Wickens wrote the numbers 1105-1185 AD. (with a question mark).¹⁵ Some say that he was born in 1100.¹⁶

Information about the history and background of Ibn Tufayl’s life is not easy to find. There are very few sources that inform teachers and his intellectual, spiritual and philosophical journeys.¹⁷ Al Hafnî even only stated that if Ibn Rushd had not written the *Kitâb al Nafs* which is a commentary to Aristotle, where there is little information about Ibn Tufayl, it may be difficult to find definite information about him.¹⁸ In my observation, various works that study

¹² See the division in Ahmad Fu’âd al-Ahwânî, *Islamic Philosophy*, (Cairo: Anglo Egyptian Bookshop, 1957), p. 46.

¹³ Ahmad Amin (ed.). *Hayy b. Yaqzan li-Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufayl wa al-Suhrawardi*, p. 10.

¹⁴ See Hillel Fradkin, “The Political Thought of Ibn Tufayl,” in Charles E. Butterworth (ed.), *The Political Aspect of Islamic Philosophy*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 234.

¹⁵ G.M. Wickens, “Ibn Tufayl” in *Encyclopedia Americana*, (Grolier Incorporated, 1985), Vol. XIV, p. 693.

¹⁶ ‘Abd al-Mun’im al-Hafnî, *Mausû’a al Falsafa wa al-Falâsifa*, (Cairo: Madbouli, 1999), Vol. II, p. 58.

¹⁷ This is explained by Henri Corbin briefly in “Ibn Tufayl,” in Paul Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (London: Collier McMillan Publisher, 1967), Vol. III-IV, p. 109. See also B. Carra de Vaux “Ibn Tufayl,” in A.J. Wensinck et. al. (eds), *First Encyclopedia of Islam 1913-1936*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), Vol. III, p. 424. Observe further, I argue, the unrecorded origin of Ibn Tufayl is similar to the story of Hayy bin Yaqzan in Ibn Tufayl’s work whose origin is also not told.

¹⁸ ‘Abd al-Mun’im al-Hafnî, p. 58.

Ibn Tufayl, from classical to modern, have more or less the same information about Ibn Tufayl's life. It can be presumed that the information about Ibn Tufayl also comes from relatively similar sources.

Ibn Tufayl was born to a prominent Arab descendant of Qabilah Qais in the valley of Asy, Guadix (a small place, 16 km or about 40 miles from Granada)¹⁹ in 506 AH / 4110 AD. In the tradition of Western philosophy, he is commonly referred to as Abubacer (corruption on Abu Bakr).²⁰ He is also nicknamed al-Andalûsî (Spain), al-Qurtubî (Cordova) and al-'Ishbîlî (Seville).²¹ In addition to philosophy, he is also known in the world of medicine, astronomy, mathematics and literature. Some even call it a "walking encyclopedia".²² It is suspected that he had studied in Seville and Cordova, because those two places were the center of academic activity in Andalusia at that time. He studied medicine in Granada. Some say, he was a student of Ibn Bajjah. However, there is information that he has never admitted to having met Ibn Bajjah. In the introduction to the book *The Story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, Absal and Salaman*, it is explained that Ibn Tufayl became big and famous in the Islamic philosophical tradition, continuing the thoughts of al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Bajjah.²³

He lived at the time of the Caliph Abû Ya'qûb Yûsuf al-Mansûr from the Muwahhidîn dynasty who had a very high interest and respect for science. This Caliph often provided his palace to be a meeting spot for scientists and philosophers. The Caliph wanted to make Spain --as R. Briffault said--as "the place of the rebirth of Europe."²⁴ Due to the beliefs of the authorities at that time, he had occupied a number of positions. He started his activities as a practicing doctor in Granada, and was later trusted as secretary to the governor of Granada. Subsequently he was appointed private secretary to the governors of Ceateu and Tangier. He also held the position of high doctor and became *qadhi* (judge) and *wazîr* (minister). Because of his closeness to the caliph, he was also appointed as the caliph's personal doctor who was eventually replaced by Ibn Rushd, one of his students. Of these various positions, it is not surprising that Hillel Fradkin referred to him as a

¹⁹Carra de Vaux describes it, p. 424.

²⁰TJ. De Boer, "Ibn Tufayl" in James Hasting (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, n.d.), Vol. VII, p. 72. See also, G.M. Wickens, p. 693. Look again at Henri Corbin, p. 109. See also Carra de Vaux, p. 424.

²¹Carra de Vaux, p. 424.

²²Henry Corbin, p. 109.

²³Hillel Fradkin, p. 234.

²⁴Bakhtiar H. Shiddiqi, "Ibn Thufayl," in MM. Syarif (ed.), *History of Muslim Philosophy*, (Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963), p. 527.

statesman.²⁵ In 580 H./1184 AD, the Caliph Abû Ya'qûb Yûsuf died and was succeeded by his son Abû Yûsuf Ya'qûb. A year after that (581 H/1185 AD) Ibn Tufayl died in Morocco.

Historians and historiographers recorded some of Ibn Tufayl's works and manuscripts. However, what is known and can be read until now according to Miguel Casiri's records is the book *Risâla Hayy ibn Yaqzân* or in the English edition *The Story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, Absal and Salaman* and *Asrâr al-Hikma al-Mashriqiya* which are still in manuscript form and are in the Escurrial library. The title of the English edition varies, among others, "Living, Son of Wakefull," "The Treatise on Hayy," "The Improvement of Human Reason." and others. In the introduction to *Asrâr al-Hikma al-Mashriqiya*, it is stated that this manuscript is part of a book fully entitled *Risâla Hayy bin Yaqzân fî Asrâr al-Hikma al-Mashriqiya Istakhlashâ min Darar Jawâhir al-Fâdhil al-Ra'îs Abî 'Alî Ibn Sînâ Imâm al-Faylasûf al-Kâmil al-Ârif Abî Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Tufayl* (Hayy bin Yaqzan's Treatise on the Secrets of Eastern Wisdom adopted from Ibn Sina's work by Ibn Tufayl).²⁶ In one statement, he also wrote about medical issues in Arabic, also in the form of prose and verse. *Al-Kuliyât fî al-Tibb* is the correspondence of Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd on medical ideas. Al-Bitrûjî and Ibn Rushd (both of whom were Ibn Tufayl's students) believed that Ibn Tufayl had original astronomical ideas. One of Al Bitrûjî's works entitled *Kitâb al-Hayât* which is an antithesis to Ptolemy's thesis of astronomy, is one of Ibn Tufayl's contributions. Even Ibn Abî Usaibi'ah who quoted Ibn Rushd's statement considered the work entitled *Fî al-Buqa' al-Maskûna wa Ghair al-Maskûna* to be the work of Ibn Tufayl, although Ibn Rushd considered that the statement was invalid.

Ibn Tufayl is a unique philosopher who uses a special method to explain his philosophical thoughts. Implicitly, he describes his thoughts in a fictional story entitled *Risâla Hayy bin Yaqzân*. This book is an answer to a request of a colleague who wants to know oriental wisdom (*al-hikma al-mashriqiyya*). The book begins with sharp criticisms of previous Muslim philosophers. He criticised Ibn Bajjah as being short-minded who only built up his philosophical principles with logic and reason by underestimating the basis of other experiences which were *kashf al-ruhanî* (enlightenment). He also criticised al-Farâbî, who, according to him, was sceptical and who refused to provide certainty in philosophical issues. To Ibn Sînâ he said that Ibn Sînâ was pretentious Aristotelian. According to Ibn Tufayl, *Kitâb al-Shifâ'* which is claimed to follow Aristotle's methodology often contains things that do not

²⁵Hillel Fradkin, p. 234.

²⁶Ahmad Fu'âd al-Ahwânî, p. 46.

exist in Aristotle's work. Al-Ghazâlî was not free from his criticism. According to him, the shakiness of al-Ghazâlî's thought lies in his sceptical attitude and inconsistencies. After throwing criticism at his predecessors, he then started this fictional story.

Ibn Tufayl took the sample of Hayy bin Yaqzân's story to explain his thoughts on metaphysics, physics, human epistemology, microcosm, macrocosm, cosmology of light, ethics, philosophy and religion. Expressing his great ideas beautifully, he describes his thoughts metaphorically in the story. According to Nadzhin al-Jisr, in the story and the formula behind the story, Ibn Tufayl wanted to convey the truth. In general, according to the historian al-Marakûshî, the story aims to provide a scientific explanation of the beginnings of human life on earth. In contrast to al-Marakûshî, Muhammad Ghallâb considered the purpose of the fictional story was Ibn Tufayl's desire to demonstrate the ability of individual humans to be independent by only utilizing natural resources without the help of other societies, as well as human ability to seek true truth as long as it was supported by intelligence.²⁷ Furthermore, according to Muhammad Yûnus Farangi Mahallî, the objective is beyond that. According to him, Ibn Tufayl wanted to show that philosophy and religion must be understood precisely, and that the exoteric and esoteric aspects of religion and philosophy are expressions of the same eternal truth, which are revealed to each individual according to their respective abilities.

All aspects (storylines, characters, conflicts, etc.) that are present in *Risâla Hayy bin Yaqzân* are metaphors of Ibn Tufayl's philosophical thought. Through this series of stories and figures, Ibn Tufayl wanted to explain his view of the world, God, light, reason and other ideas. The problem of creation is an issue that has always been a discourse in the philosophical tradition, from the most classical to the most modern. Muslim philosophers are not left behind in discussing this issue. In the West, the great Muslim philosophers have always been within the framework of Neo-Platonism. In general, in the issue of creation, emanation theory is the grand theory in the Neo-Platonist philosophical tradition that combines elements of humanity (purely the result of human thought) and religiosity/idolatry. It is thought that the pure theory of emanation in platonism necessitates the absence of a First Cause (God) in the process of creation. The emergence of Muslim philosophers who believe in the existence of God as the First Cause, the emanation theory is developed within the framework of Islam, that there is a First Cause which is not preceded

²⁷Muhammad 'Alî Abî Rayyân, *Târîkh al-Fikr al-Falsafî fî al-Islâm*, (Iskandariyah: Dâr al-Ma'rifah al-Jam'iyah, 1980), p. 559. See also Ibrâhîm Madkûr, *Fî al-Falsafa al-Islâmiya; Manhaj wa Tathbîq*, (Cairo: Dâr al-Ma'ârif, n.d.), Vol. I, p. 55.

by anything. Therefore, those Muslim philosophers were later referred to as neoplatonism.

Ibn Tufayl's thoughts on creation are a critical synergy from existing theories of creation theory. According to him, 'time' is part of existence or being. Therefore, he is able to understand "being before nothingness." Time as a state emanates and forms an existence which can be in the form of nature, humans and so on. As the tradition of Neo-Platonism (read: Islam) is closely related to the teachings of tauhid, if the material emanation process is pulled upward, it will arrive at the First Cause which is of course immaterial or as a non-physical existence. Therefore, Ibn Tufayl rejected the figure of Secondary Cause.²⁸ Since He is merely an essence, He and all His emanations such as nature and humans are eternal.

But Ibn Tufayl uses two forms of eternity: eternity of essence and eternity of time. The First Cause experiences eternity of essence whereas all forms of emanation of the First Cause like nature and humans experience eternity of time. If analogous to motion, then motion requires a mover that has more strength than motion. Or in other languages, limited motion requires infinite mover. If motion is an object or matter then the mover is something immaterial. If the hand holds an object, then the hand is moved, the object will move according to the hand motion. The thing in the hand is matter, while the force that moves it (not the hand) is immaterial. Therefore, Ibn Tufayl considered the universe nothing other than God. The universe and God are both eternal.

Like al-Ghazâlî, Ibn Tufayl considers the world to be a manifestation of the essence of God and His light shadows that have no beginning and no end. Therefore, the universe will not be destroyed as understood as the Day of Destruction. Destruction of the universe is a change in form, not complete destruction. This is what is meant by the plurality of the One Being.

Ibn Tufayl's thoughts can also be captured by understanding the light he describes in a monotonous Neo-Platonic style, in the form of a process or stage of the emitting stage of God's light. If the sun shines its light into the mirror, and the mirror reflects that light to another place, and so on, it creates diversity. Everything is a reflection of sunlight, not the sun or the mirror itself. That plurality will disappear if we look at the sun as the first source, but will appear again if we look in the mirror.²⁹

²⁸Richard Rudolf Water, p. 36.

²⁹Extracted from Bahtar Husein Shiddiqi, p. 532-537.

From the treatise of Hayy Ibn Yaqzân also, Ibn Tufayl wants to explain the ability of the active human intellect to understand anything without the help of messengers, of course with their intelligence. This is reflected in Hayy who is isolated and has not socialised on the island for more than 50 years. Hayy is a representative of a philosopher. In the next story, Hayy meets Absal who is a theologian by receiving knowledge from the Prophet, and Salaman who comes as a traditionalist. After discussing, the three agreed that they could come from different paths to the same conclusion. From that discussion, Ibn Tufayl wanted to say that religion and philosophy, revelation and reason can be reconciled.³⁰ While religion comes with various symbols of exoteric symbols for humans, philosophy is an esoteric truth.

Ellenchos in the Tale of Hayy bin Yaqzân

This famed romance is one of widely recognised legends in the literary tradition. The idea of this romance was not pure Ibn Tufayl's imagination. Ibn Sînâ also wrote a story with the same title and a relatively different story. In addition, Suhrawardî (1154-1191) also wrote relatively the same story but lesser than those by Ibn Sînâ and Ibn Tufayl. Amîn is one among scholars who presented the tales of Hayy b. Yaqzân that are written by those three great Muslim philosophers.³¹ The figures of Absal and Salaman in Ibn Tufayl's romance were also written by Ibn Sînâ entitled *Absal wa Salaman* known through the book *Isyârât* by al-Tusî. A.M. Goichon has written a special commentary on Ibn Sînâ's work.³² Goichon's work is commented on again by Georges C. Annawati in an appendix entitled "Gnose et philosophie; A propos du Recit de Hayy ibn Yaqzan de A.M. Goichon,"³³ and so on.

The framework of Ibn Thufayl's fictional romance is also not originally from Alexandria, but from Persia.³⁴ This Romance has been translated into various European languages. Many Western scholars such as Leffinitz studied and greatly appreciated the novel. In Hebrew, this work was translated and commented on by the Moses of Norbonne (14th century) and in Latin by Pico

³⁰ Ahmad Fu'âd Al-Ahwânî, *Islamic Philosophy*, (Cairo: Anglo Agyptian Bookshop, 1957), p. 121.

³¹ Ahmad Amîn, *Hayy b. Yaqzân li-Ibn Sînâ wa Ibn Tufayl wa al-Suhrawardî*, (Cairo: Dâr al-Ma 'ârif, 1952).

³² See A.M. Goichon, *Le Récit de Hayy ibn Yaqzan comment par des textes d'Avicenne*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959).

³³ Georges C. Annawati, "Gnose et philosophie; A propos du Recit de Hayy ibn Yaqzan de A.M. Goichon" in Georges C. Anawati, *Études de Philosophie Musulmane*, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1974), p. 159.

³⁴ See Bahtiar Husein Shiddiqi, p. 531.

della Mirandola (XV century). Further developments, this work was translated into Latin by E. Pococke entitled *Philosophus Autodidactus* (1671). Then in English by Simon Ockley entitled *The Improvement of Human Reason* (1708) or in a later edition entitled *The History of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* (1929), and in French by Leon Gauthier entitled *Hayy ben Yaqdhan; roman philosophique d'Ibn Thofail* (1936).³⁵ This romance also influenced a similar story by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).³⁶ Wainwright once clearly stated that Hayy b. Yaqzan's footprint in the famed tale of Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe.³⁷ This former Guardian editor also believes that Ibn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan has inspired Spinoza, Leibniz, and Locke.³⁸ Moshe Narboni, a Jewish philosopher from southern France, studied this philosophical tale that remains unpublished. Miller then studied Narboni's commentary on the tale.³⁹ Idris has extensively studied how the West took Ibn Tufayl as part of Western politics and civilisation.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Ismail has observed early modern England's reception of Ibn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan.⁴¹

Islamic teachings presuppose the presence of guidance in knowledge seeking. The guidance might come from the divine revelation or the ones who carry revelation, which are the messengers of God. Even, after the last Prophet Muhammad, there always be guide in certain period of time in particular place. They are called *mujaddid* or reformer. However, Ibn Tufayl is among Muslim scholars who argue that particular persons might be blessed to absorb knowledge and have guidance. Special persons with certain level of

³⁵See Richard Rudolf Waizer, "Ibn Tufayl" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (EB. Inc., 1970), Vol. XL, p. 1023. See also *New Age Encyclopedia*, (Grolier of Canada Ltd., 1965), Vol X., p. 36.

³⁶See Husain Ahmad Amin, *al-Mi'a al A'zam fi Târîkh al-Islâm*, (Cairo: Madbouli, n.d.), p. 187. See also Henri Corbin, *Histoire de la Philosophie Islamique*, (Beirut: 1966), p. 357.

³⁷Malti-Douglas conducted research on the influence of Hayy b. Yaqzan of Ibn Tufayl on European works. She concluded that it is uncertain that the romance Robinson Crusoe is heavily influenced by the tale of Hayy b. Yaqzan. See Malti-Douglas, Fedwa. Hayy b. Yaqzan as Male Utopia. In L.E. Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 52-68. Also see Mustafa Akyol, "Robinson Crusoe's Arab Muse," *New York Times*, April 7th, 2021, p. 19.

³⁸Lawrence Conrad, The World of Ibn Tufayl, in L. Conrad, *The World of Ibn Tufayl*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 1.

³⁹See Larry B. Miller. Philosophical Autobiography: Moshe Narboni's Introduction to His Commentary on Hayy Ibn Yaqzan. In L.E. Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 229-237.

⁴⁰Murad Idris, Producing Islamic Philosophy: The Life and Afterlives of Ibn Tufayl's. *European Journal of Political Theory* 15: 4, 2016.

⁴¹Muhammad I.U. Sid-Ahmad Ismail. Abubakr bin Tufayl's Hayy bin Yaqzan and its Reception in Early Modern England. *Ph.D. Thesis*. (University of Toronto 2014).

intelligence might be able to guide himself or herself without any helps from the so-called messengers of God.

To accentuate this opinion, Ibn Tufayl arranged imaginative tale with fictive personage Hayy b. Yaqzân in order to demonstrate that human being might be blessed to find the right guidance with his own intellectuality and experience. According to Leaman, Hayy b. Yaqzân is a perfect example from Ibn Tufayl to prove this idea.⁴² This idea is surely uncommon in the Muslim world, and Ibn Tufayl is an exception to this trend. Ibn Tufayl philosophically argues that human being has been granted with mind to seek and find truth by using the amazing strength of mind and intelligence. This is in line as what the Quaker, a Protestant sect produced an idea that human being possessed the so called “inward light” regardless of race, gender, and faith.⁴³ Baroud and Conrad also demonstrate the way Ibn Tufayl’s Hayy b. Yaqzan has influenced European and Australian writers.⁴⁴

A child named Hayy b. Yaqzân lived alone on an island. One version of the tale begins with birth of Hayy in an uninhabited island. Many sources mention that was intended to be unknown for an unblessed relationship between a man called Yaqzân and a woman who is the sister of a king. Another version mentions that after the birth, the baby Hayy was laid in a box and sent to sea. The box reached an empty island that is, according to Ahmad Amin, located in Indonesia. Amin mentions “*fî jazîra mahjûra min jazâ’ir al-hind al-latî tahta khatt al-istiwâ’*,” so the box reached “a remote island of archipelago under the equator.”⁴⁵ Tawil describes the place as the island of Waqwaq. She concluded that it “was actually an allegory for a paradise, an untouched earth, that was the home of Ibn Tufail’s protagonist in his philosophical tale, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (circa 1160 CE). The central character learns about the cycles of life through the flora and fauna of the island and infers eternity and divinity through mere observation, showing that one proves God’s existence through deduction rather than religious texts or societal teachings.”⁴⁶

⁴²Oliver Leamen, *Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*.

⁴³Mustafa Akyol, “Robinson Crusoe’s Arab Muse,” *New York Times*, April 7th, 2021, p. 19.

⁴⁴Mahmoud Baroud, *The Shipwrecked Sailor in Arabic and Western Literature: Ibn Tufayl and His Influence on European Writers*, (London: I.B. Taurist, 2012), p. J. See also Lawrence Conrad, *The World of Ibn Tufayl*, p. 1-3.

⁴⁵Ahmad Amin (ed.). *Hayy b. Yaqzan li-Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufayl wa al-Suhrawardi*, p. 10.

⁴⁶Rana Tawil, *Fruit of Desire: The Island of Waqwaq, Language, and Concept*. 19 July 2023. <https://www.mykalimag.com/en/2023/07/19/fruits-of-desire-the-island-of-waqwaq-language-and-concept/> (accessed 20 July 2024).

He was --according to widely recognised version-- weaned and raised by a deer. He had an exceedingly high curiosity. He realised that animals have natural clothing as a means of defence, while he is naked and unarmed. He then made leaves and skins of dead animals into clothing and took a stick as his weapon. Gradually, he came to know the necessities of life such as fire, fur, weaving and finally built his own hut.⁴⁷

He came to an idea about soul after observing and identifying the differences between soul-less object, animal and human being. He was getting more concerned with soul after witnessing with his naked eyes the death of the deer he was taking care. Over the time, the caregiver deer got older and eventually died. From the death of the deer, he studied the development and biological changes of living things. He then dissected the body of the deer and then concluded that the heart is central to the other organs. He also studied metal materials, flora and fauna around them, natural phenomena, and space/universe signs. According to Renan, the tale of Hayy b. Yaqzan has represented human curiosity that is eager to know and understand the nature of everything. With his human intelligence, he learned many things based on his own experiences.

From his observations, he concluded that behind these phenomena and diversities, there is a uniformity which he calls the First Cause or Creator of the World. He came to a conclusion that creation as a whole must originated from an eternal and immaterial Being.⁴⁸ The next questions for Hayy are Who is the First Cause or the Creator? How to connect with God technically? How to worship God? What are the rules to worship God? He found himself of needing these set of technicalities and knowledge. Therefore, according to Pococke who has been said so far as the first editor and translator of the treatise Hayy b. Yaqzan, "*quomodo ex Inferiorum contemplatione ad Superiorum notitiam Ratio humana ascendere possit*"⁴⁹ or the contemplation of the Inferior to knowledge of the Superior. This is the context of his meeting with Absal in the tale.

⁴⁷Muhammad Thâbit al-Fandî, *Dâ'ira al-Ma'ârif al-Islâmiya*, n.d. p. 215.

⁴⁸Remke Kruk, Ibn Tufayl: a Medieval Scholar's View on Nature. In L.E. Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 87. Kruk then extends and explores Ibn Tufayl's ideas on nature, and calls him as the fighter of ecology. Read the whole chapter by Kruk in this volume.

⁴⁹Pococke's translation is *Philosophus autodidactus, sive epistola Abi Jaafar, Ebn Tophail de Hai Ebn Yokdhan. In qua Ostenditur, quomodo ex Inferiorum contemplatione ad Superiorum notitiam Ratio humana ascendere possit* (Oxford: H. Hall. 1671). In Lawrence Conrad, *The World of Ibn Tufayl*, in L. Conrad, *The World of Ibn Tufayl*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 1.

One upon a time, he met Absal who was from a neighbouring island. In one version of the tale, Absal was mentioned as a person who brought knowledge about God and a set of religious teachings including messengers, scriptures, and rules. In Islamic context, Absal is comparable to a messenger who carries with him religious rules, just like a shari'a. In this regard, Hayy who already possessed a set of purely mind reflection on the basis of human intelligence, felt that Absal would perfect his natural findings.

Some scholars argue that the meeting of Hayy and Absal is a metaphor of the meeting of mind and revelation. Hayy represented purely mind reflection and philosophy on one side, Absal represented religion on the other. Goethe even considered this tale as a smart metaphor for the mutual need of mind and revelation. Absal taught religions and language to Hayy, while Hayy shared his philosophical wisdom.⁵⁰ He shared his subjective experiences to Absal who then realised the truth he had been believing so far. After discussing various things, both who departed from different traditions and experiences, were aware and united at the same conclusion.

It was said that both wanted to disseminate their believe and understanding to other people. They both went to an Island Absal came from. People initially welcome them warmly. Their efforts to educate people did not work. People rejected Hayy's and Absal's invitation to their believe for people already had their own system of believe. Absal, in one report, is said to complain by calling the people as "irrational animal."⁵¹ They eventually went back to Hayy's island and lived peacefully. They continued to perform their contemplation to God till they died on the island.

Other versions of Hayy b. Yaqzan have slightly different ways of tale narrating. That by Ibn Sina describes Hayy b. Yaqzan as an old wise man and Ibn Sina included himself as a part of the tale. Ibn Sina and his friends visited a town and met the old man (Hayy b. Yaqzan). Ibn Sina asked his permission to accompany the old man in his final journey. Hayy rejected simply because Ibn Sina is not supposed to leave his friends. According to Sa'd, in this work, Ibn Sina describes the old man Hayy b. Yaqzan as the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'al*).⁵² Similarly, Miller argues that the tale Hayy b. Yaqzan is an "explanation of the nature of the apprehension achieved when man's hylic intellect is

⁵⁰Murad Idris, *Producing Islamic philosophy*, p. 387.

⁵¹Murad Idris, *Producing Islamic philosophy*, p. 387.

⁵²Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy b. Yaqzan*, ed. Faruq Sa'd, (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1978), p.

conjoined with the active intellect.”⁵³ Furthermore, Ibn Sina also involve two other figures called Absal or Asal and Solomon, just like that by Ibn Tufayl. Ibn Sina describes Absal or Asal as Theoretical Intellect (*al-‘aql al-nazari*), and Solomon as the talking self (*al-nafs al-natiqa*).⁵⁴ The former could be understood as the mind reaching perfectness by way of *‘irfan* (knowing God), while the latter by way of understanding the shari’a. This is similar to Ibn Tufayl’s version where Absal is described as uninstitutionalised teachings representing the revelation, while Solomon is designated as materialised institutionalised teachings.

Ibn Bajja also presented the similar tale in his *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid* wherein Hayy b. Yaqzan is described as an extreme figure of modern human who lived alone and thought metaphysically in order to reach and absorb the Truth.⁵⁵ Ibn Bajja also presents the idea to educate other people as an ideal option. However, when the community has other option to believe, the second option is to abandon the society and live for the sake of God. According to Leaman, although human being could reach happiness by living together with people around. When the people rejected the invitation, then living alone is the best way to do. Only the smart divinely wise people could live alone under the direct guidance from God.⁵⁶ This is one of the ideas presented in any versions of the tale of Hayy b. Yaqzan.

Meanwhile, al-Suhrawardi does not employ Hayy b. Yaqzan as a figure in his philosophical tale. He acknowledges, however, that he admires much the tale of Hayy b. Yaqzan. He appreciates that the tale consists of amazing spiritual narratives. He also considers that it is one of the wonders of spiritual words and profound signs, full of allusions indicating the greatest phase. Furthermore, al-Suhrawardi argues that the great ideas in the tale of Hayy b. Yaqzan are extracted from God’s Scriptures accentuating levels of Sufism experienced by *ashab al-mukashafa* or those who are submerged in spiritual divine enlightenment.⁵⁷ In his version of this tale, al-Suhrawardi also includes himself as a figure seeking the Truth.

Hayy b. Yaqzan is a brilliant work with full of ellenchos. He wrote this fictional work to reconstruct important ideas, wises, and lessons to future generations

⁵³Larry B. Miller. Philosophical Autobiography: Moshe Narboni’s Introduction to His Commentary on Hayy Ibn Yaqzan. In L.E. Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 230.

⁵⁴Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy b. Yaqzan*, ed. Faruq Sa’d, p. 8.

⁵⁵Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy b. Yaqzan*, ed. Faruq Sa’d, p. 8.

⁵⁶Oliver Leamen, *Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*.

⁵⁷Ahmad Amin (ed.). *Hayy b. Yaqzan li-Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufayl wa al-Suhrawardi*, p. 135.

on God, soul, life, the nature, light, seeking knowledge, and many more. It is clear that he wrote this *ellenchos* to witness and establish the truth and God (al-Haqq) according to the ways demonstrated by Sufis and Ahl al-Dhawq in reaching certain level of sainthood and proximity with God. Ibn Tufayl found it difficult to demonstrate these ideas through narratives and descriptions. He found his ways to deliver his thoughts by employing allegories, symbols, metaphors, and *ellenchos* with fictive figures, time, and places. It is indeed another difficulty for readers to understand, interpret and extract those thoughts from many cryptograms and parables Ibn Tufayl had employed in his *Hayy b. Yaqzân*.

Conclusion

The fundamental difference between Islamic philosophy and Western philosophy is at the starting line. Western philosophy departs with its scepticism, while Islamic philosophy departs with its beliefs. Western philosophy departs from the desire to know and create truth, while Islamic philosophy departs from a desire to prove truth information received through religious texts. How radical is an Islamic philosophical thought, it will return to *al-tanzîh*, where it will always mention the First Cause, even though it is packed with various theories and thought speculations. Almost all Muslim philosophers, from al-Farâbî, to contemporary Muslim philosophers today, cannot escape this situation. Perhaps because of that, some say that the task of Muslim philosophers is to combine religion and philosophy, both of which are truth, and not two distinct truths. Likewise, this is what happened with Ibn Tufayl. Regardless of consistency or inconsistency, wrong or right, what Ibn Tufayl did in distinguishing the eternal essence and eternity of time was *al-tanzîh*'s effort, namely an attempt to distinguish the essence of the First Cause (Allah) from everything other than Him. Even so, there are still many scholars who consider philosophers as infidel and deviant.

Hayy b. Yaqzâ autodidactly learned from the way his mother deer and other animals to live, get food, build shelter, and secure themselves. As human being blessed with smart mind and heart, he learned further and thought beyond by storing food for tomorrow. He learned about soul and death when witnessing the death of his mother deer and other animals surrounding him. After doing physical surgery of dead bodies of animals, he absorbed the presence of immaterial soul within living material creatures which move the physical body. He learned astronomy and full stability from space sky objects which regularly rotate around their axis. He concluded that there must be a First Mover, First Cause of this universe that eventually he treated as God. This First Cause, he

clinched, must be All Knowing, All Wise, All Powerful, Who has no beginning, nor end, and other ultimate qualities addressed to God.

As I have demonstrated above, Muslim philosophers have used widely allegories, symbols, metaphors, parables, and the likes to explore and extend their philosophical understanding of God, nature, light, creation, and so forth. Ellenchos constructions have become an option for philosophers to deliver their great ideas. In the case of Hayy b. Yaqzan, at least four Muslim philosophers employed similar literary styles to describe their philosophical thoughts. They are Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Bajja, and al-Suhawardi. There must be more and more philosophers who did the same way. We witness the tale of Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe in the West. In modern days, we witness Jostein Gaarder, a contemporary Norwegian intellectual and author, who wrote his world-widely celebrated *Sofies verden: Roman om filosofiens historie* published in 1991.⁵⁸ It has been translated into more than 20 world languages. Employing metafiction, he started the story by presenting a fourteen-year-old girl who received a mysterious letter which questioned the origins of human being, the existence of the universe, and other philosophical questions. As this questions never crossed her mind and heart, the young girl eventually enjoyed her adventure in the philosophy realm.

⁵⁸Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World*, (Phoenix, 1995).

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