

**The Virtuous Son of the Rational:
A Traditionalist's Response to the *Falāsifa***
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Dimitri Gutas has recently made a strong case for considering the three centuries after Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037, *lat.* Avicenna) as the “Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy.”¹ He argues that the “originality and depth of philosophical thought” and the “diffusion of philosophical work and influence on society in general” during this period far surpassed that of earlier and later periods.² He traces the deep penetration of *falsafa*³ into Islamic intellectual life to the towering figure of Ibn Sīnā himself, who, by engaging with the religious and theological concerns and discussions of his day, made *falsafa* relevant for all subsequent discussions on philosophical and theological topics.⁴ Recent work by Robert Wisnovsky and Ayman Shihadeh has substantiated Gutas’s claim by further illuminating how much Ibn Sīnā was influenced by and, in turn, influenced subsequent theological discussions in *kalām*⁵ and other religious circles.⁶

What is abundantly clear from these studies is that thirteenth century philosophical and theological discussions had to contend with Ibn Sīnā’s sophisticated philosophical system, for it rationally defended and interpreted religious doctrines and

¹ Dimitri Gutas, “The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000–ca. 1350,” in *Avicenna and His Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven-Louvain-La-Neuve, September 8–September 11, 1999*, ed. Jules Janssens and Daniel De Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), pp. 81–97.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³ *Falsafa* is not really philosophy per se, but philosophy in a Neoplatonic Aristotelian tradition that traces back to the translation movement.

⁴ Gutas, “The Heritage of Avicenna,” pp. 84–86.

⁵ *Kalām* has traditionally been translated as theology or speculative theology. However, it is best seen as an intellectual rival of *falsafa* as both had their distinct cosmologies and methodologies, at least in the period before Ibn Sīnā, and both did engage with theological topics such as the existence of God. See Richard Frank, “The Science of *Kalām*,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, **2** (1992): 7–37; A. I. Sabra, “Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islamic Theology,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, **9** (1994): 1–42; and Alnoor Dhanani, *The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atoms, Space and Void in Basrian Muʿtazilī Cosmology* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

⁶ Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Robert Wisnovsky, “One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunnī Theology,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, **14** (2004): 65–100; and Ayman Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, **15** (2005): 141–179.

texts. However, since Ibn Sīnā was primarily committed to upholding the authority of a Neoplatonic Aristotelian system, in places where literal readings of scripture conflicted with this system, Ibn Sīnā was forced to reject the literal readings, e.g. the temporal creation of the universe and bodily resurrection. Ibn Sīnā rationalized his rejection of such literal interpretations by arguing that since scripture speaks to the masses and, thus, can only present truth figuratively, the literal meanings of the exoteric aspects of religion cannot be used in rational arguments. That is, texts from scriptural sources, whether Qur’ān or *ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet), cannot in themselves be presented in philosophical arguments to support or oppose theological doctrines.⁷ This conclusion strikes at the very foundation of traditionalist thought—that exoteric revelation should ground all religious discussions, ranging from law to complex theological discussions on anthropomorphism, creation of the universe and resurrection.⁸

Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 1287) took up the gauntlet on behalf of the traditionalists to attack Ibn Sīnā’s claim that exoteric revelation was irrelevant for truly philosophical discussions. His critique was necessitated by the appearance of Ibn Ṭufayl’s (d. 1186) philosophical narrative, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, in which Ibn Ṭufayl suggests that it is possible for an individual raised on a deserted island to rationally discover the underlying reality that is presented merely symbolically, and thus, imperfectly in revelation. Ibn al-Nafīs counters with his own narrative, *Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq*, to show that not only is autodidactic learning in religious and theological matters impossible, but that exoteric revelation is rational and, thus, should be permissible in philosophical arguments. In fact, Ibn al-Nafīs

⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), pp. 42–45.

⁸ See Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

proceeds to show that Ibn Sīnā's difficulty in establishing the individuality of a human soul after death can only be solved using scripture, which, in turn, implies that bodily resurrection can be rationally defended. His text reveals the "originality and depth of philosophical thought" that Gutas highlights as the characteristic of this period. Moreover, it reveals the complex interplay between reason and revelation during this period that cannot be characterized by simplistic models that assume, either, that the *falāsifa* (practitioners of *falsafa*) verbally professed a harmony between reason and revelation to escape persecution;⁹ or, that harmony was only possible in this period if revelation suffocated reason by making it submit to religious dogma.¹⁰ Ibn al-Nafīs, instead, provides an example of a more dialectical and interactive relationship between reason and revelation, whereby reason points to the necessity of revelation and revelation relies on reason to establish its own authority.¹¹

Section I: Ibn Ṭufayl's Harmony between Reason and Revelation: A Concession to Traditionalists or an Affront?

Ibn al-Nafīs's treatise is entitled *al-Risālat al-Kāmiliyya fi 'l-Sīrat al-Nabawiyya* (*The Treatise Relating to Kāmil on the Life-history of the Prophet*).¹² However, in biographical entries on Ibn al-Nafīs, this work is referred to only by the name of the

⁹ See, for example, George Hourani, "The Principal Subject of Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, **15** (1956): 40–46; and Richard Taylor, "'Truth does not contradict truth': Averroes and the Unity of Truth," *TOPOI*, **19** (2000): 3–16. Both, Hourani and Taylor, rely on Leo Strauss to a large extent; see Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Gelnco: Free Press, 1952).

¹⁰ See, for example, Gerhard Endress, "The Defense of Reason: The Plea for Philosophy in the Religious Community," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, **6** (1990): 1–49.

¹¹ Chapter 2 of my dissertation deals more thoroughly with Ibn al-Nafīs's argument for using reason to establish the soundness, and hence, authority of *ḥadīth* (Prophetic traditions) texts. Unlike other traditionalists, Ibn al-Nafīs classifies a *ḥadīth* as sound and authoritative (*ṣaḥīḥ*) purely on rational grounds without taking into consideration its transmission.

¹² This is the title stated at the end of the manuscript; Joseph Schacht and Max Meyerhof, *The Theologus Autodidactus of Ibn al-Nafīs, edited with an introduction, translation and notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 86. Henceforth, *Theologus*.

narrator in the story—*Risālat Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq* (*The Book of Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq*).¹³ The alternate title is significant as it illustrates that Ibn al-Nafīs’s account was received by his audience as a reaction to *Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān*—the recital and narrative of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Ṭufayl about a hermit and a philosopher mystic, respectively.¹⁴ In fact, Ibn al-Nafīs’s biographers say so explicitly:

[Najm al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī has] seen a small book of [Ibn al-Nafīs] which [Ibn al-Nafīs] opposed to the *Treatise of Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān* of Ibn Sīnā and which he called the *Book of Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq*. In it he defends the system of Islam and the Muslims’ doctrines on the missions of the Prophets, the religious laws, the resurrection of the body, and the transitoriness of the world.¹⁵

There are two important points that can be derived from this biographical entry. First off, the biographers have perceptively called attention to the change of name, and hence symbolism, from Ibn Sīnā’s text to that of Ibn al-Nafīs. The name Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān means “Living son of the Wakeful.” It is the proper name of the active intellect in Ibn Sīnā’s tale and, thereby, intimately tied to his theory of creative emanation.¹⁶ The name of the central character in Ibn Ṭufayl’s philosophical tale is also Ḥayy, even though he now represents a human being.¹⁷ Nonetheless, Ibn Ṭufayl holds on to aspects of Ibn Sīnā’s metaphysical system, especially the theory of emanation.¹⁸ Ibn al-Nafīs changes

¹³ *Theologus*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Parveen Hasanali, *Texts, Translators, Transmissions: “Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān” and its Reception in Muslim, Judaic and Christian milieux* (PhD Diss., McGill University, 1996), p. 108.

¹⁵ *Theologus*, p. 14; Yūsuf Zaydān, *‘Alā’ al-Dīn (Ibn al-Nafīs) al-Qurashī ‘i-ādat iktishāf* (Abu Dhabi, 1999), p. 42.

¹⁶ “Ḥayy b. Yaḳzān,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New edition, ed. E. van Donzel (Leiden: Brill, 1960–1993). Henceforth *EF*². For a detailed exposition of Ibn Sīnā’s theory of emanation and the active intellect, see Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁷ “Ḥayy b. Yaḳzān,” in *EF*².

¹⁸ Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes*, pp. 147–48. I am not implying that Ibn Ṭufayl does not advance any original philosophical ideas, as Gauthier believed; Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy Bin Yaḳzān*, ed. and tr. into French by Léon Gauthier (Beirut, 1936). I accept Sami Hawi’s critique of Gauthier; see Sami Hawi, “Ibn Ṭufayl: On the Existence of God and His Attributes,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, **95** (1975): 58–67.

the name of the narrator to Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq, which means “Virtuous son of the Rational,” signifying a radical break from the symbolism, and hence, philosophical system of his predecessor.¹⁹ Furthermore, the new names of the narrator, Fāḍil, and the real hero, Kāmil (Perfect), indicate a radical shift in Ibn al-Nafīs’s understanding of the relationship between reason and revelation as we shall see.

Secondly, the biographers not only pick out religious theses that are defended by Ibn al-Nafīs, but they single out some of the more problematic religious theses, as far as the *falāsifa* are concerned.²⁰ Bodily resurrection (*al-ba‘th al-jismānī*) and the temporality of the world (*kharāb al-‘ālam*) are two theses that the *falāsifa*, especially Ibn Sīnā, categorically denied.²¹ As for the Prophetic missions and their laws, from what we have already seen, the *falāsifa* did not place the same emphasis on them as the traditionalists, which proved to be a bone of contention between these groups.

It is also important to note here that the biographers confused Ibn Sīnā’s and Ibn Ṭufayl’s narratives with each other and incorrectly assumed that Ibn al-Nafīs’s tale was a response to Ibn Sīnā’s. Yet, their error in confusing these two works reflects the complicated manner in which these texts are intertwined and does not only represent a simple factual error. For starters, Ibn al-Nafīs’s own contemporaries were in the habit of confusing Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Sīnā’s treatises. Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282), for example, assumed that “perhaps he (Ibn Sīnā) wrote it [*Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*] in Persian, and so we

¹⁹ Muhsin Mahdi, “Remarks on the *Theologus Autodidactus*,” *Studia Islamica*, **31** (1970): 197–209; Hasanali, *Texts, Translators, Transmissions*, p. 107. Mahdi’s article is a preliminary attempt at deconstructing the narrative. However, it barely goes beyond the obvious and also seems to suggest that the different voices in Ibn al-Nafīs’s narrative almost belong to real people rather than characters created by Ibn al-Nafīs for some rhetorical purpose. That is, the article does no more than document the various voices through the course of the narrative without really engaging in any analysis.

²⁰ Ibn al-Nafīs also defends some other religious theses that are not brought up by these biographers, e.g. the Sunnī understanding of the caliphate and the events that will unfold before resurrection.

²¹ See al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: a parallel English-Arabic text*, ed. and tr. Michael Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1997).

may have an Arabic translation of it, made by Ibn Ṭufayl.”²² The matter is further complicated by the fact that the philosophical system presented in Ibn Ṭufayl’s text “is, transparently, another outline of Avicenna’s system”²³—a fact that would have only further reinforced this confusion.²⁴ In fact, Ibn Ṭufayl’s main claim that a person may autodidactically arrive at the truths of religion is entailed in Ibn Sīnā’s claim that reason is a better means for arriving at truth than revelation. Moreover, traditionalist scholars were looking for any chance to attack Ibn Sīnā’s system or provide alternatives to it, because of its attack on traditionalist ideology.²⁵ Thus, ultimately whether Ibn al-Nafīs or his audience correctly understood the *Risālat Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq* to be a response to Ibn Ṭufayl is immaterial. What truly matters is that the text clearly takes on aspects within the Avicennian system. Hence, as we take a closer look at Ibn al-Nafīs’s *Risāla* and compare it to Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Ḥayy*, we should continuously bear in mind that the real target of criticism is the towering figure of Ibn Sīnā.

At the beginning of his treatise, Ibn al-Nafīs states that his “intention in this treatise is to relate what Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq transmitted from the man called Kāmil concerning the life-story of the Prophet and the ordinances of religious Law (*al-sunan al-*

²² “Ḥayy b. Yaqzan” in *EF*². The confusion is quite understandable given that the same characters are involved in the tales of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Ṭufayl: Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān, Absāl and Salāmān. Ibn Khaldūn later also propagated this error by attributing the spontaneous generation story of the birth of Ḥayy to Ibn Sīnā instead of Ibn Ṭufayl; see his, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, tr. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958). For an excellent, detailed examination of the connections between the Tufaylian and Avicennian narratives and the rich symbolisms and transferences, see Hasanali, *Texts, Translators, Transmissions*, chapter 3.

²³ Davidson, *Alfarabic, Avicenna and Averroes*, p. 148.

²⁴ Ibn Ṭufayl’s reliance on Avicenna’s system is, of course, not at all surprising since he himself acknowledges his debt to Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī in the prologue of his text; see Dominique Urvoy, “The Rationality of Everyday Life: An Andalusian Tradition (Apropos of Ḥayy’s First Experience),” in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, ed. Lawrence Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 38–51, p. 45; and Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān: a Philosophical Tale*, tr. Lenn Goodman (Los Angeles: Gee Tee Bee, 1983), pp. 95–97, 100–103. Henceforth, *Ḥayy (English)*.

²⁵ Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazali to al-Razi.”

sharʿiyya) . . .”²⁶ What is significant even in this short opening statement is the close association of reason and exoteric revelation. The word “fāḍil” is used to describe a person who is virtuous, distinguished, and a man of learning who does not possess any failings.²⁷ “Nāṭiq” is derived from the same root as *manṭiq*, which means logic. As such, it refers to a rational, or philosophically sound person. Kāmil means the perfect one and its various forms had much currency in the *falāsifa* literature, especially with reference to the theory of intellection.²⁸ Finally, the association of these religious virtues and reason is with aspects of the religion known to every lay Muslim: the biography of the Prophet and the religious ordinances. Thus, there is no reference in Ibn al-Nafīs to some hidden or esoteric truths.

On the other hand, Ibn Ṭufayl’s treatise is filled with references to esoteric and hidden truths from the outset. For example, he begins his treatise by stating that he has been “asked . . . to unfold . . . the secrets of the oriental philosophy” to the best of his ability.²⁹ Further on in the introduction, he claims that those who acquire this truth (*al-ḥaqq*) can “speak of it publicly only in riddles (*ramz*), because our true, orthodox and established faith (*al-millata ’l-ḥanīfa wa ’l-sharīʿata al-muḥammadiyya*) guards against a hasty plunge into such things.”³⁰ By the end of the introduction, it is clear that Ibn Ṭufayl’s program is, as Hasanali phrases it, “to assist [his] readers in their ‘unveiling the secrets’” through the method of “rational philosophy.”³¹ Thus, unlike Ibn al-Nafīs’s introduction, the entire emphasis of this introduction is on a hidden, mystical, esoteric

²⁶ *Theologus*, p. 38.

²⁷ See J. G. Hava, *Arabic English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001), p. 567; and Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab* (Beirut, 1999), vol. 10, p. 280.

²⁸ See “Insān al-Kāmil,” in *EF*².

²⁹ *Hayy (English)*, p. 95.

³⁰ *Hayy (English)*, p. 99; Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, ed. Dr. A. N. Nādir (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1993), p. 20. Henceforth, *Hayy (Arabic)*.

³¹ Hasanali, *Texts, Translators, Transmissions*, p. 75.

wisdom (*ḥikma*) that needs to be discovered by the reader through the riddles (*ramz*) provided within the tale. The bulk of the treatise then proceeds to guide the readers to that wisdom using the fable of the philosophic mystic Ḥayy.³²

Moreover, Ibn Ṭufayl suggests in the introduction itself that there might be a disparity between the “orthodox and established faith” and this esoteric wisdom, as suggested in the quote above. This concern is also prominent during his discussion of al-Ghazālī’s belief in a “tripartite division of ideas into those held in common with the masses, those exhorting all who seek the truth, and those a man keeps to himself and divulges only to the people who share his beliefs.”³³ For, even though Ibn Ṭufayl maintains that al-Ghazālī’s texts are confusing because “he preached to the masses,” he condones this practice and appreciates al-Ghazālī’s use of “hints and intimations” for those who “have found the truth by their own insight . . .”³⁴ Thus, already in the introduction, Ibn Ṭufayl suggests that the exoteric religion of the masses and the mystical, yet rational, wisdom of the initiated appear to be in conflict. The last part of the book is then entirely devoted to illustrating that the esoteric truths that Ḥayy arrives at by himself are in fact in harmony with revealed religion even though they may not appear to be so. As Ibn Ṭufayl states:

[Absāl³⁵] related all the religious traditions describing the divine world, Heaven and Hell, rebirth and resurrection, the gathering and the reckoning, the scales of justice and the strait [*sic*] way. Ḥayy understood all this and found none of it in contradiction with what he had seen for himself from his supernal vantage point (*maqāmihi ’l-karīm*).³⁶

³² Hourani, “The Principal Subject,” pp. 42–43.

³³ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 101.

³⁴ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 101.

³⁵ An additional character in the tale who seeks solitude on Ḥayy’s deserted island, without knowing beforehand that Ḥayy lived there. Absāl proceeds to communicate to Ḥayy all knowledge of the outside world, including its rules, customs and religious traditions.

³⁶ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 161; *Ḥayy (Arabic)*, 93.

Even though Ibn Ṭufayl suggests that the two are in harmony, he recognizes that the matter is a little complex. Hence, a few lines later, he confesses that he cannot fathom why a prophet of God would “rely for the most part on symbols to portray the divine world, allowing mankind to fall into the grave error of conceiving the Truth corporeally and ascribing to Him things which He transcends and is totally free of (and similarly with reward and punishment) instead of simply revealing the truth (*wa aḍraba ‘an mukāshafa*)?”³⁷ He is even more baffled by the religious accommodation of material realities:

Property meant nothing to [Ḥayy], and when he saw all the provisions of the Law to do with money . . . or those regulating sales and interest . . . , he was dumbfounded. All this seemed superfluous. If people understood things as they really are, Ḥayy said, they would forget these inanities and seek the Truth. They would not need all these laws.³⁸

At this juncture, the underlying conflict between the *falāsifa* and the mystics, on the one hand, and the traditionalists on the other, rears its head: revelation is superfluous for the elite because it speaks of a reality that has already been grasped at a higher level. This tension is never resolved in favor of the traditionalist view, i.e. the claim that the Truth can never be grasped in its entirety without resorting to revelation. In fact, if anything, Ibn Ṭufayl’s proposed solution to the problem would frustrate and annoy the traditionalists, not only because it considers revelation an inferior way of arriving at the truth, but also because he basically calls the traditionalists “irrational animals.”

Ibn Ṭufayl adds that, when Ḥayy recognized that people were focusing too much on the literal text and losing the underlying reality towards which the metaphors were beckoning people, he started to teach a group of men that “approached nearest to

³⁷ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 161; *Ḥayy (Arabic)*, 93–94.

³⁸ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 161–162.

intelligence and understanding” from amongst the masses.³⁹ However, “the moment he rose the slightest bit above the literal . . . they recoiled in horror from his ideas and closed their minds.”⁴⁰ And as if that was not enough, Ibn Ṭufayl goes on to state that

the more [Ḥayy] taught, the more repugnance [the group] felt, despite the fact that these were men who loved the good and sincerely yearned for the Truth. Their inborn infirmity simply would not allow them to seek Him as Ḥayy did, to grasp the true essence of His being and see Him in His own terms. They wanted to know Him in some human way.⁴¹

Finally, he concludes “that most men are no better than unreasoning animals

(*aktharuhum bi-manzilati ’l-ḥayawān ghayr al-nāṭiq*), and realized that all wisdom and guidance, all that could possibly help them was contained already in the words of the prophets and the religious traditions.”⁴²

Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl explicitly equates the masses with irrational animals and states that the only path to salvation for them is to adhere to the literal meaning of the revealed texts. Yet, since these “unreasoning animals” are incapable of rising “above the literal (*al-zāhir*),” it implies, in effect, that the literal text of revelation must also be irrational.⁴³ In the eyes of a traditionalist, that is a direct attack against the authority of revelation.

Moreover, a traditionalist would not perceive Ibn Ṭufayl’s proposed reconciliation between reason and religion as a defensive, apologetic move. Rather, a traditionalist would be prone to see it as a decisive attack against his belief system. For, Ibn Ṭufayl does not see the traditionalist’s adherence to anthropomorphic descriptions of God as a pious reverence of revelation. On the contrary, he calls them ignorant and too consumed by their egos and possessions, such that the only way they can fathom God’s being is by

³⁹ *Hayy (English)*, p. 162.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁴² *Hayy (English)*, p. 164; *Hayy (Arabic)*, p. 96.

⁴³ *Hayy (English)*, p. 163; *Hayy (Arabic)*, p. 95.

resorting to human descriptions. He uses Qur'ānic verses to rebuke them for these tendencies, in order to argue that they are the ones in the wrong for holding on to the literal meanings.⁴⁴ Similarly, he equates the traditionalists' adherence to religious laws not with piety, but with their unending desire and obsession with this world and all that it offers, finally concluding with the verse that “for the insolent who prefer this life—Hell will be their refuge.”⁴⁵ Far from being a Straussian move to avoid persecution, Ibn Ṭufayl would come across to his traditionalist audiences as demanding confrontation.⁴⁶

Thus, it is not surprising that a traditionalist would take up the challenge presented by Ibn Ṭufayl, in order to show that those who cling to the literal word of revelation are also being rational. That, in a nutshell, is the entire purpose of Ibn al-Nafīs's treatise. Schacht and Meyerhof are wrong in entitling the book *Theologus Autodidactus*, since, as Hasanali says, the title is a misnomer in the case of Ibn al-Nafīs.⁴⁷ Ibn al-Nafīs's goal is not to show how a person can independently arrive at all the exoteric truths of revelation. That would run counter to his traditionalist belief in the necessity of revelation for arriving at the Truth. Rather, the goal is to show that exoteric revelation is itself rational and, thus, should be accepted within the confines of a demonstrative argument.

Hence, we return to the change in the title of the work from *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* to *Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq*. The word Fāḍil in the name is derived from the word faḍl (virtue)—the word Ibn Ṭufayl uses to describe the masses (*ahl al-faḍl*) of the island who are no better

⁴⁴ *Hayy (English)*, pp. 163–64.

⁴⁵ *Hayy (English)*, p. 164.

⁴⁶ Strauss, *The Art of Persecution*; and Hourani, “The Principal Subject.”

⁴⁷ Hasanali, *Texts, Translators, Transmissions*, p. 106.

than unreasoning animals (*bi-manzilati 'l-ḥayawān ghayr al-nāṭiq*).⁴⁸ So, by calling his character Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq he is directly responding to the last part of Ibn Ṭufayl's text. Ibn al-Nafīs means to show that the virtuous, religious masses (*ahl al-faḍl*) of Ibn Ṭufayl's island are not irrational but rational for believing in exoteric scripture. His entire allegory is one long argument against what he and his contemporary traditionalists took to be the main purpose of Ibn Ṭufayl's text: that traditionalism is irrational.

Section II: Rejecting Autodidactic Learning, Defending the Rationality of Exoteric Religion

We have already seen that Ibn al-Nafīs states that his aim in the text is to convey what Kāmil came to learn about the Prophet and his life-history. The story itself begins in a manner comparable to that of Ibn Ṭufayl's fable: with a description of a deserted island and the spontaneous birth of a human—Kāmil in the case of Ibn al-Nafīs and Ḥayy in the case of Ibn Ṭufayl. Both, Kāmil and Ḥayy, then proceed to observe the natural world and, in the process, arrive at a belief in God as the creator of the universe. However, there are important differences in both accounts that directly bear on Ibn al-Nafīs's rejection of, and Ibn Ṭufayl's advocacy of, autodidactic learning.⁴⁹

Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy observes the natural world in order to progress systematically to the knowledge of the spiritual world.⁵⁰ Ḥayy's dissections lead him to speculate on the nature of spirits, souls and the Platonic notion of forms, ultimately causing him to turn

⁴⁸ *Ḥayy (Arabic)*, pp. 89, 96.

⁴⁹ There are also significant differences in the accounts of spontaneous generation, as well as of the early lives of Ḥayy and Kāmil that are not entirely important for our purposes.

⁵⁰ Hasanali, *Texts, Translations, Transmissions*, p. 115.

away from the natural towards the spiritual world.⁵¹ He “learns to dissociate the soul, which he honors as master, from the body, . . .” whose parts he sees as simply the soul’s “servants or agents.”⁵² This Platonic disgust for matter and the sub-lunar world rears its head fully later in the tale when Ḥayy dissociates himself from bodily functions and requirements as much as possible, in order to focus on the celestial and spiritual side of things.⁵³

Ibn al-Nafīs’s *Kāmil*, on the other hand, does not delve upon anything spiritual during his dissections and observations of the plant and animal kingdom.⁵⁴ The philosophical and metaphysical systems that are so prominent in Ibn Ṭufayl’s account are entirely missing from that of Ibn al-Nafīs. Instead, *Kāmil* stays away from larger metaphysical questions as much as possible. The most that he indulges in such larger questions is to affirm, based on his observations, “that all parts of . . . animals and plants exist for certain purposes and uses, and that nothing of them is superfluous and useless.”⁵⁵ By making *Kāmil* stay away from metaphysical and theological speculations, Ibn al-Nafīs is making a subtle point about how much the natural world can reveal about divinity and the spiritual world—a point that he emphasizes in his dramatic shift in the narrative a few paragraphs later.

Of course, the discussions about the natural and celestial world in both texts are meant to lead up to arguments for the existence of God. Yet, the similarity between the

⁵¹ *Hayy (English)*, pp. 115–127.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 9, 117.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵⁴ *Theologus*, pp. 40–43; Hasanali, *Texts, Translations, Transmissions*, p. 115. Moreover, as Hasanali points out, instead of focusing on “spiritual notions,” Ibn al-Nafīs chooses to highlight *Kāmil*’s observations of “aggressive predators and timid victims” in the animal world. “These observations are not incidental. The lessons that *Kāmil* learns is that the human animal is helpless and needs to live within the norms of society” (pp. 115–116). See below.

⁵⁵ *Theologus*, p. 43.

two texts at this point is merely superficial. Ḥayy and Kāmil’s “knowledge of the Creator and His attributes” is not identical and neither are they led to their respective knowledge through the same process of reasoning.⁵⁶ Rather, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn al-Nafīs part ways sooner than has hitherto been suggested by commentators of Ibn al-Nafīs precisely because the latter have missed the real purpose behind Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn al-Nafīs’s discussions of the natural and celestial worlds.

We have already seen that Ibn Ṭufayl’s entire purpose behind his detailed description of Ḥayy’s observations of the natural and celestial world is to illustrate just how much Ḥayy came to learn about the spiritual world from them. Moreover, we also know from later on in the text that Ibn Ṭufayl is committed to: 1. a theory of emanation and; 2. the possibility of being guided by the unchanging celestial beings and intelligences towards the unchanging Divine in order to accomplish a mystical union during which Ḥayy can envisage “the whole structure of spiritual intelligences, bodies and matter that emanates from the Divine.”⁵⁷ Thus, for Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy not only needs to infer the existence of God from his observations, but he also needs to find in these observations a path to the unchanging, eternal One. For that reason, Ibn Ṭufayl is committed to the eternity of the universe because, in his mind, only an unchanging, eternal universe that is most like the forms can lead Ḥayy to meditate on the Divine. As a result, his proofs for the existence of God are more proofs for the possibility of an eternal

⁵⁶ Schacht and Meyerhof claim otherwise; see *Theologus*, p. 30.

⁵⁷ Remke Kruk, “Neoplatonists and After: From Ibn Ṭufayl to Ibn al-Nafīs,” in *The Neoplatonic Tradition: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Themes*, ed. Arjo Vanderjagt & Detlev Pätzold (Köln: Dinter, 1991), pp. 75–85, p. 80; *Hayy (English)*, pp. 128–130, 138–153.

universe than for the existence of God,⁵⁸ for he is forced to confront al-Ghazālī's charges of heresy against Ibn Sīnā for believing in an eternal universe.⁵⁹

Ibn al-Nafīs, on the other hand, wants to shut down all avenues to autodidactic learning, for, being a traditionalist, he wants to argue for the authority and necessity of revelation. Thus, in the first part of the treatise, he intentionally blocks off Ibn Ṭufayl's proposed path towards autodidactic learning at three places. First, as has already been mentioned, Ibn al-Nafīs sticks to an empirical description of the natural world and stays away from all metaphysical language. This is so even though Ibn al-Nafīs subscribes to Aristotelian physics and metaphysics generally, i.e. the distinction between matter and form and body and soul.⁶⁰ Second, he passes over any description of the celestial world.⁶¹ That is, he does not want to open up the possibility for Kāmil to postulate an unchanging, eternal heaven, based on the seemingly incessant, identical daily rotation of the stars and planets. Since Kāmil never posits an eternal, unchanging world, he cannot use that as a means to understanding and relating to the eternal, unchanging God. Hence, Kāmil has no need to contemplate the possibility of an eternal universe and the problems that such a universe would create for an eternal, all-powerful God. That is why he concludes this section using the classic Avicennian argument for the existence of God

⁵⁸ Hawi has nicely abstracted from Ibn Ṭufayl's treatise all his proofs for the existence of God and presented them in a succinct, logical fashion; see his, "Ibn Tufayl: On the Existence of God and His Attributes."

⁵⁹ al-Ghazālī's "Fourth Discussion" specifically targets the *falāsifa*'s contention that the world is simultaneously eternal and created; see his, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. He explicitly accuses them of heresy on this count at the conclusion of the treatise as well (p. 230).

⁶⁰ See, for example, *Theologus*, pp. 28–30 (in Arabic); Ibn al-Nafīs, *Mūjaz fī 'l-ṭibb*, ed. °Abd al-Karīm °Azabawī (Cairo, 1986); and Ibn al-Nafīs, *Risālat al-A'ḍā'*, ed. Yūsuf Zaydān (Cairo, 1991).

⁶¹ *Theologus*, p. 43: "Then [Kāmil] passed on to the celestial bodies and observed their movements and their respective positions, and their revolutions and the like, as we have explained in another book." Though it would be nice to locate such a book, if indeed Ibn al-Nafīs ever wrote it, the real point is that Ibn al-Nafīs wants to undercut Ibn Ṭufayl's main argument at its source.

that was becoming part and parcel of theological discussions during the thirteenth century.⁶²

Finally, the sharpest break with autodidactic learning takes place with a complete shift in the narrative that occurs immediately after Kāmil becomes aware of the existence of God:

When . . . Kāmil had reached in his knowledge the degree described . . . , he desired to know what are the claims of the Creator on His servants, and he reflected whether it was convenient that the Creator should be worshipped and obeyed, and which was the method of knowing the worship concordant with His Majesty, and he continued to think about this for some time. *Then it happened that the winds threw upon the island a ship in which [there were] a great number of merchants and other people.*⁶³

This shift is important because it shows that Kāmil actually never resolves these issues on his own. Instead, Kāmil becomes enamored with the visitors, their food, clothes, and so on, and proceeds to learn about their communities, their cities, their language and, in short, their civilization. Only after he has mingled with these visitors and learnt their ways does Kāmil return to reflect upon God. However, by that point, the problematic has completely changed. Kāmil is no longer interested in deriving the “claims of the Creator,” or “the method of knowing the worship concordant with His Majesty.” Rather, Kāmil sets aside his earlier questions, and immediately proceeds to rationalize the necessity of prophethood, Divine revelation and the progressive nature of prophecy—a rationalization that is very similar to Ibn Sīnā’s defense of prophecy⁶⁴:

[M]an can live well only if he is with a community who keep between them a law by which all disputes are settled. This is possible only if that law is met with obedience and acceptance, and this is the case only if it is believed to come forth

⁶² The argument states that the necessarily existent in itself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihī*) brings into being all beings whether eternal or contingent, and that there can only be one such being; see *Theologus*, pp. 43–44. For the importance of this Avicennian argument in thirteenth century theological discussions, see Wisnovsky, “One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunni Theology.”

⁶³ *Theologus*, p. 44.

⁶⁴ Avicenna, “Healing: Metaphysics X,” tr. Michael Marmura in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1963), pp. 99–101.

from Allah, and this is the case only if it emanates from a person whom they regard as truthful when he informs them that it comes from Allah. . . . Then he reflected on the beneficial role of this prophet, and found it threefold. Firstly, he transmits to mankind Allah's law⁶⁵ . . . ; secondly, he makes known to mankind the majesty and other attributes of Allah; thirdly, he makes known the resurrection and the happiness and unhappiness which are prepared for them in the world to come. . . . These things are accepted only with difficulty by the natures of many people Had not men in our time become acquainted with the precepts of the law, and accustomed to its doctrines, they would at once disapprove of it and disbelieve the prophets. As the acceptance of these things is difficult, men would, if the prophet revealed them at once, without having been preceded by other prophets . . . , be very much deterred from him and would strongly declare him to be a liar. Therefore it is fitting that at first some prophets should reveal that part of these things which is most easily accepted and most urgently needed for the preservation and the good life of mankind, namely the transmission of Allah's law to men. . . .

Kāmil for this reason believed that the purpose of prophecy cannot be realized by one prophet, but that there must be several prophets of whom the first bring the (doctrines) which prepare men for the understanding of those (doctrines) which the later prophets bring. Every one of the later prophets must repeat what his predecessor brought and add to it until the beneficial function of prophecy is completed with the last prophet. Therefore the last one must know all that his predecessors brought, and must be able to reveal all that his predecessors had revealed. Therefore the prophet who is the Seal of the Prophets must be the most excellent of them . . .⁶⁶

It should be clear that without interacting with human society and knowing about its history, Kāmil cannot advance this proof for the necessity of revelation. Thus, there is a strong element of autodidactic learning that is present in Ibn Ṭufayl that is immediately rejected by Ibn al-Nafīs. Yet, Ibn al-Nafīs's proof for prophecy is identical to that of Ibn Sīnā and the other *falāsifa*, and hence counts as one that an individual can arrive at rationally on his own, albeit while participating in society. However, there is nothing that rationally necessitates the existence of more than one prophet, as is evident in Ibn Sīnā's

⁶⁵ This entire argument was widely accepted by the *falāsifa*; see Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*.

⁶⁶ *Theologus*, pp. 45–48.

own defense of prophecy where he only posits the necessity of one prophet.⁶⁷ The existence of a multitude of prophets can only be known and rationalized *post facto*. Since Kāmil rationally defends the progressive nature of prophecy and revelation, it shows that he is not arriving at this truth autodidactically, but rather he is rationalizing its occurrence after learning about it. Ibn al-Nafīs’s commentators have generally failed to make this subtle, yet important distinction.

Almost every scholar that has studied Ibn al-Nafīs’s text has been misled by the style of his prose.⁶⁸ They have taken Ibn al-Nafīs’s prose literally when he claims that, for example, Kāmil reflected upon particular topics on his own, or that Kāmil found something to be necessary which, by the way, turned out to be exactly how it took place in history, or how it is found in the revealed scriptures, and so forth. We have already seen that Schacht and Meyerhof entitle the book, *Theologus Autodidactus*. They also claim in their introduction that, for example, Kāmil “discovers for himself not only the duties of man in worship and social relations, but also the periodical development of prophecy, the life-history of the last Prophet, the subsequent fate of the community of this Prophet, and the end of this world with the signs preceding it.”⁶⁹ Similarly, Remke Kruk also believes that Kāmil “arrives at knowledge of the religious truths” by “independent reasoning.”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, however much the prose might suggest that Ibn al-Nafīs is making a case for a self-taught theologian, that is, in fact, furthest from the truth.

The fact that Ibn al-Nafīs rejects the possibility of a self-taught theologian comes through in a number of places in the text. We have already seen how he breaks the

⁶⁷ Avicenna, “Healing: Metaphysics X,” p. 100.

⁶⁸ The notable exception is Parveen Hasanali.

⁶⁹ *Theologus*, p. 31.

⁷⁰ Kruk, “Neoplatonists and After,” p. 82.

narrative at precisely the point where, if Kāmil were to follow in the footsteps of Ḥayy, Kāmil would have independently arrived at how to worship the Creator. Kāmil, instead, is forced to come into contact with humans and become a part of human society, which he ultimately ends up extolling: “[Kāmil] remembered how miserable his life had been because he was always naked in cold and heat, and had to confine himself to natural foodstuffs, and the animals always attacked and bit him.”⁷¹ Once acquainted with human culture and history, Kāmil then returns to his rational contemplations. However, it is quite evident at this point that Kāmil is not independently “discovering” past historical events. Rather, he is merely rationalizing the occurrence of events that have been narrated to him. That explains why Ibn al-Nafīs so carelessly refers to actual names of places, religions and figures over the course of the narrative. For if Ibn al-Nafīs was serious about presenting Kāmil as a *theologus autodidactus*, he would certainly have not made such elementary mistakes. Schacht and Meyerhof record these slips but are unable to see their significance given that they take Ibn al-Nafīs’s introduction at face-value:

As regards the general plan of the work, Ibn al-Nafīs . . . refrains from pointing out himself the concordance between the results of the reasoning of his hero and the actual facts, but leaves that to the reader; nevertheless the word *Islām* escapes him . . . ; it is also inconsistent, given his premisses [*sic*], that he should mention Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, and Jesus, the Jews, the Christians, and the Zoroastrians, as well as the Banū Hāshim, in connexion [*sic*] with the genealogy of the Last Prophet . . . , Mecca and the Ka‘ba . . . , and Yemen in connexion with the Last Things . . . , apart from other minor facts of this kind.⁷²

Ibn al-Nafīs’s goal to rationalize history, as opposed to discover history, is plainly evident throughout his discussion of the biography of the Prophet. At every step of the biography, Ibn al-Nafīs provides arguments to illustrate that the details, events and the

⁷¹ *Theologus*, p. 45.

⁷² *Theologus*, p. 35.

character of the Prophet are in absolute conformity and harmony with reason. Take, for example, the manner in which he rationalizes the genealogy of the Prophet. Ibn al-Nafīs’s readers would agree with the statement that the “noblest possible genealogy” is that which goes back to Abraham since he “is held in equally high esteem by all religions.”⁷³ Thus, in order for the Seal of the Prophets to be the “most excellent of the prophets,” under Arab notions of character and lineage, he too must be a descendant of Abraham. Furthermore, since this prophet brings new revelation and completes the mission of prophecy, if he is part of another religion before receiving his revelations then he would be considered an apostate by the followers of that religion after he brings forth the new scripture and “that would invite people to shun him.”⁷⁴ For this reason he cannot be a Jew or a Christian and so he cannot be from the descendants of Jacob or Esau.⁷⁵ Thus, he must be from amongst the descendants of Ishmael, and since the noblest of them are the Hāshimites, he must also be a Hāshimite. And, in fact, that is exactly what Prophet Muhammad was.

It should be plainly obvious by now that Ibn al-Nafīs is not even trying to suggest that Kāmil constructed this genealogy of the top of his head. The numerous slip-ups in referring to actual historical figures and the form of the argument both suggest that he is only interested in showing that these events are in perfect harmony with reason. The liberal use of the phrase “*lā budda wa-an*” (necessarily) throughout the text is meant to bring into sharp focus the inner logic and rationality of the sequence of events and is not

⁷³ *Theologus*, pp. 49, 124–125.

⁷⁴ *Theologus*, p. 124.

⁷⁵ Contrary to Schacht and Meyerhof’s understanding that Ibn al-Nafīs meant Jesus (ʿĪsā) here and not Esau (ʿĪṣ), that is in fact not the case at all (*Theologus*, p. 49, fn. 2). Medieval Muslims considered Jews to be the descendants of Jacob (Israel) and Christians to be the descendants of Esau. See *Lisān al-ʿarab*, vol. 9, pp. 308, 499. Besides, Muslims accept the traditional Christian belief that Jesus led a celibate life, so it would be impossible for Ibn al-Nafīs to claim that Christians are the descendants of Jesus.

meant to suggest some absolute notion of necessity. Even less should it be seen as an example of Ibn al-Nafīs’s adherence to the doctrine of “*aṣlah*, ‘that which is most right and proper.’”⁷⁶ This specific notion was developed in Mu‘tazili *kalām* to express how certain things were necessarily incumbent upon God to do, e.g. make His creatures in the best possible way.⁷⁷ Although Ibn al-Nafīs seems to subscribe to this doctrine for the purposes of God “necessarily tak[ing] the greatest care of everything,”⁷⁸ it certainly does not guide his discussions of the life of the Prophet. All Ibn al-Nafīs wants to show here is that there is an inherent rational order to the major events that occurred during the Prophet’s life—from his birth into a particular family, to his migration to Medina, to his takeover of Mecca and then to his death in Medina.⁷⁹ Therefore, a person who believes in the literal details of the biography of the Prophet cannot be considered anything but rational. Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl is unjustified in calling those who cling to literal scripture, “irrational animals.” They are, rather, the virtuous followers of a rational plan—symbolized by the name, Fāḍil ibn Nāṭiq (Virtuous Son of the Rational).

Section III: Bodily Resurrection and the Individuation of the Soul

By rejecting autodidactic learning and by showing that the most exoteric and mundane aspects of revelation are rational, Ibn al-Nafīs has laid the groundwork for using scripture in rational arguments. For, since reason alone cannot arrive at the truth about, for example, resurrection, and since exoteric revelation can be rational, one has to resort to scripture to arrive at such truths. As such, the remaining part of his treatise is

⁷⁶ *Theologus*, p. 32.

⁷⁷ See *Theologus*, pp. 78–79; and R. Bruschwig, “Mu‘tazilism et Optimum (al-*aṣlah*),” *Studia Islamica* 39 (1974): 5–23.

⁷⁸ *Theologus*, p. 44.

⁷⁹ *Theologus*, pp. 120–125.

dedicated to examining traditionalist doctrine with regards to anthropomorphism, bodily resurrection and the temporality of the universe, not only to show that the traditionalist position is rational, but also to show that scripture can guide and help philosophical reflections on these vexing topics. For the remainder of this paper, I shall focus on his discussion of bodily resurrection.

There is no doubt that the belief in the promise of a life after death is one of the main tenets of Islam. Traditional Islamic sources contain an overwhelming amount of material on the events of the Last Day and the promised future life. The Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* vividly describe the conditions of the pious worshippers and sinners along with the rewards and punishments that await them in their future life. In fact, the emphasis on resurrection and judgment day is so strong in the Qur'ān itself, “that the ethical teachings contained in the Book must be understood in the light of this reality.”⁸⁰

Thus, it comes as no surprise that most major Muslim thinkers have defended a doctrine of the after-life. Ibn Sīnā, in fact, provided the most thorough rational defense of this doctrine than had hitherto been put forth. Individual immortality forms the cornerstone of Ibn Sīnā's ethics and his philosophical system at large.⁸¹ It is no wonder that Ibn Rushd (d. 1198, lat. Averroes), whose own commitment to personal immortality is best described as elusive and equivocal, resolutely defends Ibn Sīnā on this point from al-Ghazālī's charge of heresy, even though he disagrees with the details of Ibn Sīnā's argument:

⁸⁰ Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*, Paperback ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 2.

⁸¹ Robert Hall, “A Decisive Example of the Influence of Psychological Doctrines in Islamic Science and Culture: Some Relationships between Ibn Sīnā's Psychology, Other Branches of His Thought, and Islamic Teachings,” *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*, 3 (1979): 46–84; and Lenn Goodman, *Avicenna* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 149–174. Ibn Sīnā was personally vested in the problem; see Michael Marmura, “Avicenna and the Kalām,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften*, 7 (1992): 172–206.

But the [*falāsifa*] in particular, as is only natural, regard this doctrine [of resurrection] as most important and believe in it most . . . for it is a necessity for the existence of the moral and speculative virtues and of the practical sciences in men.⁸²

Ibn Sīnā's doctrine of the soul and its survival after death is shaped by his engagement with two philosophical traditions. The first is Ibn Sīnā's engagement with *kalām* and his rabid rejection of their atomistic universe and their "materialist doctrines of the soul."⁸³ The second is Ibn Sīnā's reliance on Aristotelian definitions of soul and matter and form, albeit as these definitions were understood and fleshed out by Neoplatonic commentators during the Hellenistic period and during the Graeco-Arabic translation movement.⁸⁴

Ibn Sīnā adheres strictly to the Aristotelian definition of the soul as form of the body. Thus, he completely rejects the possibility of the existence of soul before the creation of its body. The key Aristotelian ideas that ground this assertion are: the immateriality of forms and that matter is the only principle of individuation in the universe.⁸⁵ Ibn Sīnā further grounds the immateriality of the soul, in particular the rational/human soul, by appealing to its ability to acquire universals.

In his opaque remarks on the immateriality of the intellect and its relation to the soul, Aristotle suggests that if there is something of the individual that survives death it has to be each individual's agent intellect, which, in turn, has to be immaterial in order to

⁸² Ibn Rushd, *Tahafut al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, ed. Simon van den Bergh (London: Luzac, 1954), vol. 1, p. 359.

⁸³ Marmura, "Avicenna and the Kalam," p. 206.

⁸⁴ Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*.

⁸⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of Kitāb al-Najāt, Book II, Chapter VI with Historico-Philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 56–58.

acquire the knowledge of universals.⁸⁶ However, Ibn Sīnā's epistemological theory requires there to be only one agent intellect for the entire species.⁸⁷ As a result, the only candidate for receiving knowledge and universal notions in Ibn Sīnā's theory is the rational soul itself. For that reason, Ibn Sīnā provides a number of arguments for the immateriality of the rational soul, ranging from the necessity for the receptacle of universal notions to be indivisible and hence immaterial,⁸⁸ to his famous "flying man" experiment that establishes the immaterial soul as the true referent of "I" in humans.⁸⁹

The immaterial rational soul solves a lot of problems for Ibn Sīnā's philosophical system, including allowing for the possibility of the soul's survival after death.⁹⁰ For, being immaterial and incapable of division, the soul is a simple substance that is incapable of corruption and, hence, destruction.⁹¹ Thus, the soul survives the body after death. However, the immateriality of the soul also proves to be a double-edged sword. For, if the soul is immaterial and matter is the only individuating principle in the universe, as Ibn Sīnā maintains, how can a soul that is separated from its body maintain its individual identity? And if souls cannot maintain individual identities after death, then they must form a unity as one soul, since all Aristotelian forms are unitary except when present in matter. In that case, individual immortality and resurrection are impossible.

⁸⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.5, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, Modern Library Paperback ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001), pp. 589–591.

⁸⁷ See Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes*.

⁸⁸ Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 41–54.

⁸⁹ Michael Marmura, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context," *The Monist*, **69** (1986): 383–395.

⁹⁰ The immateriality of the soul also allows Ibn Sīnā to attack the theory of metempsychosis; see Michael Marmura, "Avicenna and the Problem of the Infinite Number of Souls," *Mediaeval Studies*, **22** (1960): 232–9; and Tariq Jaffer, "Bodies, Souls and Resurrection in Avicenna's *ar-Risāla al-Adhāwīya fī amr al-ma'ād*" in *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, ed. David Reisman with the assistance of Ahmed H. al-Rahim (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 163–174.

⁹¹ Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 62–63.

In order to resolve this paradox, Ibn Sīnā takes recourse in the Neoplatonic understanding of final and efficient causes that had been appropriated into the Arabic translations of Aristotle. By understanding the soul to be the final cause of the body, and by adhering to the Ammonian understanding of final causes as transcending their effects, Ibn Sīnā was able to argue that even though the rational soul comes into existence with the body, it is separable from its matter *qua* final cause and so survives as an individual rational soul after death. Though early commentators had taken this Avicennian move to be reminiscent of Platonic/Plotinian ideas of the soul,⁹² Robert Wisnovsky has meticulously shown how Ibn Sīnā could argue for the separability of the soul as an Aristotelian:

[G]iven Avicenna's rejection of the Platonic/Plotinian doctrine of the soul's pre-existence and descent into the body; given the fact that Aristotle's position on the soul's, or at least the intellect's, separability or separatedness is more underdetermined than most modern scholars have allowed; given the radical conceptual transformation which the concept of perfection underwent as a result of the activities of Greek commentators and Greco-Arabic translators; and finally, given Avicenna's inheritance of an increasingly hardened distinction between the formal and material causes, which are intrinsic to or immanent in their effect, and the final and efficient causes, which are extrinsic to or transcend their effect, Avicenna's position on the soul's separability or separatedness should, I believe, be seen as a sophisticated and justifiable reading of Aristotle by a philosopher who stands as the culmination of the Ammonian synthesis, rather than as a symptom of his being in thrall to some caricature of Platonism or Neoplatonism.⁹³

What Wisnovsky's phenomenal work shows is that Ibn Sīnā was absolutely convinced about the separability and survival of the individual rational soul after death, and that he could philosophically justify such a position given his understanding of certain key Aristotelian passages and concepts. However, this does not mean that Ibn Sīnā solved the problem of individuation or no longer considered it to be a problem. On

⁹² Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 108–109.

⁹³ Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, p. 140.

the contrary, Ibn Sīnā continued to struggle with this important puzzle and was never able to “provide a complete treatment” for it. He acknowledged that individuation is “essential for the existence of the human soul and [that it] is caused by its connection to a particular body” even after death. Yet, he was never able to provide a satisfactory answer for it and admitted that this connection was “obscure.”⁹⁴ Consequently, the soul’s principle of individuation became the central problem that post-Avicennian *falsafa* and its critics had to tackle with regards to the problem of resurrection. As such, it forms the cornerstone of Ibn Ṭufayl’s discussion of the soul and Ibn al-Nafīs’s response to it.

Ibn Ṭufayl’s discussion of individual immortality builds off of Ibn Sīnā’s Neoplatonic Aristotelian system. Like Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl too maintains that the true identity of a human is the incorporeal soul, which is imperishable by virtue of being incorporeal.⁹⁵ Ibn Ṭufayl also concurs with Ibn Sīnā that resurrection and the after-life are purely spiritual.⁹⁶ But, unlike Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl does not subscribe to Neoplatonic notions of separability of final causes. Instead, Ibn Ṭufayl is committed to aspects of Ṣūfī thought that postulate the possibility for the soul to directly experience the hidden realities. As such, Ibn Ṭufayl not only needs to address the problem of individuation, but he needs to do that in a manner that will leave open the possibility for this “mystical vision” (*mushāhada*). That is because this vision is, in fact, what grounds Ibn Ṭufayl’s argument for autodidactic learning as it enables Ḥayy to penetrate the depths of true reality that he cannot access purely through reason.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Thérèse-Anne Druart, “The Human Soul’s Individuation and its Survival After the Body’s Death: Avicenna on the Causal Relation Between Body and Soul,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, **10** (2000): 259–273, p. 272.

⁹⁵ *Ḥayy (English)*, pp. 135–6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 137–8, 153.

⁹⁷ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 95; *Ḥayy (Arabic)*, pp. 16–17.

In order to resolve this problem, Ibn Ṭufayl draws on aspects of Ṣūfī (mystical) tradition and combines it with the Avicennian notions of the soul and the theory of emanation. He draws on a Ṣūfī understanding of the spiritual heart that belongs to and, thus, has direct access to the world of the unseen (*‘ālam al-malakūt*) of which this world is but a symbol (*mithāl*).⁹⁸ In the Ṣūfī fashion of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ṭufayl equivocates the terms heart, spirit and soul when referring to this spiritual, divine aspect of the heart that has access to the unseen world.⁹⁹ Thus, in explaining his inability to coherently express the substance of Ḥayy’s mystical vision, Ibn Ṭufayl says:

Now do not set your heart on a description of what has never been represented in a human heart. For many things that are articulate in the heart cannot be described. . . . Nor by ‘heart’ do I mean only the physical heart or the spirit it encloses. I mean also the form (*ṣūra*) of that spirit which spreads its powers throughout the human body. All three of these [i.e. heart, spirit and soul] might be termed ‘heart’. . . .¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, Ibn Ṭufayl also adheres to Ibn Sīnā’s doctrine of the spirit and soul. He describes the spirit as a subtle body (*jism laṭīf*) that originates in the heart and permeates and animates the entire body, and defines the soul as the incorporeal form (*ṣūra*) of the spirit.¹⁰¹ So, the animal soul is the form of the vital spirit and the vegetative soul that of the nutritive spirit, responsible for growth and nutrition, and so on. Also, in true Avicennian fashion, Ibn Ṭufayl locates the spirit, and hence the soul, in the heart, and argues that all the faculties of the soul (nutritive, vital and rational) originate in it.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Timothy Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Iḥyā’* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 149–150.

⁹⁹ See Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 149; and *Ḥayy (Arabic)*, p. 81.

¹⁰¹ *Ḥayy (English)*, pp. 106, 117–118, 123–124; and *Ḥayy (Arabic)*, pp. 29, 43–44, 51.

¹⁰² *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 108; and *Ḥayy (Arabic)*, p. 31

Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl accepts Ibn Sīnā's Aristotelian contention that the heart is the first organ to be generated in the body.¹⁰³

As such, we need to distinguish between two aspects of the spirit in Ibn Ṭufayl. The first is the Avicennian physical spirit that animates the body and physically resides in the heart. The second is the Ghazālīan equivocal usage of spirit, soul and heart as that element of the Divine that is our real identity and which allows us to access the real world of the Divine. Let us call this the spiritual spirit. However, given Ibn Ṭufayl strongly identifies with Ṣūfī notions of describing the physical world as a simulacrum of the Divine, and given his strong adherence to the eternity of the world and the emanationist model, he maintains that the physical spirit and the spiritual spirit are united in a strong bond and neither can be destroyed. There are two passages that clearly establish the spirit's indestructibility and the strong bond between the physical and spiritual spirits. The first is where Ibn Ṭufayl argues that it is "impossible to postulate complete non-existence for the sensory world, for the very reason that it does reflect the world of the divine"—which, by virtue of being divine, can never cease to be.¹⁰⁴ The second passage occurs at the beginning of the entire treatise where, while describing Ḥayy's spontaneous generation from a mass of fermented clay, Ibn Ṭufayl combines these two notions of the spirit with the theory of emanation:

In the very middle [of this mass] formed a tiny bubble divided in half by a delicate membrane and *filled by a fine gaseous body, optimally proportioned for what it was to be*. With it at that moment joined "the spirit which is God's," *in a bond virtually indissoluble, not only in purview of the senses, but also in that of the mind*. For it should be clear that this *spirit emanates continuously from God*.
...¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *Ḥayy (English)*, pp. 106–107, 192 fn. 84.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107, my emphasis.

The “fine gaseous body” is the physical spirit that joins with the spiritual spirit emanating from God in an indissoluble bond. The difference between Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Ṭufayl lies not in the divine origin of the spiritual spirit, for even Ibn Sīnā maintains that.¹⁰⁶ Rather, the difference lies in the nature of the physical spirit and the indissolubility of the bond between the physical and spiritual spirit. For even though Ibn Ṭufayl’s description of the physical spirit as an “optimally proportioned” gaseous body sounds Avicennian, when we combine it with other passages of the treatise we discover that there is a major difference. Unlike Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl believes that the physical spirit is more akin to the matter of the heavenly bodies than it is to the earthly elements that make it up:

The implication Ḥayy drew from this was that the vital spirit with the stablest equilibrium would be fit for the highest form of life to be found in the world of generation and decay. The form of such a spirit could virtually be said to have no opposite. In this it would resemble the heavenly bodies, the forms of which have none at all. The spirit of such an animal [i.e. the human spirit], being truly at a mean among the elements, would have absolutely no tendency up or down. In fact, if it could be set in space, between the center and the outermost limit of fire, without being destroyed, it would stabilize there, neither rising nor falling. If it moved in place, it would orbit like the stars, and if it moved in position it would spin on its axis. . . . Thus it would bear a strong resemblance to the heavenly bodies.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, Ibn Ṭufayl maintains, contrary to Ibn Sīnā, that the physical spirit remains intact after death. The first place he states that is in his discussion of Ḥayy’s dissection of the doe foster-mother. As Ḥayy cuts the doe open, he realizes that the doe had died because the physical spirit that had “lived in that chamber [i.e. the left ventricle of the heart] had left while its house was intact,” implying that the physical spirit had not

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Sīnā, *Avicenna’s De Anima (Arabic Text) Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā’*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 263–264.

¹⁰⁷ *Ḥayy (English)*, p. 141.

been destroyed.¹⁰⁸ Later, Ḥayy confirms the indestructibility of the physical spirit by vivisectioning a beast. Here, Ḥayy notices that the left ventricle of the heart is “filled with a steamy gas.” However, as soon as he cuts it open, burning his hand in the process because of the animating heat of the spirit, the physical spirit departs and the animal dies.¹⁰⁹ Thus, at no point does Ibn Ṭufayl suggest that the individual physical spirit disintegrates like the body. On the contrary, the physical spirit is what Ibn Ṭufayl believes individuates the spiritual spirit, the true self, after death. He implies that in his description of the disembodied physical spirits that Ḥayy encounters in his mystical vision, during which he observes the celestial intelligences and souls that form the bedrock of the Avicennian emanation scheme:

Here [i.e. in the bowels of the sphere of the moon] too was an essence free of matter, not one with those he had seen [i.e. the other emanated celestial intelligences]—but none other. Only this being had seventy thousand faces. . . . *In this being, which he took to be many although it is not*, Ḥayy saw joy and perfection as before. It was as though the form of the sun were shining in rippling water from the last mirror in the sequence, reflected down the series from the first, which faced directly into the sun. *Suddenly he caught sight of himself as an unembodied [sic.] subject. If it were permissible to single out individuals from the identity of the seventy thousand faces, I would say that he was one of them. Were it not that his being was created originally, I would say that they were he. And had this self of his not been individuated by a body on its creation I would have said that it had not come to be.*

From this height he saw other selves like his own, that had belonged to bodies which had come to be and perished, or to bodies with which they still coexisted. *There were so many (if one may speak of them as many) that they reached infinity. Or, if one may call them one, then all were one.* In himself and in the other beings of his rank, Ḥayy saw goodness, beauty, joy without end . . .

He saw also many disembodied identities . . . covered with rust. They were ugly, defective, and deformed beyond his imagining. In unending throes of torture and ineradicable agony, imprisoned in a pavilion of torment, scorched by the flaming partition . . .¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 153, my emphasis.

Thus, for Ibn Ṭufayl, the physical spirit (*rūh*) escapes the body at death and continues to live eternally because it is the shadow in the material world of the eternal, celestial soul of the sublunar sphere. Each individual soul comes into being only when it is associated with a physical spirit upon the creation of a human. Otherwise, it exists as a unity in the celestial soul. The celestial soul, being immaterial, is one and so unifies all beings that emanate from it, which explains Ḥayy’s species preserving behavior with respect to all plants and animals.¹¹¹ There is in fact a greater ontological monism that underlies Ibn Ṭufayl’s system since the real divine world cannot be individuated and thus everything in the spiritual world comes to form a unity in the One. Hence, the soul of the sublunar sphere is really one in itself, and also indistinct as such from the rest of the celestial beings and the One. The Divine element pervades through the universe via an eternal emanation, and as this element is present in the celestial soul that brings forth individual souls, which, at the incorporeal level, are themselves one and Divine, the mystic is thus able to achieve ontological union with the Divine. As Radtke shows, this Ṣūfism of Ibn Ṭufayl is not of al-Ghazālī, or of his predecessors, but rather very akin to the monism of his great Ṣūfī “compatriot, Ibn al-ʿArabī.”¹¹² Once we understand that we can gain a greater insight to Ibn al-Nafīs’s specific response to Ibn Ṭufayl on the problem of bodily resurrection and the individuation of the soul.

As I have already shown, Ibn al-Nafīs’s main point throughout this text is to deny the possibility of autodidactic learning and to emphasize the rationality of revelation. As

¹¹¹ See Remke Kruk, “Ibn Ṭufayl: A Medieval Scholar’s Views on Nature,” in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl*, pp. 69–89.

¹¹² Bernd Radtke, “How Can Man Reach the Mystical Union? Ibn Ṭufayl and the Divine Spark,” in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl*, pp. 165–194, p. 194.

far as revelation is concerned, the Qur’ān consistently describes the Hereafter in physical terms and explicitly attacks those who deny bodily resurrection (36:78–79). Hence, Ibn al-Nafīs has no choice but to defend the rationality of this doctrine. Moreover, the *ḥadīth* literature is filled with references to the punishment of the grave (*adhāb al-qabr*).¹¹³ Since Ibn al-Nafīs accepts the necessity and validity of *ḥadīth* in establishing religious law and doctrines,¹¹⁴ he is forced to address this issue as well. Finally, since Ibn Ṭufayl’s entire argument for autodidactic learning hinges upon his defense of mystical visions of the heart, if Ibn al-Nafīs can rationally defend traditionalist doctrine while closing the door on the possibility of such visions, that would only further bolster his argument against Ibn Ṭufayl. With that in mind, let us proceed to Ibn al-Nafīs’s discussion.

Immediately after rejecting the possibility of a purely incorporeal after-life¹¹⁵ and arguing for the after-life to be “composed of body and soul,” Ibn al-Nafīs proceeds to explicate what he means by soul: “There is no doubt that man is composed of body and soul; the body is the thing which can be perceived, but the soul is that to which one refers when one says ‘I’.”¹¹⁶ He then proceeds to provide classic Avicennian arguments to establish the incorporeality and imperishability of the soul. Thus, he agrees with Ibn Sīnā that the fact that “the body and its parts are continuously in dissolution and reconstruction,” while “that to which man refers . . . remains constantly the same,”

¹¹³ See “adhāb al-qabr” in *EP*².

¹¹⁴ I have proven this in the second chapter of my dissertation.

¹¹⁵ *Theologus*, p. 57. Ibn al-Nafīs seems to suggest that the Prophet cannot represent the after-life in purely incorporeal terms because most people’s intellects cannot grasp such a concept. As such, it leaves open the possibility that like Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl and al-Ghazālī, he too may believe that descriptions of a physical after-life are merely metaphorical. However, given some of his arguments later in the text, there is scarcely any doubt that Ibn al-Nafīs firmly believed in the doctrine of bodily resurrection and a physical after-life (see below).

¹¹⁶ *Theologus*, p. 57.

implies that something immaterial must be the true referent of ‘I’.¹¹⁷ Similarly, he denies that the soul can be an accident that inheres in a body. Instead, Ibn al-Nafīs affirms the belief in soul as a substance, in complete concordance with Ibn Sīnā’s cosmology and, in particular, his understanding of substance (*jawhar*) in an Aristotelian sense. Finally, he argues for the immateriality of the soul by relying on Avicennian notions of cognition. Since cognitive notions and forms are universal and cannot be divided, they cannot inhere in a material substance. As a result, the soul must be immaterial.¹¹⁸

Thus, Ibn al-Nafīs’s understanding of the immateriality of the human soul is almost identical to that of Ibn Sīnā and illustrates that he was certainly not persuaded by al-Ghazālī’s critique of Ibn Sīnā on this issue.¹¹⁹ Hence, Ibn al-Nafīs is forced to propose a solution for the problem of individuation, for that is the bane of the Avicennian understanding of the soul and its relationship with the body. Ibn al-Nafīs recognizes the gravity of the problem as soon as he postulates the immateriality of the soul, “If this is so, it [the soul] cannot exist before the existence of the mixed matter from which the body of man comes forth, because if it existed before that matter, it could be neither one nor manifold, and could not possibly subsist at all.”¹²⁰ The reasons he provides are again very Avicennian and rely on the absurdity that the cognitions of one person be immediately grasped by another, as would be the case if their souls were one, and on the impossibility of souls being manifold since the only principle of individuation is matter. “Therefore,” Ibn al-Nafīs concludes, “the soul of man can exist only after the existence of

¹¹⁷ *Theologus*, p. 57; Michael Marmura, “Ghazali and the Avicennian Proof from Personal Identity for an Immaterial Self,” in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture. Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. R. Link-Salinger (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), pp. 195–205, pp. 201–202; and Marmura, “Avicenna and the Kalām,” p. 204.

¹¹⁸ *Theologus*, p. 58; and Rahman, *Avicenna’s Psychology*, pp. 47–48.

¹¹⁹ For al-Ghazālī’s critique of Ibn Sīnā’s arguments for the immateriality of the soul, see Marmura, “Ghazali and the Avicennian Proof”; and al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 18th discussion.

¹²⁰ *Theologus*, p. 58.

matter mixed in a manner corresponding to (the nature of) man, and the existence of this matter is a prerequisite for the existence of the soul of man.”¹²¹

At this stage, Ibn al-Nafīs turns to a *ḥadīth*, though not explicitly, to get him out of this bind. Having realized that since the soul is imperishable, the matter to which it attaches must also not perish, he turns to a *ḥadīth* from two of the canonical collections that states that the only part of a human that does not decompose in the grave is the ‘*ajb al-dhanab*¹²²:

This matter is generated from sperm and similar things, and when the soul becomes attached to it . . . , the body is generated from it. This matter is called the ‘*ajb al-dhanab*. It is absurd that this should become lost as long as the soul subsists The soul of man is imperishable [So,] [t]his matter which is the ‘*ajb al-dhanab* is imperishable (too). Therefore it remains after the death and decomposition of the body, and the soul with which it remains continues to be perceiving and noticing, and that time it experiences pleasures or pain; these are the pleasures and pain in the tomb [*adhāb al-qabr*].

Then when the time for resurrection . . . comes, the soul stirs again and feeds this (nucleus of) matter by attracting matter to it and transforming it into something similar to it; and therefrom grows a body a second time. This body is the same as the first body inasmuch as this (nucleus of) matter in it is the same, and the souls in the same. In this way resurrection takes place.¹²³

By resorting to this *ḥadīth*, Ibn al-Nafīs is able to defend the traditional doctrines of bodily resurrection and the punishment of the grave, while providing a solution to Ibn Sīnā’s problem of individuation. However, it is worth emphasizing that this *ḥadīth* is only one in a multitude of *ḥadīth* that are concerned with the status of body and soul after death. The majority of *ḥadīth*, and even Qur’ānic sources in fact, refer to the possibility

¹²¹ *Theologus*, p. 58.

¹²² The *ḥadīth* appears in Mālik’s *Muwaṭṭa’* (16.16.16.49) and Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* (6.60.338 and 6.60.457).

¹²³ *Theologus*, pp. 58–59. Schacht and Meyerhof translate ‘*ajb al-dhanab* as “coccyx.” I have avoided that usage because it is unclear whether Ibn al-Nafīs understood this term to mean that, since he does use the medical term, ‘*uṣ’uṣ*, for the coccyx in his *Commentary on the Anatomy*.

of a free soul/spirit that leaves the body at death and even views it from afar.¹²⁴ Some traditionalists, in fact, even rejected the authenticity of this tradition on the ‘*ajb al-dhanab*.¹²⁵ Thus, Ibn al-Nafīs’s defense of bodily resurrection using this tradition reveals that he was trying to reconcile reason and revelation in his own unique way. Since he was committed to aspects of the Avicennian system, such as the immateriality and substantiality of the soul, he picked out only that element of the religious corpus that could fit with these notions. Thus, far from slavishly adhering to religious dogma and making reason subservient to revelation, Ibn al-Nafīs tries to allocate authority to both while trying to maintain a reasonably coherent position.¹²⁶

Finally, by attaching the soul to the ‘*ajb al-dhanab*, Ibn al-Nafīs severs the connection between the heart, spirit and soul that underlies Ibn Ṭufayl’s entire argument for autodidactic learning. Unlike, Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn al-Nafīs makes a sharp distinction between soul (*nafs*) and spirit (*rūḥ*). Hence, although Ibn al-Nafīs agrees that the spirit is a refined body that resides in the heart and animates the rest of the human body, he denies that it emanates from the divine or has any divine element or immateriality associated with it. Instead, he claims that the spirit is entirely derived from air and is continuously created within the heart.¹²⁷ Since the soul is immaterial and is connected to the ‘*ajb al-dhanab*, it implies that the soul, spirit and heart do not have the tight nexus required for Ibn Ṭufayl’s rational defense of mystical visions. Thus, Ibn al-Nafīs is able to provide a rational defense of bodily resurrection and a solution to the problem of individuation,

¹²⁴ See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Rūḥ: fi ’l-kalām ‘alā arwāḥ al-amwāt al-aḥyā’* (Cairo, 19uu).

¹²⁵ al-Jawziyya, *al-Ruh*, p. 154.

¹²⁶ I have developed this model more fully in chapter one of my dissertation.

¹²⁷ *Theologus*, p. 40.

without providing Ibn Ṭufayl with a basis to support mystical visions, and hence, autodidactic learning.

Conclusion:

Ibn Sīnā's importance to philosophical and theological discussions during the thirteenth century can certainly not be underestimated. His proofs for the existence of God and the necessity of Prophecy, and his defense of the immortality and immateriality of the soul—all are marshaled in by Ibn al-Nafīs to defend traditional doctrines. Yet, Ibn al-Nafīs can never grant Ibn Sīnā the claim that revelation is inadmissible in rational proofs, for that diminishes the authority of revelation and leaves the door ajar for autodidactic learning. Thus, Ibn al-Nafīs goes to great lengths to close that door and to show that revelation is necessary for rational speculation on theological topics. In the process, Ibn al-Nafīs reveals some of the originality that Gutas eludes to, in the way in which he actively appropriates certain aspects of the Avicennian tradition, as well as the religious tradition, while rejecting others. There is nothing inevitable about Ibn al-Nafīs's particular selections from both traditions, as can be seen in the different way in which his predecessors and contemporaries appropriated from these traditions while dealing with the same issues and the same texts.¹²⁸

More importantly, Ibn al-Nafīs's particular solution to the problem of resurrection was a direct result of his desire to deny Ibn Ṭufayl, and other Ṣūfīs, the chance to entertain the possibility of mystical visions and mystical unions with God. Yet, by

¹²⁸ Baydawi (d. 1316), for example, reconciles Ibn Sīnā's immaterial soul with aspects of the tradition that speak of souls as free substances that float freely after death; see Edwin Calverley and James Pollock (ed. & tr.), *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam: 'Abd Allah Baydawi's Text: Tawali' al-Anwar min Matali' al-Anzar, along with Mahmud Isfahani's Commentary Matali' al-Anzar, Sharh Tawali' al-Anwar*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 666–67, 672, 673–74, 677, 679, 681–82, 716–717.

severing the connection between soul and spirit, Ibn al-Nafīs was also forced into modifying his physiological understanding of the body.¹²⁹ Thus, in his later medical works, Ibn al-Nafīs stops using adjectives with the terms spirit and soul and entirely gives up the tripartite division of spirit and soul into: nutritive/vegetative, vital/animal, psychic/rational, respectively. This further illustrates the new avenues that thirteenth century scholars were exploring in the debate between reason and revelation. Simplistic explanations that posit either an eternal destructive relationship between the two, or an eternal non-compromising harmony, do a disservice to the complexity of these arguments.

¹²⁹ This argument forms the core of chapter four of my dissertation.