The Philosophical Heritage of Desire for God in Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy Ibn Yaḥyān

Bethany Somma

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL HERITAGE OF DESIRE FOR GOD

IN IBN ṬUFAYL’S ḤAYY IBN YAQZĀN

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and the Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Bethany Somma

August 2018
THE PHILOSOPHIAL HERITAGE OF DESIRE FOR GOD

IN IBN ṬUFAYL’S ḤAYY IBN YAQẒĀN

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ABSTRACT

THE PHILOSOPHICAL HERITAGE OF DESIRE FOR GOD
IN IBN ṬUFAYL'S ḤAYY IBN YAQẒĀN

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August 2018

Dissertation supervised by Michael Harrington and Peter Adamson

This dissertation investigates the role of desire in Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān through a philosophical investigation of desire from Plotinus to Ibn Ṭufayl. I examine Plotinus’s account of desire for the Good, and I argue that this desire forms the basis of his account of substance, such that this desire is non-rational, permanent, fundamental to all hypostases. I also examine the Arabic translations of Plotinus’s text, arguing that the role of desire for God is severely diminished. Indeed, the desire for God we find in these texts is rational and non-permanent—a modified version of the Plotinian model. As I consider Ibn Bāǧga’s corpus, I argue that on his account desire is decidedly rational and non-permanent. However, he uses a model I term the power-among-powers model, which he inherits and develops from al-Fārābī and the translations of Aristotle. These previous examinations form the backdrop for my main concern: my argument that desire is fundamental to Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān. I contend that Ibn Ṭufayl intends to intervene
politically by inciting desire for the path toward Truth in his readers. I then argue that his account of desire is a blend of Avicenna’s and al-Ġazālī’s accounts, a combination of the Plotinian and power-among-powers models. On this account, desire for God is non-rational and permanent. Finally, I conclude that Ibn Ṭufayl presents a model for political intervention that places desire at the center of philosophical education and practice and that includes all members of society and the natural world.
For Noelle, always
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Introduction

The aim of this investigation is to identify and expound the role of desire for God in Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy Ibn Yaqqān. One might call this desire one for Truth, the Real, the Good, or, in the Avicennian nomenclature taken over by Ibn Ṭufayl, the Necessary Existent. It might seem that such a specific topic in such a short text could not possibly warrant an entire dissertation, particularly since in general desire has not been regarded an especially important concept in the text. The story of young Ḥayy’s gradual ascent to ultimate truth has generally been read as a manifesto for the autodidactic potential latent in human beings’ rational nature, a reading solidified in the text’s European reception from Edward Pocock’s 1671 Latin translation, which carries the subtitle Philosophus Autodidactus. The undeniable yet somewhat “mystical,” or affective, or, in general, non-rational elements of the text are usually classified as non-philosophical in some way: Sufi, religious, literary. As Akhtar has rightly observed, it is the general trend in scholarship on this text to interpret “the mystical elements of the story [as constituting] a kind of veil over the story’s true philosophical or ‘rationalist’ intentions.”¹ That Ibn Ṭufayl found rational inquiry valuable is not in itself a problematic claim. But the commitment to the position that this rational aspect was itself the primary aim of the text stands widely unquestioned, perhaps because of general assumptions either about what philosophy is, or about what could be philosophically valuable. Close attention to Ibn Ṭufayl’s claims in his prologue and epilogue are in tension with such readings, since in both he claims that he writes his text in the hope that he might address a political reality by inciting desire in his readers. Thus, it is a desideratum for our scholarly understanding of the text to understand and to account for the meaning and role of this claim.

¹ Ali Humayun Akhtar, Philosophers, Sufis, and Caliphs: Politics and Authority from Cordoba to Cairo and Baghdad (Cambridge, 2018), 215.
Emphasis on the concept of desire need not overturn the work that has been done on the rational aspects of Ibn Ṭufayl’s thought, nor am I suggesting that this sort of scholarship on Hayy has altogether failed. Rather, it seems to me that our understanding of the text is simply incomplete, and I want to argue that consideration and incorporation of the role of desire might bind together loose ends of our interpretative tapestry.

In addition to examining the role of desire as found in the text, a further step to explicate Ibn Ṭufayl’s understanding of desire is consideration of the philosophical models for understanding desire that were available to Ibn Ṭufayl. In addition to providing conceptual parallels, reflection on earlier available models provides the following benefits. First, it allows for the formation of a heuristic method for uncovering desire and its function within the text. Second, it provides a glimpse of different articulations of desire’s placement within philosophical systems. Third, it deepens our understanding of what models for understanding desire Ibn Ṭufayl had at his disposal and might have incorporated into his own account. This approach provided the basis for the investigation found in the following pages, which contain consideration of the notion of desire in general, as well as in its particular historical articulations that provide the possibilities for talking about desire available to Ibn Ṭufayl.

On what grounds to direct or delineate the bounds of the historical investigation were at times difficult to establish. Since this study is committed to examining the philosophical background of Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān, I have done my best to both stay in line with this commitment without being reductive or anachronistic in my own assumptions about what counts as philosophical or what non-philosophical ideas might be philosophically relevant. However, I did begin the study with some idea of where I thought it might go, since from the beginning I saw intensive parallels between Ibn Ṭufayl’s depiction of young Ḥayy’s desire for the ultimate Agent
and Plotinus’s depiction of the human being’s desire for the Good, both of which were inexplicable, fundamental, and unceasing. The study thus considers carefully the features of Plotinus’s own conception of desire and its translation into Arabic. My interest here is not so much in textual transmission or in showing whether Ibn Ṭufayl had access to the Arabic instantiations of Plotinus’s text. Instead, I exploit the occasion of investigating the role of desire in Ibn Ṭufayl to examine the different ways his predecessors and influences accounted for desire functionally. Thus, I will throughout consider desire in structural terms, since I think consideration of desire with respect to the larger framework in which it is situated elucidates its function. Viewing desire through this lens reveals competing accounts of desire’s nature, permanence, and priority. Although one may loosely delineate these models along Platonic and Aristotelian lines, we find them combined and articulated in various ways. The sort of desire in which I particularly interested is non-rational desire, namely, desire that is in some way irreducible to reason (but not necessarily set against it), and I am interested in delineating the role and value of non-rational desire in philosophical activity. By philosophical activity, I refer to the process of learning, becoming virtuous, and attaining the goal toward which philosophy aims, as determined by whichever framework is at issue.

The thought of Plotinus and Ibn Ṭufayl thus forms the core of my investigation, and in fact most of the study is devoted to their thought. In my attempt to articulate Ibn Ṭufayl’s model of desire, I consider Plotinus both because I see a kinship between his model and Ibn Ṭufayl’s, but also because he provides a clear model for understanding desire that is irreducible to reason and impossible to satisfy. By beginning with his text, I was able to trace the way in which this model changes in translation and forms the backdrop for competing models of desire. Plotinus and Ibn Ṭufayl also share the fact that each has been interpreted in wildly opposing ways, and each has
been understood at times as a strict rationalist and at other times as mystically inclined. I argue throughout for a prioritization of desire in the thought of Plotinus and Ibn Ṭufayl, and this prioritization does to some degree entail a subordination of reason to this desire. What this prioritization means for each author is radically different. For Plotinus, it means that non-rational, pre-noetic desire precedes any sort of rational activity on each hypostatic level below the One, and that this initial desire, which has a metaphysical function, continues to operate within each such hypostasis even after fully formed, as I will argue. For Ibn Ṭufayl, the prioritization of desire means that the driving force of his ultimate spiritual and philosophical endeavor is to witness something that is irreducible to reason, and that can never be contained. Thus, on both accounts, the object of human desire is not something that may be rationally contained, on account of which I have termed this goal, and the desire it in turn shapes, non-rational. However, both thinkers, I argue, share the fundamental commitment that desire is part of the being of the human subject of desiring, such that what it means for the subject to act is that it be desiring. Throughout, I have termed this model the Plotinian model of desire.

In order to lay out the philosophical alternatives available to Ibn Ṭufayl and to which he responds, I also consider the role of desire within Ibn Bāǧga’s thought. I argue that desire is crucial to his thought insofar as it allows him to situate human activity thoroughly within a framework of final causality. Although he articulates a subtle account of desire and its relation to human activity, he makes explicit that desire is not part of the human essence, and that its goal is to aid in human perfection by driving one toward conceptualization and demonstration. Thus, his account of desire is definitely opposed to that offered by Plotinus and Ibn Ṭufayl and falls within a line of interpretation of Aristotelian psychology, and I have termed this model the power among powers model of desire.
As a whole, I aim to do three things in this study. First, I aim to understand Ibn Ṭufayl’s conception of desire for the Good or God, the nature of this desire, and its role in philosophical activity. Second, and to this end, I aim to understand the existing possibilities available to him for talking about desire philosophically. And last, I aim to understand the intellectual provenance of Plotinus’s conception of desire of the Good as related to Ibn Ṭufayl’s own conception of such desire. As a result, the following points of discussion are thematized: what the nature of the desire for the Good is, and the ways in which this desire is different from other kinds of desire; the relation between reason and desire, and whether one is prioritized over the other; the relation of desire to the subject; whether desire is permanent, and whether it can be satisfied; the relation between the nature of the desire for the Good and its capacity to be satisfied; and what distinctions were drawn among and between various ways of talking about desire.

My hope is that this study will be of a modest contribution to the understanding of desire and its philosophical value. This study’s close examination of Plotinus’s account of desire for the Good and its function within his system is relevant to scholars of Neoplatonism. The tracing of his model of desire in its translation into Arabic, as well as the changes that happen in translation, concerns those same scholars of Neoplatonism generally, but also specialists of philosophy in the Islamic world and those interested in the development of philosophical terminology. Further, this study’s commitment to examination of the differences between alternative models of understanding desire may potentially be valuable for those interested in tracing the adumbrations of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophical ideas in this period of the history of philosophy. I also hope that this investigation may be valuable to specialists of Andalusian philosophy, insofar as it suggests a reconsideration of the philosophical development of the region. Finally, the study’s emphasis on the development of different models for talking about desire intervenes in discussions
of desire and its relation to reason, and will be of interest to historians of philosophy who are generally interested in the function of desire and the various articulations of its role throughout the history of philosophy.

Structure of the Investigation

The investigation begins with an examination of the function of desire within Plotinus’s philosophy. This first chapter provides an analysis of the function of desire within Intellect and Soul, focusing on the generation of the two hypostases. I complement this examination with an overview of Plotinus’s terminology of desire, highlighting the special and ubiquitous role of ἔφεσις. This desire plays a metaphysical role within Plotinus’s system, as he connects it to his own unique conception of intelligible matter. I then examine desire within the bodily compound, specifically the relation of the soul to the body and the function of desire within this union. Last, I consider the operation of desire in the soul’s return to Intellect, considering at length whether desire is permanent to the soul, and whether all or part of the soul takes part in the ethical return. In this chapter, I argue for what I call a Plotinian model of desire, according to which desire is a permanent part of the being of substance.

In the second chapter, I examine the role of desire as presented in the surviving Arabic translations of Plotinus’s texts, the Theologia Quae Dicitur Aristotelis, Epistola de Scientia Divina, and Dicta Sapientis Graeci. This chapter is important both because it reveals what did or did not survive of Plotinus’s own conception of desire and its function, and because it offers the first glimpse into a different permutation of the Plotinian model of desire. I begin by examining the presence of desire within Mind and Soul, examining also the terminology present for indicating this desire. Further, I examine the role of desire in the relation between the soul and the body,
examining here too the extent to which one might say there are different types of soul. Last I consider the ethical goal of human life as presented in these texts, tracing the changes that occur in the account given the conflation of the first and second hypostases. In this chapter, one begins to see the push toward a rationalist account of ethical success and the way in which it effects the nature and permanence of desire for the Good.

The third chapter comprises the only study of a model of desire explicitly different than the Plotinian model. Here I examine Ibn Bāḡga’s contribution to the debate around desire, focusing on the way in which he works according to and clearly articulates an alternative model of desire, which I call the power among powers model. I examine here the influence of Aristotelian sources, in particular al-Fārābī and the Arabic translations of Aristotle’s *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*. I begin by examining the function of desire within Ibn Bāḡga’s philosophical system, examining specifically the way in which it operates in properly human activity. I then examine the relation of the striving power to the body, highlighting the ways in which different powers of the soul are connected to the body. This examination lays the groundwork for his critique of the Sufis, which I examine in detail, and which Ibn Ṭufayl explicitly responds to in his *Ḥayy*. Last, I examine the role of desire with the human ethical aim, determining the nature of desire and whether desire is permanent. This chapter offers the background for the rivaling account of desiring and philosophical accomplishment to which Ibn Ṭufayl reacts in his own text. Ibn Ṭufayl will dismiss Ibn Bāḡga’s depiction of the accomplishment of the Sufis, as well as his system as a whole, by claiming that Ibn Bāḡga’s rationalism is a true, yet reductive, account of human endeavor and attainment of ultimate reality. He aims to offer his own account of both in his *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓân*.

When considering Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Ḥayy*, it is necessary to establish guidelines for reading the text, lest one’s own assumptions creep into her interpretations—a danger when reading in general,
but especially so with a work of literature meant to be a challenging read. Establishing these
guidelines is the goal of the fourth chapter. There I consider carefully what Ibn Ṭufayl tells us he
intends to do with his text and for what reason he says he has written it. I then consider his
assessment of his predecessors, asking specifically why he presents their texts and thought in the
way he does. Last, I examine the dual account of Ḫayy’s arrival on the island, considering what
Ibn Ṭufayl might be pointing toward with this presentation of Ḫayy’s birth. Altogether, in this
chapter I reflect on the ways in which Ibn Ṭufayl presents his text to the reader and what we might
learn from this presentation in the prologue and in the framing of the story.

The core of the study is Ibn Ṭufayl’s own conception of desire and its role in philosophical
activity. In the fifth chapter, I examine the way in which desire functions in Ḫayy’s education and
philosophical endeavor. First I examine the instances of desire in text, considering here too the
terminological background to the different ways in which Ibn Ṭufayl discusses desire. I highlight
the terminological connection between the desire Ibn Ṭufayl in the prologue says he wants to incite
in the reader and the desire Ḫayy has for different agents throughout his education. I consider the
way in which this desire can propel Ḫayy through his education, and consider the mechanism,
subject, and object of his education, which is to say the mechanism, subject, and object of his
desire. I consider the relation between desire and reason, considering carefully the influence of
Avicenna and al-Ğazālī on Ibn Ṭufayl’s conception of desire. This chapter offers an example of a
way in which the power among powers model for understanding the function of desire was
combined with the Plotinian model of desire, by connecting desire for the Good with a particular
power, all while arguing that once the power itself begins to desire, it does not stop, since its object
is incomprehensible.
Finally, I conclude this study by considering the very end of the narrative story in *Hayy Ibn Yaqẓân*. On the whole, I aim to understand the relation between Ḥayy and other individuals, human and non-human. My hope is that this chapter will address two of the most baffling difficulties in interpretation of *Hayy*: Ḥayy’s apparently polarized care of the natural world and the depiction of Ḥayy’s relation to and abnegation of society. Of special importance is the role of the natural world in Ḥayy’s education, and as a result this chapter objects to characterizations of Ḥayy that would have him be merely an autodidact. Further, it considers both the value of animals as individuals and the care that societies should show the natural world. Last, I argue both for a new interpretation of the depiction of Ḥayy’s failed venture on the second island, and that Ibn Ṭufayl offers a solution to the problems of communication faced by Ḥayy and his interlocutors. This chapter concludes the three-part examination of *Hayy Ibn Yaqẓân* by showing the way in which Ibn Ṭufayl aimed to incite desire in his readers and in turn the way in which his curriculum of desire might be tenable, politically speaking.

As a whole, this study argues that desire is a central, functional aspect of Ibn Ṭufayl’s philosophical account, and that his model for conceiving of desire is a unique combination of two earlier models, the Plotinian model and the power among other powers model. Nevertheless, Ibn Ṭufayl’s account of desire and its function shares several of the same basic features of Plotinus’s own model: desire for the Good is irreducible to reason since the Good itself is irreducible to reason; desire for the Good is permanent; and desire for the Good is really part of the subject of that desire. These features were diluted through the rational bent of the Arabic translations of Plotinus’s text, and are eliminated altogether in the second, power among powers model of desire introduced to al-Andalus through Ibn Bāǧga’s staunch Aristotelianism. Ibn Ṭufayl’s incorporation of Avicenna and al-Gazālī allows him to reintroduce a Plotinian model of desire that reinstates
these features. Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl’s conception of philosophy presented in *Hayy Ibn Yaqẓān* represents a novel Western synthesis of Eastern philosophical reflection on desire, which is, after all, exactly what Ibn Ṭufayl claims to be doing.
Chapter 1

Plotinus and the Formless Nature of the Desire for the One

The reality of yearning is towards that which is better than itself.

αὐτὴ δὲ ἡ ἔφεσις πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον αὐτῆς

Plotinus, Enn. I.4.6.17

Everything in me yearns for the Good.

Πάντα δὲ τὰ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἑφίεται μὲν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ

Plotinus, Enn. III.2.3.32

The role of yearning in Plotinus’s philosophy is a complicated matter. Varied terminology, convoluted analysis, and a lack of systematic treatment render attempts at comprehension tenuous, and concerns about depicting the incontrovertibly rigorous thinker as anything like a mystic discourage the incorporation of perhaps more extreme discussions of desire found in Plotinus’s text. However, the concept of desire remains a crucial one within Plotinian philosophy, and, in addition to playing a psychological role, has a functional role within Plotinus’s philosophy writ large. There are several consequences of desire’s functional role, but perhaps the most fundamental is for the interrelation of reason and desire. I undertake an examination of Plotinus’s notion of desire in this chapter, and I will argue that the Plotinian account of desire provides a model for understanding the function of desire, and especially of non-rational desire, within any subject of desire in general. This function has repercussions for non-rational desire’s role within philosophical activity and for the permanence of desire in general. I will discuss what non-rational desire is below, but let me say here that when I identify a desire as non-rational, I mean two things. First, I mean that it is irreducible to rational comprehension, which follows from the fact that
second, I mean that such desire is *formless*. Thus I will examine Plotinus’s use of non-rational desire in these terms.

The investigation will proceed as follows. First, I will briefly examine Plotinus’s terminology of desire, considering the role of rational and non-rational desire, as well as the ways of talking about desire he inherits from Plato and Aristotle. I will then examine the role of desire within Intellect and Soul, both in their generation and function. In the second section, I will consider the relation of desire, soul, and the body, articulating the role of desire within the body-soul compound. In the third section, I will examine the role of desire within the return of the soul, considering the role of the so-called lower soul in the process of the return. I will conclude with a consideration of the permanence of desire within Plotinus’s account of philosophical success. The crucial conclusion of this chapter is that non-rational desire is built into the being of substance. As a result, what it means for an individual soul to be, is that it is a desiring, and in the case of soul, mobile agent. This desiring is not something that the substance sometimes uses and sometimes does not use. Rather, on the Plotinian model, a substance is always desiring as part of what it is, and the object of substance’s primal desire renders that desire formless and permanent.

1.1 Desire

The goal of this section is to identify and articulate the most important ways non-rational desire functions in Plotinus’s system. To this end, I will examine the role such desire plays in the generation of the structure of reality, in the activity of Intellect and Soul at the hypostatic level, and the way in which Plotinus’s terminology is constructed around these functions. What we find, I argue, is consistent use of non-rational desire as a founding principle at each hypostatic level. This structural role of this desire is typically earmarked by the term ἔφεσις, and continues in each
individual born from this structure. Although each enformed hypostasis and individual becomes determined, preceding and underlying it is non-rational desire for the Good. As a result, the role of non-rational desire is critical in the formation, and the function, of all things. First, I examine Plotinus’s terminology of desire, offering an overview of his terminology delineating conation in general in an effort to identify key terms and passages. Second, I will examine the role of desire in Intellect, especially in its generation, and consider to what extent one may consider non-rational desire to be present in Intellect at all. Last, I examine the role of non-rational desire in the Soul and its manifestations, and argue that we find a structure similar to that in Intellect. I argue that non-rational desire is fundamental to the generation of Soul, and to the function of individuals in general.

**Terminology**

Before I begin the investigation proper, I would like to offer an overview of Plotinus’s terminology of desire, both to assess his language accurately and to narrow the focus of this investigation. Most germane here are ἔφεσις, ἐρως, and ὄρεξις as well as their derivatives, and we may add to these ἐπιθυμία and βούλησις. My goal in this section is to present clearly the main terms under consideration in this chapter, both to highlight and to clarify the literal terms of investigation and so that my understanding of these terms will be clear. From Plotinus’s vocabulary for desire, ἔφεσις is the most far-reaching, for he attributes it to all levels of being (besides the One) from pre-noetic Intellect to bare matter. In itself, ἔφεσις and its derivatives connote a throwing or reaching out. Plotinus’s use of ἔφεσις never requires rationality, although it is most often directed toward the Good, and so is found in the proximity of rationality often. One could object to my characterization of ἔφεσις as never reliant upon rationality if one were to think that goodness and
rationality go hand in hand. I will discuss this potential objection below, but here I will highlight that Plotinus himself makes no such claim (especially considering that fact that the Good is beyond any notion of rationality). Even an account that connects goodness to “rationality” based on the proximity of Intellect to the Good loses the notion of rationality that involves any kind of propositional knowledge or judgment. This drive toward goodness sometimes manifests in an imitation of goodness via an ἔφεσις toward generation, but there is one instance in which Plotinus describes individuals who are ἐφιέμενοι κακῶν.1 The big picture is that all things ἐφίονται the Good, and this claim extends even to animals, plants, and things that are not technically alive.2

Historically, ἐπιθυμία is a loaded term, given that Plato uses it in the Republic to identify the “irrational” desires of the lowest part of the soul.3 Plotinus often keeps such a characterization of ἐπιθυμία. But there are two notable exceptions that suggest we rethink what exactly he intends to connote with this term in particular, given that he uses the term in the starkest contrast to its historical usage. In both cases, the ἐπιθυμία in question is of the good. One is III.5(50).9.50–5, where Plotinus explains production of Love from soul insofar as soul desires but fails to attain the Good. Here Plotinus explicitly states that soul’s desire for the Good is like matter’s unlimited desire (τὸ ἀόριστον τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐπιθυμίας). So, there is one point of connection between ἐπιθυμία and the Good. In V.3(49).11.7, Plotinus ascribes epithumetic desire to pre-noetic Intellect: ὥστε ἄλλου μὲν ἐπεθύμησεν. Here ἄλλου refers explicitly to the One, the unity of which pre-noetic Intellect was seeking. In these two instances, we have strong evidence to suspect that Plotinus reconfigures the signification of ἐπιθυμία from its original Platonic heritage. Instead of

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1 For the former, see for example III.4(12).2.14, III.5(50).1.54, or III.7(45).4.31. For the latter, see III.5(50).7.32. All quotations of Plotinus are from the Greek text as found in Armstrong, based on Henry–Schwyzer’s 1982 edition. The English translations are from Plotinus, The Enneads, tr. A. H. Armstrong, including the Greek, in 7 volumes (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard-London: 1966-1968), frequently modified.
3 See Rep. 439dff and 588cff. I put irrational in scare quotes because there is debate about whether it is fitting to characterize the lowest ἐπιθυμία as completely bereft of reason.
only base, carnal desires, Plotinus appears to elevate ἐπιθυμία to a primary longing for the Good, even though in the vast majority of passages he preserves the original signification of this term. I will say more on this point below.

The next term to consider is ὄρεξις and its derivatives. Plotinus typically uses the middle/passive ὀρέγεται, and, unlike ἔφεσις or ἐπιθυμία, ὄρεξις, like ἔρως, is proper to the soul alone. Relevant to this investigation is that Plotinus explicitly distinguishes it from λόγος (also proper to the soul), and like ἔφεσις it is directed by and large toward the Good. In the two passages in which Plotinus explicitly does so, he uses ὀρέγεται to express a movement toward the Good that is independent from reason and in some way unconscious. The first is III.4(15).6.7, where he says that for the good person (ὁ σπουδαίος), “Even before reason there is in the inward movement which reaches out toward its own” (πρὸ λόγου ἡ κίνησις ἡ ἔνδοθεν ὀρεγομένη τῶν αὐτῆς). In the second, VI.7(38).33.11, Plotinus explains that whenever soul desires something, it “desires without saying why it longs for something like this, but our reasoning says this is the real thing” (οὐ ὀρέγεται μὲν ψυχὴ οὐ λέγουσα διὰ τί τοιοῦτον ποθεῖ ὁ δὲ λόγος λέγει ὅτι τοῦτο τὸ ὄντως).

Plotinus’s use of ἔρως occurs most notably in his discussion on this concept in III.5, although it occurs elsewhere when he speaks of the soul’s love for the the Good, both in mythic terminology and in purely descriptive terms. Not surprisingly, this term tends to occur in discussions of beauty, not only in III.5, but for example in I.6: “These experiences must occur whenever there is contact with any sort of beautiful things, wonder and a shock of delight and longing and love (ἔρωτα) and a happy excitement”. The connection between love and beauty is consistent through Plotinus’s work. In I.3, On Dialectic, the lover, one who is drawn to absolute

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4 For Plotinus’s claim that of Intellect lacks ὄρεξις, see IV.7(2).13.6.
5 Plotinus uses πόθος, longing, relatively infrequently, including it often in lists of desiring words that he attributes to the soul, and not infrequently in contexts of sight and vision.
beauty, is at the second tier in the threefold progression toward virtue, which is achieved at the level of the philosopher. As an appreciator of beauty, the lover is thus someone who is predisposed to philosophy, and capable of making the ascent to true beauty.\(^7\) The most remarkable instance in which Plotinus discusses love as belonging to a subject other than soul is at the beginning of VI.8.15, where he claims that “[The Good], that same self, is lovable and love and love of himself (καὶ ἐράσμιον καὶ ἔρως ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔρως), in that he is beautiful only from himself and in himself.” Plotinus’s extended discussion of love in III.5 is remarkable not only in the fact that he provides love such extensive consideration, but that he aims both to provide a metaphysical account of love and to do so in profoundly mythic language. I do not wish to examine this treatise at length, but I want to highlight a few things as present in the summary in III.5.9.\(^8\) First, Soul produces Love in its attempt to aspire to the good, and is itself a longing and directedness at the beautiful or the good. Love as a metaphysical entity comes about on account of the intense, unlimited desire soul has for what is above it. Plotinus calls it a sort of material being, οὕτω τοι ὁ Ἔρως ὑλικὸς τίς ἔστι, although it is unclear whether he means it is made of sensible matter, or it is material insofar as it is formless (more on that below). Nevertheless, even in this technical sense of ἔρως, it is still marked by being beauty-oriented, and in all cases is ascribed to soul alone.

Plotinus, following Aristotle, uses βούλησις, wish or will, to connote an explicit rational instance of desire.\(^9\) The term refers to a rational intention, and although it is most often used to refer to acts of soul, Plotinus also uses it to refer to the One, or, in the case of II.1, to the will of god, βούλησις τοῦ θεοῦ.\(^10\) In IV.4.12, he says that in the Universal Soul, will is thought, ἡ βούλησις

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\(^7\) On this point, see V.9.2.

\(^8\) For a recent investigation of Plotinus’s treatise on love see Dimitrios A. Vasilakis “Love and myth in Plotinus’ Enneads III.5,” *Diotima. Review of Philosophical Research* 43 (2015), 68-75.

\(^9\) For an extended discussion on the role of this term in Plotinus, see Erik Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends Upon Us in Plotinus and its Background* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), especially ch. 6.2.

\(^10\) Referenced throughout II.1–2.
φρόνησις. The most extensive use of this term occurs in I.4 and VI.8. In both cases, Plotinus discusses the role of βούλησις in the actions of a virtuous person, and generally seems to follow Aristotle’s account of βούλησις as developed in *Nic. Ethics*, insofar as it is rational desire. This notion becomes integral in VI.8, Plotinus’s account of “free will” and the wish of the One (Περὶ τοῦ ἑκουσίου καὶ θελήματος τοῦ ἑνός). There he examines the relation of one’s βούλησις and to what is up to us, ἔφ’ ἡμίν. I will not explicitly discuss this term below, since my aim here is to identify the use of terminology that delineates non-rational desire.

To my knowledge, there has been little extended study of the function of these specific terms in Plotinus’s philosophy. Arnou considers them briefly, and Gerson also makes mention of them. Arnou discusses ἔφεσις and ὄρεξις, depicting the former as broadly neutral (while acknowledging that it sometimes connects to the higher) and the latter, following Aristotle’s usage, as capable of being swayed by “un raisonnement erroné,” but also led straight by correct reasoning. His analysis of ἔπιθυμια is even shorter, which he contrasts with βούλησις. It is “le fait d’une âme enfoncée dans le corps…appétit inférieur, recherche de ce qui est agreeable et fuite de ce qui est pénible.” Arnou does mention the unusual use of ἔπιθυμια in III.5(50).9.50, and uses it as an example of why “Avec Plotin il faut renoncer à la satisfaction de distribuer sinon les concepts du moins leurs signes en catégories étanches.” He characterizes Plotinus’s use of βούλησις as in VI.8(39) to be, in part, rational desire *simpliciter*: “Pour Plotin aussi la βούλησις est désir du Bien…, désir raisonnable…immatériel, spirituel…et libre.” These claims reflect his larger reading of the terms for desire: “En fait entre ces termes ἔρως, ἔφεσις, πόθος, ὄρεξις, ὁρμή,

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12 Arnou, 59–60.
13 Ibid., 64.
14 Ibid., 64fn4.
15 Ibid., 64.
il ne reste chez Plotin que des nuances, qui souvent s’effacent.” Striking here of course is that ἐπιθυμία is not included in this group. Arnou also classifies βούλησις as rational appetite, in contrast with ἐπιθυμία, following Aristotle and the Stoics, where βούλησις entails an ὀρέξις κατὰ τὸν λογισμόν and ἐπιθυμία an ὀρέξις παρὰ τὸν λογισμόν. Gerson broadly agrees with Arnou in his assessment of Plotinus’s terminology of desire. He accounts for Plotinus’s unusual use of ἐπιθυμία at III.5(50).9.50 as due to the dependence on the discussion of Plato’s Symposium, where Plato uses the verb form in 204a.

Although ἐπιθυμία has not been interpreted as a central aspect of Plotinus’s system, I think there is good reason to consider his use of it seriously, and hence I include it in my investigation. Regarding ἐπιθυμία, one must parse the usages in which Plotinus does not speak of it in line with its usual Platonic heritage, instances in which the term’s use seems to be thoroughly unorthodox. In both V.3(49).11.7 and III.5(50).9.50, ἐπιθυμία indicates an unlimited striving for a prior principle, for the One in the first case and for Intellect in the second. Just above, ἐπιθυμία was taken either to be an inexplicable oddity or reliant on a Platonic precedent. Rather than dismissing a parallel usage that indicates the same aspect of a crucial step in the construction of two distinct hypostases, we can instead consider the likeness between these moments in Plotinus’s system and the historical usage he is happy to accommodate. In doing so one finds a connection between these apparently distinct articulations that shows Plotinus’s usage to be twofold, yet coherent. When used to refer to desire of the lower soul, ἐπιθυμία connotes an unlimited striving after an object of desire, and ἐπιθυμία here refers to a fundamental yearning proper either to the body or to the lowest parts of the soul. This manifestation of desire seems to be least touched by reason insofar as it is

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16 Ibid., 63.
17 Ibid., 63–4.
18 Gerson, Plotinus, 151.
19 Ibid., 273fn63.
furthest from it, and constitutes the historical usage of the term. In both unorthodox instances, the term denotes also an unlimited striving, but specifically after the good. If Plotinus uses the term to identify a constitutional element of Intellect and Soul, he may be pointing to a likeness in kind between the two apparently unconnected desires, albeit with vastly different objects. The coherence of this term is telling for this study, since there stands arguably a likeness between the pre- or non-rational moments in that which underlies the generation of the hypostases and the non-rational ἑπιθυμητικόν of the lowest parts of the soul. This terminology is in turn ubiquitous in the system. Further, such usage would mirror Plotinus’s extension of ἔφεσις throughout his system, from matter all the way to the fabric of noetic life. The extensive presence of these two terms suggests the presence of non-rational desire throughout Plotinus’s system by and large, and thus would have far-reaching consequences for the role of traditionally “non-rational” parts of the soul, such as the nutritive or sensitive faculties, and well as the moral standing of plants and non-human animals. The rest of this study will aim to identify the function and development of this element.

Desire in Intellect

In our discussion of desire, we begin with νοῦς, and νοῦς begins with desire. It has been well-established that Intellect is unlimited and undefined before it is fully-formed and limited in its reversion to the One. But the role of an unlimited desire in or even as pre-noetic Intellect neither has received much attention, nor has the permanence of its role been fully appreciated. I will first adduce two quick passages that show the role of indefiniteness in the generation of Intellect, before

21 The original work on intelligible matter and pre-hypostatic generation is Rist 1962, who briefly mentions the role of desire, but does not investigate to any extent. After, Bussanich, *The One*, Phillips, “Plotinus and the Eye,” and Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect*, discuss the passages on hypostatic generation, but do not thematize the role of desire.
examining the part played by desire. The first passage is V.4(7).2, where in his discussion of the generation of Intellect Plotinus claims that, “Thinking, which sees the intelligible and turns toward it and is, in a way, being perfected by it, is itself indefinite (ἀόριστος) like seeing, but is defined by the intelligible.” The next is in VI.7(38).17, again in a discussion of Intellect’s generation: “When [Intellect’s] life was looking toward that (i.e. the Good) it was unlimited (ἀόριστος), but after it had looked there it was limited (뢉ζέτο), though that Good has no limit (ἔκείνου ὃρον οὐκ ἔχοντος).” The most explicit passage connecting indefinite and uninformed sight and desire is V.3(49).11.5–14.

[Intellect] moved to [the One] not as Intellect but as sight not yet seeing...so that it desired (ἐπεθύμησεν) one thing, having vaguely in itself a kind of image of it, but came out having grasped something else which it made many in itself...before this it is only desire and uninformed sight (πρὸ δὲ τούτου ἔφεσιν μόνον καὶ ἀτύπωτος ὄψις).

Notable are both Plotinus’s qualification of pre-noetic Intellect as desire and his emphasis on pre-noetic Intellect’s failure to define the actual object of its desire, which it has only ἀορίστως and as a φαντάσμα. There are two distinct moments in his articulation of desire, one generative and one preservative: pre-noetic Intellect desires the One, and in this desiring generates Intellect. But the generation of Intellect is only the actualization of sight driven by desire, such that the continued actualization of Intellect requires the continued desiring of Intellect for the One. Indeed, Plotinus

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22 Ibid., V.4(7).2.4–8.
23 Ibid., VI.7(38).17.14–6.
24 Of course, Plotinus’s use of sight to discuss the activity of Intellect is well known. For a complete analysis of Plotinus’s use of sight language in Intellect’s generation and even hyper-intellection, see again Phillips 1990, which I discuss below.
makes this permanent presence of desire clear in V.6(24).5, claiming, “This is what thinking is, a movement towards the Good in its desire (ἐφιέμενον) of that Good; for the desire generates thought and establishes it in being along with itself: for desire of sight is seeing.”\(^{25}\) Thus, this pre-noetic desire, sight not yet seeing, makes thought, and is here clearly primary.

Further, Plotinus connects this desire with the matter found in the noetic world. A full discussion of intelligible matter in Plotinus would warrant a separate consideration, and here I want to show only that Plotinus identifies pre-noetic desire as intelligible matter.\(^{26}\) Of course the most explicit passage discussing intelligible matter is found in II.4(12).4.

[Intelligible matter] must be shapeless (ἄμορφον) before it is varied; for if you take away in your mind its variety and shapes and forming principles and thoughts, what is prior to these is shapeless and undefined (ἀόριστον) and is none of these things that are on it and in it.\(^{27}\)

Plotinus notably discusses intelligible matter in the same terms does uninformed sight and desire of pre-noetic Intellect. He discusses intelligible matter in terms of sight again in III.8(30).11: “Since Intellect is a kind of...sight which is seeing, it will be a potency which has come into act. So there will be a distinction of matter and form in it, but the matter will be [the kind that exists in] the intelligible world.”\(^{28}\) Continuing, he says, “The Good, therefore, has given the trace of itself on Intellect to Intellect to have by seeing, so that in Intellect there is desire (ἔφεσις), and it is always

\(^{25}\) Plotinus, V.6(24).5.9–11.
\(^{26}\) For Plotinus’s account of intelligible matter, see Rist, “The Indefinite Dyad,” and Nikulin “Intelligible Matter in Plotinus,” *Dionysius* 14 (1998), 85–114. Nikulin discusses the identity between the indefinite dyad and intelligible matter at 91–2, but does not connect the two to desire.
\(^{28}\) Ibid., III.8(30).11.1–6.
desiring and always attaining [the trace of the Good].”29 Throughout these passages, Plotinus identifies desire of pre-noetic Intellect with its intelligible matter, often by way of the sight analogy that allows him to clarify the transition from potentiality to actuality of Intellect. As a result, desire acts as the mechanism by which a substance is both changed from potentiality into actuality, and maintained as a single substance through this change.

I will examine what I have now called the mechanism of desire through two passages, V.6(24).5 and V.3(49).11. In each of these passages, Plotinus explains the generation of Intellect from the Good in two stages. First, desire is responsible for initiating the generation of Intellect. Second, desire is responsible for grounding the continuance of Intellect in itself while connected to the Good that is prior to it. This second point has not been much discussed in the literature, but, as I hope to show below, I think it is textually warranted and essential to constitution of the Plotinian system.30 In his explanation of why the Good does not think in V.6.(24).5, Plotinus offers this account, as we saw above:

This is what thinking is, a movement toward the Good in its desire of that Good; for the desire generates thought and establishes it in being along with itself: for desire of sight is seeing…For when what is other than the Good thinks it, it does so by being like the Good and having a resemblance to the Good, and it thinks it as Good and as desired by itself, as if it had a mental image of the Good.31

30 On the first point, see Rist, “The Indefinite Dyad,” 101–2; Bussanich, The One; Gerson Plotinus, 46, 223; Emilsson, Plotinus on Intellect, 69–123. The major contributor on the second point is also Rist. See Rist, “The Indefinite Dyad,” 105.
31 V.6(24).5.8–15.
Thought, ἡ νοητή, comes about when desire wished to move toward the Good because of its desire for the Good (ἐφιέμενον ἐκείνου). Most striking about this passage is the claim that “desire of sight is seeing” (ἔφεσις ὄψεως ὅρασις). Seeing is itself an act of desiring, which has important implications for the presence of this desire throughout Plotinus’s system. It is throughout given as the spur toward and ground for a new mode of being. Plotinus utilizes this notion of sight time after time, as I will show below. In another passage, V.3(49).11, Plotinus articulates the connection between the generative and preservative effects of desire more clearly.

Therefore this multiple Intellect, when it wishes to think that which is beyond, [thinks] that itself which is one, but in wishing to attain to it in its simplicity comes out continually apprehending something else made many in itself; so that it moved to it not as Intellect but as sight not yet seeing, but came out possessing the multiplicity which that sight itself made; so that it desired one thing, having vaguely in itself a kind of image of it, but came out having grasped something else which it made many in itself. The sight, again, certainly has the impression of what is seen: otherwise it would not have allowed it to come into existence in itself. But this impression became many out of one, and so Intellect knew it and saw it, and then it became a seeing sight. It is already Intellect when it possesses this, and it possesses it as Intellect; but before this it is only striving (ἔφεσις) and uninformed sight.32

Here Plotinus makes clear that before Intellect was fully formed, it was desire alone and unformed sight (ἔφεσις μόνον καὶ ἀτύπωτος ὄψις). Though desiring to attain to the Good in simplicity (ὅς

32 V.3(49).11.1–12.
ἁπλῷ), it fails, and comes out “having grasped something else which it made many in itself.” It reflects the One’s unity into itself, and generates one-manys. At this point what was ὄψις οὔπω ἰδοῦσα becomes ἰδοῦσα ὄψις, and Intellect proper has been generated. The result of the operation of this reflexive mechanism is that desire is the stimulus for the generation of Intellect, as well as the seat and principle of its continued activity. Desire looks toward the Good in pursuit of its unity, and generates within itself the intelligibles, activating them as objects within its own sight. It is tempting to equate sight with thought de facto, just as it is tempting to equate desire and thought. Rather, seeing or thinking seems to be a state of the otherwise unlimited desire, one that contains limits granted by the One or the Good. Even though it is difficult to pull them apart, all that Plotinus has said in these two sections requires that we not conflate the two aspects of Intellect.

There are here two distinct moments in his articulation of desire, one generative and one preservative. This desire itself appears to be non-intellectual insofar as it precedes and grounds the possibility of any intellectual activity. Further, even after it is “taken up” as it were into the activity of Intellect, desire continues to fulfill the role it originally had. The sight that is desire eventually becomes the activity of intellection. Especially in passages in which Plotinus will identify a substratum of Intellect and the intelligibles (e.g. V.1(10).5.7–20 and III.8(30).11.1–6), he explicitly maintains there are two aspects, a duality that must be unified in Intellect. In the first case, it is as a substratum and the numbers or forms are realized within it; and in the second case, it is matter and form that will be reflected in the fact that sight itself is διττόν. It is the mechanism of desire, here variably articulated as sight, ὑποκείμενον, or τὸ ὕλη, that has the function of the unifying power within Intellect. That sight continues to play a distinct role within Intellect requires that Plotinus’s description of its initial nature actually point to a reality permanently active.

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33 On this point see also II.4(12).4 and V.4(7).
in Intellect. Gerson reads such distinct phases of Intellect as “logical fiction,” either a pointer toward Intellect’s complex relation to the One, or as an account of Plotinus’s own mystical experience.\textsuperscript{34} Given that the urge toward the Good plays a distinct and permanent function within Intellect, it seems to me insufficient to read these passages in that way. It is true that they reflect the complex nature of Intellect’s relation to the One, and it may be true that they reflect Plotinus’s own experience, but the passages also show that desire is a distinct aspect of Intellect and that it plays a fundamental role in both the development and the continuance of Intellect, namely, they ground its unity. The exact relation between this desire and rationality or intelligibility remains to be determined, and I will examine it in detail below.

So far, I have argued the following. First, based on passages explaining the generation of the Intellect from the One, I highlighted that pre-noetic desire is operative in this process. Second, I connected this desire to intelligible matter, showing that desire’s function within the generative process is as Intellect’s underlying unifying substance. Third, I explicated the notion of the mechanism of desire by detailed examination of passages in which pre-noetic desire is discussed as sight. From this discussion, I argued that this desire is the potency that comes into actuality as sight fully seeing, which Plotinus identifies as the process of thinking, movement toward the Good by the desire for it.

\textit{Desire in soul}

Now that I have sketched the role of formless desire in Intellect, I now turn to consider the notion of formlessness in the generation of Soul. Here the picture is not as clear, although I will argue that there is sufficient evidence to show that Plotinus accounts for Soul’s generation along similar

\textsuperscript{34} Gerson, \textit{Plotinus}, 46, 223, respectively.
lines. It is clear that soul is connected to the Good through its desire for the Good. In his extensive investigation of soul, Plotinus claims that, “Soul desires (ἐφίεται) the Good beyond being.” He later ascribes desire to all manifestations of soul. In his discussion on love, he claims, “Every soul desires (ἐφίεται) the good, the mixed soul, too, follows upon that higher soul and derives from it.” Further, Plotinus famously considered part of soul to be undescended, resting permanently with Intellect. As the “expressed thought of Intellect,” Soul is itself actualized through the sight of a prior reality in the same way Intellect is actualized through its sight of the One. And thus as a result, soul is intellectual. Further, when Plotinus investigates in I.1 who “we” really are, he identifies us as the undescended soul in Intellect, and we actually possess, as part of our being as an intellectual soul, Intellect itself. The result of this is that we “possess the forms” in this intellective part of our soul in not one, but two ways: “in our soul, in a manner of speaking, unfolded and separated, in Intellect all together.” Expressed at different levels of priority, the soul through and through desires the Good, both in itself as something beyond being, but also in Intellect which itself both has traces of the Good and desires the Good as part of its being.

The most extended account of soul’s generation is found, surprisingly, in III.5, as part of Plotinus’s extended discussion of love. Plotinus claims that in the production of Love

Poverty had intercourse with an intelligible nature...and bore the substance of Love made from form and indefiniteness (ἀοριστίας), the indefiniteness which the soul had before it

35 IV.4(28).16.25
40 I.1(53).8.7–8.
attained the Good, while it was divining that there was something there by an indefinite, unlimited imagination (κατὰ ἀόριστον καὶ ἄπειρον φάντασμα).\textsuperscript{42}

We find both the notion of indefiniteness and another mention of a φάντασμα according to which the indefinite substance divines the One. There is a close parallel between Plotinus’s description here of the indefinite material and his account of intelligible matter in Intellect. Plotinus later explicitly identifies Poverty as desire for the Good: “Poverty is matter, because matter, too, is in every way in need, and because the indefiniteness of the desire for the good (τὸ ἀόριστον τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐπιθυμίας)...makes the aspiring thing (ἐφιέμενον) more like matter in so far as it aspires (ἐφίεται).”\textsuperscript{43} Plotinus identifies Poverty with matter, although the context makes it clear that he here refers to intelligible matter. Further, Plotinus’s claim is even more important than it may at first seem, since he says that “[Intelligible matter] bore the substance of Love made from form and indefiniteness, the indefiniteness which the soul had before it attained the Good.” This qualification is crucial, since it shows without question that the indefiniteness the soul had before it was fully formed remains, and remains functional. Further, his description of the desire or striving for the Good is nearly identical of his description of desire and intelligible matter in the discussion of Intellect.

Already in II.4(12).4, Plotinus argues that the many forms must exist “in matter which is...one” and claims that what is prior to the shapes is not identical to them.\textsuperscript{44} Plotinus claims also in V.1(10).5 that, “The dyad (i.e. pre-noetic sight) is indefinite (ἀόριστος) when one forms an idea of it by what may be called the substrate (ὑποκειμένῳ).”\textsuperscript{45} In these passages the indefinite is present

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., III.5(50).7.7–9.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., III.5(50).9.49–56.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., II.4(12).4.14–21.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., V.1(10).7.14–6.
not only as substrate, but is functional, affording Intellect its unity and operating as that out of and in which Forms subsist. Thus the pre-hypostatic nature of both Intellect and Soul thus appears as follows. The immediate outflow from the higher hypostasis is indefinite and unlimited, and a desiring, intelligible material. Remember that Plotinus identifies pre-noetic substance as desire simply. On this account, indefinite desire is ontologically prior to and partly constitutive of the second and third hypostases. Although one may wonder whether distinction between this indefinite substratum and any formal definition is possible, the passages I have examined in this section show it is possible, by the fact that this initial pre-noetic desire is present as a substrate the nature of which it is to be formless or indefinite, but the function of which is to strive toward a unity that is unattainable within the bounds of rational comprehension.46 As such, it both maintains its original object while working within limits by which it can attain a semblance of its goal by its continual striving for a goal that is irreducible to its necessary (and necessarily failed) condition. Nonetheless, it is responsible for the unity of Intellect and for the unity underlying all soul.

Plotinus’s presentation of Soul is not always clear, and he does not discuss the way in which formlessness functions at length. However, explanation of the role of intelligible matter and formlessness are scattered throughout his works. We have already seen mention of the matter of the soul in III.5(30), and he further refers to the matter of soul in his discussion of virtue in I.2(19).4, saying, “[Virtues] are a measure that forms the matter of the soul.”47 I will discuss the connection between virtue and the formless aspect of the soul at length below, but I want to emphasize here that Plotinus not only uses the notion of intelligible matter at crucial points (the generation of hypostases and in the account of virtue), but also that he uses the concept throughout

46 My argument stands in contrast to Gerson, *Plotinus*, 46, 223.
47 Ibid., I.2(19).2.19. One might also point to III.9(13).5, where Plotinus claims that soul “is matter in relation to Intellect.”
his corpus. Thus, chronologically speaking, we find intelligible matter as early as treatise 12 (On Matter) and as late as treatise 50 (On Love), so that throughout his work he considered it available to him as an explanatory principle.\(^{48}\)

Further, since hypostatic soul must engender All-Soul and individual soul, it must have no distinct quality of its own: it must be able to be everything at once and to adjust its concentration on different activities and bodies as needed. Plotinus makes as much clear in his discussion of the unity of soul in IV.9(8), where he concludes that all soul is potentially capable of all activities, such that soul must function fluidly.\(^{49}\) On the connection of the individual to Good, we may consider Plotinus’s oft-cited enjoinder that one “try to lead the god in us back to the god in the all.”\(^{50}\) Before offering passages that show that this relation operates within terms of formlessness, I will give one example here that shows both a direct connection between the individual and the Good and that desire is the agent of this connection. Since it may seem that such a connection is rather given, I offer evidence of Plotinus’s stance on this direct connection for two reasons. The first is that it is not given that Plotinus thinks there a connection between the Good and the individual directly, there may rather be an indirect connection. The second is that not all interpreters of Plotinus agree that one can even return to the Good, but rather that one returns only to Intellect. Such an interpretation is tantamount to step one of the intermediate understanding, and

\(^{48}\) Thus, we must reject Bussanich’s suggestion that in late tractates Plotinus “abandoned his earlier theory of intelligible matter, or, at the very least, the view that it contributed unity to actualized Intellect,” Bussanich, The One 28.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., IV.9(8).5. Further, Nikulin has shown that there is a close connection between Plotinus’s use of intelligible matter and imagination, such that souls are using intelligible matter all the time. One might add that Plotinus makes clear that soul must receive its unity always from Intellect (in fact he claims that soul “is matter in relation to Intellect” [III.9.5.3]), and further that it is the task of virtue to unify the soul so that it may form to Intellect (see I.2(19).4 and VI.9(9).5.21–5.). See Dimitri Nikulin, “Memory and Recollection in Plotinus,” Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 96, 2 (2014), 183-201.

\(^{50}\) Plotinus, Porphyry’s Life of Plotinus, 7. Unless otherwise noted, all translations come from Armstrong.
immediately precludes a direct connection between an individual and the Good. The first passage I offer in evidence is found in V.5(32).12.

We must consider that human beings have forgotten that which from the beginning until now they want and long for (οὖ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς νῦν ποθοῦσι καὶ ἔφεινται αὐτοῦ). For all things reach out to that and long for it by necessity of nature (πάντα γὰρ ὄρέγεται ἐκείνου καὶ ἔφειται αὐτοῦ φύσεως ἀνάγκη), as if divining by instinct that they cannot exist without it...But the Good, since it was there long before to arouse an innate desire (ἄτε πάλαι παρὸν εἰς ἔφεσιν σύμφυτον), is present (πάρεστι) even to those asleep and does not astonish those who at any time see it, because it is always there and there is never recollection of it.51

First, Plotinus’s claim that the Good is present to every being is strong here, as he claims not only that it is present in each thing, but that there is no recollection of it. Plotinus’s denial of ἀναμνήσις requires that there never be separation between an individual and the Good, such that the Good always will be present to all things (πάντα), whether or not they are thinking or aware of it.52 It is clear that this presence is enough to spur desire for the Good itself. Plotinus says twice in this passage that individuals possess an innate desire or striving (ἔφεσις) for the good, and that they have this desire while being unaware of the true object of this desire. He also discusses this desire

51 Ibid., V.5(32).12.6–14.
52 I cannot go into an extended discussion of Plotinus’s views on ἀναμνήσις here, but in short and in the words of Dmitri Nikulin, ἀναμνήσις for Plotinus is, “when through discursive, logical, and narrative means the soul strives to restore and attain what it has non-discursively thought in the intelligible but has later forgotten” (Nikulin, “Memory and Recollection,” 200). This clarification is important for what it tells us the connection between an individual and the Good is not: it is not something that has to be pieced back together, but something constantly but latently present. The further implication this clarification has is that it makes clear that, according to Plotinus, the Good is not something that is attained in Intellect at all.
in terms of loving. Thus in VI.7(38).31 he says, “[The soul] has its love, even if it does not know that it has it, it is always searching.”

But why should one think that this relationship and its desire have anything to do with formlessness? Presumably, it would be easier and more straightforward to work on the expectation that one’s form—as itself a trace of the Good—is the connection between one and the Good, and the desire is aimed at higher traces of the Good. But one runs into a significant problem approaching the relation to the Good on these terms. Although traces of the Good do eventually lead back to the Good, there is a difference between a trace of the Good and the Good. Although it is unquestionable that Plotinus thinks one must utilize such traces in order to work one’s way back up the ladder as it were, these traces are paradoxically of a different sort than the Good. Traces of the Good are formal and defined, while the Good is neither of those things, but as the source of form and definition beyond both. So grounding the relation between an individual and the Good on a trace of the Good does not work.

I here give a couple of brief passages that show that Plotinus thinks of the relation between the individual and the Good in terms of formlessness, before moving on to a more substantial discussion of formlessness in the ontology of the connection as instantiated in the compound individual. The most explicit passage is found in VI.9(9).3, in the discussion of the way in which the soul can relate to the object of its desire, the Good. Plotinus emphasizes the soul’s trepidation at moving toward the One, saying, “But in proportion as the soul goes towards the formless (ἀνείδον), since it is utterly unable to comprehend it because it is not delimited (ὁρίζεσθαι) and, so to speak, stamped by a richly varied stamp, it slides away and is afraid that it may have nothing at all.”\(^{54}\) Plotinus emphasizes that an attempt to reach the One is fear-inducing, since its formless

\(^{53}\) For such a reading, see Lloyd Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, 287ff.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., VI.9(9).3.4–7.
nature makes it difficult for one to be sure of what one has reached. The second passage is found in VI.7(38).33, as Plotinus discusses the soul’s relation to its beloved, the Good.

If he should come to understand that one must change (μεταβαίνειν) to that which is more shapeless (ἀμορφότερον), he would desire that (ὀρέγοιτο); for his experience from the beginning was love of a great light from a dim glimmer. For the trace of the shapeless is shape; it is this which generates shape, not shape this.  55

Plotinus maintains what is now a consistent pattern, according to which one desires the Good on the basis of a vague or dim connection or instance it has of the Good in itself. In both passages here, he discusses this connection and the object of one’s desire in terms of formlessness, although he stops before spelling out either what this connection consists of or in what way it works. This brief overview is not exhaustive, but it shows first that Plotinus thinks that there is an actual connection between the individual and the Good, and that this connection is not reducible to a trace-cause connection.

I want to make two points concerning the desire for the Good itself. First, properly speaking, an individual’s desire for the Good itself is never limited or defined, since the object of the desire is without limit. Plotinus makes this point explicit in VI.7(38).32.24–7:

Truly, when you cannot grasp the form or shape of what is longed for, it would be most longed for and most lovable, and love for it would be immeasurable. For love is not limited

55 Ibid., VI.7(38).33.27–32.
Plotinus here identifies the soul’s longing for the Good. This longing itself must be undefined because its object is undefined.\textsuperscript{56}

It follows, and this is my second point, that desire for the Good cannot be rational desire, which de facto is limited. This desire is by definition a desire for the One, and ascension to the One requires one to achieve greater and greater modes of unity.\textsuperscript{57} The required reduction of multiplicity raises a problem for an account that identifies the desire for the Good as a rational desire, since reason (and I include in this category Intellect) is discriminating and in its function creates multiplicity. In fact, when he discusses the cause of perplexity about the One, Plotinus explains that, “The soul experiences its falling away from being one and is not altogether one when it has reasoned knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of anything; for reasoned knowledge is a rational process (λόγος), and a rational process is many.”\textsuperscript{58} Although from this passage it is not yet clear whether Plotinus considers Intellect included in “reasoned knowledge” (since λόγοι are usually said of soul), he immediately clarifies that Intellect falls within the category of things that must be superseded. He claims that, “Our awareness of the One is not by way of reasoned knowledge (κατ’ ἐπιστήμην) or of intellectual perception (κατὰ νόησιν), as with other intelligible things (τὰ ἄλλα νοητά), but by way of a presence superior to knowledge (κατὰ παρουσίαν ἐπιστήμης κρείττονα).”\textsuperscript{59} I am not interested here to give an account of the notion of παρουσία, fraught as it may be.\textsuperscript{60} All I

\textsuperscript{56} On this point, see also VI.9(9).3.4–7 and VI.7(38).31.33. Consider also VI.7(38).31.11–9, where Plotinus likens the soul that likens itself to the Good to the lover who likens himself to his beloved.

\textsuperscript{57} See especially on this point VI.9(9).3.20–7.

\textsuperscript{58} VI.9(9).4.4–6.

\textsuperscript{59} VI.9(9).4.2–5, altered.

\textsuperscript{60} On this notion of presence in Plotinus’s thought, see Frederic Maxwell Schroeder, Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press (1992), 53; and more recently on
I want to highlight is that Plotinus distinguishes between the activity by which one operates intellectually, and the activity by which one is aware of the One. As a result, desire for the Good itself cannot be rational desire.

I have now argued that Plotinus explicitly claims that the desire for the Good is unlimited, evidenced in part by the conceptually distinct pre-noetic desire of Intellect and Soul. Our key question here has been whether after this non-rational desire is taken up by Intellect or Soul it remains non-rational, or whether it has been transformed simply into an intellectual or dianoetic mode of existence. As I have argued above, I think we must conclude that Plotinus thinks this desire really does retain its original nature, and that there is a continued contribution of such desire to its combined whole. The reason is that even once Intellect or Soul is formed, non-rational desire’s instrumentality remains in the finished entity of which it is partially constitutive. That is to say: non-rational desire is the driving force the effects of which are still felt in the completed hypostases of Intellect and Soul. The desire that is sight not yet seeing is always a striving toward unity. This striving for unity (or the Good) does not rest on intelligibility (since it would require multiplicity). This desire is responsible for propelling Intellect into existence and for driving it toward the Good and its own traces of the Good. Plotinus makes clear that there are two aspects of Intellect: that which can be identified as “intelligible” and that which is the good (or the unified or the life-giving) within it.\textsuperscript{61} It is this latter part that is the continuation of the pre- or non-rational desire that Plotinus distinguishes in his discussion of the pre-noetic moment of Intellect. One may desire the defined, intellectual traces of the Good or the One, but these traces only facilitate the...

\textsuperscript{61} VI.7(38).20.16–25.
basic, directive desire for the Good or the One. As a result, the intellectual objects of desire stand in service of the non-rational, formless desire of the Good.

The main conclusion of this discussion is that the desire for the Good is the non-rational connection to the Good that we must follow out in order to achieve philosophical success. The necessity human beings have to articulate it for themselves is indicative of the human condition, and not of the state of desire for the Good as such. There is a difference between the psychological requirements of trying to conceive goodness, and the structural function of non-rational desire, although Plotinus thinks these two ought eventually coincide. Although desire for the Good itself is non-rational and unlimited, the desire for traces of this Good is not. Plotinus often discusses the good of Intellect (the Forms) or the good of Soul as traces of this ultimate Good. One desires these only insofar as they are traces of that non-rational, unlimited Good, such that the desire for traces is a specification of the greater desire for the Good. As such, rationality is necessary to fulfill our desire for the Good successfully, but it is ultimately only a stepping stone. The desire that urges all back to the Good itself supersedes the bounds of rationality. This non-rational basis of desire for the Good allows it to be a mobile and ubiquitous element in Plotinus’s system. This mobility and ubiquity will be necessary for the process of purification, which I will discuss below. One thing I want to highlight here is the fact that the desire for the Good forms both the continuum of procession from the Good and the continuum of the return to it. I highlight above that it is the non-rational, inexplicable urge back to the Good that Plotinus references in V.5(32).12 when he says, “We must consider that human beings have forgotten that which from the beginning until now they want and long for. For all things reach out to that and long for it by necessity of nature, as if divining by instinct that they cannot exist without it.” This diving by instinct is echoed in V.6(24).5 and V.3(49).11, where in the first he says, “When what is other than the Good thinks it,” that it
does so “as if it had a mental image of the Good” (οἷον φαντασίαν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ λαμβάνον), and in the second he repeats a similar formulation, that pre-noetic desire of the Good had “vaguely in itself a kind of image of [the Good]” (ἀορίστως ἔχουσα ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ φάντασμά τι). Moving forward, I will consider Plotinus’s use of the above terms to highlight one, specific psychic element that is constitutive of the world and that is in turn necessarily involved in purification and philosophical progress.

*Desire and rationality*

Even though Plotinus explicitly claims that desire for the Good is unlimited and that we experience it as such, one may well wonder in what way we can relate this desire to the desire for good things, one that is necessarily defined. Gerson’s well-developed account of desire in Plotinus’s system offers a framework for thinking about this question. He sketches the distinction between Plato’s and Plotinus’s accounts of desire and rationality by arguing that for Plato desires of the lower soul are non-rational, such as the ἐπιθυμητικόν of *Rep.* 439d, and for Plotinus the only non-rational desires are desires that belong purely to the body. As a result, any desire that is proper to the soul must be rational. In order to account for the way in which there can be difficulty discerning whether or not one ought to do something, in his example to take a drink, Gerson distinguishes between normative rational desire or desire aimed at the good, and non-normative rational desire or desire aimed at the apparent good. The former category includes Intellectual desire and desire of undescended reason, while the latter would include desire proper to the embodied being. It would appear from Gerson’s account that there is no place for non-rational desire left within Plotinus’s

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62 Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, 287.
63 Ibid., 288.
64 Ibid.
account of the human being, or nothing one can identify, besides, say, affections of the body (which
is not truly what one is, or more precisely who we are), given the fact that rational Intellect (in
itself and in its reflection in Soul) appears to consume all.

Before attempting to assess Gerson’s analysis of desire in Plotinus’s philosophy, one must
settle a more basic question: What is rational desire? I see two possibilities. First, a desire might
be rational insofar as the subject of the desiring is rational. Second, a desire might be rational
insofar as the object of the desire is rational. In both cases, the desire is rational insofar as the
desire is reducible to reason, namely, insofar as it can be rationally defined. In both cases, there is
a relation between the subject and object of desire that is rationally determined, and that can be
rationally articulated. The desire of Intellect and Soul would appear to fall into the former category:
Intellect and Soul are both rationally defined, and therefore are rational subjects of desire. But on
some accounts, the desire of Intellect and Soul would appear to fall into the second category of
rational desire, depending on one’s account of the good. For example, if one takes the good to be
something defined and contained within Intellect, one would take the Intellect and Soul’s desire
for the good to be rational in the second sense, since the object of their desire is rationally defined
and located. However, if one identifies Intellect’s and Soul’s desire for the good to be desire for
the Good, classifying this desire as rational is inaccurate, since the Good is irreducible to reason
and therefore not rational.

I think that one might reconcile Gerson’s account in relation to my account of non-
rationality rather simply. If the former is simply an account of human action, it is sensible to place
it within a framework of rational desire for good things. After all, we are forced to engage with the
world in its specificity, and this fact holds true for the ways in which we assess moral action. There
is a difference between the way(s) in which we must engage with the desire we have, and the actual
structural presence and function of that desire. Although Gerson’s discussion provides a thorough account of human action, the requirements of human action do not necessarily reflect the reality of the metaphysical system. This is not to say that there is no relation between the two. To the contrary, human action mimics the procedure by which even Intellect must engage with and attempt to satisfy its formless, non-rational desire for the One. The serious change comes when one considers the desire for the Good itself, necessarily formless, an appraisal some may consider contentious. But nevertheless one must acknowledge Plotinus’s unwillingness to dismiss all other desire as unimportant, irrelevant, or unfunctional. I presented several examples above of points at which Plotinus considers non-rational desire as non-rational to be functional, articulates the non-rational aspect as having a continuing function, and identifies this non-rational aspect as being productive of another non-rational aspect like itself after it became limited. This debate is no mere quibble over terms, for the placement of desire—and in turn its potential to be satisfied—reflects radically different notions about what Plotinus considers the subject of desire to be, and as I suggested above, what he considers substance to be.

1.2 Desire in the structure of compounds

I have now examined the role of non-rational desire in Intellect and Soul, focusing on generation and individual longing in the case of soul. In this section, I will consider the role of non-rational desire in the compound of body and soul. My goal is to show that even at this basic, ostensibly material level, we find desire systematically functional and capable of being good-oriented. First, I will examine the role of desire between the soul and body, focusing on desire in the lower soul, in order to determine the limit of soul and its desire. I consider Plotinus’s position concerning
affectivity, and examine the role of unity in the compound, before moving on to consider the role of unity in the process of becoming virtuous in the next section.

Above I argued that the function of the mechanism of desire is to draw its subject or itself to a prior reality. The desire of the intellectual part of soul that connects the soul unconsciously to Intellect serves to drive the soul back to Intellect. By extension, one might expect that the desire of the so-called lower part of the soul ought to serve to drive it into the higher, intellectual soul. However, this supposition rests on the assumption that there are two distinct types of souls, an inheritance of Aristotle’s distinction between rational and animal soul. Although Plotinus will nominally refer to rational versus animal soul, it is unclear on what ontological grounds Plotinus could—or would even want—to distinguish between different kinds of soul. I will investigate the question by examining passages concerning desire and the lower part of the soul, considering whether there are distinct parts of the soul at all, and whether desire at a lower level could in any way be for the good. Related to this discussion is the notion of affectivity, for which Plotinus struggles to account. The pejorative connotation of affectivity lies in the fact that whatever is affected can be said to undergo change. The capacity to change is a sign of corruptibility, and Plotinus maintains throughout his work that the soul is utterly incorruptible. Worse, the impassibility of matter seems doubly damning for Plotinus’s dualism. Given the fact that both soul and matter are impassible, it is not immediately evident in what way their compound, i.e. the body, develops affectivity. Since affectivity includes things central to human experience (sensations, emotions), Plotinus goes to great lengths to articulate a framework according to which affectivity is possible, and his discussion contains details on the nature of the relation of matter and soul. First, it is clear that it is the body and not the soul that is affected. Plotinus examines affectivity at

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65 Within Plotinus’s system, bodies are always bodies τοιόνδε, of a certain sort or so-qualified. On this point, he is heavily indebted both to Aristotle’s De Anima and to the Stoics.
length in two places, III.6(26) On the Impassibility of Things without Body and IV.4(28) On Problems of the Soul II. He begins the former by asserting, “Sense-perceptions are not affections but activities and judgments concerned with affections.”66 Affections themselves belong “to the body qualified in a particular way.”67 In a strict sense, the soul experiences no pain, although it is proper to say that the body as the composite (τὸ συναμφότερον) of body and soul does. The soul can go from one activity or state to another without being properly affected, since the changing states are brought about by the different judgments made by the soul. In this way bad judgments and beliefs are responsible for the presence of vice.

Although it is clear what is affected and in what way the soul can be aware of the affection, it is still unclear what is responsible for the fact of affectivity in the first place. Plotinus accounts for this development through bodies’ fundamental lack of unity. As a compound of two distinct constituents with two different natures, a body always has unity as something added (ἐπακτῷ) to it: “But when two things want to be one (ὅταν δὲ δύο ἐθέλῃ ἓν εἶναι), since they have this unity as something extraneous, it would be reasonable to say that the origin of pain for them consists in not being allowed to be one.”68 The unity the body gains is what Plotinus will call the trace of soul, discussed below. Here Plotinus makes clear that it is body that suffers the pain of separation as this compound:

When one nature wants to share (ἐθέλῃ κοινωνεῖν) with another one, and a different kind, and the worse takes something from the better (τι τὸ χείρον λάβῃ παρὰ τοῦ κρείττονος) and

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66 III.6(26).1.1–2.
cannot take it itself but only a trace (ἰχνος) of it, and so there come to be two things, and one which has come to be in between what it was and what it could not grasp, this makes difficulties for itself by acquiring a communion (κοινωνίαν) with the other which is perishable and insecure (ἐπίκηρον κοινωνίαν καὶ οὐ βεβαίαν), always born from one extreme to the other.69

It is on account of its desire to enter into relation with soul that matter both gains a trace of soul and is put into a state where it may suffer from its lack of unity. Recently investigated, the notion of the trace of soul is an important innovation in Plotinus’s psychology, and it has been argued that with it Plotinus appropriates some forms of hylomorphism to account for the difficulties encountered by his dualist structure.70 Plotinus uses the trace of soul to explain in what way bodies are alive, something that requires a psychic element to be actually in body. Since Plotinus’s dualism forbids such a union (something I examined above), he utilizes this notion of the trace or the shadow to account for a body’s vitality. Properly speaking, when Plotinus discusses the compound, he means the living body, which is to say, not body and soul, but body and its trace of soul. The conclusion of the argument above concerning affectivity locates affectivity in the body because the compound body, properly speaking, does not have an agent capable of maintaining unity, that is, capable of keeping it alive. The cause of life is soul, and the compound body contains only a trace of soul. This trace is what accounts for the fact that the body is alive, but on its own it does not cause life. On the contrary, Plotinus uses the trace of soul to explain the way in which

certain bodily functions continue for a short while after death, showing that the trace of soul is a vestige of life, and not its cause.\footnote{On this point, see IV.4(28).29.1–7. Plotinus uses the example of the fact that fingernails and hair appear to grow after death.}

The problem of affectivity arises because the connection between soul and matter that constitutes the compound body is insecure. The body has an external and separate cause of its unity, a unity that is internal but insubstantial, and its lack of an internal cause of unity leaves it vulnerable to severance. Germane to this investigation is Plotinus’s ascription of conation to the body, or to matter as it continually strives for the unity offered by soul. Above Plotinus uses forms of \( \theta\epsilon\lambda\omega \), but just after the above passage he identifies the striving for unity as an instance of \( \varepsilon\varphi\varepsilon\varphi\iota\varsigma \):

“And as [the body] fluctuates upward and downward, on its being borne down it proclaims pain, and as it moves up its desire for the association (\( \tau\iota\nu \varepsilon\varphi\varepsilon\varphi\iota\nu \tau\iota\varsigma \kappa\omicron\nu\omicron\omicron\nu\ion{\iota}{\nu} \alpha\varsigma \)).”\footnote{IV.4(28).18.36–8. Perspicacious as ever, Plotinus implicitly suggests the following explanation of bodily experience: that to be physical is to be always to some degree in pain, since to be a body is to strive to hold a unity both impossible for bodily nature and requisite for bodily existence.} The attribution of \( \varepsilon\varphi\varepsilon\varphi\iota\varsigma \) to the body itself echoes Plotinus’s claim above in III.6(26).7.13 that matter is \( \varepsilon\varphi\varepsilon\varphi\iota\varsigma \) \( \upsilon\rho\omicron\sigma\sigma\tau\omicron\alpha\varsigma \varepsilon\omicron\omicron\varsigma \), so that we find that Plotinus offers a consistent characterization in both passages discussing affectivity at length. He thus accounts for the possibility of affectivity through the desire for and lack of unity in matter and the body. This desire has a moral implication insofar as it is explicitly a desire for what is better (\( \tau\omicron \kappa\rho\epsilon\iota\tau\tau\omicron\omicron \)), so that it is clear Plotinus has no problem affording the basic capacity for being good-directed to matter and the body so-qualified. This capacity is affirmed insofar as the body desires what is better, that is to say, because it desires unity. The insecurity of the compound is the fundamental reason that Plotinus considers affections of the body to be bad. Preying upon the weak connection between matter and soul, affections actually threaten to rip our bodies apart by disrupting the delicate unity it has. Now that we have a
definition and explanation of affections proper, we can look briefly to Plotinus’s discussion of desire of the body before considering its role in purification.

Plotinus’s account of the development of desire is mostly straightforward. The most relevant section for our purposes is IV.4(28).20. There Plotinus presents a careful and subtle analysis of desire and its relation to body and the lower soul. He makes a distinction between the desire that begins in the body, and the “clearly-defined” desire taken up by the soul. One may wonder whether there are two distinct desires here, but, as Dillon points out in his commentary, it seems more properly to be a portrayal of different stages of any one desire than two discrete types of desire. Because of its capacity to be affected, the body is susceptible to many desires. Plotinus calls the stage of desire proper to the body “pre-desire” (προεπιθυμίαν) or “fore-desire” (προθυμίαν). The soul can respond to this desire that begins in the body, choosing either to develop or to deny it. In other words, Nature (the term Plotinus uses here to refer to the lower soul) discerns whether the desire ought to be gratified. It is important for our purposes that Plotinus affords the body proto-desire. This proto-desire reflects here his claim in V.5(32).12 that all things have a connection to the Good, which amounts to saying that all things have a desire for, and thus connection to, unity, insofar as the Good and the One are the same, as are, in turn, goodness and oneness. Plotinus’s claim that bodies and even matter have ἔφεσις for unity is tantamount to claiming that they have ἔφεσις for the goodness. Plotinus’s conclusion in V.5(32).12 was that since

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73 Throughout, I refer only to lower soul, and never to a “middle” or thumatic soul. The reason for doing so should become clear throughout, but my motivation for doing so is that Plotinus has no strict separation of independent souls or even discrete parts of souls within an individual. Rather, there are distinct faculties that correspond to different functions, bodily or otherwise. The vocabulary of the different souls is an inheritance form Plato.


77 IV.4(28).20.34.
the Good is present to everything, there is desire for it everywhere. It is clear now that the body is included in this category.

1.3 Desire, Soul, and the Return

Now that I have argued for a holistic reading of soul, I want to examine the way in which this psychological holism affects Plotinus’s account of the return. In this final section, I argue that this holism exhibits the unlimited nature of soul, which underlies soul’s responsibility for ensouling the world at large. Plotinus identifies this unlimitedness as situated within the intelligible matter of soul, which, as I showed above, is operative in soul’s generation. I will argue in this section that the unlimited, fundamentally formless yet enforming nature of soul provides a connection between the soul and the Good, and this aspect of the soul is non-rational desire itself. Thus, we find soul’s capacity to be good-directed everywhere we find soul, and it is by embracing its formless capacity—by unifying itself in concert with the desire for the Good—that soul completes the purificatory process, and unites with Intellect. As a result, rather than being disfigured with soul’s generation, the formless desiring of soul as such continues to be integral to philosophical progress, and is indeed even foundational to the fulfillment of soul’s ultimate potential.

Function of lower soul in the return

Now that I have argued that there is a way in which the striving even of the body is for unity or goodness, the question stands as to how meaningful this connection between bodily ἔφεσις and goodness is, and I aim to answer this question by considering the relationship between the desire in question and unity. Above, I highlighted a connection between desire and unity in the generation of Intellect, and I have shown that this desire for unity is replayed in the connection between the
body and soul. In the latter connection, the body’s desire to be in partnership with soul is simply a desire for unity, and here Plotinus explicitly describes this desire as a desire for the better, τὸ κρεῖττον. This strongly suggests that Plotinus would affirm that desires of the body, insofar as they are directed toward a unity that supersedes their own, are actually for goodness. Insofar as the desire points beyond the compound, one can say that this desire stands in some relation to the Good. One can thus affirm that the desire of the body may be Good-directed. But clearly not all bodily desires are Good-directed, since we desire many things that would in fact sever the unity of our psychosomatic compound. These desires are rather responses to mere affection, an indication of the body’s insecure unity. Additionally, not all bodies have the same degree of inherent unity, since some bodies naturally flourish and some need a little help. It is due to such inference from and complications with the body that Plotinus considers purification to be a necessary facet of philosophical progress.

Plotinus discusses purification at length in I.2(19), where he claims that one attains virtue by becoming as much like God as possible. Plotinus distinguishes between two kinds of likeness: one that requires sameness between the two things made like (as in two different human beings), and one in which the something brought into likeness is posterior to that with which it is made like. He determines virtue to be an instance of this latter likeness. Let me briefly sketch the two kinds of virtue most germane to this discussion, the civic and the purificatory. Likeness is imparted to the body via civic virtue, which “makes us better by giving limit and measure to our desires and putting measure into all our experience.” Plotinus draws the act of limiting and making like in the process of becoming virtuous close to the relationship between body and soul. He claims that the virtues form the “matter” of the soul “by the exclusion of the unmeasured and indefinite in

78 I.2(19).2.5–10.  
accord with their measuredness” (καὶ τῷ ὡρίσθαι καὶ τῶν ἀμέτρων καὶ ἀορίστων ἔξω εἶναι κατά τὸ μεμετρημένον). Just as soul limits matter and brings it into a unity with itself in the bodily compound, the civic virtues function by limiting the desires (ἐπιθυμίας) of the soul and bringing those into unity with themselves. Plotinus explicitly claims that “[virtues] are a measure that forms the matter of the soul,” and it is by being such a measure that civic virtues are traces (ἴχνη) of Intellect. As a result of this process, once one has attained civic virtue, one’s desires are measured according to the traces of Intellect. Thus in general, Plotinus expresses the relation between matter, soul, and virtue in terms of form and formlessness: “That which is altogether unmeasured (ἄμετρον) is matter, and so altogether unlike (πάντη ἀνωμοίωται): but insofar as it participates in form (εἴδους) it becomes like (ὁμοιοῦται) that Good, which is formless (ἀνειδέω).” It follows from this account of likeness that the soul, when attaining civic virtue, becomes more like the Good by participating in becoming more formed. The Forms function as guides to the Good by providing points of possible likeness, all of which follow a trajectory toward the Good. Just as matter’s desire for soul leads to its improvement by making it like the soul, the civic virtues bring the part of the soul most vulnerable to influence by desire and passion into a better moral state. A particularly curious part of Plotinus’s claim is that greater participation in form produces greater likeness to the One or the Good, which is formless. The point here seems to be that the more one participates in form the more unified she is, and thus the closer she is to the One or to the formless, ultimate point of unity. This procession via form toward formlessness accords with Plotinus’s explanation of the desire that spurs our philosophical investigation, namely that all people experience a formless desire for a formless object, i.e. the One.

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80 1.2(19).2.17–8.
81 1.2(19).2.18–20.
82 1.2(19).2.20–4.
The second relevant category of virtues is purificatory, the goal of which is to purify the soul from everything that is alien, by which Plotinus means affections and passions, specifically, those that are involuntary. The goal here is likeness to Intellect. Just as in the attainment of civic virtue, in the process of attaining the purificatory virtues body and soul were made like to traces of Intellect, and the soul as a whole becomes like Intellect. When Plotinus discusses the purificatory virtues, he speaks of the higher, undescended soul in Intellect. He claims that it would be best to free oneself altogether of passion (θυμός), while remaining aware of pleasures insofar as one “[uses] them as remedies (ἰατρεύσεις) and reliefs (ἀπαλλαγὰς πόνων) to keep from being troubled (ἵνα μὴ ἐνοχλοῖτο).” Pleasure can function even within the purified individual as a way of caring for the body to help it maintain its minimal role in the progression of the philosophical life. Plotinus is also explicit when he reaches the issue of desire: This higher soul itself must neither desire anything bad, nor desire things proper to the body. In III.6(26).5, Plotinus explains that the purification of the soul must entail “leaving [the body] alone,” and waking oneself up from images that disturb the soul. We find elsewhere that the waking from images applies not only to the imagination, but also to lower soul, of which in IV.3(27).23.31–2 Plotinus claims, “For the sensitive power is in a way formative of judgments (κριτικόν), and the imaginative faculty is as it were intellective (νοερόν).” As a result, these lower parts of the self are capable of entertaining pseudo-images, and must be purified accordingly. He details in III.6(26).5 the process of purification, especially vis-à-vis the lower soul:

83 I.2(19).
84 I.2(19).5.8–9, altered.
85 On this point see Damian Calouri, Plotinus on the Soul, Cambridge, 2015, 163–71, where he argues that the so-called lower part of soul is reducible to the power of presentation, the φανταστικόν.
But if there is a turning in the other direction, to the things above, away from those below, how is it not purification, and separation too, when it is the act of a soul which is no longer in body as if it belonged to it, and is being like a light that is not in turbid obscurity. And yet even the light that is in obscurity remains unaffected.\(^{86}\)

Here Plotinus specifies that this light refers to the lower soul that is responsible for the body. Even while in the body as if it belonged to it (although Plotinus clearly thinks this is not the case), the light that is the soul is not affected by the body. Further, Plotinus maintains that the light undergoes a transformation in the act of purification. Through the turning, the light changes in act and continues in its now transformed wakeful state.

In his discussion of the purificatory virtues, Plotinus further specifies what the process of becoming like comprises. I want to offer a brief overview of that process, and then examine its implication vis-à-vis the role of this so-called lower soul. Plotinus explains that purification is the process through which virtue and goodness result. In order to identify exactly what is left after the process of purification, he goes through the different qualities of “what is left,” an expression that points to the purified soul. This soul is unable to remain “in the real good,” since “it has a natural tendency in both directions.”\(^{87}\) The good of this soul is “fellowship (τὸ συνεῖναι) with that which is akin to it (τῷ συγγενεῖ),” and its evil “fellowship with opposites.” The former is attained by being purified (καθηραμένην), which is to say, by returning (ἐπιστραφεῖσα). Plotinus states the result of the return in this way: “A sight and the impression of what is seen, implanted and working in it, like the relationship between sight and object” (θέα καὶ τύπος τοῦ ὀφθέντος ἐντεθείς

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\(^{86}\) III.6(26).5.18–23, altered, italics mine.  
καὶ ἐνεργῶν ὡς ἢ ὄψις περὶ τὸ όρώμενον).88 Before the return, he says, “It did not have the realities themselves but impressions (τύπους) of them; so it must bring the impressions into accord (ἔφαρμόσαι) with the true realities of which they are impressions.”89 This sight is of the Forms, and although each individual “has” the Forms within herself at all times, she must awaken all parts of herself to them in order actually to become like them or identify with them in any way. In other words, she must learn to see them, with all parts of herself. Above I showed that likeness begins in the body as it is shaped by and identified with soul, especially if we consider the trace of soul to be the lowest part of the soul given to the body. The lower soul itself is brought into unity with the higher soul via the civic virtues, and the higher into a likeness with Intellect through the purificatory or convertive virtues, that is, the process of purification. The mechanism through which the higher soul is in control is likeness, and the mode of this likeness, fellowship, or coincidence is manifested as a sight that sees the reality of what is prior. Unlike his discussion of Intellect, Plotinus here does not seem to be interested in identifying the sight and object simpliciter. Rather, he aims to show that there is an act of seeing that can be unified and directed across the composite in order to turn and focus its vision of the reality of the Form. This focus is the platform for the return to the One, and by this vision, one is taken further up within Intellect by its desire to unify with the One.

The goal of virtue and purification is to unite the soul and all its powers in such a way that they point as a whole toward the reality of Intellect and the Good. Here I want to argue that the role of the body and lower soul in this process is twofold. First, they provide an initial, visceral prompting toward the Good, although not the only one that one can experience. Insofar as any bodily activity that aims at unity stems from a desire for unity or goodness, this prompting can be

89 1.2(19).4.23–5.
very basic, e.g. the healing of a body after it has been wounded. I argued for this conclusion above in my examination of Plotinus’s claims about matter and the body’s desire and striving toward the better and toward unity. However, one must resolve the apparent tension between this conclusion and other claims Plotinus makes in regard to lower soul in his account of εὐδαιμονία. The strongest examples of two competing and apparently inconsistent positions regarding the lower soul and its place in the good life are the following. First, the mechanism of desire as Plotinus employs it suggests that there might be some kind of good life on all levels of reality, and that this good life would be reflected in the microcosmic human individual. However, Plotinus’s stance on this point is notoriously inconclusive. The most negative passage regarding the role of the lower soul in εὐδαιμονία is I.4(46).14.1–8.

The human being, and especially the good person, is not the compound; separation from the body and despising of its so-called goods make this plain. It is absurd to maintain that εὐδαιμονία extends as far as the living being, since εὐδαιμονία is the good life, which is concerned with soul and is an activity of soul, and not all of it (ψυχῆς οὐ πάσης)—for it is not an activity of the growth-soul (οὐ γὰρ δὴ τῆς φυτικῆς), because it would bring itself into contact with the body (ἵν᾽ ἂν καὶ ἐφήψατο σώματος).90

Here we have what appears to be an explicit statement that the lower soul is in no way constitutive of the good life. Entailed in this claim—and apparently contrary to the conclusion above—is that the lower part of the soul is not included in the return, which is the process of purification and unification with Intellect, which itself constitutes εὐδαιμονία.

The second passage appears to concur with my conclusion above but to be at odds with the I.4(46) passage just examined. At the end of III.4(15).3, Plotinus describes the life of the individual, saying, “We are each one of us an intelligible universe, making contact with this lower world by the powers of soul below…and we remain with all the rest of our intelligible part above, but by the ultimate fringe we are tied to the world below.” In the following section at III.4(15).4.1–2, Plotinus explicitly asks whether the lower part of the soul always stays in the body: “Is this lower part, then, always in body?” He answers in the negative, claiming, “If we turn, this, too, turns with us to the upper world” (ἐὰν γὰρ στραφῶμεν συνεπιστρέφεται καὶ τοῦτο). These passages form a striking pair, insofar as in them Plotinus both isolates the part of the soul responsible for turning as the “we” in Intellect, and claims that when the higher soul turns toward or is unified with Intellect through purification, the lower soul does the same. Thus we have an inclusive account of soul, which does not suppose a rigid distinction of discrete parts that prevents unification. Although these passages appear at odds, placing Plotinus’s argument and vocabulary into dialogue with his most fully articulated psychology shows that they are largely consistent. His vocabulary is most explicit in I.4(46).14.1–8, where he claims that εὐδαιμονία does not extend to the compound, τὸ συναμφότερον, which he identifies as the living being, τὸ ζῷον. In this statement, Plotinus denies εὐδαιμονία to the compound body, not to ἡ φυτική. We saw above that in Plotinus’s sophisticated psychology, it is the trace of soul that is in the body as the vitalizing principle. It would follow here that it is the effect of the lowest, nutritive part of soul that is not afforded εὐδαιμονία, not the soul itself. But, Plotinus offers as justification of the above claim that were ἡ φυτική to be included in εὐδαιμονία, “It would bring itself into contact with the body.” It is this explanatory claim that appears impossible to reconcile with the rest of Plotinus’s system. When he uses ἡ φυτική elsewhere, Plotinus refers to the lowest generative part of soul.
There are two ways to interpret this discrepancy. First, one could say that Plotinus is simply inconsistent, which I would like to avoid.91 Second, one could claim that in the I.4(46).14 passage, Plotinus speaks loosely and actually refers to the trace of the soul in the body. It is reasonable to suppose the second interpretation, given that it fits well both within Plotinus’s full psychology and with the second passage on purification, and thus seems to be the most consistent portrayal of his position. Further, one could adduce passages with similar vocabulary to support the second interpretation. In V.2(11).1, Plotinus explains the generation of the various hypostases through the emanationist image of superabundance or overflowing, specifying that when Soul generates what is below it, it generates something in living bodies. “It looks to its source and is filled, and going forth to another opposed movement generates its own image, which is sensation and the principle of growth in plants (αἰσθησιν καὶ φύσιν τὴν ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς φυτοῖς).”92 Plotinus specifies that “nothing is separated or cut off from that which is before it,” and that as a result, “the higher soul (ἡ ἄνω ψυχή) seems to reach as far as plants.”93 He then explains precisely in what way the higher soul extends to plants:

In a way it does reach so far, for the image of it is in plants (ὅτι αὐτῆς τὸ ἐν φυτοῖς). It is certainly not all in plants (οὐ μὴν πᾶσα ἐν φυτοῖς), but it has come to be in plants in the sense that it has extended itself down to their level, and produced another degree of being by that extension, in desire of its inferior.94

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91 One might in fact be tempted to endorse such a view, especially given Porphyry’s claim concerning Plotinus’ waning condition in his Vita. Since I.4(46) is within the last nine of Plotinus’s tractates, it falls within what Porphyry identified as products of Plotinus’s lessening faculties. I am not inclined to agree with him whole-heartedly on this issue, given that both III.7(49) and III.5(50) are late, yet technically masterful. Thus, I try to save Plotinus from this reading both by due charity and because I am not convinced by Porphyry’s claim. Endorsing such a view, see Kieran McGroarty, Plotinus on Eudaimonia: A Commentary on Ennead I.4, Oxford (2006), xiii–xiv.
94 V.2(11).1.23–8, altered.
Of most interest to us is what precisely Soul generates. Here, when Plotinus tells us that Soul made another level of being (ὑπόστασιν ἄλλην ποιησαμένη τῇ προόδῳ), he is referring to what he will later call the trace of soul found in the living bodies. In his translation Armstrong renders the first line, τρόπον γάρ τινα φθάνει ὅτι αὐτῆς τὸ ἐν φυτοῖς, “In a way it does reach so far, for the life-principle in plants belongs to it.” The closest referent of τὸ seems to be the εἴδωλον that the Soul generates. Armstrong renders the τὸ as “life-principle,” presumably picking up on the function the εἴδωλον performs in the body. Such a translation unnecessarily obfuscates that Plotinus’s account here is identical to his later, more explicit account of the trace of soul in IV.4(28).18, examined above, which states that soul gives a shadow or trace of itself to the body. The way in which Plotinus speaks of lower soul here is similar to his discussion in I.4(46).14. There too Plotinus distinguished soul and its activity from the soul that is in contact with the body. There he also lists activities proper to bodies alone, such as the size and health of the body or the capacity to sense well. The concern there was that Plotinus refers to this psychic entity as the nutritive soul (ἡ φυτική), but here in V.2(11).1 he again does not explicitly refer to the trace of soul, but only to its image, which he specifies as “sensation and the nature in plants.” I am inclined to read both of these passages as analogous, and, given what Plotinus says when he aims to be most specific about his psychology, to interpret this lowest psychic element as referring to the trace of soul in body.95

One may be tempted to read these passages as many, including Armstrong, do, namely as describing the lower soul simply, rather than a distinct product of soul. The difference rests in whether, as on the former reading, there is a different soul or “part” of soul that is lesser than another, or whether all soul is the same, as on the latter reading. But there is, I think, an inherent

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95 It is important to note that in places Plotinus allows himself the shorthand of referring to traces of soul with a reference to an immanent nutritive soul. Consideration of his strict psychology and the causality that underwrites it usually allows one to determine the reference.
problem with a reading that would have one kind of soul producing another. Such a production would entail that the productive ontological entity be equal in substance to its product, a principle the Plotinus strictly maintains. In fact, in I.4(46), much of Plotinus’s disparaging remarks on the body aim explicitly at maintaining this principle and avoiding the inversion of the proper causal order. Plotinus does rank powers of soul and certainly the body in a normative order based on priority and posteriority, but such a ranking of soul would be perverse, like maintaining that the Form of Horse is less a form because of the nature that the Form of Horse ensures. In turn, Plotinus describes the soul as light, and all of soul as light, even if the light is “in” the body. In the latter cases, he describes the light as dim or obscure, but this appropriation is due to the fact that the soul has been overrun by the body and has not maintained authority over the body as it should. Even in this case, the soul is unaffected, and once it regains its proper power, it shines brightly in its reformed, true state.96 Plotinus will even maintain that the image, trace, shadow or even sort of light that soul gives to the body is a distinct product that soul gives of itself (παρ᾽αὑτὴν), and that it is this psychic element that is proper to τὸ ζῷον.97 He expounds on this point at length in I.1(53).8, where he discusses in what way soul is present to bodies. After initially answering that, “soul [is] divided in bodies,” Plotinus clarifies, saying

Or, because [the soul] is pictured as being present to bodies since it shines into them and makes ζῷα, not of itself and body, but abiding itself and giving εἴδωλα of itself, like a face seen in many mirrors. The first image is αἴσθησις in the joint entity, and after this comes everything called a form of soul, each in its turn proceeding from the other; [the series] ends with γεννητικοῦ and αὐξήσεως and generally that which makes and perfects

96 On this point, see especially III.6(26).5.18–23 also I.1(53).4.13–9.
something other than that which is making, while the making part is turned to what it
produces.98

This passage is fertile, but difficult to parse. It is clear that soul reflects itself into bodies and gives εἴδωλα to help constitute the living body, but does not give soul itself. The rest of the powers that Plotinus assigns to the body follow one after the other, but he maintains that these are merely images of the soul’s own powers. Thus, there is still is a metaphysical distinction between what is in the body and soul itself.

I think that one must take seriously the fact that, according to Plotinus, soul is not strictly speaking broken up into discrete parts, and not always even into discrete functions. Rather, all the functions are present to all of soul—the expression of certain psychic powers is due to the proximity of soul to a body capable of utilizing the faculties. Plotinus states this explicitly in V.2(11).2: “[Soul] is then like a long life stretched out at length; each part is different from that which comes next in order, but the whole is continuous with itself, but with one part differentiated from another, and the earlier does not perish in the later.”99 Any reference to discrete parts or different souls seems to be unavoidable shorthand. Keeping in mind that all the functions of soul are immediately reflected into soul from Intellect disrupts the more traditionally Platonic and Aristotelian understandings of soul as a tripartite amalgam, and instead suggests a holistic framework within which material, sensible beings come into existence and pass away.100

98 I.1(53).8.16–25, altered, italics mine.
Non-rational desire, the return, and psychological holism

Here I will make some brief remarks about the role of formlessness in the return, before arguing that the formless capacity of hypostatic substrates allows for Plotinus’s claim that one can desire something formless, and his claim that “what is other than the Good thinks it...by being like the Good.” According to the metaphysical structure of Intellect and Soul, this formless desire is actually possible for the individual, as I discussed at length above. Soul’s proclivity to unlimitedness—especially unlimited desire—is something it must constantly keep in check, and Intellect’s unlimited beginning acts as unifying substrate to the Forms, which I also examined above. Further, Intellect’s substrate allows it to experience the One. In VI.7(38).35 Plotinus distinguishes Intellect’s capacity to think itself from that by which it looks to the Good, the “one by which it looks at what transcends it by a direct awareness and reception (ἐπιβολὴ τινὶ καὶ παραδοχῇ), by which also before it saw only, and by seeing acquired intellect and is one.” In III.8(30).11, Plotinus explains, “The Intellect must return, so to speak, backwards, and give itself up, in a way, to what lies behind it...and if it wishes to see that First Principle, it must not be altogether Intellect.” In his examination of the sight analogy in Plotinus’s noetics, Phillips argues that, “It is some extraordinary more of unified vision (ἀθρόα ἐπιβολή), which is far different from the noetic ἀθρόα ἐπιβολή in that νοῦς, by virtue of self-transcendence, is no longer 'all intellect’ and so does not ‘see’ intellectually.” Further, he convincingly argues for ἀθρόα ἐπιβολή as a kind of “passive vision” identical to that found in pre-noetic Intellect.

102 Ibid., VI.7(38).35.20-4.
103 Ibid., III.8(30).9.29–32.
105 Ibid., 93, 97–8.
There are passages in which Plotinus explains Soul’s unification with Intellect by identifying soul as a kind of intelligible matter. He says, “Therefore one must become Intellect and entrust one’s soul to and set it firmly under Intellect, that it may be awake to receive what that sees, and may by this Intellect behold the One…beholding the most pure with the pure Intellect, and the primary part of Intellect.”\textsuperscript{106} The notion that setting one’s soul (ὑφιδρύσαντα) under Intellect enables the reception of Intellect rests on the connection between seeing, becoming what one sees, and the capacity of non-physical substances to assimilate to one another fully.\textsuperscript{107} “When there is no otherness, the things that are not other are present to each other.”\textsuperscript{108} Bodies are unable to form a unity with other bodies, but this is not the case with soul and Intellect.\textsuperscript{109} If soul makes itself like Intellect, it can assimilate to it through the coincidence afforded by its non-physical nature. Soul assimilates itself to Intellect and then to the Good by being like matter, for “just as it is said of matter that it must be free from all qualities if it is going to receive the impressions of all things, so much more must the soul be without form if there is going to be no obstacle settled in it to its fulfilment and illumination by the first nature.”\textsuperscript{110}

In this final section, my goal is to argue that the somewhat plastic nature of soul facilitates the fulfillment of soul’s formless desire for the One, and that the inclusion of all soul within εὐδαιμονία rests on this connection. One must keep in mind that the formlessness of the One is also a capacity to unify, form, and make good all that is after it. The crucial connection is as follows. The substrates that constitute the formless desire for the One (substratum of intelligible matter in Intellect and Soul) are themselves a reflection of the unifying capacity of the One since,

\textsuperscript{106} Plotinus, VI.9(9).3.23–7.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., VI.9(9).8.16–20.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., VI.9(9).8.33–4.
\textsuperscript{109} On this point, see Plotinus’s discussion of body’s instability in IV.4(28).18.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., VI.9(9).7.13–7.
as I will show, they constitute the connection to it. The formlessness of their desire does not undercut the unity at which they aim, but rather is itself solely responsible for all articulations of that unity below the One. I will first reiterate the way in which the formless desire for the Good rests on soul’s plastic capacity in a way analogous to that in which Intellect’s formless desire for the Good rests on its own initially formless substrate. This connection accounts for the way in which Plotinus can account for the human experience of this formless desire. Then I will argue that the ubiquitous presence of this specific desire within soul, wed to the adaptability, further accounts for the presence of all soul within Plotinus’s account of εὐδαιμονία.

First let us recall the fundamental connection to the Good with which I began this investigation. In V.5(32).12, Plotinus identifies the connection to that Good in this way: “But the Good, inasmuch as from long ago it was present as an inborn desire, is present even to those asleep.”111 The subject and qualifying clause interest us most here: τὸ δ᾽ ἀγαθὸν ἅτε πάλαι παρὸν εἰς ἔφεσιν σύμφυτον. Armstrong translates it, “since it was there long before to arouse an innate desire,” and Harder’s German translation reads, “das Gute dagegen, welches uns ja seit je beiwohnt als Gegenstand unseres angeborenen Trachtens.” Harder’s translation explicitly identifies the Good as the object of our inborn desire, although Armstrong’s translation is more ambiguous, such that it implies the Good is the object (given that it “arouses” the desire), but the translation also implies that the Good itself is within us (“since it was there”). This passage is important not only for the problem at hand, but also for Plotinus’s general account of the way in which human beings are themselves connected to the Good. It is one thing for Plotinus to say that we come to a conclusion about the logical necessity of the Good. But claiming, as he does in many places, that an individual person or even thing inherently desires the Good is another thing entirely, and it has

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111 V.5(32).12.11, altered.
not yet been made clear in what way such a desire is possible or meaningful within Plotinus’s rigorous metaphysical and psychological system. I develop an argument below for a connection between the plastic capacity fundamental to soul and the formless desire of the Good, in order to make good sense of Plotinus’s claim. My conclusion will be that in V.5(32).12.11 Plotinus refers to the reflexive desire for the Good that is a reflection of the Good’s own unifying capacity.

To begin, I will briefly review the role of desire in Intellect. Plotinus argues in V.3(49).11 and III.8(30).11 that Intellect’s desire for the Good stems from the One’s immediate expression and that in its pure, inchoate state, it is formless and indefinite. I showed in earlier sections that this desire, which is Intellect’s pre-noetic striving, forms the substrate of Intellect that both grounds the intelligibles and is taken up within them. Just as the initial offshoot from the One is the formless desire of Intellect, Plotinus accounts for the initial state of Soul similarly. In III.8(30) he accounts for this desire explicitly through Intellect, but cross-reference to VI.9(9).3 and VI.7(38).32 shows that Plotinus acknowledges that a formless desire for the Good is present explicitly in individual souls, a desire one might expect to be present anyway given Plotinus’s strict imagistic system. Before turning to this point, I want to explicate both the object of Intellect’s desire and Intellect’s relation to this object. In III.8(30).11, Plotinus claims that, “Intellect needs the Good,” and, “when it attains the Good it becomes conformed to the Good (ἀγαθοειδές) and is completed by the Good, since the form which comes upon it from the Good conforms it to the Good (ἀγαθοειδῆ ποιοῦντος).” The result of this formation is that “a trace (ἴχνος) of the Good is seen upon Intellect.” Plotinus connects the trace of the Good to desire and sight. “The Good, therefore has given a trace of itself on Intellect to Intellect to have by seeing, so that in Intellect there is desire,

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112 In addition to the passages just cited, on this point see II.4(12).4.
113 III.8(30).11.15–9.
114 III.8.(30).11.19.
and it is always desiring and always attaining.”115 Plotinus identifies that which Intellect contemplates and wants to contemplate as a trace of the Good. The lack of an explicit object in the last clause of the sentence has led to some confusion in the literature. Intellect desires the Good, but what it attains is not the Good itself, but a trace of the Good that the Good gives to it. Read to say that Intellect simply attains the Good in its contemplation would entail that it need not continue to strive for the Good beyond itself. But this is a misinterpretation of the text, as well as both inconsistent with earlier claims in the treatise and fundamentally incompatible with Plotinus’s system.116

As explained above, Plotinus’s account of the generation of soul is embedded within his account of the generation of Love in III.5(50).3–7. In III.5(50).4.18–26, Plotinus explains that just as there are many souls sprung from one soul, there are many loves sprung from one love. He identifies, in his mythic terminology, the Soul with Aphrodite, since systematically speaking the soul is the mother of love and mythically speaking Aphrodite is the mother of love:

One must think that there are many universal Aphrodites in the All, which have come into being in it as spirits along with Love, flowing from an universal Aphrodite, many partial ones depending from that universal one, with their own particular loves—if indeed soul is the mother of love, and Aphrodite is soul, and love is the activity of soul reaching out after the Good.117

This point about many souls springing from the universal soul matches the more characteristic account he offers in IV.3(27).5.15–20: “The souls spring from one, and the souls springing from one are many in the same way as Intellect, divided and not divided; and the soul which abides is a single expression of Intellect, and from it spring partial expressions which are also immaterial, just as in the world of Intellect.” This reference is important for two reasons. First, it offers explicit evidence that Plotinus sees the substratum of soul functioning in the same was Intellect. Second, it shows that Plotinus’s discussion of Love is consistent with his other systematic accounts. Both are important for the following claim made in section 7, but equally important is what Plotinus has added in III.5(50): Love is the activity of the soul reaching out after the Good (ἐρως δὲ ἐνέργεια ψυχῆς ἀγαθοῦ ὀριγνωμένης). Since the treatise obviously concerns desire, we need not be surprised at his emphasis. But highlighting his incorporation of the notion of striving prepares the way for the next key text, III.5(50).7.1–25. Examined above, here Plotinus offers a genetic account of Love’s generation, and here we find important claims about the nature of Soul in its inchoate state. He claims,

[Poverty] bore the substance of Love made from form (εἴδους) and indefiniteness (ἀόριστας), the indefiniteness which (ἡν) the soul had before it attained the Good, while it was divining that there was something there by an indefinite, unlimited imagination (κατὰ ἀόριστον καὶ ἄπειρον φάντασμα). 118

This is a crucial passage concerning the nature of soul, and the clearest expression of the soul’s indefinite nature, its connection to the Good, and the desire of that Good. I showed above that we

118 III.5(50).7.6–8.
have a direct conceptualization of inchoate soul that is analogous to the inchoate Intellect. Further, the vocabulary in this passage also mirrors that Plotinus uses in his account of pre-noetic Intellect and its desire for the One. In V.3(49).11.6, Plotinus argues that “[pre-noetic Intellect] desired one thing having vaguely in itself a kind of image of it” (ὥστε ἄλλου μὲν ἐπεθύμησεν ἀορίστως ἔχοψα ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ φάντασμά τι ἔξηλθε), and in V.1(10).5.13–14, Plotinus identifies the substratum of Intellect as ἀόριστος. 119 In fact, in V.1(10).7 Plotinus characterizes soul’s generation in similar terms. He says that soul is “indefinite (ἀόριστον), but defined by its parent, and, so to speak, given a form (ὤριζόμενον δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ γεννήσαντός καὶ οἶον εἰδοποιούμενον).” 120 As a result, soul is a light and trace of Intellect (νοῦ φῶς καὶ ἴχνος).

In connection with Plotinus’s account of pre-noetic Intellect, we find that Plotinus accounts for the immediate expressions that form the bases of the second and third hypostases as indefinite expression of desire for the Good. Even in the case of soul, which one might expect to desire Intellect, Plotinus claims that it desires the Good. As a result, these underlying, inherently formless but form-giving elements of the hypostases are identical to the formless desire of the Good, a desire an individual can identify and focus on in herself. Here is the connection to his psychological holism. Plotinus also claims that the formless desire for the Good at the base of soul is responsible for receiving and giving life to everything that soul enforms, specifically the λόγοι reflected into soul and the soul-traces these λόγοι in turn engender. This inchoate form of soul is the same unifying, plastic capacity I outlined above. This aspect of soul accounts for two things. First, it accounts for the role that desire for the Good plays after soul has been given a trace of Intellect. Second, it accounts more decisively for the inclusion of all soul within Plotinus’s account of

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119 Here is the second: “Therefore what is called number in the intelligible world and the dyad are rational principles and Intellect; but the dyad is indefinite when taken as if it were a substratum (ὁ οὖν ἐκεῖ λεγόμενος ἀριθμός καὶ ἡ δύο λόγοι καὶ νούς: άλλα ἀόριστος μὲν ἡ δύο τῷ οἴον ὑποκειμένῳ λαμβανομένη).”

120 V.1(10).7.41–3.
εὐδαιμονία insofar as it shows that the same desire for the Good is present in all soul *simpliciter*. One must now understand that the pliable, unifying capacity of soul—identical to the intelligible matter of soul—is fundamentally the desiring the Good of which its unifying capacity is a reflection. I argued for the second point in the discussion of εὐδαιμονία, by identifying the way in which the soul is capable of assimilating itself to its paradigm in Intellect. It is now clear that insofar as soul is soul, it functions within and as variations of the formless desire of the Good.

Earlier, it was not yet clear whether such a formless desire could be present in any way in all of soul, since it was established only that Intellect had an element that was simply the formless desire for the Good. As a result, it would appear that the higher, undescended part of the soul would then be a distinct facet of soul alone capable of realizing such a desire (albeit with the unified soul present to it). Now that there is evidence that Plotinus ascribes a formless desire for the Good to soul *simpliciter*, we must ascribe such an element to all soul, regardless of its functions.

**Conclusion: On the permanence of desire**

I have examined passages in which Plotinus discusses non-rational desire and its function within the generation of the world and within the return of the soul to the Intellect and the One, and I have argued for an understanding of Plotinus’s philosophy within which non-rational, formless desire is foundational. I outlined an account of non-rational desire according to which this desire operates on all levels of reality by working as a unifying power that aims always at the One. Since its object, the One, is formless, and since Plotinus discusses this desire in terms of formlessness, I have characterized this desire as non-rational *because* it is formless and therefore irreducible to reason’s grasp. Since the object of this desire falls outside of definition, it is continually disappointed, and
in turn continues to desire what is fundamentally impossible: to be completely and permanently subsumed within the ultimate unity of the One. Throughout, I have also argued for a holistic account of soul, both because I think it is the most consistent and rigorous account of soul Plotinus offers, and because it makes better sense of ἐὐδαιμονία, since it avoids the otherwise inevitable conclusion that part of soul is left behind in the attainment of ἐὐδαιμονία. The investigation of Plotinus’s holistic account of desire also uncovered the way in which the non-rational or formless desire of soul is responsible for manipulating all unificatory power of soul. Further, it is from this formless desiring part of the soul that a connection to the Good itself remains, and it is even through this formlessness, also discussed as the intelligible matter of the soul, that ἐὐδαιμονία is accomplished, by the reorganizing and unification of soul.

Although I have highlighted this non-rational source and base of substance, one ought not take this discussion as a move to reduce or dismiss rational activity and formal aspects of Plotinus’s metaphysics in any way. Instead, I emphasize the non-rational or formless aspect in order to show functionally what is happening in Plotinus’s metaphysics, and structurally what accounts both for the connection to Goodness and for claims about what is good. At base what substance is according to Plotinus, both Intellect and Soul, as well as matter in its pseudo-substance, is a desiring toward unity or goodness. Thus the interplay between this non-rational desiring substance and limited unity forms an integral whole, since the desire for a unity beyond unity must attempt always to attain it through smaller instantiations of unity. That is to say, desiring substance attempts to make its way back to the One through the traces of the Good, which are discrete, formal unities that mirror that Good, but ultimately fail to provide the unity sought by desiring substance. So substance, in its most fundamental activity, is potency coming into actuality through its desire for and striving toward the Good or the One, its final cause. In fact, one can see this framework in the
One’s own production, since the One itself is active potency actualizing all the time. Plotinus marks this potency coming into actuality through desire, which is itself the impetus of actualization, active at every level, and responsible for the realization of individuals always held within a related, unified whole.

Plotinus has thus offered us a model of philosophical activity according to which non-rational desire is foundational to the operation of the system insofar as it is built into the being of substance: what it is for intellect or soul to be a substance is for intellect or soul to be in an activity driven by its constant desiring of the good. As a result, this non-rational desire is permanent to substance as such, and does not cease, since Intellect and Soul both desire what is ultimately impossible: to be unified with the Good beyond being, the One beyond any unity. Intellect and Soul are ultimately in a state of constant failure, and while they grasp traces of the Good, they do not grasp the Good itself. Moving forward, we will see this Plotinian model of desire—according to which desire is marked by its distinction from reason, its permanence and insatiability, and its position within the very being of the subject of the desire—reappear elsewhere and in different formulations within the historical trajectory of this investigation. Our first re-articulation of this model is found in the *Plotiniana Arabica*, to which I now turn.
Chapter 2
The Plotiniana Arabica and the Enformation of Desire

The first desire, which is not perceived by the senses, is higher and nobler than every desire, and prior to every desire. It is the good, such that no possible road can lead up to anything else above it, so that one might desire anything higher.

فأما الشوق الأول الذي لا يقع تحت الحس فهو أعلى وأشرف وأقدم من كل شوق
وهو الخير الذي لا يجده سبيل إلى الصعود إلى شيء آخر هو أعلى منه فيشتاق إليه

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The Plotiniana Arabica text is a crucial point in the transmission of Neoplatonic conceptions about the value and function of desire. In the Procleana Arabica, the notion of desire is barely present, an intensification of the Proclean diminution of discussion about desire. ¹ Although Plotinus’s philosophy undergoes significant changes in its Arabic adaptation, including the alteration of the ubiquity and function of desire, desire remains an important concept in the resulting text. The ascription of desire to Mind is curtailed, and the functionality of formlessness excised, with the result that desire lies primarily within the realm of soul, and, even there, markedly rational. Although the adaptation recasts the timbre and distribution of desire, it is faithful in its transmission of the Plotinian model of desire according to which desire is part of substance as such, although in the adaptation that substance is, in most passages, soul alone. This rationalization of desire affects

the attainability of desire by putting the object of desire, attainment to the realm of Mind, within reach.

In this chapter, I will examine the presence and function of desire as found within the available Arabic Plotinus materials in order to determine the connection between desire, rationality, and the Good. First, I will examine discussion of the presence of desire in Mind, soul, and the body, considering the terminology used to indicate different kinds of desiring. I argue that desire, while often restricted from the domain of Mind, is part and parcel of soul’s existence as distinct from Mind. Second, I will examine the connection of the soul to the body, in order to determine whether one may say that there are different kinds of soul and to what extent soul is distinct from the body. I argue that the adaptation closely follows the original text to a greater extent than appreciated, arguing against interpretations of the adaptation that include an Aristotelian conception of lower soul. Last, I consider the ethical goal of the return as presented in the adaptation. There I argue that the return occurs by way of an individual soul’s assimilation to universal soul and then to Mind by way of imagination. This return stops within Mind, instead of superseding Mind to the First Cause.

2.1 Desire

In the prologue to the *Theology of Aristotle*, we find desire an integral aspect to the account of philosophical progression. The writer says that, “All generated agents act because of the natural, primordial yearning (*al-šawq al-ṭabīʿī l-sarmadī*), and that yearning and searching (*ḏalika l-šawq wa-l-ṭalab*) is a second cause.”² In this section, I will undertake an examination of the notion of

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desire as it is found in the *Plotiniana Arabica*, in order to present the most relevant passages on the topic and to construct a coherent account of desire from the text. My goal is to establish the adaptor’s view concerning the nature of desire, and in turn to offer a picture of desire within the entire system. I will argue that although desire is functional within the system, the adaptor of the *Theology of Aristotle* (hereafter ThA) carefully delimits desire nearly to exclude desire from Mind altogether and to mark it as a psychological phenomenon. By contrast, in passages on desire found in the so-called *Sayings of the Greek Sage* (hereafter GS), desire extends to the Mind in a way that is more whole-heartedly Plotinian. This rationalist focus has major implications for the relation between the soul and a body and for the account of ethics in the Arabic Plotinus materials, as I will argue later in sections two and three. In this section, I will proceed by examining the adaptor’s presentation of the desire of the Mind, Soul, and body. I argue that the adaptor is reluctant to ascribe desire to the Mind, and instead ascribes desire primarily to soul, making soul a primary desiring, mobile agent. This result is in concordance with the adaptor’s understanding of the goal of Mind, which is self-knowledge, rather than a unification with the higher principle, God.

**Mind and Desire**

Within any distinctly Neoplatonic system, there are three points at which one might expect desire to be present in Mind. The first is the generation of Mind from the One, the second is within the Mind’s own activity, and the third is Mind’s attempt to return to the One. As I will show below, the adaptor ascribes desire on the first point. However, he conflates the second and third points, and ascribes desire to Mind only insofar as the Mind desires to know itself, and in this knowledge,
to know its cause. The vocabulary used by the adaptor for Mind’s desire is concentrated, and he primarily uses variants of two roots: \( r-w-d \) and \( š-w-q \). The latter term will recur throughout the texts we examine, and here and in later chapters will form the basis for theories of conation.

We find accounts of desire’s role in the generation of Mind from the One sparsely in the Arabic Plotinus materials, and we find explicit discussion of it in the *Epistle on Divine Science* 98–112 (hereafter *DS*), where he also considers its role in Mind’s acts. In regard to the first point, he says

> When mind wishes (ʾīrāda) to know the sublime, which is alone, it casts itself upon it simply, and then becomes multiple and roams about in order to perceive it...Then the mind becomes multiple beside the sublime thing, which is alone, because when it wishes (ʾīrāda) to know it, it casts itself upon it, as if it were vision, not as mind. For when mind is attached to the First Cause, which is only being, it is as it were endowed with vision and perception. It desires (yaštāqu) to see the First Cause, but can do so only with the eye of its sight, so it returns to itself, having become multiple through its roaming about and through much cogitation...Then mind becomes multiple, though that which was sought and desired (al-\( maʾšūq \)) does not become multiple.

This is a familiar Neoplatonic picture. In an effort to know its principle, Mind makes itself multiple, since it is unable to grasp the purely simple One. The adaptor does not distinguish

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between different moments in the generation of Mind, although the emphasis on the fact that Mind is made multiple (yatakattaru) suggests the adaptor acknowledges a conceptual progression from simplicity to multiplicity. Helpful on this point is GS I.32–46. There one finds a clear claim that Mind is without form before it attempts to think its cause. As a result, there are two distinct moments in the life of Mind.

The first originated mind (al-'aql al-'awwal al-mubtada') was not in possession of form. When it inclined to the first originator (al-mubdi'), it was the possessor of form because it came to an end. So it is shaped (yušakkalu), and it is the possessor of shape and form (ḥilya wa-ṣūra). The first state is a formless, inchoate state before Mind inclined to the One, and the second is an enformed, definite state after the Mind is limited by the One. Considering this progression with respect to the notion of desire presented in DS 98ff. above, one finds that the inchoate Mind inclines toward the One because it desires to know ('alima) the One. By its vision, the Mind makes itself multiple in its attempt to explicate the absolutely simple One.

Regarding the second and third aspects of desire in Mind, the role of desire in the Mind’s own activity and in its potential return to the One, one finds that the two points are often conflated and the role of desire muted. There are several passages that assert Mind’s desire of the One. The two most informative for our purposes are those that also contain discussion of the Mind’s desire

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for its own activity. One is found in DS 67, the other at the beginning of ThA I. The first discussion is set within an analysis of the nature of Mind, specifically that Mind is not found “outside” itself, and therefore is never fatigued in its activity. There we find the following claim. “The life of the Mind is not one of fatigue, especially when it is a part of a whole that acts from outside. For it does not desire (lā yaštāqu) anything so as to be fatigued by its desire (ištīyāquhu) for it.”7 The adaptor foresees a potential objection to this picture. Given the fact that the Mind knows and desires God, Mind would presumably be fatigued by this desire. Further, if the Mind knows God it must also in this knowledge know itself (since knowledge and knower must be the same). This would seem to entail that, when fatigued in its knowledge of God, Mind is fatigued in its self-knowledge. The adaptor must show that Mind’s knowledge of God entails self-knowledge in a way that does not lead to fatigue. I include first the argument concerning Mind’s self-knowledge and knowledge of God before moving on to the argument about rest.

If we concede to you that the mind knows and desires (yaštāqu) God exalted, we concede also that when it knows him it knows itself. For every power or knowledge that the mind possesses is given to it by that sublime and noble substance. And when the mind knows that it obtains every power it has, and every knowledge, from its cause, which is the cause of causes, it knows too that it is one of the gifts of that cause. Rather, it is the totality of the excellent gifts of God exalted. For it is knowledge and power and substance, and all these things are one in it, for it is mind. But although it is of this description, yet it is caused. If this is as we have described, and we concede that the mind knows God exalted, then it

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7 DS 67, Henry–Schwyzer 309, Badawī 172.
knows his powers too. And if the mind knows his powers, it knows itself too, because it is one of his powers.\[^8\]

First, notice that the adaptor takes it as given that Mind knows God. (He does not argue for this claim in lines I provided since the claim is brought in as granted by the hypothetical objector.) The closest thing one finds to an argument for this claim is the point that if Mind is unable to know God with the utmost knowledge, then Mind will be deficient, the inference apparently being that Mind is not deficient, and therefore that it knows God completely. With respect to the argument from the passage concerning the connection between Mind’s knowledge of God and its knowledge of itself, it goes as follows. When Mind knows that every power or knowledge is a gift from God, it knows that it must be one of these gifts or powers. When Mind knows itself and sees its nature as containing all knowledge, power, and substance together as one, it knows that it must be the totality (\textit{jamīʿ}) of the gifts or powers from God, since Mind knows itself as \textit{all} of God’s gifts. Since it is granted that Mind knows God, the adaptor teases out what that process would be like. Knowledge of God entails knowledge of God’s powers, and the Mind comes to know these powers through its own process of self-realization. The result is essentially that Mind’s knowledge of God and its own self-knowledge are co-extensive. The adaptor reiterates this reading in the following passage.

If the mind does not have the power to know God almighty utterly—for there knowledge and the known are one—then in this respect mind will fall short (\textit{nāqsān}). This is because it is not able to see or know itself in this way, since sight and knowledge are the seen and

known. We say that rest befits nothing so much as mind. But in mind, rest is not an emergence from mind but an activity resting from all exterior things.\footnote{DS 75–6, Henry–Schwyzer 309, Badawī 172.}

The adaptor identifies a necessary failure of Mind’s capacity to know. The passage is oblique, but the form of the argument is clear. The adaptor affirms that Mind does not have the power to know God thoroughly, driving a wedge between complete knowledge of God and the knowledge of which Mind is capable. Were Mind able to know God completely, \textit{Mind would simply be identical with God}. Insofar as the argument presumes two distinct entities, such a situation is impossible, and as a result, the adaptor has shown supra-intellectual knowledge also to be impossible. He continues, drawing out the conclusion that Mind must be at rest. “If it is of this description, it performs its action only looking at itself and in itself, not outside, so that it is acting while at rest from the things that are outside it.”\footnote{DS 78, Henry–Schwyzer 311, Badawī 172–3.} Even in Mind’s knowledge of God, it remains still in its own self-knowledge. As a result, knowledge of God is simply an intensification of the knowledge Mind has of itself, and Mind is not fatigued in this knowledge of God.

This point is unique within a Neoplatonic context and a significant departure from the Plotinian account of the relation between the second and first hypostases. In the account from \textit{DS}, unity between Mind and the One is not an assimilation by way of formlessness, but a radical act of self-knowing. This account of the conclusion of Mind’s desire for God is echoed in our next passage from the very beginning of the \textit{Theology}, where the adaptor explains the nature of intellectual substance.
We say that every substance that is intellectual alone possesses intellectual life and is impassive, and therefore the substance reposes in the world of mind, fixed in it and perpetual, not departing from it or proceeding to another place, because it has no place towards which to move from its own place, nor does it desire (lā yaštāqu) any place other than its own.\(^\text{11}\)

There are two points of overlap between this passage and the above passage from *DS*. The first is the claim that Mind does not desire a new place, and the second that it does not depart from its own place to another, that is, that is does not go outside of itself. Important to these claims is the qualification that the substance in question is intellectual substance alone (*jawhar ʿaqī faqat*). In the following passage, the adaptor contrasts this substance with intellectual substance that is endowed with desire.

Every intellectual substance that has a certain desire (šawq) is posterior to the substance that is mind alone, with no desire (lā šawq). When the mind acquires a desire, it proceeds because of that desire in a certain direction and does not abide in its original place, for it desires greatly to act and to adorn the things that it has seen in the mind...When the mind is informed by the form of desire (*al-ʿaqlu ʿiḏa taṣawwara bi-ṣūrati al-šawqī*), it desires to bring out into actuality the form that is in it, and it longs greatly for that, and the birth-pangs seize it and it brings it forth into actuality because of its desire for the sensible world. When the mind receives the desire to go downward, the soul is fashioned (*taṣawwarat*) by

\(^{11}\text{ThA I.2, Henry–Schwyzer 219, Badawī 18–9. Cf. Enn. IV.7(2).13.2–4.}\)
it and the soul is then a mind fashioned by the form of desire, although the soul has
sometimes a universal desire and sometimes a particular desire.12

The adaptor presents a distinction between the intellectual substance that is Mind itself, alone with
no desire, and an intellectual substance that posterior to it, endowed with desire and because of
that led to go outside of Intellect. This description of Mind with no desire is stronger than the
claims we found in DS, which at least conceded that Mind desires God. The adaptor identifies the
intellectual substance with the proclivity toward the sensible world as soul. This passage is
particularly challenging, given that the progression and stages are not immediately clear. In fact,
D’Ancona Costa has remarked on the apparent inconsistency of this passage, noting that there
appear to be two inconsistent claims concerning the presence of soul in Mind. The first “impl[ies]
that when Intellect plus desire proceeds downwards, soul already exists as such,” while the second
“maintain[s] that soul is the same as Intellect plus desire.”13 She remarks that the adaptor’s struggle
reflects a difficulty within the Plotinian original, namely the opaque relationship between Intellect
and World Soul. I am not inclined to read these remarks as inconsistent, since I think the lack of
clarity is due not to the thinker but to the nature of intelligible substance. Since it is incorporeal,
intelligible substance can fully assimilate to another intelligible substance, and this assimilation is
what happens, for example, in the process of becoming virtuous and returning to Mind. The
ambiguity of the passage picks up on this problem of distinction within Mind, a problem that stems
from Plotinus, not the adaptor. Because of this nature, soul, fully assimilated to Mind, would be
not be other than Mind until it had the impetus to leave. Rather than being inconsistent, the

13 Cristina D’Ancona Costa, “Porphyry, Universal Soul, and the Arabic Plotinus,” Arabic Sciences and Philosophy 9
(1) (1999), 75, italics hers.
passages reveal the progression of soul’s differentiation from Mind. This reading is further supported by a passage from ThA VII, where the adaptor argues that soul is better off having descended to the sensible world, since if it had not, it would not have known its powers, which were hidden while it was in Mind.\(^\text{14}\) I discuss this passage in detail below, but what is relevant here is the claim that when soul is assimilated to Mind, it is not distinct from it, so much so that soul does not know its own powers.

The progression of the soul’s separation is three-fold. First, there is, with Mind, an intellectual substance that has a certain desire (šawq mā). Second, this intellectual substance comes about upon the initial reception of this desire. It is only once this desire is received that soul is informed, that is, fashioned in a way that is distinct from Mind itself. Third, on account of this desire, this substance proceeds outward from the place of Mind in order to generate what it has seen in Mind. Before I discuss this account of the generation of soul, one ought to note again that here the adaptor makes the strong claim that Mind, properly speaking, has no desire. I have shown that this claim is mitigated in other passages, but it is worth noting that in the ThA, there is a strong distinction between Mind alone without desire, and mind desiring, which is soul. In fact, even though both are intellectual substances, only that which is intellectual substance alone is without desire, such that intellectual substance with desire is somehow defective intellectual substance.

Even in passages in which the adaptor elaborates on the Mind’s desire for the One, he goes to lengths to explain that Mind’s desire to know the One is to know itself more intensely. The most explicit passage in which we find Mind described as desiring of a higher principle. It is in the portion of GS transmitted by al-Šahrastānī and included by Lewis as GS IX. In GS IX.12, we find the following characterization of the first principle.

\(^{14}\) ThA VII.2–4, Henry–Schwyzer 243, Badawī 84.
He is beloved and an object of desire (mahbūban maʾšūqan) of the high and low forms. The forms of all things have a desire for him, because he is their creator and, through his generosity, clothed them with the shape of existence. He is primeval and permanently unchanging. The lover yearns to reach him and to be with him. The first beloved has many lovers...The desire of the first intellect for the first creator is more intense than the desire of the other things, because all other things are below it...All forms need him and have a desire for Him, because every form seeks and longs for the person who formed it.15

The description of Mind’s desire ends here, but although we find that Mind has a desire for the first creator, we find that its, and the desire of all other things, is formal desire, consonant with the formal and rational depiction of desire found throughout the Arabic Plotinus materials.

The aim of the reticence to ascribe desire to Mind is an attempt to maintain Mind’s immutability and eternal activity. As I will show below, the immutable and perfect character of Mind remains a top priority throughout the adaptation. One important consequence of this emphasis is that the relation between Mind and the One is conceived as a relationship between minds. As will become clear throughout the chapter, there is no allowance for a unification of Mind to the One by way of receptive assimilation, that is, there is no return of Mind to the One.

Soul’s Desire of Mind

As in the discussion of Mind and desire, one finds desire operative at the same three points within soul: its generation, its activity, and its return. The role of desire in the soul’s return to Mind is

15 GS IX.12, Henry–Schwyzer 483–4, al-Šahrastānī 332.
discussed frequently, and, as I will show in the last section of this chapter, it plays a formative role in the conception of the ethical paradigm we find in the Arabic Plotinus materials. The vocabulary of soul’s desire is extended. Although verbs from šawq are most common, one finds frequently forms of h-r-ṣ, to desire or strive. The connotation of the terminology of soul’s desire is further from the willing of Mind and closer to a passionate desire or love, evidence by forms of h-w-y and 'a-ṣ-q peppered through the adaptation.16

The best place to examine the role of desire in the generation of soul is also the beginning of ThA I. Above, I showed that the adaptor conceives of soul as an intellectual substance that proceeds from Mind either with a universal desire (šawqan kulliyyan) or a particular desire (šawqan juz 'iyyan).17 The discussion continues in explanation of the difference between these two desires.

When the soul has a universal desire she fashions the universal forms (al-ṣūra l-kulliyya) into actuality and governs them intellectually and universally, without departing from her universal world. When she desires the particular things, which are forms of her universal forms (ṣuwar li-ṣuwarīḥā al-kulliyyatī), she adorns them and increases them in purity and beauty, and corrects what error has occurred in them, and governs them in a higher and loftier way than their proximate cause, which is the heavenly bodies.18

After soul proceeds from Mind “informed with the form of desire” (bi-ṣūratī al-šawqī), this desire surfaces either universally or particularly. The universal desire spurs the creation of universal

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16 See, e.g., ThA VI.54 and ThA IX.74.
18 ThA I.6, Henry–Schwyzer 219, Badawī 19.
forms, but the particular desire, which is for particular things (al-aṣyaʿ al-juzʾiyya) that are themselves forms of soul’s universal forms, prompts the soul to improve the forms that already exist. It is clear here that the heavenly bodies play an intermediary role between soul and physical particulars. Interestingly, the adaptor accounts for soul’s generation only through the appearance of desire. Before there is desire in Mind, soul is not present as a distinct substance, and soul itself is only an extension of mind that has been informed with desire. The emphasis on a form of desire, ṣūra l-šawqi, is a marked change from the original Plotinian account of generation. Although the adaptor allows for a formless beginning of Mind, such a beginning is denied soul, since soul begins with a form. Even more remarkable is that this form is one of desire. The soul is still fundamentally a desiring agent, and the difference is the nature of that desire. In this passage it is clear that the desire for form spurs soul’s generation and activity, and one find elsewhere that this desire is definitively rational.

In *GS* I.64, the adaptor claims that each soul has an intellectual desire for Mind. “The particular, singular souls desire the intellect intellectually (al-nafṣu al-juzʾiyyatu al-waḥdāniyyatu taštāquʿ ila al-ʾaqli šawqanʿ aqliyyan), and strive for attachment, adherence and reversion to it.”19 This claim is situated within a broader discussion of the relation between soul and Mind, specifically the capacity of soul to remain in Mind.

For the many souls do not depart from the universal soul or that noble, elevated position, but always remain there, together with the universal soul, as long as they remain in

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19 *GS* I.64, Henry–Schwyzer 237, Wakelnig 108. References to the passages not included by Rosenthal in his article trio are to the text as edited by Elvira Wakelnig in her edition of the Oxford, MS Marsh 539: Elvira Wakelnig, ed. and tr., *A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh* (Cambridge 2014). Translations are also from Wakelnig, unless otherwise noted.
themselves, i.e. as long as they desire (ištāqat) the universal things, and direct and rule them together with the universal soul.20

The return to Mind is motivated by a desire to be with Mind, and this desire is intellectual in nature. The motivation for emphasizing the intellectual nature of this desire stems both from the defined nature of soul I highlighted above, and from the nature of the object of the soul’s desire, which is Mind. The return of soul to Mind is echoed in ThA VIII.75, where the adaptor claims that soul always desires to move upward, back to Mind.

Even though soul has descended from above to below, the soul is not obliged to descend to every depth or to move ever downward...no, it finishes at one of the beings (baʿḍ al-ʿakwān) and stops there, and it does not stop desiring to emerge from it upwards until it becomes superior to every being in which it was in the first state.21

Here again one finds that the soul desires to leave its association with particular bodies and return to its higher state in Mind. This passage is within a discussion of memory and the ascent of soul upward, where the adaptor claims that soul’s ascent to mind happens because it, “desires (ʿirādat) knowledge of the world of mind,” and that once “soul is in the intelligible world, it does not need to raise its gaze upward.”22 The claim that surfaces in this discussion is that although soul desires to move upward and revert back to God, the desire stops once the soul reaches Mind.

21 ThA VIII.75, Henry–Schwyzer 77, Badawī 104.
22 ThA VIII.66 and 68, Henry–Schwyzer 75, Badawī 102.
However, there are passages in which the adaptor makes broader claims regarding the soul’s desire for the One. In *ThA* IX.74, one finds a claim that the soul, supported by the first cause, longs to go back to it: “To him do we cling, towards him is our desire, to him do we incline, and to him do we return.” Further, in *GS* IX, there are multiple passages that claim the soul desires the Good beyond Mind, and toward the end of *DS*, the adaptor divides the soul’s desire into two kinds, one for the sensible and one for the Good. I quote the latter in full here.

And this desire—I mean the sensory desire (*al-šawq al-hiss*)—is a secondary desire, not the first desire, because it sees the object of desire only by the sense of sight. Therefore it is a secondary desire. The first desire (*al-šawq al-ʾawwal*), which is not perceived by the senses, is higher and nobler than every desire, and prior to every desire. It is the good, such that no possible road can lead up to anything else above it, so that one might desire anything higher. Therefore all who attain this first pure good (*al-ḫayr al-ʾawwal al-maḥḍ*) are satisfied with it, and stop, and seek nothing else beyond it, having travelled to the horizon of things and the goal of all goals.

In *DS* 209, the adaptor identifies the first pure good as the cause of Mind, and therefore here he identifies that after which all things long clearly as the Good beyond Mind, not Mind itself. It is not immediately clear in what way one ought to reconcile this passage with the earlier claims that soul reaches Mind alone and stops. This reconciliation is further problematized by the fact there is

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25 *DS* 219–21, Henry–Schwyzer 357, Badawī 182. Mention of *al-ḥayr al-ʾawwal al-maḥḍ* obviously brings to mind the Arabic adaptation of Proclus’s *Elements of Theology*. As I mentioned above, in that text, and in fact in all of the *Procleana Arabica*, discussion of desire is sparse, even more so than in the original Greek text.
a lacuna in the text shortly after the above text. However, if one considers the passage that picks up after the lacuna, one finds again a conflation of the ascension to Mind with an ascension to the Good, suggesting that the passage in question ought to be read in the same way as the those that clearly state the soul’s fulfillment in Mind. In DS 229–34, the adaptor discusses the three different classes of people, and specifies that in which the highest class finds its satisfaction.

[People in the third class] are those who have risen up from the depths to the heights, and have seen the radiating light by the superior, penetrating, and keen power within them, so that they have come to be above the clouds and are raised up over the effluvium of earth, which fogs intellects. There they have stopped, contented, and have rejected all things, taking a surpassing delight in that place, which is the true place, suited to the superior ones of mankind.26

I think there are two points in favor of reading this passage as claiming that the individual’s goal is Mind, not the Good. First is the claim that the individuals see the radiating light. The Good is certainly the cause of this light, although it itself is not the light. To see the radiating light of the Good is simply to see Mind.27 Second, that the individual aims at the true place is also suggestive of Mind as the goal. Not only is Mind said to be a place (characteristic of the second hypostasis), the specification that the place is beyond the sensible, specifically beyond the higher atmosphere, is suggestive that the adaptor here refers to Mind, which comes next in the ascent, not to the Good. The result is an account of desire and its end that is consistent with a passage like ThA VIII.75 and with the adaptor’s account of the desire of Mind. Since the adaptor considers Mind to know the

27 See ThA VIII.114, Henry–Schwyzer 269, Badawī 110 for the world of Mind as the world of light.
Good as an extension of its own self-knowledge, the conflation of the goal of soul’s desire ought not be too surprising. As a result, the goal of soul’s return is Mind, and not something that is beyond it in any meaningful way.

Further, given the difference in the two genetic accounts of Mind and Soul, we find a difference in the very nature of the desire they do possess, namely, that it is not explicitly formless like that which we find in Plotinus’s own text. This change is due to the fact that the object of the two hypostases in the Arabic adaptations is no longer a formless Good, but Mind and form. Even in the case of Mind’s desire, we find that it is fully satisfied with the forms given to it, and we find little to no trace of formless. Soul moves through a form of desire toward universal and particular forms. Thus, the substantial presence of desire changes in the *Plotiniana Arabica*, as it is always or for the most part rationally defined. Thus, the relation between desire and goodness in the *Pl. Ar.* is fundamentally rational, and the desire for goodness, part of the substance of soul, expresses itself rationally. When considering on what grounds the notion of desire has changed from a ubiquitous, metaphysically functional conception to one that is primarily bound to soul, one might consider the translation of the Greek terms into Arabic. Upon examination of the translation of ἔφεσις and ὄρεξις from Greek into Arabic, one finds a terminological and in turn conceptual, and more importantly, functional conflation. ἔφεσις and ὄρεξις are both translated as šawq, and as a result the difference between the two terms is obfuscated to the point of being lost altogether.

*Soul and Body’s Desire*

Body’s desire and soul’s relation to it are of paramount importance for ethics, and the adaptor is careful to distinguish bodily desire from other kinds of desire. One of the ways he does so is through a specific vocabulary for the desires of the body. The adaptor does not use the same roots
that denote Mind or soul’s desire, and instead, he almost exclusively uses š-h-w, connoting desire in the sense of lust. In one place there is a verb from r-w-m, and ḥ-r-ṣ is also used to denote a positive instance of bodily desire.

We find discussion of desire in relation to the body in two ways. First, the adaptor ascribes desire to matter. Second, bodily desire is described as something that is in addition to and capable of working against psychological desire. The only passage in which the adaptor claims that matter desires is found in GS IX. There the adaptor summarizes a view of matter and form that is based on a reading of the myth of Penia and Poros from Plato’s Symposium. He describes matter in the following way.

Your mother is desiring (rawm) but she is poor and fickle. Your father is young (li-ḥadaṭi) but he is generous and measured (muqadar). He means by ‘mother’ matter (hayūlī) and by ‘father’ form (ṣūra). By ‘desiring’ [he means] matter’s pliability, and by ‘poverty’ [he means] its need for form, and by fickleness [he means] the paucity of its stability in what it obtains.28

The terms and description are taken from the myth, but the adaptor explicates it in physical terms. The desiring mother (umm) he identifies as matter itself. In addition to desiring, he ascribes two other qualities to the mother, poverty (faqr) and fickleness (ruʿūna), which he in turn interprets as matter’s need for form and its lack of stability, specifically, its incapacity to hold onto the form that it receives. This account of matter is the Plotinian account of matter, in both that it is incapable of holding onto the form it receives and that it is itself a desiring aspect of the systematic world.

structure. Interestingly, the term used to denote desire, *raum*, seems to be used only here. There could be different factors responsible for this distinct word choice. One may wonder whether the vocabulary selection is particular to al-Šahrastānī’s transmission, and although we find this term only in al-Šahrastānī’s attestations of the Sayings, there is elsewhere in his attestation the standard terminology for desire, such as forms of *šawq*. One must also take into account al-Šahrastānī’s own procedure of transmitting texts and doctrines, which included not a little of his own reworking and interpretation. In addition, it is also only in al-Šahrastānī’s text that we find a passage ascribing desire to matter, so that one cannot compare his terminology here to another philosophically similar passage. I think the choice of *raum*, which has the connotation of coveting, is selected because the adaptor wished to distinguish the desire appropriate to matter from the desire of higher substances, such as that proper to soul or Mind. A negative connotation marked by terminological distinction is maintained in the accounts of desire (*šahwa*) that is proper to *bodies*, so that there is reason to expect such a distinction to be made for matter as well.

Although the ascription of desire to matter occurs in only one place, there is much further discussion of desire within the body compound. Bodily desire is discussed in three aspects: first, in terms of bodies’ desire to be in soul; second, in immediate relation to soul; and third, as somatically operative. I present the passages in this progression in order to make clear the possibility that the desire of matter is operative within bodies and the natural world. In an argument against materialists in *ThA* IX, the adaptor argues for the ontological priority of soul over body.

[The materialists] make soul’s place breath and fire, for they are both more fine and subtle than other bodies, whereas they ought to have said that it is the bodies (*ʾajrām*) that desire (*tahrišu*) to seek a place to be in, and establish themselves within the powers of the soul,
the soul being the place of the bodies, and their subsistence and their endurance being in her.29

The reason that bodies, ʾajrām, desire and seek soul’s powers is that they gain subsistence and endurance from those powers, since bodies do not have these qualities on their own. This desire, ḥirṣ, has a positive aim, that is, it directs body toward soul in an effort to put itself into better state. In this way, bodies’ desire to be in soul is analogous to the desire of matter that accounts for its pliability and leads to its acceptance of form and stability.

This passage may be contrasted with ThA III.73, which presents the second aspect of bodily desire. Here the adaptor argues against the identification of soul with the natural form of the body, that is, against the Aristotelian definition of the soul as the entelecheia of the body. He highlights the distinction between the desires of bodies and the soul that works against those desires. “We say that if the soul were a natural form of perfection, it would not oppose the body in its desires (fi ʾshahawāṭihi) and many of its activities, indeed it would not oppose it in anything at all.” The point of the passage is to highlight the incoherence of the entelecheia theory of soul, but it also reveals a distinct sort of desire proper to a particular ensouled body. This conception of desire is clarified in ThA VII.43–4, where the relation of soul to body and its desire is distinguished further.

We can sense the intelligible world and what the soul brings us from it only when we rise above this world and reject its base lusts (ʾshahawāt duniyya) and do not occupy ourselves with anything of its condition. Then we can sense it and the thing which descends on us from it through the medium of soul, while we cannot sense the thing that comes to be in

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29 ThA IX. 54, Henry–Schwyzer 187, Badawī 128.
one of the parts of the soul before that comes over the whole soul, such as desire (šahwa), for we cannot sense it so long as it remains fixed in the appetitive power (quwwa šahwāniyya) of the soul.\textsuperscript{30}

Here the adaptor clearly distinguishes the bodily desires, šahawāt, which he says stem from the appetitive, šahwāniyya, power. This type of desire is proper to the bodily compound, and distinct from the desire of soul and from the desire of matter and pre-compound body.

The third way in which the adaptor discusses bodily desire concerns the activity of desire within the body. He discusses this in GS VII, which is quite short and almost entirely dedicated to a discussion of vegetative desire.

The growing power (quwwa l-nāmiyya) is spread through the whole body. All limbs of the body, therefore, feel pleasure and pain. The same applies to appetite (al-šahwa), because it belongs to the sphere of the growing power. There is no limb in the body in which desire is not growing (rābiyya). Aches and pleasures are proof of that. Each limb feels pain and pleasure. Pain and pleasure belong to the category of appetite (al-šahwa). When a limb attains its desire, it feels pleasure. When it does not, it has pain, because the desire is lacking.\textsuperscript{31}

Here there is even a stronger connection between šahawāt and what is now called the growing power. This power, which is spread throughout the body, is responsible for desire, which grows


along with the growing power. Even though it is “in the sphere of” the growing power eventually ruled by soul, this desire does not necessarily begin in soul. In GS VII.6, the connection between the desire produced by this power and the body is further specified.

Choler (ʻadh) is within the province of growing soul (al-nafs al-nāmiyya), because it is the growing soul that makes the body sensitive to things which cause pain, and gives the body bile and blood. Wherever appetite (al-šahwa) is, there is choler, and wherever choler is, there is appetite.32

Choler is an analogue to the desire, and both come about when the growing power makes a body sensitive. The adaptor makes clear at the end of GS VII that there is a direct correlation between one’s capacity to control one’s desire, and one’s capacity to control one’s choler. Šahawāt are bodily, and choler is their agent. In summary, desire functions within the body on two levels. First, desire is proper to matter and to body before it is taken up by soul. Second, desire is proper to the bodily compound in its development, its relation to soul, and its somatic functions.

What has emerged from this analysis is an account of desire in which desire is restricted primarily to the soul, such that desire in Mind is sated and desire in body ought to be sated. Desire is systematically present in the generation of the different hypostases, but its permanent role in the system is not as extensive as that found in the original Plotinian text. Rather, within the Arabic Plotinus materials, soul alone acts as a mobile, desiring agent that endeavors to return to God. However, the nature of that desire is definitively changed. Rather than a non-rational, formless connection between the entire system and the Good, one finds a permeating formal desire to know

32 GS VII.6, Henry–Schwyzer 113, Wakelnig 286, my translation.
Mind, and as a result the notion of non-rational desire is greatly reduced within the system. Non-rational desire plays a role only in the generation of Mind and as it manifests in the body. Further, the conflation of Mind’s self-knowledge and the knowledge of the One appears to lead to a truncated version of the return to the One, insofar as returning to Mind seems to be the only way in which one can return to the One. Moving forward, I will continue this discussion in two waves. First, I will examine soul and its relation to the body in order to delineate clearly the boundary of soul, specifically, the extent to which it descends into the body. Second, I will take the results of that investigation and develop an account of ethics from the Arabic Plotinus materials and show the role of desire within the ethical paradigm.

2.2 Soul and its Traces

In this section, I will examine the exact way in which the adaptor considers soul to be related to the body, in order to determine the extent of soul’s reach, arguing that soul is completely distinct from the body, against earlier interpretations of the adaptation’s notion of brute soul. I will do so in three parts. First, I will examine the two different kinds of soul the adaptor discusses, intellectual and brute soul, and distinguish between the two. Second, I will examine the relation between soul and form, and in turn discuss soul’s activities, both intellectual and bodily. In conclusion, I will argue that the adaptor has a strict view of soul, such that all soul is intellectual soul. Instead of being a secondary, lower soul, brute soul is identified with the active soul-words in the body. As a result, the adaptor maintains a strictly Neoplatonic view of soul. The goal of this section is to establish the extent to which soul is in the body. I will argue that soul is left completely distinct from the body, such that the soul’s connection to goodness and its goal is restricted completely from body.
Soul, Form, Activity

Before jumping into a detailed discussion of soul’s activity, I want to give a brief overview of the two different kinds of soul. The adaptor’s discussion of soul is peculiar in that he discusses soul as if it were distinguished into two kinds, intellectual (al-ʿaqliyya) and brute (al-bahīmiyya). He distinguishes them in ThA VIII.106–8.

We say that the soul is intellectual because it comes from mind...When the soul returns to itself and looks at mind, all its activity is related to mind, and we must not ascribe any of its activities to the intellectual (al-ʿaqliyya) soul except the activities which soul performs intellectually, they being its essential, praiseworthy and noble (al-šarīfa) activities, whereas the base reprehensible activities must not be related to the intellectual soul but must be related to the brute (bahīmiyya) soul, because they are affections (āṯār) that fall on this soul and not on the intellectual soul.33

Soul’s activities are distinguished into those that are praiseworthy and noble as opposed to base and reprehensible, the former belonging to the sphere of the intellectual soul and the latter to the so-called brute soul. Mīmar VII of the Theology begins with the heading “On the Noble Soul” (fī-l-nafs al-šarīfa), and one finds there an extensive account of the beginning and characteristics of this soul. The adaptor summarizes them as follows.

We say that the noble, ruling soul, although it departed its higher world and descended to this lower world, does this by a sort of its ability and its higher power, in order that it form

essences (al-anniyya), which are after it and are by its reflection (tadabbur). And if it slips away from this world after its shaping and governing of it, and proceeds to its world quickly, then its descent to this world does not harm it [at all], but rather it benefits by it. This is because it acquired from this world knowledge (ma’rif) of something, and it knew what [that world’s] nature is after it poured out its power over it, and made visible its noble, motionless deeds and activities, which are in it and in the intellectual world.34

The discussion of a benefit of the soul’s descent continues afterward, but the motivation of soul’s descent is here described as the adornment of what is below it. It is also implicitly claimed that the soul can return to Mind after completing such administration. Later in mīmar VII, the adaptor makes this claim explicitly. “Although the soul has penetrated into the body, it is capable of emerging from it and leaving it behind and returning to its own upper world of mind.”35 In its basic iteration, the intellectual soul is that soul which concentrates on intellectual activity and is capable of coming to and leaving body.

What exactly the adaptor denotes by the ‘brute’ soul is remarkably unclear. He discusses the brute soul vis-a-vis the intellectual soul in two main ways. The first is as an instrument through which the intellectual soul acts, and the second is as something capable of affections, a capacity it has separate from the intellectual soul. He describes brute soul in the first way in ThA X.72.

This man is the man whom Plato defined, but he added his definition saying that the man who uses the body and performs his functions with bodily instruments is nothing but a soul

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34 ThA VII.1–2, Henry–Schwyzer 243, Badawī 84, my translation. Cf. Enn. IV.8.5.27–31. Lewis’s inclusion of the modifier ‘evil’ seems to me completely ungrounded in the text, present only in the Greek original, and even then used in a different sense. I discuss this passage again below in terms of the soul’s benefit from its descent.
35 ThA VII.31, Henry–Schwyzer 247, Badawī 88.
using the body primarily, while the noble and divine soul uses the body in a secondary manner, that is, through the medium of animal (ḥayawāniyya) soul.\textsuperscript{36}

The adaptor is careful not to associate the intellectual soul directly with the body, and instead posits the animal soul as that by way of which the intellectual soul controls the body. The adaptor strengthens the connection between the brute soul and the physical world in the following passage.

For when the created animal soul becomes percipient the reasoning living soul follows it and gives it a life nobler and more honorable. I do not say that it descends from the upper world, but I do say that [the reasoning soul] adds to [animal soul] a life nobler and higher than its own life, for the living reasoning soul does not leave the intelligible world but combines with that life, and this becomes attached to that, and the word of that becomes attached to the word of this soul.\textsuperscript{37}

A similar account is found in ThA VI.50, where the adaptor maintains a distinction between intellectual and brute soul even regarding the things of which each soul is aware. It is in this passage that he claims the lower soul is capable of being affected.

For there are some affections that fall upon the brute (bahīmiyya) soul and it receives them, to the exclusion of the reasoning soul, and there are some that are not received unless the

\textsuperscript{36} ThA X.72, Henry–Schwyzer 449, Badawī 145.
\textsuperscript{37} ThA X.73, Henry–Schwyzer 449, Badawī 145.
reasoning soul incline towards that affection and receive it. Otherwise, the brute soul cannot completely receive that affection.\textsuperscript{38}

This remark is situated within a discussion of magic, where the adaptor argues that only the brute soul is susceptible to the influence of magic, and that the reasoning soul itself does not fall prey to such effects.

Clearly, the adaptor draws a strong and consistent distinction between the two different kinds of soul. In order to draw out the differences between them, I will establish the relation of soul to form, and then determine in what way the adaptor sees form manifested in the activities proper to each soul. One of the questions to be answered is whether the adaptor conceives of the brute soul as a distinct kind of \textit{soul}, with its own particular substantiality, or whether he uses the term ‘soul’ to identify a psychic element that is, properly speaking, \textit{not} on the same level as soul, but is rather a kind of substance related to soul in the way that soul is related to Mind.

The adaptor discusses the soul’s relation to form in terms of two different kinds of form, true form and material form. He discusses the former in \textit{DS} 12–3.

So mind makes a form for soul (\textit{yukawwinu al-}‘\textit{aqlu šūratun li-l-}\textit{nafsi}), and it is mind that shapes (\textit{yuṣawwiruhā}) the soul with various forms, just as soul shapes bodies with various forms...The forms that mind shapes in soul are true form, while the forms that soul shapes in the body are, as it were, images and a likeness (\textit{aṣnām wa-miğāl}).\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{ThA} VI.50, Henry–Schwyzer 145, Badawī 80.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{DS} 12–3, Henry–Schwyzer 415, Badawī 168.
The relation between the two kinds of form is the familiar relation of a true paradigm and its image. Interestingly, although one may expect the form in soul to be already an image of the true form found in Mind, the adaptor claims that the form in soul is *true* form. This point is an important innovation, insofar as it signals a compression of the ontological distinction between soul and Mind. I highlighted above the adaptor’s inclination to do so, where I showed his tendency to conflate Mind and the One, and even this parallel inclination regarding soul and Mind evidenced in his account of the generation of soul. He elaborates on the second kind of form, that which is an image or a likeness, shortly after these verses in *DS*. There he says, “The sensory sciences are in the reasoning soul, and the reasoning soul knows the sensory forms (*al-šuwar al-ḥissiyya*). These sensory forms come after the things by which they occur, and are images of the true forms (*aṣnām al-šuwar al-ḥaqqiyya*).” Here too we find only two types of form, the true and its image, which here he clearly identifies as the sensible form. He reiterates this account of form and intelligibility late in *DS* 166–68 where he sets up a three-tiered system of intelligibles, the first of which is the One.

The second intelligible is mind, but it is both intelligible and intelligent, desiring to exercise intellection on what is inside it and being the object of intellection of what is below it. The third intelligible is the sensible and material form (*al-ṣūra al-ḥissiyya al-hayūlāniyya*), which is accidentally and not essentially intelligible. For it is mind that distinguishes form from its bearer in the process of reason: it describes forms as though they were self-existent, distinct from their bearers.

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40 *DS* 22, Henry–Schwyzer 419, Badawi 169.
41 *DS* 166–68, Henry–Schwyzer 333, Badawi 179.
A similar dichotomy is offered here between the forms in Mind and the sensible forms, with further specification of the latter. They are intelligible, but only *accidentally*, and the adaptor maintains strict requirements for what counts as form. Only the true form of Mind is form proper, although it is found both in Mind and in soul. Sensible form is only an image of form, and as a result it is intelligible only accidentally, since soul is capable of abstracting the form from its sensible bearers.

We need here some clarity of the terms used in relation to soul and form as it is instantiated in the sensible world. It is clear that although the adaptor ascribes forms to soul, he is committed to the position that soul itself is not a form. He explicitly claims this in two places. The first is in *ThA* II in a discussion of soul and its power, specifically the way in which the soul is in the body.

Nor is the soul like a form in matter, for the form does not depart from the matter save by corruption, and the soul is not like that: rather does it depart from the body without corruption. Further, matter is prior to form but body is not prior to soul, for it is soul that puts the form in matter, i.e. it is that which informs matter and that which embodies matter.42

The argument against soul being a form—specifically a form of the body—rests on the fact that form corrupts when it separates from matter. By contrast, the soul itself is incorruptible and unchanged by the departure from the body, a point highlighted above in passages from *ThA* VII. The point is made again, and more forcefully, in the argument against the *entelecheia* account of soul toward the end of *ThA* III. Mīmar III is the adaptation of *Enn.* IV.7(2).8, where Plotinus argues against various conceptions of soul and presents arguments in favor of his own. The passage in

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42 *ThA* II.96–7, Henry–Schwyzer 45, Badawī 44.
question has been discussed in the literature, and it has been argued that the author integrates an Aristotelian account of soul into the Plotinian adaptation.\textsuperscript{43} The adaptor discusses perfection of soul and body in the following passage. “Therefore the soul is not a perfecting form (\textit{al-\text{sūra al-tamāmiyya}) like the natural and the artistic form (\textit{al-\text{sūra al-\text{t}ābī’iyya wa-l-\text{ṣinā’iyya). No, it is perfection (\textit{tamām}) because it is that which makes the body complete (\textit{al-mutammim}) so that it comes to possess perception and mind.”\textsuperscript{44} From the earlier examination of the soul as the cause of the oneness and cohesion of the body, this passage can easily be read as consistent with the adaptor’s earlier account: soul is the cause of perfection, and not identical to the perfection of the body. It is rather \textit{ThA} III.75–6 that is more difficult to parse with the adaptor’s broader reading.

There is no second soul other than this rational soul that is in the body at the moment, and it is that of which the philosophers say that it is the entelechy of the body, though they speak of it as an entelechy and a form of perfection in a way different from that in which the Materialists speak. I mean that it is not a perfection like the natural perfection, which is passive (\textit{al-maf’ūl}), but is an active perfection (\textit{tamām fā’īl}), that is, it makes perfection (\textit{yaf’alu al-tamāma}). In this sense do they say that it is the perfection of the natural organic body, potentially ensouled.\textsuperscript{45}

The important aspects of this passage are first, that the adaptor rephrases the notion of \textit{entelecheia} to make it more rigorous, and second, that he ascribes this reading of \textit{entelecheia} to the

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{ThA} III.70, Henry–Schwyzer 211, Badawī 54–5.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{ThA} III.75–6, Henry–Schwyzer 211, Badawī 55.
Aristotelians that he and Plotinus essentially criticize in this section. It is curious that the adaptor should add these last lines, given that he already has rejected the *entelecheia* theory of soul. Perhaps more significant than what the passage itself says is the tendency it represents. As noted above, the adaptor does distinguish between the intellectual, noble soul and the brute, animal soul. Such a distinction would appear to suggest commitments to an Aristotelian notion of soul, such that the intellectual soul is eternal while the animal soul perishes with the body. In order to begin to clarify this issue, one must consider the adaptor’s use of ‘words’ and activities, for it is through these terms that the adaptor is most explicit concerning the way in which the soul relates to and is situated in the body. As I will show, the adaptor’s vocabulary for this psychic element is varied, but I argue that the account he offers is both internally consistent and consistent within a Neoplatonic framework.

The adaptor introduces the notion of the ‘word’, *kalima*, into the adaptation as his translation of the Greek *logos*. In *ThA* X.64, he defines this notion of the word, identifying it with activity.

If the soul is not the human being, the human being must then be a word (*kalima*) other than the word of the soul (*kalima l-nafs*). If this is so, what prevents us from saying that the human being is the combination of both soul and body (*al-murakkabu min nafsin wa-jismin jamīʿan*), in which case soul would possess some one of the various words? I mean by ‘word’ (*al-kalima*) activity (*fiʿl*), for the soul has one of the various activities, and it is not possible that there is an activity without an agent.46

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He continues to distinguish the notion of ‘word’ from the notion of ‘soul’ by discussing the word that is within seeds. He argues that one would not say that the word that is in a seed is without a soul, “For the active words are the activities of soul, either the growing soul or the animal soul.”47

As a result, insofar as a seed is active or manifests an activity, e.g. of growing, it has some relation to soul. With this account of word, the adaptor highlights the different aspects and levels of soul and its activities, and in doing so he makes more distinguishable the intelligible apparatus, developed originally by Plotinus’s appropriation of Stoic terminology, that underlies his refusal to identify soul with the form of the body.48

I want to offer three passages here that specify the differences between soul and word or the soul’s activity in order to bring these different concepts out more clearly. The two fundamental distinctions between soul and its words are the permanent separation of soul from the body and the simplicity of soul as opposed to the plurality of words or activities. In ThA IX.30, the adaptor shows that the active word is that which is in body, and that soul gives the word to the body.

The active soul-word (al-kalima al-fāʿila al-nafsāniyya) gives form to the matter of bodies, and when it gives form to matter it makes body from it. The proof of that is that no active word occurs in this world save from the soul, because when the soul gives form to matter and originates from it the simple bodies, it bestows on it an active natural word (kalima faʿāla tābīʿīyya), and the natural active word is from the soul.49

49 ThA IX.30–1, Henry–Schwyzer 181, Badawī 124.
There is a strong distinction maintained between the soul and the active word that it gives to matter as it shapes it. Interestingly, the adaptor calls this word an active psychic element, which emphasizes its likeness to soul as something that carries forth soul’s work. An important question arises from this likeness, namely to what extent the word itself is a cause, as something distinct from or in addition to soul. Concisely, one can ask whether it is this active psychic word that is responsible for the unity in the body or whether soul is responsible for this unity. Later in ThA IX, one finds an explicit claim that soul is responsible for the unity of the body. “Every body...is not a cause of its own oneness and cohesion. No, the soul is the cause of the cohesion and oneness of the body.”\textsuperscript{50} The activities of the body appear to be only effects of soul and not themselves causes. But one ought to keep in mind that the efficacy of the word is not yet clear, since the adaptor has claimed both that soul is responsible for the unity of the body but also characterized it as an active psychic element, \textit{kalima fāʿila nafsāniyya} and \textit{kalima faʿāla ṭabīʿiyya}.

The next two passages both highlight the simplicity of soul in contradistinction to the plurality of its activities as they are realized in body. In ThA II.19–20, the adaptor discusses the simplicity of soul and the plurality of its activities. There he claims, “The power (\textit{quwwa}) of the soul is single and simple, and it is only in other things and not in itself that its powers become many.”\textsuperscript{51} He expands on this point later in ThA II.59 when he explains the particularization of soul in terms of the particularization of its powers and the parts of the body to which those powers correspond.

\textsuperscript{50} ThA IX.47, Henry–Schwyzer 185, Badawī 127.
\textsuperscript{51} ThA II.19, Henry–Schwyzer 67, Badawī 32.
The soul is particularized as an accident, for when it is in the body it admits particularization by the particularization of the body, as one may say that the cogitating part of the soul is not its brute part, nor its sensual part its choleric part. What we mean by ‘part’ here is the part of the body that contains the cogitating power of the soul, and the part that contains the sensual power, and the part that contains the choleric power.\footnote{ThA II.59, Henry–Schwyzer 39, Badawī 38–9.}

Clearly, the simplicity of the soul is never compromised by its association with body. Instead of direct association or mixing, the soul is present to the body through its activities. The activities are accounted for as the words in the soul, particularized in particular parts of the body. The strong distinction between soul and its activities in body is foreshadowed by and an extension of the strong distinction the adaptor also makes between Mind and its activities, the soul. In GS II.7–10 (which overlaps with ThA VIII.103–5), the adaptor specifies soul’s relation to Mind in a similar way.

The activity of mind in its entirety is soul. Mind and soul are in the position of fire and heat. Mind is like fire and soul is like the heat that is emitted from the fire upon something else. But although mind and soul are in the position of fire and heat, heat flows and proceeds from the fire until it comes to the thing which receives it, so as to be in it, whereas mind stays within the soul, without any of its powers flowing out of it.\footnote{GS II.9–10, Henry–Schwyzer 267, Wakelnig 124.}

Here the adaptor utilizes the characteristic emanationist image of fire and heat to explain the relation between soul and Mind. There are two points at which the adaptor’s articulation of this
image is unique. First, he identifies soul as the totality of Mind’s activity \textit{simpliciter}. Here again one finds a compression of the second and third hypostases. Second, the adaptor is careful to specify the Mind itself is restricted to soul. Anything that happens below soul is soul’s responsibility alone. This point reflects the adaptor’s staunch commitment to preserving Mind’s immutability and identity as Mind alone.

This clarification brings us to the discussion of Nature, which the imminent principle in bodies. I will not discuss Nature at length here, but I want to highlight it as an explanatory principle that accounts for the distinction between body and soul. In his discussion of nature, the adaptor both identifies Nature as the immanent and proximate cause of the body’s vitality and form, \textit{and} explicitly claims that Nature is a principle separate from soul. Nature functions as an enmattered psychic element, which is ontologically distinct from and inferior to soul. I will argue that the adaptor identifies Nature with the active words given by soul, and in turn with the lower, so-called brute soul. In doing so, he creates a distinct, embodied psychic stratum on the basis of which he can maintain a dualist picture of soul and body in which soul’s immateriality and immortality are maintained. When the adaptor systematically discusses soul’s production of Nature, and in turn Nature’s production of bodies, he uses the fire image to express Nature’s status as an image or trace of soul.

We want to know how the body must receive soul and nature. Is it like the air which is excited by sunlight or as the air heated by the heat of fire? So he says that the body is enlivened by the soul only by the mediation of nature. For nature is the effect of soul and body the effect of nature, and the remotest cause is in the remotest effect only by the mediation of the more proximate cause. And he says that the body must be receptive to the
soul as air is receptive to the heat of fire. For when fire has produced an impression on air and heated it, and has then vanished from it, fire's heat remains in the air as a trace. When air is in this condition, it is also quick to receive heat. In the same way the body which is receptive of the soul must be prepared for receiving the soul, and this preparation [consists of] the existence of a trace and a shadow of the soul's shadow, i.e. nature, in the body, just as in the bodies of plants and beasts there is a shadow of the intellective soul (ẓilla al-nafsi al-‘āqliti).\textsuperscript{54}

Later in the GS VII, the adaptor makes explicit that, “The powers of the soul are a shadow of soul,” such that the trace or shadow constitutes the psychic activities present in the body, something I discussed at length in the previous chapter in discussion of the original Greek text.\textsuperscript{55} This connection identifies nature, the shadow of soul, and the activities of soul as one embodied psychic element, and most importantly, an embodied psychic element that is distinct from soul itself.

Throughout this section, I have examined the way in which the adaptor discusses soul in order to determine the boundaries of soul. In the course of the investigation, I have argued that soul according the adaptor is ontologically distinct from the form and activities of the body, and shown that the adaptor develops a distinct stratum of complex psychological agency that is the proximate cause of soul’s activity in body. The stratification of intelligibility at work within the adaptor’s psychology functions according to a distinctly emanative structure that maintains the Neoplatonic integrity of his account. Although it has led to a fascinating complex of immanent activity, the careful distinction of each stratum actually works to continue the adaptor’s project of the compression of hypostases insofar as each layer of intelligibility is the activity of its cause, and


\textsuperscript{55} GS VII.5, Henry–Schwyzer 113, Wakelnig 284.
this identification minimizes the layers of form to only two. Moving forward, I will connect these
two elements—distinction and compression—to the ethical framework the adaptor develops, and
show that they both account for his particular account of desire within the return and for the
specifications of the virtuous life as the adaptor conceives of it.

2.3 Ethics

In this final section, I will examine the ethical framework of the *Plotiniana Arabica*, in order to
identify the ethical process and goal of soul. In doing so, I will investigate the moral situation of
nature and natural bodies such as plants and non-human animals. I will argue that soul’s
assimilation to Mind occurs progressively, since soul must first assimilate to universal soul. Both
types of assimilation happen by imagination, although assimilation to Mind occurs by way of a
higher form of imagination than that directed by memory. Second, I argue that the goal in the
return is a unification with Mind, rather than the First Cause. I highlight here that the insistence in
other places that we return to God is consonant theologically rather than philosophically, and that
the adaptor’s locution regarding a higher place of return mimics Quranic usage. In the end, I argue
that since the account that emerges from the *Plotiniana Arabica* has soul as a fundamentally
desiring agent rationally determined, the ensuing ethical goal we find is thoroughly rationalist, and
lacks any aspect to Plotinus’s original account of formless desire for the Good.

*Assimilation and the Ethical Implications of Soul’s Procession*

Neoplatonic schemata do not always depict the procession of soul from Mind in positive terms.
The moral assessment of the departure of Soul from Intellect in Plotinus’s thought is mixed, with
Soul at times holding the blame and at times commended for aiding in the betterment of the world.
In the adaptation, there are indeed passages in which Soul’s descent is spoken of negatively. In fact, in ThA VII Soul’s descent is spoken of in three ways. In ThA VII.10, one finds that the soul descended to “to make manifest her noble actions and power, and this is concomitant (lāzim) to every nature.” But at the beginning of ThA VII, Soul’s descent is described in more explicitly moralizing terms.

We say that the noble, ruling soul, although it departed its higher world and descended to this lower world, does this by a sort of its ability and its higher power, in order that it form essences (al-anniyya), which are after it and are by its organization (tadabbur). And if it slips away from this world after its shaping and governing of it, and proceeds to its world quickly, then its descent to this world does not harm it [at all], but rather it benefits by it. This is because it acquired from this world knowledge (maʿrifā) of something, and it knew what [that world’s] nature is after it poured out its power over it, and made visible its noble, motionless deeds and activities, which are in it and in the intellectual world.

The point that soul is not damaged if it returns quickly to its own world without extended engagement in the sensible world is a straightforward concept immediately adapted from the parallel Plotinian text. New is the suggestion that the soul benefits by such an engagement. The explanation of this benefit is the knowledge gained by soul, knowledge of the sensible world and, as is made clear below, knowledge of itself. There is a further suggestion that this knowledge would not happen without soul’s expression and endeavor into the sensible world, since its powers and acts were quiet while it stayed with Mind. The idea that the soul is quiet with Mind is not

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56 ThA VII.10, Henry–Schwyzer 243, Badawī 85.
57 ThA VII.1–2, Henry–Schwyzer 243, Badawī 84.
necessarily new, since above I examined the beginning of *ThA* I, and there one finds that soul properly speaking is not differentiated from Mind *until* it makes a move away from it. Still, it is unclear why the soul need have self-knowledge in the first place. Given that unification with Mind is the ideal and goal (even here, the adaptor implies that soul ought to return quickly), the adaptor needs still to draw out what the negative consequences of soul’s permanent assimilation to the intellection world could be. He does so in the following passage.

If it were not that [soul] manifested its activities and poured out its powers and made it as something falling under vision, then this power and the activities in it would be in vain and the soul would have forgotten [its] wise and perfect virtues and effects. If it were hidden, it would not be visible. If this were so, soul would not know its power, and it would not know its nobility. This is because the activity, that is, the manifestation, is its hidden power making itself visible. Were the power of soul hidden and not made visible, it would become decayed (*fasadat*) and it would be as if it never were at all.\(^5^8\)

The adaptor explains his negative understanding of soul’s permanent assimilation to Mind by claiming two things. First, he claims that soul would not know its wise and perfect virtues and effects. Second, he claims that soul would “become decayed and...be as if it never were at all.” This passage is remarkable, specifically the last claim, that had soul not made its power manifest by way of its attention to the lower world, that power would decay and in turn it would be as if it never even existed. In fact, it seems as if soul is capable of knowing itself only through the expression of its activities. I think there is a way to read this passage that minimizes the

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controversial implications and shows it to be consistent with the adaptor’s earlier presentations of soul, specifically his claim that soul and Mind are indistinguishable before soul’s descent. The root *f-s-d* does, of course, mean to be decayed, corrupt, or rotten. But it also means simply to be null, void, or empty. I think it is this last meaning that the adaptor has in mind, and the most natural understanding given that it occurs within a discussion of power. In this case, if the soul’s power were hidden and not made manifest, such power would become futile and be as if it had never existed simply because it has no effects. Recalling *ThA* I, it is clear that the criterion of soul’s distinction from Mind as its effective *difference* from Mind is replicated in this passage. This criterion in itself is not far from a Plotinian account of soul’s relation to Mind. The assimilation of non-physical substances to other non-physical substances is certainly something Plotinus accepts. Given the adaptor’s criterion for soul’s differentiation, it is not surprising that he would draw out the inevitable implication of soul’s non-descent. Without descending, soul’s power ceases to have any efficacy and in turn any meaning for the system.\(^{59}\)

By contrast, the soul’s descent is said to be good not simply because it may be efficacious, but because the soul *learns* something. Although it is a bit ambiguous in what way knowledge of the sensible world would help soul, it is clear the adaptor finds soul’s knowledge of its own power and virtue to be unequivocally good. The assumption seems to be that actuality is better than potency, and by extension that actualizing one’s powers is better than not doing so. In this passage, then, the adaptor offers two accounts of the moral status of soul’s descent, both as if it were morally neutral since it is in its nature to descend, and as if the descent in itself were good since it actualizes the soul’s potential and offers it an opportunity for self-knowledge. Conversely, he argues that the *lack* of a descent by soul would be bad for it, since it would in effect cease to exist. Overall, the

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\(^{59}\) This point is analogous to the adaptor’s argument in *DS* 68–74 regarding Mind and its non-identity to the One.
account of soul’s descent is remarkably positive, since it gives a positive motivation for soul to descend, rather than only a value-neutral or a negative one.

However, one finds that the adaptor is far more willing to offer a negative analysis of soul when it comes to its assimilation to the sensory world rather than to mind. There are two passages in which one finds articulations of soul’s assimilation to the sensory world. One is found in GS I, and the other in ThA IX. Both passages concern assimilation to the Mind as the way to the attainment of virtue, and contrast this assimilation with the assimilation to the sensory. The first is GS I.78.

In the measure that soul’s gaze is extended to Mind, the virtues in it are greater and more apparent (ażhar), and in the measure that its gaze is extended to the body, the virtues are smaller and more concealed (ahfā), until there is sometimes no differentiation between it and sensation, on account of the intensity of its connection with it and its distance from the Mind (li-ṣiddati ihtisaliḥā biḥī).60

The passage immediately following hattā concerning the relation between soul and the sensory has been rendered by Lewis as follows: “So much so that sometimes there is no distinction between her and the body,” reading al-hiss as al-jism. D’Ancona and Wakelnig both follow Lewis in this reading. My own supposition of their rationale is that the occurrence of al-jism in the previous line suggests that al-hiss is a scribal error (neither D’Ancona nor Wakelnig offer an explanation for their emendation). However, it is not clear to me that this reading is philosophically more sensible, nor is it clear that it is reasonable for one to accidentally write al-hiss after al-jism appears in the

60 GS I.78, Henry–Schwyzer 239, Wakelnig 110, my translation.
previous line. In her commentary on this passage, D’Ancona says that lines in question—emended to read, “there is no difference between the soul and the body—are an interpolation intended to harmonize the Aristotelian account of soul with the Plotinian one.\textsuperscript{61} I am not inclined to accept this interpretation, since it assumes this purpose. Aristotle is not mentioned in the pages following this passage, and the discussion is clearly a Plotinian one regarding the relation between the body and soul. I would rather take the manuscript as it stands, for al-hiss is not only philosophically more sensible (given that soul by its very nature cannot be physical), it also tells us something consistent with the psychological structure found elsewhere in the \textit{Plotiniana Arabica}. Sense perception is one of the many activities for which soul is responsible, but it is the activity that brings soul closest to the body. Understanding the passage in terms of sensation, the claim that there is no distinction between soul and sensation means only that in this state the soul’s attention is reduced to the activity of sensation alone. In this case, to say the soul is sensation is not to say that it is itself physical but to say that it has minimized its activity. This point is brought out further in the next passage, \textit{ThA} IX.68.

\begin{quote}
The virtues are not contemplated always in soul, but rather sometimes they are existent in it, and in it when it thinks [them]. For when soul casts its vision to Mind, such that it derives virtues from one of [Mind’s] parts, in proportion to which soul casts its vision to it. When it sustains its gaze to the Mind, it acquires the noble virtues from it. If soul is heedless, turns to sensation, and occupies itself with it, then Mind does not pour onto it anything of the virtues, and soul becomes like something of the low, sensory things (\textit{ka-ba ʿd al-ʾaṣyā’})
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} See Cristina D’Ancona Costa, \textit{La discesa dell’anima nei corpi: ENN. 4. 8(6) ; Plotiniana arabica : pseudo-teologia di Aristotele, cap. 1 E 7 ; ”Detti del sapiente greco“} (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2003), 333. My sincere thanks to Alessio Rotundo for his help with the Italian.
al-ḥissiyā al-duniyya). So when it thinks on some of the virtues and desires to acquire them, it looks to Mind, so that Mind then pours virtue on it.\textsuperscript{62}

Here the reason that soul becomes like a sensory thing is twofold. The consequent of the sentence in question is itself twofold, namely, Mind does not pour virtues onto soul, and soul becomes like a sensory thing. Both result from the soul’s heedlessness and its turn toward and occupation with sensation. As I argue above, the adaptor is being rather exact in these passages: disintegration to sensation entails that soul has spread its attention and activity to sensation alone, neglecting Mind and its activity of virtue.

While the portrayal of soul’s procession from Mind is in places positive, the adaptor is clear concerning soul’s decision to assimilate to sensation. In ThA VII.42–3, he emphasizes that people are unaware of soul and the world of Mind because, “The sensible world dominates us and our souls have become full of its reprehensible lusts (šahawātuhū al-madmūma).” The result of this influence is that, “We do not sense that intelligible world and what the soul brings us from it.” We can do so only “when we rise above this world and reject its base lusts (šahawātuhū al-duniyya) and do not occupy ourselves with any of its conditions (ʾaḥwāl).”\textsuperscript{63} A return to Mind begins with the rejection of the šahawāt, which, I argued above, stem from the šawaniyya power of soul and are proper to the bodily compound. The first condition of the return to Mind is the power to reject such desires and to occupy oneself with Mind rather than with the sensory.

\textsuperscript{62} ThA IX.68, Henry–Schwyzer 287, Badawī 129–30.
\textsuperscript{63} ThA VII.42–3, Henry–Schwyzer 249, Badawī 90.
Virtue, the Return, and Philosophical Success

The treatment of virtue in the Arabic Plotinus material has been previously discussed, and I do not wish to go into it in detail here. As I have already shown, soul acquires virtue from sustained attention to Mind, and from an avoidance of assimilation to sensation. In this section, I will briefly overview the status of virtue vis-a-vis Mind, and then examine the process of soul’s return to Mind by way of an assimilation to universal soul. Last, I will highlight that the motivation behind the return to God and its connection to the conflation of Mind and the highest principle.

The most explicit discussion of virtue in Mind is found in ThA IX. One finds there a layout of the causal structure behind virtue and the way in which virtue is present at each level of reality. “Now the mind has all the virtues in it continually, not sometimes present and sometimes not present, but in it always...because the Mind does not dispense with looking (al-naẓar) at the first cause.” Further, the virtues in Mind are perfect and complete, since they are immediately caused by the first principle: “As to the first cause, the virtues are in it in the manner of a cause.” The acquisition of the virtues by Mind from the One occurs along the same causal structure as the soul and Mind. As long as the lower element maintains its gaze (naẓar) on the source of virtue, it will acquire and maintain the virtues in itself. Nevertheless, the attribution of virtue to Mind is certainly rather striking, given that Plotinus explicitly claims that the Intellect is not virtuous.

Now that the structure underlying virtue is clear, I want to examine in what way the return of an individual soul takes place. Before discussing its assimilation to universal soul, it is helpful to consider the nature of assimilation as such, especially as it operates within the return. In ThA II, there is an extended discussion of assimilation within the broader discussion of memory. There, in

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64 See Peter Adamson, The Arabic Plotinus, 69–83.
65 ThA IX.69, Henry–Schwyzer 287, Badawī 130.
66 ThA IX.70–1, Henry–Schwyzer 287, Badawī 130.
67 See Enn. I.2.
a description of soul’s descent, we find an account of what it means for soul to assimilate via *imagination*.

For when the soul remembers anything it assimilates itself to that thing which it remembers, because memory is either cogitating or imagining, and imagination (*tawahhum*) has no being that is permanent and abiding in one state, but is in the state of the things it sees.68

Properly speaking, imagination is not able to grasp mind, since “it is intermediate in position between mind and sense,” and as a result, it is not able to keep “firmly to one to the exclusion of the other.”69 But soul, when it reaches Mind, no longer remembers anything from its imagination, such that soul’s assimilation to Mind entails that it is ignorant of the things that are below it.

[We] say that soul, on leaving this world and entering the upper, intelligible world, remembers nothing of what it knew, particularly when the knowledge it acquired is lowly....[it] is extremely objectionable that the soul should receive impressions of this world when it is in the upper, intelligible world, because that would necessitate its being, in the upper world, the like of what it is in the lower world.70

Assimilation to Mind is complete, and soul has neither the memory nor the impressions of what is below Mind. In places, the adaptor explains the return to Mind by way of an individual soul’s assimilation to universal soul. In *ThA* VII.41, the adaptor makes clear that there is part of soul,

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70 *ThA* II.53–4, Henry–Schwyzer 72, Badawī 38.
both of universal soul and individual soul, that remains in the Mind. Again, one finds soul in need of rejecting its sensible aspect.

If the soul can reject sense and the transient sensory things and does not hold fast to them, it then controls this body with the slightest effort, with no fatigue or toil, and assimilates (tašabbahat) itself to the universal soul (al-nafs al-kulliyya) and becomes like it in conduct and control, with no difference or variation between them.

This passage is the end of ThA VII, such that the explanation does not proceed to a discussion of Mind, but here it is clear that assimilation to universal soul coincides with the individual soul’s capacity to control the body fully. But what is it about universal soul that allows soul to reach Mind and the upper, intelligible world? In GS I.69–78, the adaptor explains what happens when particular souls descend from the upper world and universal soul.

When the souls come to be in these particulars, their stay in them and their separation from the universal soul endure, they lack the world of intellect, do not cast their glance on it and become like a particular, [then] they become weak and find no one to strengthen them, as they remain isolated and alone and the universal soul is not with them. So their thinking and deliberation then multiply and they cast their glance only on the particular things. This happens because of their separation from the whole and [because] they are attached to only one particular thing and master it, give up the universal one and depart from it, and turn to the particular one which they
The cause of the particular soul’s weakness is its deprivation of the intelligible and its failure to keep its gaze (baṣaruhā) directed at it. This deprivation leads to soul’s weakening—it fails to contemplate the universals with universal soul, and instead focuses on sensory particulars. Conversely, ascension and assimilation entail contemplation of universals rather than particulars. Had the soul continued to be with universal soul in contemplation of universals, it would have avoided its enfeeblement. In the above passage from ThA II, it was left ambiguous whether soul assimilates to Mind via imagination, tawahhum, or some other power. In GS I.74–7, the situation becomes clearer.

They begin the ascent to their world when they cast away from themselves the filth of the particular body and remember the world of intellect. For they then imagine that world and the beings in it and see them with their noble and elevated glance, because in [the souls] there is something noble, always attached to them, be they above or below, and that is Mind.72

Here one finds that soul does assimilate via tawahhum, albeit by way of a higher kind of vision. In the lines following, the adaptor clarifies that because of soul’s station between the two worlds, it necessarily holds the position of an amphibian creature, al-ḥayy al-barrī al-bahrī. Which world dominates soul and its activities comes about by the direction of soul’s gaze. Still, it is not clear from this passage to what extent an individual can assimilate to Mind. In fact, one could read the

72 GS I.74, Henry–Schwyzer 239, Wakelnig 110.
remarks as an intimation that an individual must always split her attention given her peculiar situation. However, in ThA X, one finds an outline of the adaptor’s conception of philosophical success.

How noble is the upper world and the things in it—and nobler than they is the nobility of wisdom that originated them because it is the greatest nobility of all. None can look on that world save the man whose intelligence has submerged his senses (allaḏī istaḏraqa ṣaqluhu hawāṣṣahu), and who is known only as being mind alone. He is the man who has accustomed himself to recognize things by the vision of the mind (bi-naḏari al-ʿaqli), not by logic and analogy (bi-manṭiqi wa-qiyāṣi).73

The claim is that the one who can look at Mind—which is a necessary if not sufficient condition for the attainment of virtue—is one who is able to be free from the senses and to grasp things with a higher vision than sensory vision. As a result of this sustained vision, the person is known even as mind alone. As established above in my examination of desire, the full realization of Mind is the ultimate goal, and thus final cause, of the desire of both Mind and Soul. Although God is frequently identified as the goal of all activity, what God is will turn out to be Mind, as I will argue in a moment. Entailed within this higher vision is a rejection of logic and analogy. This remark is clarified in the following passage, where he claims that since people think that only the sensible world is true, they are led to believe that science and knowledge are found only by drawing conclusions from premises one has developed and posited. However, “that is not the case in all sciences here, for the knowledge of the first pure manifest principles is obtained without laying

down premises, because they are the premises from which conclusions are drawn.” The fact that
the unchanging principles in Mind are themselves true premises renders logic and analogy needless
there. Such activities are needed only at a lower level.

The clearest picture of philosophical success is found at the very end of DS, and
corroborates and clarifies the account in ThA X. Here one finds an analysis of human beings in
terms of levels of philosophical success. The text picks up after a lacuna, and distinguishes three
classes. The description of the first class is thus the shortest, and goes as follows. “…one class,
when they see the corporeal things under sensation, suppose that the discrimination (tamyīz) of
things has been exhausted. Followers of sense-perception call this knowledge ‘wisdom’ (ḥadīhi
al-maʿrifah, ḥikma).” This class reduces all knowledge to sensation, and it does not occur to them
that there may be another (higher) sort of knowledge or wisdom. The second class is described as
follows.

There is also another class of them, raised a little above sense perception, because the
intellective soul has stirred them from [the thing that is shunned] to the quest for the better
thing, but they have abandoned the search for the noble virtues and have employed base
earthly practices, and made the First Thing, beyond which there is nothing else, one of the
earthly sensible things. So by means of sense they have wished to reach the knowledge of
the First Thing, since they have proved incapable of the knowledge to which mind attains.

This class has gone further than the first insofar as the members have been able to go beyond mere
sensation, but have still failed in a quest for virtue. Here it is stated explicitly that the members are

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75 DS 231, Henry–Schwyzer 211, Badawī 183.
unable to attain true knowledge: ʿajazū ʿan al-maʿrifati allaḏī tanāla al-ʿaqlu. In turn, they mistakenly believe the first principle to be something sensible. It is explicit that their failure to attain to Mind entails their failure to achieve the noble virtues contained in it. The third and final class is described as achieving philosophical success.

There is a third class, superior men: they are those who have risen up from the depths to the heights, and have seen the radiating light by the superior, penetrating, and keen power within them, so that they have come to be above the clouds and are raised up over the effluvium of the earth, which fogs intellects. There they have stopped, contented, and have rejected all things, taking a surpassing delight in that place, which is the true place, suited to the superior ones of mankind.76

This third class attains philosophical success by reaching the intelligible world after rising above the earth and what it contains. Interesting here is the particularly physical description given to the ascent to Mind: even the vapor of the earth, buḥār al-ʿard, fogs the intellect. This claim highlights the need to separate Mind completely from sensation, a point emphasized in the following line, which claims that the superior individuals reject all things other than Mind. Again, the ascent stops explicitly in Mind, the true place, and does not go beyond it.

Still, it is not clear what explains the adaptor’s tendency to state that we return to God even when he has argued that it is philosophically untenable. In his examination of virtue, Adamson has argued that the adaptor undertook such a change in order to show Greek ethics to be congruent with his own theological context.77 He raises two points in support of this thesis: first, the fact that

76 DS 233–4, Henry–Schwyzer 411, Badawī 183.
the adaptor makes God the source and principle of virtue, and second, the adaptor’s willingness to set Empedocles as the mouthpiece for a doctrine of forgiveness. I am rather convinced by his argument, and I want to add one small suggestion in favor of reading the adaptor’s ethics as largely influenced by his Islamic context. My suggestion concerns the way in which the adaptor discusses the return, specifically the way in which he explains the return to the One. It is common for the adaptor to describe the return using the locative construction, and there are four reasons this construction has Quranic resonance. First, the nomen loci is used throughout the Quran to highlight God as the place to which one must return. Second, this notion is decidedly non-Plotinian and in turn not present in the source text, given that the One would never be said to be in a place. Third, the Adaptor uses this construction in addition to and as a restatement of a straightforward claim that we return to God. Last, this notion of returning to God is inharmonious with the otherwise consistent claims that one’s return ends with Mind, so that there must be another motivation for the addition of this construction. I want to offer here two passages for this interpretation. The first is ThA IX.74, as the adaptor explains the situation in which we are “supported and sustained by the first agent.”

To him to do we cling towards him is our desire, to him do we incline and to him do we return (narjiʿu): though we are remote and distant from him, out destination and the place of our returning (marjiʿunā) is in him, just as the destination of the radii of the circle is in the center, though they be remote and distant.79

78 See for example 2:156; 5:48; 6:60, 164; 11:4; 29:57. See also Zimmermann’s discussion of this point in Zimmermann, Origins, 141–3.
79 ThA IX.74, Henry–Schwyzer 287, Badawī 131.
This example is especially salient, since the original Greek explicitly says that the One is not in a place, and the adaptor includes this claim: “The virtues well forth from it without its dividing or moving or reposing in any place.”\textsuperscript{80} The second passage is \textit{ThA} X.33, where he says, “All things are fixed in mind and mind is fixed in the first cause, and the first cause is the beginning and end of all things. From it do they originate and to it is their returning (\textit{marji} ʿ\textit{uhā}), as we have often said.”\textsuperscript{81} Both passages utilize the nomen loci in addition to a straightforward articulation of the return. I think this usage is one more indication of the adaptor’s readiness to accommodate his ethics to his theological context. This impetus may go some way in explaining this disconnect between the philosophical conclusion that our return stops in Mind, and apparently theological one that the return is always to the One itself. First, it is clear that the theory is decidedly rationalist, placing the aim of ethical progress in unification with the Mind. Second, the small glimpse of political commentary one finds toward the end of \textit{DS} follows this rationalist arc, ranking human beings according to their capacity to be aware of and assimilate to Mind.

\textit{Conclusion}

In this chapter, I have examined the adaptation’s presentation of desire and soul in order to investigate the extent that non-rational desire might be present within its philosophical program. I discovered that there is a reluctance to ascribe permanent desire to Mind, and that the desire that is permanently ascribed to soul is decidedly rational. Further, non-rational desire, while present at the incipience of Mind, is permanent only negatively within the body. In my examination of the adaptor’s conception of soul, I argued that there is only one notion of soul proper, and that the

\textsuperscript{80} See \textit{Enn.} V.1(10).11.8–9: “Since he does not abide in a place (καὶ οὐκ ἐν τοπῶι μένοντος).” \textit{ThA} IX.71, Henry–Schwyzer 287, Badawī 130.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{ThA} X.33, Henry–Schwyzer 297, Badawī 139.
adaptor uses many synonyms to identify the activities of soul in body, including the notion of brute soul, leaving soul distinct in every way from body. I have also examined the ethical aspect of his thought within the light of these conclusions, and shown that the ethical goal the adaptor presents is a rationalist assimilation to Mind, rather than to the First Cause.

The adaptation of Plotinus’s philosophy contains several notable differences. Most germane to this investigation are the following two. First, although desire remains integral to the being of soul, its inception is as a form, and the manifestation of desire in the soul remains decidedly rational since the object of soul’s desire is Mind. The second is that since the object of desire is rational, and since rational souls are capable of attaining, that is, knowing, this object, it is possible for desire to cease, having been completely fulfilled. Thus one finds here the correlation between rationally defined objects of desire and the capacity of that desire to be fulfilled. We will see this connection emphasized and made explicit in Ibn Bāǧga’s discussion of human desire. The model for and account of desire found in the Arabic Plotinus materials set the precedent for one way of understanding desire and its function for the ensuing philosophical tradition. On this model, although desire is foundation to human subjects, that is, to rational souls, it is not permanent because its object is attainable. In the following chapters, I will present two different ways in which this model was either rejected or taken up: Ibn Bāǧga’s Aristotelian account of desire as a power among other powers, part of but not essential to rational subjects, and Ibn Ṭufayl’s reinstatement of a desire for an object that is fundamentally irreducible to reason, rendering it essential and permanent.
Chapter 3

Ibn Bāǧġa and Desire for Conceptualization

Insofar as [the concept] is in its subject, yearning comes along with its subject, and the yearning is related to conceptualization, just like recovery is related to medicine.

Ibn Bāǧġa has a reputation for being a rationalist. This reputation is certainly true, but he was also certainly concerned to account for the human impulse toward understanding. He does so by situating the human being within a framework of final causality according to which conceptualization and affirmation regulate the human yearning for understanding. As a result, Ibn Bāǧġa discusses desire continuously in his texts. In the previous chapters, I have presented two versions of a philosophical model on which desire is part of the being of all or some substance, which I have called the Plotinian model (although this model is surely older).¹ In this chapter, I will present a different model, one according to which desire is a power among other powers, which our thinkers take as a version of Aristotle’s faculty psychology. Ibn Bāǧġa takes over this model of understanding desire from al-Fārābī and the Arabic translations of Aristotle’s De Anima. The result will be a framework for understanding desire within which desire is both rationally determined and impermanent, since it is not part of substance as such.

In this chapter, I will consider Ibn Bāǧġa’s discussion of desire throughout his corpus. I will examine in particular smaller, lesser known works, which, as I will show, contain fertile

¹ I take it that this model is first seen in Plato’s own account of soul as desiring substance, the parts of which are directed toward different aims.
passages for understanding his position on the function of desire. First, I examine the role of desire in the soul, in particular the relation of yearning to the striving power. I also examine Ibn Bāǧğa’s influences, arguing that he offers a new model on which to understand human desire, which I call the power among powers model. Second, I examine the relation of the striving power to the body, examining both the relationship between striving and the body, and the relationship between the body and other powers of the soul as a way of understanding Ibn Bāǧġa’s critique of the Sufis. Last, I consider the role of desire within Ibn Bāǧğa’s account of the attainment of the human end. I argue that within Ibn Bāǧğa’s account of human excellence, the natural, intellectual yearning proper to a human being as a human being ought to cease completely.

3.1 Desire

In the first section, I will examine the role of desire in Ibn Bāǧğa’s philosophy writ large, arguing that Ibn Bāǧğa has a developed and sophisticated account of desire and striving, and that his account is heavily indebted both to al-Fārābī and to the early Arabic paraphrase of Aristotle’s De Anima. In the second section, I will examine the placement of desire and striving within the lower part of the soul, examining the connection of the body to imagination. I will show that this connection forms the basis of Ibn Bāǧğa’s criticism and rejection of the Sufis’ and al-Ğazālī’s claim to attainment of truth. In the last section, I will examine the proper end of human life according to Ibn Bāǧğa, showing that the goal and the only truly human activity is to cognize the universals one obtains through demonstration, thus attaining to the level of acquired intellect and becoming a simple intellect. As a result, I will argue that although desire is crucial to Ibn Bāǧğa’s system, he does not discuss as particularly valuable, placing it outside of the human essence, and arguing that ideally even all properly human desire will cease.
Desire, Yearning, Striving

When reading either the more popular texts by Ibn Bāǧga or the secondary scholarship on his work, it is easy to get the impression that Ibn Bāǧga does not care much for desire as a philosophical tool. It is thematized neither in his Tadbīr, nor in his famous Ittiṣāl, nor does his discussion in his Kitāb al-Nafs include any sustained engagement with any notion of desire as such. However, if one considers other, lesser-known texts, one finds a wellspring of reflection on this issue. Ibn Bāǧga discusses desire primarily in terms of the striving soul, al-nafs al-nuzūʿiyya, or the striving power, al-quwwa l-nuzūʿiyya. From this striving power springs yearning, al-šawq.

In this section, I will consider the notion of desire in the soul, in particular in the rational and imaginative powers of the soul, in order to determine in what way desire functions and what its relation to other powers of the soul is. I will show that desire functions as a corollary to many other psychological powers, such that Ibn Bāǧga’s system is fundamentally structured around the notion of final causality, leaving it layered with different types and manifestations of desire. I will highlight that Ibn Bāǧga explicitly claims that even the most human desire—rational yearning—is not essential to the human being. I will then argue that this particular conception of desire and its placement within the structure of the human soul offers a model of desire as a power among other powers, so that although human beings must desire to get what they want, this desire ought to stop, and is always located outside of the Ibn Bāǧga’s definition of what it is to be truly human.

Yearning in the Soul

In this section I will begin by concentrating on three short treatises that thematize desire, in an effort first to see in what way Ibn Bāǧga views desire’s role within psychological activity, second

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2 It is possible that the now-lost final section on reason might well have contained a discussion of desire, given presence of such discussion in other works which must be of a similar tenor as this missing section.
to determine his vocabulary, and last to determine his philosophical influences on this point. The three treatises in question are *On the Inquiry into the Striving Soul* (*Fī l-faḥṣ 'an al-quwwā l-nuzū'īyya*),³ his so-called *On the essence of Natural Yearning* (*Fī mahiyya al-šawq al-ṭabī‘ī*), and the *On the Human End* (*Fī l-ḡāya l-‘insāniyya*). What we will find is that Ibn Bāǧغا’s main discussions of desire are set in terms of *al-nafs al-nuzū’īyya* and its corresponding activity, yearning, šawq.

*Fī l-faḥṣ 'an al-quwwā l-nuzū’īyya* is a treatise that spends most of its time discussing motion, although it begins by explaining the different types of striving.

The striving soul (*al-nafs al-nuzū’īyya*) is a genus for three powers, namely, [1] the striving by the imagination, and by it is the rearing (*al-tarbiya*) of children, and moving (*taharruk*) toward raising the houses, and friendship and love, and what is like these. And [there is] [2] the striving soul by the intermediate (*al-mutawassiṭa*) soul, and by it [is there] yearning for (*yaštāqu*) nourishment and covering. And all of the skillful disciplines (*al-ṣanā‘i‘*) are included in this [category]. These two are common to the animals (*al-ḥayawān*). And one of them [3] is the striving of which you are aware by reason (*taš‘uru bī-l-nuṭq*), and by it is learning and teaching, and by this is the human being alone distinguished.⁴

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³ I use here the beginning as it is in the Berlin manuscript, rather than the title al-‘Alawi provides. References to each of these texts is from *Rasā‘il falsafiyya li-Abî Bakr Ibn Bāǧغا*, ed. by Jamāl al-Dīn al-‘Alawī, (Beirut-Casablanca: Dar al-Ṭaqāfa – Dar al-Naṣr al-Maghribiyya, 1983). I have consulted the Berlin manuscript only in select cases: Berlin, Preußische Staatsbibliothek, Wetzstein I 87 (Ahlwardt 5060) / Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Ms. Berol. Wetzstein I 87.

Ibn Bāǧğa goes on to explain that the striving had by all animals, [1] and [2], are ordered such that the presence of [2] is by nature before [1]. The human being has the third kind of striving in addition to and after these two. After this, Ibn Bāǧğa moves on to discussion motion at length.

We find in these short remarks what I will show to be hallmarks of Ibn Bāǧğa’s terminology of desire, which I will continue to explore throughout most of this chapter. The two most important terms for our discussion are *nuzūʿ*, here qualifying a power of soul, and *šawq*, here found in the eighth verbal form. I have chosen to translate *nuzūʿ* as ‘striving’ rather than ‘appetitive’ in an attempt both to broaden the notion and to avoid any assumptions that might accompany the qualifier ‘appetitive’. As I will show below, Ibn Bāǧğa’s characterization of the striving soul found here is more or less the same as that found elsewhere, namely, that the striving powers are of two kinds, one animal and one human, with the proviso that here he has added a third instantiation within the animal kind, namely, that of the intermediate, *al-mutawassiṭa*, soul. Further, we are here told that the striving one knows by reason is something that characterizes human beings alone.

We find these points reiterated and expanded in Ibn Bāǧğa’s discussion in *Fī l-ŷāya l-‘insāniyya*, in which Ibn Bāǧğa aims to account for not only the end of human life, but the process by which it is obtained. He begins his explanation by distinguishing between active and passive powers, the latter of which are “either material or animal (*hayūlāniyya aw ḥayawānīyya)*,” and by asserting that the human being “is greater than that to which it is connected.”⁵ His aim here is “to reflect on the active human powers (*al-quwan al-fāʾīl al-‘insāniyya)*.” He explicates the active power through the skill of grammar.

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The active power is like the skill of grammar, and [it is that] by which grammar is, and it intends perfection (*taqassud al-tamâm*) alone, and [at its attainment] it stops. The repetition (*takrâr*) of its act is only by the striving soul and by the concept (*bi-l-nafsi l-nuzû’iyya wa-bi-l-ra’î*). That which is on account of the striving soul (*al-nafs al-nuzû’iyya*) is like what the agent does while yearning (*tašawwuqan*) only to act. And what is by the concept is to act so that one obtains from it another result, namely, the benefit (*naf*”) of that action. So it is clear that the striving soul yearns for (*taštâqu*) something endless, or something from the perspective in which it is endless. And we call this yearning being lively, and the privation of this yearning is fatigue and exertion and what is like these. This yearning is always animal, [and] the human being is not distinguished by it primarily.6

The inherent logic of the explication is bit opaque. Since here in *Fî l-ğâya* he is discussing the human being alone, we would expect this point to be a slight refinement of the claim we read above in *Fî l-fâhsh ‘an al-quwwa l-nuzû’iyya*, and to get a magnified view of what was there the third in a list of powers of striving. But what Ibn Bâǧga offers here is an explication of a type of yearning that bridges what he calls the animal and the human, within which both imaginative and rational yearnings fall. Both instances of yearning have a proper concept that accompanies them and is the object of yearning from the striving power. He also needs to clarify that the yearning from the striving soul aim always for what is endless, but he shows us in this example what happens when one acts according to yearning alone, and not according to contemplation. The problem with the imaginative striving power, as he later clarifies, is that the forms in the imagination are not in themselves endless, but are of an intermediary type of form that fails to attain the level of the

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6 Ibn Bâǧga, *Fî l-ğâya*, 244.
endless in itself. By contrast, in a case of actual human, rational yearning, “the essentially and not accidentally correct contemplation (al-ra’y) yearns for the endless in itself.” At the end of Fī l-gāya, he claims, “The endless is that which time does not comprehend, and is endless in itself, not by its endless time. And because of that, the most appropriate of the endless things by its perpetuity is God exalted, and the giver of the endless.” Since human yearning is capable of attaining to the endless in itself, human yearning is also the only kind of yearning—and the only striving soul—that can cease, that is, be fully satiated. Coupled with the criterion of endlessness is that of correctness, which is correlative to an unchanging nature. But more on that below.

Again in the Risāla l-wadāʾ Ibn Bāḡga reiterates this account of yearning and psychological powers. There, in a distinction about the self, he explains that imagination is a mover only when accompanied by yearning, and that

The yearning sometimes occurs by the imagination and [sometimes] by reason (fikr). And the animals without reason have only the yearning of the imagination, and it is the highest of [their] steps. The cognitive yearning (al-tašawwuq al-fikriyya) is the yearning of the correct, and it is rather [that which] the human has as a distinguishing feature.

Here we get largely the same account as we had above. Perhaps the most interesting feature is the discussion within which these lines fall, which is about what we mean when we say, “I strive for something.” Ibn Bāḡga says, “The first motion that is in us is compounded from imagination and

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7 Ibid., 246.
8 Ibid., 247–8. More on the technical and ethical function of striving below.
9 Ibid., 252.
10 See De Anima 433a27.
11 Ibn Bāḡga, Risāla l-wadāʾ, in La conduite de l'isolé et deux autres épîtres, ed. Charles Genequand, 101. All translations of Risāla l-wadāʾ are my own, with consultation of the French translation.
striving, and the striving is signified by the soul, and because of that, I said, ‘my soul inclines me’.

What the pronoun indicates is another thing.” He goes on to specify that “that which was indicated by the pronoun is the rational power (al-quwwa l-fikriyya).” This point raises as a question for us what exactly is happening in cases of properly human striving: What does it really mean to want something as a human?

Perhaps the most extended and novel discussion about yearning in Ibn Bāǧga’s writing occurs in the so-called Fī mahiyya al-šawq al-ṭabī‘ī. I say so-called, because this text—with some major differences—is also situated within Ibn Bāǧga’s Taʾāllīq ʿalā l-burhān al-Fārābī. Unlike in Fī l-faḥṣ ʿan al-quwwa l-nuzūʿīyya, Ibn Bāǧga spends most of the text determining what natural yearning is and in what way it is satiated. Given Ibn Bāǧga’s predilection for suppressed subjects and sustained back references, the text itself is remarkably oblique and difficult to follow, and deserves much more attention than I am able to give it here. However, the general argument of the treatise is that human beings’ yearning to know, a yearning that Ibn Bāǧga considers to be natural or proper to human beings, is fundamentally connected to intellectual apprehension of each of the four causes. Ibn Bāǧga lays out the procedure through which one learns the various causes of an

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12 Here I follow the free-standing text as it has been given by al-ʿAlawī. I do not at the moment have access to the manuscripts, but as far as I can tell from the two editions, the text as given as free-standing in the Oxford manuscript (Pococke 206) is of a better quality than that printed by Fakhry in his edition of Ibn Bāǧga’s remarks on Fārābī’s logic (as it was found in the Escorial 209 [Derenbourg 612]). Not only do many variants of the latter look to be corruptions of what we find in the former, there are large passages in the Escorial manuscript that Fakhry relates as severely corrupted, including a part of the text that is about 20 lines. It is further unclear whether this “treatise” was originally separate and then inserted into the discussion of burhān, or whether it was removed from the logical remarks and set up alone as an individual treatise. I suspect the latter is the case, but more work is needed before this conclusion is fairly warranted. It does not seem that in their editions either Alawi or Fakhry consulted either version’s corresponding instantiation. Although Fakhry’s edition of Ibn Bāǧga’s logical remarks takes into account both the Oxford and the Escorial manuscripts, when he mentions that our text is missing in the Oxford manuscript, he does not seem to have been aware that the corresponding text was present earlier in the codex as an independent treatise. I intend to write an article examining and addressing the situation of this treatise, since, as I will argue, it presents a fascinating and original account of šawqāt and the human being, and I hope to answer such questions there. The text may be found in al-ʿAlawī Rasāʾil falsafīyya, 97–102, and Fakhry edition Al-mantiq ʿinda al-Fārābī Kitāb al-Burhān wa-Kitāb Šarāʿ ʿīt al-yaqīn maʿa Taʾāllīq Ibni Bāǧga ʿalā al-Burhān (Beirut: Dar al-Mašriq, 1987), 123–27. For the conditions of the manuscripts, see al-ʿAlawī Muʿallaḵūt Ibni Bāǧga, 43ff. on the Oxford manuscript, and on the Escorial manuscript 73ff.
object of knowledge—and therefore of yearning. The treatise ends with a meditation on the way in which *burhān* satisfies the conditions of knowledge such that our yearning ceases. It is in this text that he offers the most extended discussion of human yearning, since here he discusses at the greatest length theoretical, *al-nażariyya*, yearning, which belongs to human beings alone and by which they are distinguished from other animals. He begins,

The natural, theoretical yearning (*al-tašawwuqāt al-nażariyya al-ṭabī‘īyya*), their first and their prior, are [so] not in time alone but by nature, just like the cause precedes the caused and is that by which we say it is what it is, and the yearning [is] to that by which the subsistence of that thing is.13

These opening lines set the orientation of the rest of the treatise by establishing that Ibn Bāǧǧa will discuss natural, theoretical yearning with respect to causes, i.e. that by which a thing’s subsistence is. He continues, explaining that we have a fourfold yearning, that corresponds to the four causes.

Whenever we grant it, there comes about for us a fourfold yearning, namely, why (*li-mā*) this [thing in question] is, and what exactly is the intention in the formation of this concept up to this point for the sake of which the mover moves, and what the intention (*qāṣd*) is in this existence.14

Ibn Bāǧǧa describes the experience through which an instance of theoretical yearning arises, offering a survey of the questions to which we want answers. When one has a concept in one’s

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14 Ibid.
mind, when it is yet vague and ill-defined, by nature, one yearns to establish what the thing is and why it is. Here it is difficult to discern what exactly he is talking about without knowing that the discussion ends in a point about yearning’s connection to \textit{burhān}. Indeed, this is a reason one might think that the treatise has been moved from a different, logic-oriented examination. In fact, the opening discussion is borderline incomprehensible unless we know that we are discussing an intellectual, logical activity the entire time. Once we know that we are simply discussing concepts—suggested, of course, by the qualifier \textit{al-nazariyya}—it is clear the yearnings in question are restricted to the mind alone.\footnote{Perhaps one might think it odd that the yearnings could be located anywhere other than the mind. But the discussion of yearning in the imagination should at least temper this assumption. Further, al-ʿAlawī inserts \textit{al-nazariyya} in his edition, although its inclusion in Fakhry’s edition suggests it is in his manuscript, which, for this text, is based solely on the Escorial manuscript.} Ibn Bāǧga is more explicit concerning the relation between the yearning and the causes in the following passage.

When we look attentively at each one of these four [causes], which are the form, the matter, the agent, and the final, each one descends from its respective direction (\textit{manzila}) of the thing, and yearning for the investigation into its causes emerges. This [yearning] does not go on infinitely, for we will come to prime matter (\textit{mādda lā mādda la-hā}), and when we come to it, the yearning does not emerge, and this yearning ceases, and does not exist. So therefore, this yearning is only for the sake of this cause, and this cause has a natural relation (\textit{nisba ṭabīʿiyya}) to us, for whenever we do not find it, there is yearning, so that finding this [cause] is the goal to which we move by this yearning.\footnote{Ibn Bāǧga, \textit{Fi māhiyya al-ṣawq al-ṭabīʿī}, 98.}
Listing the four causes, Ibn Bāğğa explains that it is consideration of the causes that instigates the individual cases of yearning, which continue until one arrives at the ultimate instance of the cause in question, here exemplified through the example of matter. He continues, saying that for each cause there is a yearning, and that the yearning continues until the subject locates and understands the ultimate cause, be it the agent, the goal, or the form.

It is worth considering what might motivate Ibn Bāğğa to make such remarks about yearning in a discussion of demonstration. If we work on the supposition that this treatise was later removed from Ibn Bāğğa’s remarks on al-Fārābī’s Kitāb al-Burhān, we find that there is nothing at all about yearning or desiring in what would be the corresponding text of al-Fārābī on which Ibn Bāğğa remarks. In the version found within his Taʿlīq, Ibn Bāğğa appends this digression to a consideration of what al-Fārābī means by the phrase, “Absolute demonstration is the certain syllogism” (al-burhānu ʿalā ʾatfāqi huwa l-qiyās al-yaqīnī), which reappears at the end of the treatise, as Ibn Bāğğa identifies the best type of demonstration as that which is potentially a definition, and “the composed definition is the most perfection definition, because (li-ʾannahū) yearning does not remain after it at all.”17 Thus, Ibn Bāğğa offers us a view into both the type of yearning that is explicitly human yearning, and the only type of yearning that ceases, because it is the only type of yearning for which one may (1) attain its object certainly, which entails that one (2) attain an object that does not stop or change. Although Ibn Bāğğa specified human yearning above in both Fī l-faḥṣ ʿan al-quwwa l-nuzūʿ iyya and Fī l-ğāya l-ʿinsān, he nowhere else goes into such careful and precise analysis about what exactly satisfies a human being’s most human yearning. Thus, he discusses this yearning within a discussion of demonstration because it is only

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by demonstration that human beings attain what they most desire as human being, but also what they desire at all levels: the endless and unchanging.

Surprisingly, the other place that Ibn Bāǧǧa discusses such distinctly human activity is in his commentary to On Generation and Corruption, during a discussion of the motive power, al-quwwa l-muḥarrrika, which is itself set within a discussion of potency in general. His goal in the section is to explain the procedure according to which the human intellect prompts motion, but in particular, essential motion. Ibn Bāǧǧa argues that essential human activity is the completion of concepts in our minds, so that the aim of such activity, tašawwur, is driven by a yearning, tašawwuq, for the concept’s completion, kamāl.\(^{18}\) Part of what Ibn Bāǧǧa addresses is in what way one may understand the relation between the concept and yearning such that there is yet an unmoved mover responsible for the yearning’s motion: “Whenever each concept (tašawwur) is deficient (nāqis), there attaches to it—if there is nothing preventing it—a yearning (tašawwuq) for its perfection, so that [it] is moved by this yearning, and [it] is that conceptualization (mutašawwir) inasmuch as it is a mover by this description.”\(^{19}\) As a result, the concept, when deficient, acts from one direction as a mover (muḥarrik) and from another as that which is moving (mutahharrik), the latter of which is the concept insofar as it is deficient and that which has been postulated (al-mafrūḍ). As a result of this analysis, he claims

So the yearning therefore is external to its essence (ḥārağa‘an ḍāṭuḥu) except that it connected to (muqtarin) by a natural connection (iqtirānan ṣabī‘iyyan) that does not depart from it, but the yearning rather belongs to the human being inasmuch as [the human] is


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 31.
passionately longing (ʻāšiq) for completion, so that the yearning for completion is connected to conceptualization of a concept. If it is like this, then the mover is separate from the moved, and it is already clear that it is in it. So therefore, whenever we pursue the matter, it is necessary that this yearning will be found rather because it belongs to this concept with respect to what [is] with it, and it is the nature of this concept, therefore, that this yearning is connected to its subject (mawdūʿ) insofar as it is in it, just like recovery is connected to to medicine. So that consequently, the subsistence of the concept is by a subject, so that were is not in a subject, it would not be in potentiality (bi-l-quwwa), so this is something that follows necessarily, like you saw. But insofar as it is in its subject, yearning comes along with its subject, and the yearning is related to conceptualization, just like the recovery is related to medicine.\(^{20}\)

Ibn Bāġga makes clear that the yearning is not part of the essence, that it is external to the subject, and that it adheres to it as a sort of help or tool serving the completion of conceptualization. Although yearning is not proper to the essence, it is closely connected to it by nature, and continues until one reaches her goal as a human being, namely, completion of all concepts. He later specifies the goal of human beings as assent, taṣdiq: “And in order that we make clear here the taṣdiq from the taṣawwur, the goal (ḡāya) in taṣdiq is certainty (al-yaqīn), and we do not find an end in taṣawwur.”\(^{21}\) Thus in attaining her goal, the human being goes beyond conceptualization, and reaches for certainty.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 31–2.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 35.
The first concepts on the whole are those connected to yearning, not that they are yearning, namely, the arguments and what falls below them, but by them come about for us the yearnings that are related to us, just like the recovery relates to medicine. And were it not so, we would not yearn at all for the completion that is ours by nature, and by it a human being is a human being naturally. And one who does not have this [yearning for completion] does not have reason (fikr), and has nothing of human potential. And the bestowal of this is the intellect (ʿaql), so therefore the agent intellect has an essential relation to this material intellect, and we examine this relation in the book on the soul.\(^\text{22}\)

We find that although yearning is not itself part of the human essence or dāt, one is not a human unless she yearns for completion of her concepts, and this completion is essentially human. After specifying more finely the relation of yearning to conceptualization, Ibn Bāǧga clarifies yearning with regard to different types of objects.

Whenever sensibles come about bodily yearnings (ašwāq jismāniyya) are connected to them, either to flee or to seek, while the end of that yearning is the safety of the sensible body, and [those] yearnings are appetites (šahawāt). Whenever imaginations come about, the yearnings that are connected to them are from the genus of these sensible yearnings, except that they are more intense in their determination and order. And the motion from it is sensible with respect to its connection, and more suitable for [what] is useful and harmful, but the connected yearnings are from a genus of these sensible yearnings. So whenever concepts come about, they are connected to two kinds of yearnings: regarding

\(^{22}\text{Ibid., 37–8.}\)
what exists from the will (ʾirāda) of the human being, it is connected to yearnings from the
genus of sensible and imaginative yearnings—except that the motions of this are ordered,
and are those which are given the utmost station of order—and its end is in the manner of
what is similar to the ends of the material forms, and it is as if it was compounded from
genera of all yearnings. And insofar as concepts are found to be existent things, that
certainly settles it, so that with that the theoretical yearning is connected to them, and that
is clear in itself and necessary, and the knowledge of it from this study is certain and
primary, there is no doubt about it and no dispute. 23

Ibn Bāǧga distinguishes three different levels with respect to which yearning arises, analogous to
those we saw above, and three different genera of yearnings. We have the now familiar threesome
of sensible, imaginative, and theoretical objects of yearning. The yearnings themselves seem to be
broken into three types as well. Ibn Bāǧga mentions bodily yearning, which is appetite (šahwa),
sensible yearning, and theoretical yearning. We find what will become a familiar depiction of
imagination as a conceptual intersection between the sensible and the theoretical. Perhaps most
strikingly, this is the only passage in which Ibn Bāǧga mentions the human will at all. He connects
it to sensible and imaginative yearning, and thus actually places it below what he identified as
properly human: the completion of concepts that leads to taṣdīq. I am not sure what we ought to
make of this remark, but Ibn Bāǧga does not to consider the concept of will elsewhere, and even
here uses it only once.

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23 Ibid., 39–40.
The notion of will brings us to Ibn Bāǧga’s primary source for his account of striving and yearning: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. Al-Fārābī discusses yearning and the striving power in both his *Kitāb al-siyāsa l-madīniyya* and his *Mabādi’ ārā’ ahl al-madīna l-faḍila*, in which he offers largely the same account, and his views on desire are clearly influenced by the discussion of desire found in *De Anima* III.10–11. At the beginning of the investigation into political communities in *Kitāb al-siyāsa*, al-Fārābī discusses the different types of human will. Here al-Fārābī specifies that šawq comes from *al-juz’ al-nuzū ’iyya*:

The will (*’irāda*) is in the first instance only yearning from sensation (šawq ‘an iḥsās). The yearning is by the striving part (*al-juz’ al-nuzū ’iyya*) and the sensation by the sensitive part. Then there arises after that the imaginative part (*al-juz’ al-mutaḫayyl*) of the soul, and the yearning following it, so that a second will arises after the first. So this will is yearning from imagination (šawq ‘an taḥayyul). After these two arise it is possible for the first instances of awareness to arise, which arise from the active intellect (*al-’aql al-fā’āl*) in the rational part. And at that time a third sort of the will occurs in the human being, and is the yearning from reason (šawq ‘an nuṭq), and this is what is distinguished by the name “choice” (*’iḥtiyār*), and this is that which is in the human being as a distinguishing feature outside of the rest of the animals.24

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Al-Fārābī distinguishes three different kinds of yearning, only the first of which stems explicitly from the striving part. As for the other two, al-Fārābī says they are ‘an, from or on the basis of, imagination and reason, but he does not clarify whether these powers are the subject or source of the yearning. It is clear that these šawqāt proceed sequentially, and that the last is available only to human beings. The relation between the different kinds of šawq and the striving part of the soul is clearer in al-Fārābī’s discussion in the Mabādi’. There in section 4 chapter 10, he lists the various powers present in the human being, nutritive, sensation, imagination, and the rational power, distinguished into the practical (ʿamaliyya) and theoretical (nāẓariyya). He proceeds to discuss al-quwwa l-nuzūʿiyya.

All of these [powers] are linked to the striving power (al-quwwa l-nuzūʿiyya), and the striving serves sensation, and imagination, and reason (nāṭiq). And the subservient apprehending powers (al-quwan al-ḥādima l-mudrika) are not able to fulfill the service and act without the striving power. For sensation, imagination, and reflection are not adequate for acting, outside of being linked to that yearning for what is sensed, or imagined, or thought about, or known, because will is to strive by the striving power to what is apprehended (‘an yunza’a bī l-quwwa l-nuzūʿiyya ilā mā ‘udrika).25

Here we find the striving power explicitly linked with all three powers seen above. The striving power is presented as a sort of servant of the rest of the powers, but one that they need in order to act at all. Additionally, al-Fārābī specifies that the striving power is needed for powers of apprehension. Although the striving power itself does not have a direct relation to apprehension,

striving is doubly at work in his definition of will, which is that one strives by the striving power itself.

There is a final way in which Fārābī discusses desire or striving, a way that is completely lacking in Ibn Bāǧğa’s thought, and that is the presence of desire in the first cause and the procession of celestial intellects. Al-Fārābī gives two slightly different accounts of striving or desire in the generation and activity of the intellects in the Siyāsa and the Mabādī’. In both texts, the first intellect is described as the object of love and desire. In the former, he says

And it is similar [with] its its admiration for its essence (iʿāb bi-ḏātíhī) and its passionate desire (ʿišq) for its essence. So that what is loved first and admired first (al-maḥbūb awwalan wa-l-maʿjūb awwalan) in [each intellect’s] soul is what it intellects of the first [cause] and, second, what it intellects of its essence. The first [cause], then, according to its relation to these [intellects] as well, is the first object of love and the first object of desire (al-maḥbūb al-awwal wa-l-maʿšūq al-awwal).26

In the latter, he describes the intellects’ relation to the first in the following way.

What passionately desires (ʿāšiq) in us, then, is not identical with what is desired (maʿšūq) in us. But, in the First’s case, what passionately desires is the same as what is desired, and what loves (al-muhibb) is what is loved (al-maḥbūb). It is the first object of love and the first object of desire (al-maḥbūb al-awwal wa-l-maʿšūq al-awwal), whether something

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26 Al-Fārābī, Political Regime, 46; Kitab al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya, 52.
other than it loves it or does not love it, or something other than it passionately desires it, or does not desire it.27

This description of the first is largely reminiscent both of the depiction of Intellect and soul’s yearning for the One in the Arabic Plotinus materials, but also of Aristotle’s description of the first cause in *Meta*. Lambda, one of Plotinus’s own inspirations. In both of al-Fārābī’s passages, we find that the first cause is the first object of love and desire, *al-maḥbūb al-awwal wa-l-maʾšūq al-awwal*. In the first passage, the first cause is the first of two objects of love and desire, the second of which seems to be each desiring subject’s own intellect. In the second passage, the first cause is again the first object of love and desire, except that here al-Fārābī emphasizes the first’s own love and desire for *itself*, since, as an intellect and the *first* intellect, the only thing that it can search for is itself. The description of the first cause as *al-maḥbūb al-awwal wa-l-maʾšūq al-awwal* is reminiscent of a passage from *Sayings of the Greek Sage* IX, in which the first is said to be *maḥbūban maʾšūqan*, yearned for by high and low forms.28 Walzer highlights the similarity between the description of the first cause in the *Mabādiʾ* and that of the One found in Plotinus’s VI.8.15 as being “At once loveable and love and love of himself.”29 If the Arabic Plotinus materials were al-Fārābī’s source, considering passages like GS IX.12 and the surviving adaptation of VI.7 may be more helpful. However, in the ultimate source, Book Lambda of the *Meta*, Aristotle discusses the first cause as the primary object of desire and of thought. In the surviving Arabic translation, we find the following:

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28 GS IX.12, Henry–Schwyzer 483, al-Šahrastānī 332.
It moves just like the object of desire (al-muṣṭahā) and the object of thought (al-maʿqūl) move, since it is not moved. And the firsts of these are the same in themselves, and the object of yearning (al-muṭašawwīq) is the good (ḥasan), which is separate and the first thing wanted (al-murād al-awwal), which is good.”

This passage translates *Meta*. 1072a26–8:

It moves like the object of desire and the object of thought, moving but not moved. The firsts of those are the same, for the object of appetite is that which appears good, but the object of rational choice is foremost the good (κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νοητὸν: κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα. τούτων τὰ πρῶτα τὰ αὐτά. ἐπιθυμητὸν μὲν γὰρ τὸ φαινόμενον καλὸν, βουλητὸν δὲ πρῶτον τὸ ὄν καλὸν).

Of course, we cannot know what exactly was al-Fārābī’s object of inspiration for his description of the first cause, although his terminology is certainly very close to the Arabic Plotinus’s *GS* IX.12 (which of course is transmitted by Šahrastānī after al-Fārābī). Either way, such an ascription is not found in the work of Ibn Bāǧğā, who does not discuss the generation of the world.

In addition to the first intellect, al-Fārābī ascribes desiring, ʿišq, to the secondary intellects in the *Mabādiʿ*, while in the *Siyāsa* he says that those intellects do not strive, saʿy, for anything. In the former, he claims that each of the ten celestial intellects has ʿišq for the first cause, and that the self-love of each increases when it thinks the first:

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[Each celestial intellect’s] admiration of its own essence and its passionate desire for it whenever it thinks something of the first is increased over its admiration of its essence and its passionate desire for it whenever it thinks something of its essence in proportion to the degree in which the splendor and beauty of the first surpasses the splendor and beauty of its own essence. Thus the object of love and admiration is in the first instance the first as thought by it, and in the second instance its own essence as thought by itself. By virtue of its relation to these ten [separate intellects the first] is always the first object of love and the first object of desire (al-maḥbūb al-awwal wa-l-maʾšūq al-awwal).³¹

This description of the intellects’ relation to the first is set within a discussion of the order of the intellects between the celestial world and the first. Thus, although desire for and intellection of the first lead to greater admiration, love, and, as we find out elsewhere, pleasure, the desire present in these higher level intellects does not seem to be functional: on al-Fārābī’s account, the intellecting does the work, and in the Mabādī’ desire even seems appended as an afterthought. The main motivation rather seems to be the pleasure that follows upon the intellection of the first cause, which is emphasized in both the Siyāsa and the Mabādī’. This aspect of Fārābī’s account highlights the influence of Book Lambda on his conception of the intellects and their motivation, since the pleasure that follows upon intellection is one aspect of Aristotle’s thought that, relatively speaking, Plotinus does not emphasize.

Without doubt, al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga were both influenced by several Aristotelian works, but the general structure of desire, motion, and psychological faculties used by both authors may be found in Aristotle’s De Anima. As has been often lamented, the section on the rational

³¹ Al-Fārābī, Mabādī’, 118.
power of the soul of Ibn Bāǧga’s own Kitāb al-Nafs did not survive, and so we are unable to look
at his comments on one of the more obvious discussions about the connection between desire and
the soul, namely, in the discussion of the motive powers of the soul at DA III.10–11.32 Two Arabic
versions of the DA have come down to us, one a paraphrase thought to be from the circle of al-
Kindī and the other a more faithful translation thought to be the one made by Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn. It
is not known which Ibn Bāǧga might have known, but Averroes had both, and he preferred Isḥāq’s
version. In both versions, but particularly in the early paraphrase, we find the notion that desire is
connected to three powers emphasized. In order for an animal to move, it requires mind,
imagination, or sensation plus its mover, desire: šawq in the paraphrase, or šahwa and šawq in
Isḥāq’s translation. I will go through the passage most relevant to our discussion here, DA III.10,
highlighting the claims that influenced al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga’s understanding of motion, desire,
and their relation to psychological powers.

From this constellation of texts we find the second model of desire, the power among
powers model, articulated by al- Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga. The distinction rests on where desire is
located in the subject, i.e., whether it is essential, and it may be made as follows. One might
conceive of desire as a power among other powers within a subject. By ‘subject’, I mean whatever
is the seat of essential activity, be it the soul, a particular part of the soul, or something else
altogether.33 On this understanding, whether or not desire is part of the subject’s essence, ḍāt, is
an open question, and desire may or may not be a part of the subject essential activity.34

32 Technically, the very beginning of this section survived, and can be found in Ibn Bāǧga, Kitāb al-Nafs li-Ibn
145–9.
33 This ‘something else altogether’ will be relevant and clarified in the following chapter on Ibn Ṭufayl, where we
see new options for what the subject might be, e.g. the heart, or, in Ibn Ṭufayl’s analysis, a special power of
apprehension.
34 I do not intend to give an account of essence here, but only to situate desire in relation to the essence, whatever
any given figure takes that to be.
Understanding the placement of desire within the subject in this way was one reading of Aristotelian materials, as I will argue below. Another way one might conceive of desire is as something that is part of the subject itself, built into its fabric, and part of its essence or its essential activity. This understanding, as I have argued in earlier chapters, is an explicitly Plotinian one. I will now present selections from the Arabic translations of the *DA* to show the background for al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga’s accounts of desire. I will first present the later more faithful translation, and then adduce relevant material from the earlier paraphrase. In both versions, we will find the explicit connection of desire to the now familiar threefold series of psychological powers.

Iṣḥāq’s translation, although much closer to the original than the paraphrase, is still at points quite jumbled. One of the results of this jumble is that the terminology of desire is neither faithful to the Greek nor clearly delineated, although structurally the passage and the concepts therein are fairly faithful to the original. For example, the discussion in III.10 is about ὄρεξις, although Aristotle also distinguishes ἐπιθυμία and especially βούλησις as different kinds of desire, both of which relate to correct (ὀρθός) action in different ways. The translator rendered ὄρεξις as šahwa until the following explanation for why al-šahwa moves without reason, bi-ġayri fikrin: “because desire is only a sort of yearning” (li-ʾanna l-šahwata ʾinna-mā hiya ḏarbun min al-šawqi).35 This explanation translates Aristotle’s own explanation of why ὄρεξις can act contrary to reason, παρὰ τὸν λογισμόν: “for appetite is some [sort] of desire” (ἡ γὰρ ἐπιθυμία ὄρεξις τίς ἐστίν).36 In the translation, the translator seems to have confused the genus-species relationship of ὄρεξις and ἐπιθυμία, and says that šahwa is a sort of šawq, rather than identifying šawq as a specific

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36 *De Anima* 433a25–6.
type of šahwa, the order that would be consistent with his choice of terms. As a result, it is not clear whether the translation retains a meaningful distinction between the two terms, as the terms are used interchangeably throughout the rest of III.10, with šawq more or less translating ὄρεξις from this point on.

Philosophically speaking, there are two points to highlight in the translation of DA III.10–1. The first is the connection of imagination to both sensation and thinking, a connection that lays the way for the threefold series we find in al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga. This time true to the Greek original, the translation does not emphasize the connection to sensation in its account of local motion. Rather, the only explicit connection we find is at the very end of III.10, where the translation reads, “Each imagination is either in the direction of reason (fikriyyan) or in the direction of the senses (ḥawassiyyan).” Here we have the basis for what is readily distinguished as a set of three distinct objects of desire that are responsible for motions of various sorts. The second point I want to highlight here is the connection of movement to apprehension, ʾidrāk. This term is mentioned only twice in the translation, in both cases without counterpart in the Greek. The first at the beginning of III.10, where we read, “In the rest of the animals, there is apprehension only by the imagination (bi-l-tawahhum) and by deliberation (bi-l-fikri),” for the Greek, “In the other animals there is neither contemplation nor reason, but imagination” (καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ζῴοις οὐ νοήσις οὐδὲ λογισμός ἀλλὰ φαντασία). In the enumeration of the powers of soul the translator includes, “the power of apprehension by the understanding” (quwwatu ʾidrāki bi-l-}

37 The translator’s error seems actually to be earlier, by choosing to translate ὄρεξις as šahwa in the first place. As far as Graeco-Arabic translations go, translating a pairing of ὄρεξις-ἐπιθυμία as šawq-šahwa is perfectly reasonable. I highlighted just this translation by the adaptor of the Plotiniana Arabica in the previous chapter. See also the earlier DA paraphrase p. 343.6, and Themistius’ commentary on the DA in “An Arabic Translation of the Commentary of Themistius,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 17, 3 (1955): 426-435, in both of which ὄρεξις-ἐπιθυμία are translated as šawq-šahwa.
38 Fī l-nafs, 84.
39 Fī l-nafs, 82, and DA 433a11–2.
I highlight the introduction of this notion because apprehension is something that, as we have already seen in the case of al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga, becomes crucial for accounting for conative movement in general, and will be critical in Ibn Ťufayl’s account of yearning. The notion of apprehension is also not found in the earlier paraphrase, to which I now turn.

The other translation is very much a paraphrase, which makes it more difficult to analyze. The text is also clearly influenced by the Arabic Plotinus materials, which goes some way to alter clear transmission of the ideas, above the alteration of the text itself. The paraphrase differs substantially from the original insofar as it emphasizes different kinds of desire, rather than simply desire plus an object from mind or imagination, which to some extent also emphasizes the threefold series even more strongly than the translation. Further, the paraphrase includes the notion of two worlds, one of mind and another of sense and the body. To some extent, this addition of the two worlds grounds and is wrapped up in the delineation of different kinds of desire. The first point occurs repeatedly throughout the paraphrase. We find, for example, the claim that, “The yearning (al-šawq) is of two kinds, sensory (ḥassī) and rational (fikrī), because the yearning is either from the realm of sense (ḥayyiz al-ḥass) or from the realm of reason (ḥayyiz al-fikr).” It is specified that “the rational yearning, which is from the realm of reason, is at first from the imagination (al-wahm).” It is worth noting that the division of yearning in this way is starkly reminiscent of a passage from the Epistle on Divine Science I examined in the previous chapter. In DS 219–23, where the adaptor distinguishes first and second desire, the latter of which he identifies as al-šawq

⁴⁰ Fī l-nafs, 83, and DA 433b3.
⁴² Ibid., 331.15–6.
al-hassi, while the former is higher than it and imperceptible to the senses.43 The next passage that distinguishes different types of desire follows the following rendering of 433a20: “The cause of motion is one, namely, desire (al-šawq), for whenever motion is incited by the imagination or by intellect (‘aql), they both move only by the medium of desire.”44 This desire then breaks into three different kinds: “Desire (al-šawq) is either sensory (hassiyyan), or imaginative (wahmiyyan), or intellectual (‘aqliyyan).”45 Here we find a description similar to one I highlighted above, except that these specifications are ascribed to desire rather than to imagination as in the original and in the other translation, the latter of which read, “Each imagination is either in the direction of reason or in the direction of the senses.” Further, we see again a tripartite account of the levels on which desire operates.

The last passage I would like to highlight is an explication of motion according to a fourfold structure. The passage does not include mention of desire, but it is historically and philosophically interesting, insofar as it appears to be a reworking of Aristotle’s tripartite explanation of local motion through the mover (τὸ κινοῦν), instrument by which the moved moves (ᾧ κινεῖ), and that which is moved (τὸ κινούμενον) in DA 433b.14ff.

He says that there are four causes for local motion: a formal cause, a final cause, an agent cause, and an instrumental cause (al-ʿila l-āliyya). The formal cause is the motion itself. The final cause is the thing yearned for. The agent cause is of two sorts, one of which is an ultimate cause and the other a proximate [cause]. So the ultimate agent cause is the imagination and the intellect, and the proximate agent cause is the yearning. The

43 It is also worth consider on this point the Neoplatonic Treatise on the Two Worlds. On the notions of two worlds in the DA paraphrase see also 319.5–9.
44 Aristoteles’ De Anima, 341.17–8.
45 Ibid., 343.2.
instrumental cause is the moving spirit (al-rūḥ al-muḥarrik), and we call it the bodily pneuma (rūḥan jismāniyyan).46

Of course, Aristotle himself does not explicitly discuss local motion in terms of the four causes. And although it is not unthinkable that one might characterize Aristotle’s account of local motion in such a way, I have not found such a characterization before the paraphrase. Of course, in the commentary tradition there is a history of counting the explanations of motion as fourfold (that is not a far jump from the original text), although nowhere explicated in terms of the four causes.

The influence of the DA on both al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga is clear. Both connect desire to three distinct psychological powers with which desire might work in tandem. Although Aristotle consistently claims that animal thinking stops at imagination, the later translation of the DA reads that for animals, apprehension comprises imagination and deliberation, fikr. Neither al-Fārābī nor Ibn Bāǧga explicitly incorporates or emphasizes this extension of mental capacity. Rather, both, especially Ibn Bāǧga, firmly emphasize that animal thought ends at imagination, while humans are moved especially by thought, practical or theoretical. However, it might be relevant that Ibn Bāǧga’s nearly impossibly high standards of human activity may have inverse effects on humans and animals: as sophisticated as properly human thought becomes, the more sophisticated animal thought becomes, insofar as the line between animal and human thought is raised.

As I highlighted above, al-Fārābī famously introduces the notion of ʿirāda as the inclination (nuzūʿ) in the striving power (quwwa l-nuzūʿ iyya). Interestingly, although Ibn Bāǧga’s account of desire shares much with that of al-Fārābī, he does not include the notion of the will in any real way. As I highlighted above, the only passage I have found that includes even a mention

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46 Aristoteles’ De Anima, 343.7–12.
of the will occurs in Ibn Bāǧğa’s remarks on potentiality in his commentary on Aristotle’s *On Generation and Corruption*. But it is here I want to emphasize the importance of Ibn Bāǧğa’s claim that desire itself is not essential. This argument I made above about its (non-)essentiality is relevant here, since within Ibn Bāǧğa’s framework desire clearly functions as a power among other powers, one that, ideally, will cease. Recall that in Ibn Bāǧğa’s discussion of of the human being’s natural, theoretical yearning, he argues that as soon as one grasps each of the ultimate four causes, her yearning stops. As such, yearning is not a permanent part of the human being. The claim that desire is not essential to the human essence is also consonant with the model of the striving power as a power among other powers, according to which desiring is something that one may or may not do, and which in the end must cease.

3.2 Striving Soul and the Body

In addition to discussion of yearning in the soul, Ibn Bāǧğa accounts for the way in which yearning arises in the body. Bodily pneuma (*rūḥ jismānīyya*) was just mentioned above in the *DA* discussion of yearning and motion as the instrumental cause of bodily motion. Ibn Bāǧğa discusses the relation between striving, the soul, and the inner workings of the body in several places. In this section, I will first examine Ibn Bāǧğa’s account of the soul’s relation to the body and whether the most basic level of striving is bodily. Then, I will evaluate the condition of imaginative activity, since although it would seem to be a type of human activity, Ibn Bāǧğa insists that it is an animal activity, and thus not part of the human aim. In doing so, I will examine Ibn Bāǧğa’s criticism of the Sufis and of al-Ġazalī. This last section prepares the way for a discussion of the ethical goal for human beings, which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter.
Striving, Instruments, and the Extent of the Body

We find discussion of the relation of striving to the body in multiple places. In the *Risāla l-wadāʿ* he summarizes a discussion of motion, saying it is clear “that the inborn heat (*al-ḥār al-ḡarīzī*) is the first moved, and that the first mover is a form it has.”47 It is not clear from his discussion there what he means when he says that the first mover is a form the innate heat has. Earlier in his *Kitāb al-Nafs*, Ibn Bāǧga discusses something similar, explaining the function of heat within the body as related to the form within the imagination. First, in his explication of the nutritive power of soul, he explains the role that the innate heat plays on that level within the transformation of the elements from simple elemental mixture to a form of a body.

This heat [that changes the elements into a body with a form] is the instrument of the soul and is called the innate animate heat (*al-ḥār al-ḡarīzī*), as been explained in the seventeenth section of the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*. The innate heat is, therefore, the organ of this soul. Then, the nutritive soul first moves the innate heat, which is moved by itself, and moves the food through innate heat.48

This explanation is of the most basic function of *al-ḥār al-ḡarīzī*, namely, in what way food is turned into nutrition, although it establishes that innate heat works on the level of the nutritive power. Later in his discussion of the imaginative faculty, Ibn Bāǧga ties together the function of the nutritive power with imagination as one of the motive powers found therein.

It is through this power [of imagination] that animals move in various ways and that the striving power (al-quwwa l-nuzūʿīyya) is moved, and through it animals have many arts and crafts, and look after their progeny, as for instance, ants and bees. This power is the most noble in animals without reason (al-ḥayawān ḍayr al-nāṭiq), and in animals without reason there is no other moving power more perfect than this power. The moving powers that are in animals by nature are the nutritive and sensitive power[s], and from all these exist the actions the animal has specifically from its essence (min ḍātiḥī), since mover and moved are together in them.49

Ibn Bāǧğa outlines the motive powers of the animal as threefold, consisting of nutrition, sensation, and, highest of all, imagination. We saw above the role that sensation and imagination played in motion, namely, by providing the object apprehended which is then either yearned for or avoided. Although he has here listed nutrition as a motive power, it is not yet clear in what way it is, since there is not yet an explicit connection between the nutritive power and the striving power.

He dwells on this point at greater length in the Ittiṣāl, where, in preparation of his discussion of intellect, he explains the framework of bodily motion and its relation to the soul. In this discussion he makes most explicit the relation between innate heat, imagination, and the concept on account of which the innate heat acts. He discusses movement and the body as follows.

The initial mover in humans is something proper that brings about motion by means of two kinds of instruments. The first is corporeal and the second is incorporeal, where some of the corporeal [instruments] are voluntary and others are involuntary. [In the case of

49 Ibn Bāǧğa, Ibn Bāǧğa’s Ilm al-Nafs, 111; Kitāb al-Nafs, 140.
voluntary instruments], they are like the hand, leg, and lung, which [voluntarily] play the flute. The involuntary instruments that have specific extremities are called “organs,” like sinew, whereas those that are fluid, like bile, do not have a name from the perspective that they are instruments.⁵₀

He adds a clarificatory comment to his characterization of corporeal, involuntary instruments, saying, “In reality and priority the innate heat is the instrument of instruments,” since it is necessarily always at work, and since every other part of the body is related to it.⁵¹ He clarifies his terms, identifying this *al-ḥār al-ġarīzī* with the innate vital spirit:

The innate heat (*al-ḥār al-ġarīzī*) is called “innate vital spirit,” (*al-rūḥ al-ġarīzī*) on account of being an instrument of the motive power, and [the motive power] is [the innate vital spirit’s] form and initial mover, whereas “spirit” is said of the soul and according to what we have described.⁵²

Thus the innate heat surfaces as the instrument that the soul uses in order to move the body, although the apparatus underlying this movement is not yet clear. He specifies as follows.

It has been explained elsewhere that the intelligible objects are not forms of the innate vital spirit; for they are not forms of bodies, and they cannot be that [namely, forms of the innate

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⁵¹ Ibn Bāǧga, *Conjunction*, 271–2; *Ittišāl*, 186.
vital spirit] unless they are material...So, [the mover] is not something connected with body, but moves the body only by means of incorporeal forms, which are its instrument (this has been summarized in the *Epistle of Farewell*).

He differentiates now two different types of forms that must somehow be related to the innate vital spirit in order to account for motion: corporeal forms of the innate vital spirit and incorporeal forms connected to imagination. In the *Risāla l-wadāʾ*, we find a discussion of the self, the soul, and motion, in which he claims to have already made clear that “the imagination attains a form for the innate spirit,” and that “the first motion which is in us is compounded from imagination and striving, and the striving is signified by the soul, and because of that, I say, ‘My soul inclines me,’” although the pronoun refers to the rational discursive power (*al-quwwa l-fikriyya*). Regarding motion, he reiterates what we saw above in the examination of Ibn Bāǧga’s account of yearning.

The yearning is a relation, and the yearning that accompanies motion, “sometimes occurs by the imagination and [sometimes] by reason (*bi-l-fikr*), and the animal without reason have only the yearning of the imagination, and it is the highest of its steps. And the rational yearning (*al-tašawwuq al-fikrī*) is the yearning of the correct, and it is rather [that which] the human has as a special property.

After setting out the now familiar framework of yearning, thought, and motion, he explains the role of the concept, striving, and the innate spirit.

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53 Ibn Bāǧga, *Conjunction*, 273; *Ittiṣāl*, 188–89.
54 Ibn Bāǧga, *Risāla l-wadāʾ*, 100–1.
55 Ibid.
The mover is the concept and the imagination, and the moved is the striving part, which is a form in the innate spirit, which is a body. It was already made clear that the first mover is compounded from two things. One of them is the mover, and it is the concept or imagination. And the other is the striving by which [it] moves, except that these two are not bodies, but a relation of the conception to striving, a relation of the mover to the instrument by which it moves. So there are three genera of relations. One of them is understanding (ma’rifah) [which is] the relation of the artisan to its instruments, just as the carpenter to his instruments. Then [there is] the relation of the soul to its instruments, and [those] are the organs. And then [there is] the relation of the concept and imagination to the striving. 56

Here we finally have the clarification that the connection between the concept or imagination and the innate spirit is the striving, which, while being not being a body, is a form in the innate spirit itself. In order to account for the way in which motion occurs from a concept, he sets striving into a relative state between the body and the concept, such that the concept, through its relation to the striving, has a relation to the innate spirit, since the striving is simply a form in the innate spirit, and thus itself is intimately connected with the innate spirit. He iterates the relation as twofold, first straightforwardly as that between the concept and striving, and second as that between a mover to the instrument by which it moves. To these relations he adds the third, namely, that of the artisan to his instruments. Although Ibn Bāǧga says that these are three genera of relations (talāta ijnās min nisab), it is not clear in what way they meaningfully differ. It is clear that the corporeality of

56 Ibid., 101–2.
each *nisba* is different: the first has two corporeal relata (taking the artisan as the composite human) or one corporeal and one incorporeal (taking the artisan as the knowledge by which he acts), the second one incorporeal relatum and one corporeal relatum, and the third two incorporeal relata. If we take an incorporeal mover in each relation, it might be that Ibn Bāğğa seems interested to give an explanation in which there is always an unmoved mover responsible for motion in the human being.

In his remarks on *Bi-l-nuzūʿ iyya*, we find this framework reiterated, where he explains the innate heat with respect to its source, the heart.

It was already made clear in another place that the heart or what takes its place is the principle of the animal, and that it [is] a spring for the innate heat existing in the body, and by the innate heat are all the existing motions in the body, I mean, by that [is] the nourishment and the kinds of striving (*al-nuzūʿ*) and imagination (*al-tawahhim*) and thought (*al-tafakkir*). So with the digestion, and if it is in the stomach, it is like [like it is with] writing. So that if it is that the pen is that which traces the letters, the one tracing is the human.\(^\text{57}\)

Here we have a similar framework as above, such that there is a mover (the heart), that which moves (the innate heat), and that by which it moves (the stomach). By using the stomach, the heart accomplishes actions like nutrition and, surprisingly, striving, imagination, and thought. Wirmer considers this passage in his exhaustive discussion of Ibn Bāğğa’s psychology. In his own analysis, he considers the connection of innate heat to a thinking capacity to be yet along the lines of

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\(^{57}\) Ibn Bāğğa, *Bi-l-nuzūʿ iyya*, in *Rasāʿ il falsafiyya*, ed. al-ʿAlawī, 133.
imagination: “Wenn Ibn Bāǧğa dem »Überlegen« hier ein körperliches Organ zuweist, dann ist
damit wohl eher eine Tätigkeit des Vorstellungsvermögens als des rationalem Vermögens
gemeint.”\(^58\) Thus, it is not entirely clear what Ibn Bāǧغا intends in this passage. Al-Fārābī makes
a similar point in his \textit{Mabādi‘}, connecting the body and striving closely after specifying the
relationship of the \textit{al-quwwa l-nuzūʿ iyya} to other powers:

The striving power, by which there is yearning for or aversion toward something, has a
ruler and subordinates. It is the power by which there is the will, so that the will is a striving
toward what is apprehended or from what is apprehended...striving is only by the ruling
striving power, and the acts from the body are by powers subordinate to the striving
power...These power are distributed in parts of the body which are disposed to performing
those acts, some of them being nerves (or ‘sinews’), some muscles, reaching out to the
limbs by which acts are performed toward which animal’s or a human being’s striving is
directed...These powers, then, which are in parts of the body like these are all of them
bodily instruments and subordinate to the ruling striving power within the heart.\(^59\)

After he discusses the heart as the source of the innate heat, he discusses the \textit{brain} and its regulation
of heat, explaining that the imaginative power imagines (\textit{tahayyala al-quwwatu l-mutahayyihu}) and
the rational power reasons (\textit{fakara quwwatu nāṭiqu}) only when at the right temperature, so that

It is, again, the brain which serves the heart in giving its heat the right measure which
enables it to perform proper acts of imagination, and the right measure which enables it to

\(^{58}\) Wirmer, 494n99. For more discussion for the heart’s relation to the innate heat, see Wirmer 488–93.
reason and deliberate correctly, and the right measure which enables it to remember and to recollect correctly.\textsuperscript{60}

Ibn Bāǧga would then seem to operate within the same paradigm as al-Fārābī, identifying the heart and innate heat as necessary conditions of even mental function. If we are permitted to consider Ibn Bāǧga’s remarks with the Aristotelian explanation of the brain’s regulatory function in mind, then his claim amounts to saying that the heart provides the heat that the brain regulates in order to perform the various mental functions.\textsuperscript{61}

Additionally, the direct and material connection between the body and the imagination is something that Ibn Bāǧga takes seriously, since it renders imagination and its act fundamentally flawed because they are connected with matter.\textsuperscript{62} In his examination of the power of imagination in his \textit{Kitāb al-nafs}, he explains the way in which imaginative forms, although apparently removed from matter, are yet still fundamentally connected to it.

The power of imagination is related to the power of sensation in this way but the power of imagination is not completely free from the immattered forms insofar as they are material, but it is in rank far from matter, since this power acts even if the immattered forms are not present, but in its being it needs them by necessity...The power of imagination is not moved unless it is set in motion by sensations, and when there is no sensation this power is not set

\textsuperscript{60} Al-Fārābī, \textit{Mabādī’}, 178–9.
\textsuperscript{62} Al-Fārābī is famous for this point as well. See his \textit{On Intellect} in Classical Arabic Philosophy, 68–78, and \textit{Risāla fī-l-‘aql}, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut: Al-Maṭba’a al-Kāṭulīkiyya, 1983).
in motion...But in its being this power is nobler than the common sense, since it is like the end for it.\textsuperscript{63}

This passage accounts for why, in Ibn Bāǧğa’s view, operating on the level of imagination fails to reach the human goal: since human beings are capable of attaining an end that is unchanging and endless, anything less than that is simply deficient. And on Ibn Bāǧğa’s account, deficiency is correlative with matter.

\textit{Imagination and Ibn Bāǧğa’s Critique of the Sufis and al-Ġazālī}

The now-outlined relation between the heart, matter, and imagination leads us to an important aspect of Ibn Bāǧğa’s thought for this project, namely, his criticism of al-Ġazālī and the Sufis in general. Here I will only outline what is most basically at issue in this rejection, and I will leave the detailed explication of his critique for another time. My goal here is on the one hand to show the way in which the striving power is implicated in this rejection, and on the other hand to set the stage for Ibn Ṭufayl’s rebuttal in the next chapter.

One finds the only passage on those criticizing the Sufis that includes the notion of the striving soul in the \textit{Ittiśāl}. This critique comes within a discussion of the unity of the prior and the posterior. I include the text here in full.

A part of the state that belongs to the powers of the soul possessing this rank is what belongs to the imaginative [power], that is to say, something analogous to this intellect comes to be in it, where [that analogous thing] is a light that when mixed with something, what is seen

\textsuperscript{63} Ibn Bāǧğa, \textit{Ibn Bāǧğa’s Ilm al-Nafs}, 110; \textit{Kitāb al-nafs}, 139.
either cannot be articulated in any way or it is difficult to articulate. Owing to the striving soul, one comes to have a state resembling awe, which in a certain way resembles the state that appears when sensing something great and frightful. That state is called “wonder.” The Sufis have exaggerated in describing this state, and that is [because] this state appears to them owing to the objects of imagination that they find in their souls according to what they believe, regardless of whether they are true or false; for that unfortunately befalls the striving (nuzūʿiyya) [soul] because it is conjoined only with the imaginative soul, whereas truth and falsity are due to another striving part, namely, the rationally striving part (al-juzʾ al-nuzūʿī al-nuṭqī). Moreover, there appears to the one at this rank a state resembling immense joy; since something magnificent overcomes him, he is overcome by contempt for anything below it. This power specifically but also the imagery power both preserve their states, whereas the amazement passes from the other striving [part], namely, the animal-like one, which returns to something close to its state among the masses.64

Most germane to our investigation is Ibn Bāǧga’s discussion of the confusion that occurs in the striving power, which in the Sufis’ case joins on to the imaginative soul and its concepts, rather than acting by the rationally striving part. Interestingly, Ibn Bāǧga here distinguishes between different parts, ajzāʾ, of the striving power, something he does not do elsewhere. In fact, he seems to distinguish only two parts of the striving power, the animal-like one (al-bahiṭiyya), and the rational one (al-juzʾ al-nuzūʿī al-nuṭqī). Since, as Ibn Bāǧga sees it, the Sufi experience of wonder stems from a bahiṭiyya aspect of their soul, he claims that they actually act from a state close to

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64 Conjunction, in Classical Arabic Philosophy, 282; Ittiṣāl, 201–2.
that of the masses in these moments, a serious insult to the Sufis’ claims to achievement of the highest level of truth and realization.

Ibn Bāǧga’s first point is that when the imaginative power reaches toward intellect, it receives something analogous to intellect, a reference to the starting point of conceptualization, a process that will ultimately supersede imagination. The similarity between the beginning of the conceptualization in the imagination and that of the rational power make this mistake possible. Just prior in the Ittiṣāl, Ibn Bāǧga distinguishes three levels on which an individual might grasp the intellectual or spiritual forms.

So whoever puts his body ahead of the incorporeal form...he and his body will pass away and corrupt. In that case he is like an unpolished surface in which light is obscured, only being scattered. In the case of whoever comes to be in the second intermediary rank, he is more like the polished surface, such as the mirror’s surface, which is itself seen and by which other things are seen as well. He is nearer to being purified than those first while still being in a state of passing away. In the case of whoever belongs to the third rank, he is more like the sun itself, but in fact he does not resemble material bodies in any way.65

The Sufis reach only this second level of conceptualization, which Ibn Bāǧga in his criticism describes as operating only on the level of imagination. In fact, he even suggests that they easily slide back in the state of the masses, which is the first rank, whose noetic state he describes as like an unpolished mirror on which the reflections of the truth are scattered completely. I highlight this aspect because it is perhaps the most Neoplatonic motif that Ibn Bāǧga includes in his writing.

65 Conjunction, in Classical Arabic Philosophy, 281; Ittiṣāl, 200–1.
This image goes back to al-Kindī, but is found earlier in the Arabic Plotinus and, of course, in the work of Plotinus himself. Further, Ibn Ṭufayl uses this image in his own account of divine union, as does Avicenna in the Išārāt and al-Ḡazālī in his Miškat.66 I do not highlight this here to suggest we read any particular Neoplatonic theory into this metaphor, but actually to caution against doing so. Although the image itself was popularized by Neoplatonists (or those with Neoplatonist predilections), its use by Avicenna and especially here by Ibn Bāǧga speaks rather against making any such assumption.67

Ibn Bāǧga clarifies the connection to sensation in the Sufis’ experience of and explanation of the end of the human being in his Tadbīr. He connects the experience of the Sufis to something that happens on the level of imagination, highlighting the difference between the spiritual forms that are in imagination, and those that are in the intellect proper.

Whenever the three powers [common sense, imagination, and memory] are unified, the spiritual form is present, as if it is a sensible, so that at its unification it is true necessarily, and the astonishment of its act is witnessed. This is that which the Sufis believe [to be] the utmost end for the human being, and therefore they say in their supplication, “May God unite you” and “the essence (ʿāyn) of the union,” so that on account of their shortcoming with respect to the pure spiritual forms, this spiritual form remains with them [in] place of that [pure spiritual form], and because this [spiritual form] is false when it is separated, and they perceive its truth when it is combined eternally, they believe its combination is the

utmost happiness, and, because at its combination there was present to one who unified to it strange forms and sensations by a frightful power of the reflection, unblemished, more beautiful in many ways than what is in existence, they believe that the end is apprehension of this.68

Again, Ibn Bāḡga highlights that the Sufis have mistaken a new level of intellection for the highest level of intellection, and as a result, the wonder and fear they experience at this new level leads them to believe that it must be the highest of all levels. Ibn Bāḡga goes on to single out al-Ġazalī for criticism, even quoting from his Munqid as an example of the very thing Ibn Bāḡga himself is criticizing.

Therefore al-Ġazalī says that it is apprehension of spiritual things, and hearing spiritual noise, and witnessing of the spiritual substances, the appearance of which he testifies to in his verse: It was what it was, something of what [it was], it do not recall. Because of that, the Sufis allege that apprehension of utmost happiness might be not by learning but rather by leisure, and by not ceasing for a moment in the recollection of what is sought.69

Ibn Bāḡga takes al-Ġazalī’s inability to express what he experienced, and his description that is analogous to physical experience, to indicate that his experience was only at the unification of these three powers that lead to the formation of an imperfect spiritual form, and specifically not at the highest level of perfection, at which one attains pure spiritual forms. Ibn Bāḡga reiterates his

68 Ibn Bāḡga, Tadbīr al-Mutawhīḍ in La conduite de l’isolé et deux autres épitres, 139.
69 Ibid.
criticism of al-Ġazalī in more detail in the *Risāla l-wadāʿ*, and goes so far as to claim that al-Ġazalī’s proclamations have misled others onto his erroneous path.

There comes to us the book of the learned man Abu Hamid al-Ġazalī, and its title is *al-Munqīḏ*, [and] he describes in it a glance from his way of life, and he recalls that he bore witness upon his seclusion regarding affairs divine. And the delight is the highest delight, and something of what he said about it is the verse, “It was what it was, something of what [it was] I do not recall.” All of this is conjecture, and things he sets up [are] likenesses of the truth, and this man made clear from his command that he did not change from this kind, nor from his first state, and that he lured into error or misled with imaginations of the truth...Similarly, al-Ġazalī says upon his solitude a vision and hearing of divine stations, he heard a divine sound, and that returned to the delight, except that he was mindless of what [Aristotle] said in the eleventh book when he said, “It is tranquility.” He did not reflect on this saying or any of what was established by demonstration in the rest of his books.70

Here again we find highlighted al-Ġazalī’s description of his experience of the highest levels, also found in his *Munqīḏ*, from which Ibn Bāḡga selects the same quote above (the same that Ibn Ṭufayl in fact will quote at the beginning of his *Ḥayy*). But this time, Ibn Bāḡga expresses al-Ġazalī’s shortcoming in another way, namely, as a failure to appreciate Aristotle, both his description of contemplation at the end of the *Nic. Ethics* (in the tenth book, which had been labelled as the eleventh) and his account and conclusions regarding demonstration.

In fact, this remark leads us back to Ibn Bāǧġa’s claims regarding the aim of human life and thought that I examined earlier in this chapter, namely, that the ultimate end of human essential activity and thought is the perfection of concepts, which leads to assent and certainty. This perfection occurs by way of demonstration, and it is only by demonstration that our striving and yearning ceases, since it is only by the perfection of concepts that one reaches the endless. Ibn Bāǧġa’s criticism of the Sufis rests ultimately on his noetics, to which this study is not devoted. But, his criticism rests on the same threefold structure of conceptualization that is essential to his account of striving and yearning, and he rejects the Sufis’ accomplishments on the same grounds that he rejected objects of desire that do not supersede imagination: Imagination is essentially an animal intellectual activity, since it is directly connected to sensation. In his criticism above we see this connection highlighted when he censures the use of descriptions of the experience of the highest level that resemble sensation in any way.

Before concluding, I want to consider briefly an interpretation of Ibn Bāǧġa’s intellect theory that aligns him with the Sufis, whom, I have argued, he considers to have categorically been refuted. By his theory Alexander Altmann discusses Ibn Bāǧġa’s position on the final stage of intellectual development, specifically as discussed in the Risāla, and interprets it as something that both is a divine gift, and yet a stage impossible without the previous preparatory levels and achievements.71 Mose germane to this discussion is Altmann’s interpretation of the highest level of intellectual achievement as argued by Ibn Bāǧġa as something not entirely foreign to Sufi experience. He claims, “It is clear that to Ibn Bāǧġa the ultimate stage, although based on the preceding one, represents a mystical experience not far in its effects upon the soul from what the Sūfīs claim to experience.”72 David Wirmer discusses Altmann’s “Fehlinterpretation” at length,

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71 Alexander Altmann, “Ibn Bāǧġa on Man’s Ultimate Felicity,” 90, 92, respectively.
72 Ibid., 92–3.
highlighting the hasty conclusion against which I warned above, that because Altmann saw the images Ibn Bāǧga used as Neoplatonic, “Das führt ihn dazu, Ibn Bāǧgas Ausführungen mehr auf die benutzen Bilder und Texte – das Höhlengleichnis, die Metapher des Spiegels, einen neuplatonisch inspirierten Ḥadīṯ, ein Proklos-Fragment – zu achten als auf die theoretischen Positionen, für die Ibn Bāǧga sie einsetzt.” Wirmer connects the misunderstanding of Altmann—and, as it turns out, of Genequand—to the assumption made by both scholars that there are intelligibles over and above matter, a variety of Platonic forms, which Ibn Bāǧga himself would not accept. Wirmer rightly identifies the fact that Genequand’s selection of texts for his edition highlights the somewhat monolith view (even with Genequand’s fervent disagreement with some aspects of Altmann’s analysis) of Ibn Bāǧga’s thought. This myopic focus is further evident in the fact that much of Ibn Bāǧga’s text are unknown and nearly completed unstudied in modern scholarship.

In addition to Wirmer’s assessment, it is clear from the above examination that there is no evident way in which Ibn Bāǧga condones the Sufis’ encounter as the highest encounter of the truth. Altmann cites as evidence the passage from the Ittiṣāl I examined above, wherein Ibn Bāǧga criticizes the Sufis for mistaking wonder for experience of reality. Altmann seems to take Ibn Bāǧga’s description of failure as something that is close to the actual experience of reality. However, Ibn Bāǧga’s wholesale dismissal of the Sufis’ claims becomes clear when one considers the noetic reality underlying his criticism. Since the Sufis remain fully within the operation of the imagination, they fail completely even to approach the goal of the intellectual activity. In fact, the imagery Ibn Bāǧga uses functions as additional backhanded-critique, since it is in part the

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74 The notable exception is Miquel Forcada.
explanation of intellectual experience in sensory terms that Ibn Bāǧğa finds fundamentally suspicious and indicative of a misunderstanding on the part of al-Ǧazalī and the Sufis.

Let me briefly sketch the ways in which I see this section clarifying his account of desire and its value. I have tried to throw light on the connection Ibn Bāǧğa sees between body, striving, and the concepts at which we aim as human beings. I have shown that the striving of the soul acts as an instrument that is the connection between concepts and the body, and have shown that on Ibn Bāǧğa’s account, the imagination has yet a connection to the body by obtaining its forms from the common sense. As a result, the forms in the imagination are still properly animal, since they fall short of full, human potential. I then showed the way in which this discussion clarifies his criticism of al-Ǧazalī and the Sufis. Seen within the light of the connection between the imagination’s relation to the body, it becomes clear that Ibn Bāǧğa’s criticism of the Sufis is actually characteristic of his system. Further, the discussion of the relation of the body to noetics has consequences for the value of desire within Ibn Bāǧğa’s system. It would seem that for human beings, desire on the level of imagination or sensation (or below these) is ultimately not valuable at all, except maybe as a necessary tool for forming concepts in the first place by providing the common sense with material to feed to the imagination. However, Ibn Bāǧğa does not speak of desire in terms of its being good or bad. It is not the case that for Ibn Bāǧğa one kind of desire is valuable and another not: desire is never essential, and rather seems to fall outside of those categories altogether. One must be careful not to overdetermine Ibn Bāǧğa’s position on this point. Thus, let us now turn to Ibn Bāǧğa’s account of properly human life and human excellence.
3.3 The Human Goal, Value and Desire

Now that I have examined the role of the body and imagination regarding striving and the soul and seen the restrictions Ibn Bāĝğa places on human activity, we must identify what Ibn Bāĝğa considers to be the human goal and the process of reaching it. Thus, I will now examine the ultimate human goal, which Ibn Bāĝğa identifies as intellection of the universal spiritual forms. First, I will examine passages in which Ibn Bāĝğa lays out this goal, and examine briefly the way in which he conceives of the virtuous person’s responsibility to others. Last, I will relate this discussion back to my earlier discussion of desire’s relation to the human self and the human goal, in order to discern to what extent desire is valuable at all and to what extent it might be permanent, given that it is non-essential.

Human Excellence

Here I want to go over a selection of passages in which Ibn Bāĝğa discusses the end of the human life, properly speaking. We have already seen several passages that indicate that properly human activity occurs unsurprisingly through rational inquiry, and specifically, through demonstration. The first set of passages I would like to highlight comes from Ibn Bāĝğa’s Tadbîr al-mutawahhid. There, his investigation of the human goal is situated within a discussion of the solitary individual, who must achieve human excellence while living in a vicious city, and who, to some extent, might be responsible as an impetus of change for said city. Ibn Bāĝğa specifies that the solitary person (the eponymous al-mutawahhid) establishes three goals: his bodily form, his particular spiritual form, and his universal spiritual form.75 Remember that when Ibn Bāĝğa distinguishes between particular and universal spiritual forms, he means by the former the forms in the common sense,

75 Tadbîr al-mutawahhid, in La conduite de l'isolé et deux autres épîtres, 158.
imagination, and memory, and by the latter he means the intellection of the universal intelligibles. He identifies that by which *al-mutawāḥhid* accomplishes these goals:

Reflection (*rawīya*), inquiry (*baḥṯ*), inference (*istidlāl*), and in general cogitation (*fikra*) are used in striving after each one of them, so that if one does not use cogitation, that is an animal action, [and] there is not partaking in it from what is human in any way, apart from the fact that the subject is a human body.

Ibn Bāḡga’s specification of which powers are properly human are straightforwardly Aristotelian, and therefore hardly surprising. His condemnation of those who do not use thee higher-level faculties as mere animals is perhaps a little harsh, given that he has not listed imagination or memory as properly human. In fact, it seems as though in his commitment to a high level of human activity, Ibn Bāḡga has actually raised the capacities of non-human animals quite a bit, insofar as they are in theory just as capable in the realms of memory and imagination as most humans.

Ibn Bāḡga’s most explicit specification of the human goal is found some pages later, where he specifies the higher level that philosophers must attain as representatives of ideal human beings. He explains that, in general, noble, non-philosophic human beings fall between the philosophers and those who care only for their bodily form. These individuals, caring for particular spiritual forms, bother with their bodily form only for the sake of the particular spiritual forms. By contrast, the philosopher cares only for universal spiritual forms, while engaging with particular spiritual forms as necessary, but not for their own sake:

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76 See ibid., 152ff. and 164ff. See also Steven Harvey, “The Place of the Philosopher in the City according to Ibn Bāḡga,” in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy. Essays in Honor of M. S. Mahdi*, ed. C.E. Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1992), 213ff.

The philosopher must do many spiritual things, but not for their own sake (li-ḏātiḥī), and he does all the intellectual acts (al-afʿāl al-ʿaqliyya) for their own sake. By the bodily is the human being an existent, by the spiritual is [the human being] more noble, and by the intellectual is [the human being] divine and virtuous (ilahī fādil). So the one who possesses wisdom (al-ḥikma) is consequently necessarily a divine, virtuous human being.78

This philosophic individual alone performs the best acts and attains the ultimate goal (al-ḡayla ḍuṣwā), which Ibn Bāǧga specifies as

To intellect the simple, substantial intellects—which are mentioned in the Metaphysics, De Anima, and De Sensu—after that, he is one of those intellects. And it holds true of him that he is altogether divine. Bodily attributes disappear from him, as well as the sublime spiritual attributes, and a simple divine characterization is befitting of him.79

In addition, he claims at the outset of this discussion that only those who live intellectually will be happy, since the utmost perfection of the human being is spiritual: “Each one who prefers his bodily [existence] to something from his spiritual [existence] is not able to apprehend (yudrika) the utmost goal, and therefore, there is not one corporeal [individual who is] happy, and all of [those who are] happy are spiritual in kind.”80 As a result, we see that Ibn Bāǧga’s requirements for the highest attainment of human beings is that they become not only an intellect, but in doing so, actually become divine. One might wonder what the procedure of becoming an intellect, and

78 Ibid., 163.
79 Ibid., 164.
80 Ibid., 163.
thus a god, is. Universal spiritual forms, also called pure spiritual forms, are the highest object of intellecction. In summary, through demonstration, one undertakes the process of taṣawwur and taṣdiq, in order to apprehend universal objects of knowledge.\textsuperscript{81} In the philosopher’s endeavor to attain the highest levels of noetic activity, the body functions only to keep the human being alive.

We find in Risāla l-wadā‘ another articulation of the human attempt at virtue, as well as discussion of the role of the body as instrumental to this endeavor. Here I will go through the lower level of virtue as presented in the Risāla in order to set out Ibn Bāǧga’s position on the moral or ethical virtues. In the first passage I would like to examine, Ibn Bāǧga considers the relation of the virtuous person—in his example the courageous person—to the body by way of the familiar analogy of an artisan to his tools. Ibn Bāǧga builds upon a tripartite distinction he makes earlier in the Risāla by which he identifies three different relations of individuals to their bodies. He offers what appear to be two parallel accounts, one that is an account of the volitional disposition (al-qunya l-irādiyya) and the other that is an account of those with a natural aptitude, each of which has this tripartite division. As a clarification of this al-qunya l-ṭabī‘iyya Ibn Bāǧga offers animals who do not have a qunya bi-l-ṭabī‘a, such as the horse and the dog, who do not hoard and take care of their belongings, as opposed to the bee and spider. Thus, when he refers to an animal having qunya ṭabī‘iyya he generally seems to mean an animal that is capable of taking care for and planning for the future. In fact, this characteristic would seem to be required for the examples he intends to discuss, namely, the care that an individual takes for her body.\textsuperscript{82}

He lays out three options, which occur along a sort of continuum with two extremes and a mean, which is in line with his general approach in the Risāla, itself heavily influenced by the Nic.

\textsuperscript{81} On taṣawwur and taṣdiq in Ibn Bāǧga, see Miquel Forcada, “Ibn Bāǧga on Taṣawwur and Taṣdiq: Science and Psychology,” Arabic Sciences and Psychology 24 (2014), 103–126.

\textsuperscript{82} In denying the dog any kind of natural aptitude, Ibn Bāǧga goes against the grain of philosophical appraisal of the qualities of dogs, which, even in philosophy of the Islamic world, are usually lauded to some extent.
Ethics and especially by al-Fārābī’s commentary on the text. The difference between the voluntary and natural dispositions is not entirely clear, although it seems that the two relate to humans and animals, respectively.\textsuperscript{83} Here are the following options for those with a voluntary disposition. First, one might take no care for her bodily instruments at all, to the point that these instruments quickly deteriorate. The acts of people with this disposition are forbidden because of their pernicious effects. Second, one might take excessive care of her bodily instruments, to the point that they miss out on the benefits (\textit{manāfi' hum}) of the bodily instruments. As a result, such people are like servants to their instruments (\textit{yakūnūna 'abīdan li-ʿālātihim}). Ibn Bāǧğa says that both of these states are blameworthy (\textit{madmūma}), and his assessment and categorization of them are clearly based on Aristotle’s discussion of the mean in the \textit{Nic. Ethics}. Ibn Bāǧğa then outlines a third disposition, which is a mean between the two.

Another disposition is that of one who watches over [his instruments] and preserves them at the moment, not having any need of them, and [who] gives them up, and values them lightly at the time when he uses them, and who is not concerned about their use for what is necessary, whether they are destroyed or remain. These states alone are commendable (\textit{almahmūda}), and those who obtain the mean between the two kinds (\textit{tawassatū bayna l-ṣинфaynī}) already obtained what is more beautiful from each part, and resisting by it what is worse in each, namely, each one of the two extremes.\textsuperscript{84}


\textsuperscript{84} Ibn Bāǧğa, \textit{Risāla l-wadā’}, 93. There is a problem here with the manuscript. Miguel Asin Palacios tells us that that the first seven pages of the \textit{Risāla l-wadā’} are missing in the Oxford manuscript, as a result of which he bases his own edition on the Berlin/Krakow manuscript. This passage occurs within those early pages, at the very end of one folio onto the top of the other. Since the Berlin manuscript suffered water damage, the passage is obscured. In
After highlighting this disposition, Ibn Bāǧga claims that the obtainment of the middle (al-mutawassit) is the criterion by which one judges what is praiseworthy in one’s actions.

He later relates this discussion of care for the body to a discussion of virtue by examining different ways one might be disposed toward her body in times of distress. This discussion immediately follows a description of the relation between the mover and moved, in which Ibn Bāǧga offers the relation between an artisan and his instruments as an example.85 Continuing this example, Ibn Bāǧga explains that just as the artisan, who perfects the instruments of his craft, is not worried about using his instruments when he needs to, so too the first mover in the human being with the proper relationship to the body will not worry about using his body, which perfects in order to bring it into a state of health that he continues to supervise.

The existence of the [organs] in the most virtuous of their states is the existence of the body as in correct health, and the mastery (itqān) of the vital instruments is soundness (ṣīḥha), and its supervision is the continuation of soundness. The acts of the mover to whatever it moves toward are its completion, regardless of whether it results in its destruction or its proper state.86

In fact, regardless of whether the body is kept in a sound state, it obtains its completion, kamāl, whenever it follows the direction of its first mover. This relation is relevant in situations requiring courage, as Ibn Bāǧga explains.

85 Ibn Bāǧga, Risāla l-wadā’, 102. I examine this passage above on pp. 21.
86 Ibid.
Clearer than that is [that] the courageous [person] uses his body such that he apprises himself of [its] destruction generally, setting about it whenever it is necessary and in whatever way it is necessary in the moment that requires noble actions. And something similar accompanies [what occurs] between the imagination and the concept (al-raʾy). Let us now leave the imagination behind, because [it is] to the human being from the direction of what is animal, for this issue is not difficult for one who ponders it. So the first mover here is the concept, and that by which it moves is the striving (nuzūʿ). Its existence in a state of precise perfection (mutqinan) is its existence as virtuous (fāḍalan), and its mastery (itqānuhū) is the virtue (fadīla), I mean by, “the concept,” the correct concept. So a mistake of the concept is rather only from the feebleness of mind or its corruption. What is analogous to this in the disciplines is the debilitation of learning or its corruption. There is no distinction between these, except that the instruments become dull and depleted.87

The mention of a correct concept is a reference to the third example of relations in the list Ibn Bāǧga offered earlier in the Risāla. The take away from this passage is that virtuous person has complete control over the body and its instruments, to the point that, even if the direction of the first mover leads to the destruction of the body, it still functions as the body’s ultimate perfection, since the body is under the complete control of the first mover.

Although the moral virtues are necessary, stopping with them is a mistake. Ibn Bāǧga makes this explicit: “It is clear that each one who strives for anything other than the completion of the theoretical power (al-quwwa l-naẓariyya) strives rather for finding something other than the

87 Ibid.
state which is better, and he is busied away from himself."88 He describes the search one should undertake as follows: “The search for that [i.e. completion of the theoretical power] does not have a name, although its kinds are called learning, and deduction, and other such names.”89 Thus we here have an echo of Ibn Bāǧǧa’s claim in the Tadbīr that to be human is to become an intellect in its complete form. Later in the Risāla Ibn Bāǧǧa discusses intellectual virtues, faḍā’il fikriyya. Interestingly, he divides them into two, and discusses the practical sort of intellectual virtues. “The intellectual virtues are practical (al-ʿamaliyya) and theoretical (al-naẓariyya). The practical are, in brief, trades (mihan) and powers (quwan).”90 By mihan he refers to everything that utilizes the body, e.g. carpentry, and by quwan he refers to disciplines like medicine. He refers to the intellect in question here as that which Aristotle discuss in the sixth book of the Nic. Ethics, and here refers to practical intellect and practical wisdom.

In the Ittiṣāl, Ibn Bāǧǧa identifies the first mover of the human being as, “the actual intellect, that is, the actual intelligible object.”91 Toward these intelligible objects the human being yearns, and thus they function as the initial mover due to one’s desire to know them.92 At the very end of the Risāla, he identifies explicitly the ultimate goal of the human being, since this end is what he passionately wants his addressee to attain, and for this attainment he wrote the Risāla in the first place.93 The goal of al-nafs al-nāẓiriyya is to reach the level of the acquired intellect, al-ʿaql al-mustifād, which is removed from matter, without contrariety, and always one.94 Ibn Bāǧǧa describes the attainment of this intellect as follows.

88 Ibid., 103.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 112.
91 Ibn Bāǧǧa, Conjunction, 273; Ittiṣāl, 189.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibn Bāǧǧa, Risāla l-wadā’, 89–90.
The [acquired] intellect is most loved by God of existings things, and whenever the human being attains it, [he] is that intellect in itself, and there is no difference between the two in any way. So once [one] has attained that, the human being is most loved of the created things [by God], to the extent [one is] near to [the intellect], [one is] near to God, and God exalted is pleased with him. And this is specifically by science, so that science is what allows one to get to God, and ignorance is what makes one be removed from him, and the most noble of the sciences generally is this science that we indicated, and its greatest degree is this degree which is the human being’s conceptualization of its essence, such that [he] conceives that mind that we indicated earlier [the acquired intellect].

Here, Ibn Bāǧğa identifies acquisition of the acquired intellect as the goal of truly human endeavor, for through this acquisition does one become a simple intellect, which, as we saw above, he also identified as the goal in the Tadbīr.

*Conclusion: Value and Permanence of Desire*

From the very beginning, we have seen that Ibn Bāǧğa divides desire or striving, *nuzū‘*, into three types, that which serves the preservation of the body, that which is directed toward a concept in the imagination, and that which is proper to the rational power alone. It is only the third type of desire that is human desire, the other two being common to all animals. I argued the he follows al-Fārābī closely in his account of striving and its relation to the human being, with the exception of the notion of the will, and I showed the affinity of these accounts to the Arabic versions of the *De*

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95 Ibn Bāǧğa, *Risāla l-wadā‘*, 118.
Anima. I then showed the way in which striving relates to the bodily innate heat, and the connection between this ultimate instrument of the body and the striving for preservation or a concept in the imagination. From this discussion, I examined Ibn Bāǧga’s objections to al-Ġazalī and the Sufis’ claims to the realization of the ultimate goal, showing that his criticism is based on the Sufis’ failure to reach the highest and properly human level of conception, while instead remaining at the level of imagination and calling it the utmost achievement.

We also have just had a glimpse of the culmination of true human endeavor: becoming one of the simple intellects through reaching the level of the acquired intellect. Thus, in what way desire relates to the properly human life is rather limited. We saw that in Risāla l-wadā’ Ibn Bāǧga argued that the yearning of the correct, tašawwuq al-ṣawāb, i.e. cogitative yearning, al-tašawwuq al-fikriyya, is properly human. It has become clear that the intelligibles are the utmost concepts that the human being desires, and therefore the ultimate first movers. The correct concepts are, ultimately, the simply intelligibles that the human being desires to know, and in so doing to become, through the formation of the acquired intellect. Thus, the bar is set very high for human activity, as anything below acquiring this intellect is strictly-speaking, an animal activity. But even this most prestigious instantiation of yearning, though it might be valuable as a functional part of the realization of the human end, is not permanent—it is not even essential. As we learned from his remarks on natural, theoretical yearnings and his discussion on potency from the commentary on On Generation and Corruption, if the human being operates properly as a human being, all yearning will cease.

Given these conclusions and the goals of this investigation, one wonders about the value of non-rational or pre-rational yearning, and it is not clear that Ibn Bāǧga sees it as valuable to the

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96 Ibid., 101.
human being as such *at all*. However, I want to emphasize the importance that Ibn Bāġġa bestows on desiring in general, since it operates on every level of the human being, even if it is only the human animal. The concept of motion is so important to our thinker because he is deeply concerned to give an account of human activity that operates on a complex structure of final causality. His discussion of the relation between the concept and yearning, explicated also in terms of relations, is found in all of his major works, and, as we have seen, quite often in lesser-known, small treatises as well. As a committed Aristotelian, Ibn Bāġġa has no account of the generation of the world, and thus there is no concept of the “return,” since there is no place that one has left. However, this omission does not entail a lack of yearning within Ibn Bāġġa’s system, for Plotinus’s notion of the return is simply Aristotle’s account of final causality with the addition of different metaphysical structure within which it operates. The crucial difference between Ibn Bāġġa’s account of desire within final causality and Plotinus’s is that Ibn Bāġġa situates desire as a power among other powers and specifies that desire is not essential to the human being.
Chapter 4

Ibn Ṭufayl’s Desire for Desire: Reading Ḥayy

I will be at your side for as long as you need me, to lead you where you wish to go by the shortest, safest, and most unobstructed route.

Having now discussed Ibn Bāǧga’s own account of desire and its relation to the ultimate human goal, I will turn to Ibn Ṭufayl. But before we dissect the body of the text for Ibn Ṭufayl’s own account of desire, I suggest we consider the following points by careful examination of his prologue: the first is what Ibn Ṭufayl’s own purpose is in writing his Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān; the second, what his influences were for writing the text; and the third, the way in which he orients his reader to these influences by the unique dual beginning through which he situates his story. I include this chapter for two reasons. First, because I believe that any study of Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān must include consideration of the way in which one ought to read the text. Since it is both a work of philosophy and an allegory, a literalist reading of the text—one that takes what is found there to be literally true—is obviously impossible, but is nevertheless the way in which we as readers of philosophy tend to proceed. However, Ibn Ṭufayl’s text demands caution and nuance. As will become clear below, I think one ought to approach the narrative contained in Ḥayy in the same way one approaches a Platonic dialogue—with appreciation of the artistic quality that makes the text so delightfully engaging, and with critical attention to the goal and procedure of the author. Unlike Plato’s dialogues, we here have the added benefit of a prologue and epilogue that Ibn Ṭufayl
attached to his narrative, within which we find the stated intentions of the author, as well as his own philosophical history. But second, this chapter fits into the consideration of the role of desire within the text, for, as I will argue, we find that Ibn Ṭufayl’s intention for his text is fundamentally connected to the notion of desire that runs throughout Hayy. Further, the prologue to the text identifies the key thinkers whose conceptions of desire inform Ibn Ṭufayl’s own understanding and use of desire.

In this chapter, I begin with a consideration of what Ibn Ṭufayl intends with his text. I argue that he intends to address the pseudo-philosophy he claims is practiced by his contemporaries, and to do by inciting desire in them for the path to truth. Next, I appraise his assessment of his predecessors, considering not so much that veracity of his claims, but attempting to discern his aim in making those claims at all. I argue that Ibn Ṭufayl discusses his predecessors in a way that supports his position as the premier philosopher of al-Andalus and the true western heir of eastern—that is, Aristotelian and Avicennian—philosophy. Last, I consider Ibn Ṭufayl’s curious inclusion of two distinct accounts of Ḥayy’s birth and arrival on the island. I argue that each story is an account in the terms of Ibn Ṭufayl’s two greatest influences, Avicenna and al-Ǧazālī. As such, I argue that these two accounts are paradigmatic of Ibn Ṭufayl’s general procedure in the text, which is to blend somewhat seamlessly the two ostensibly competing frameworks of Avicenna and al-Ǧazālī in his attempt to offer what he takes to be a holistic philosophical account of the human being’s philosophical progression toward God.

4.1 The Purpose and Methodology of the Text

In this section, I want to discuss why it is that Ibn Ṭufayl wrote Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān. I will argue that although we actually find two different reasons expressed in the prologue for the production of
Ḥayy, these two intentions are complementary, since both address his perception of the political and intellectual reality of al-Andalus. Consideration of Ḥayy’s purpose and Ibn Ṭufayl’s intentions will lead us to consideration of Ibn Ṭufayl’s methodology in his composition of the text, and in turn the best methodology for reading the text. I will argue that the narrative structure of the text is what allows Ibn Ṭufayl to accomplish both of his aims—to espouse the secrets of eastern philosophy and to address a political concern. As a result, one must be circumspect in one’s interpretation of text, specifically regarding the different levels or different voices at which and with which Ibn Ṭufayl may be speaking to us.

Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān initially begins as a response to a request, as Ibn Ṭufayl claims at the very beginning of the prologue: “You have asked me to unfold for you, as well as I am able, the secrets of the eastern philosophy (al-ḥikma al-mašriqiyya).”¹ The goal of this supposed eastern philosophy is the attainment of the highest level of truth, a level Ibn Ṭufayl says he finally reached upon reading his addressee’s request. But further in the prologue, Ibn Ṭufayl identifies another concern he has, namely, pseudo-philosophers (in the prologue called mutahhilā l-falsīfa and in the epilogue mutafalsīfa). In the former case, he mentions them while saying that he compared the views of Avicenna and al-Ḡazālī to “the views that have sprung up in our era, so fervently admired by mutahhilā l-falsīfa.”² In the latter, while speaking of his willingness to make clearer the esoteric wisdom he portrays in Ḥayy, he claims, “What made it easy for me...was the great number of corrupt ideas that have sprouted up and are being openly spread by the mutafalsīfa of today, so

¹ Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān, tr. Lenn Goodman (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4. All references to Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān are to the pagination of Léon Gauthier, Ḥayy ben Yaḍān, roman philosophique d’Ibn Thōfāl, texte arabe et traduction française, 2e edition (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1936). Unless explicitly specified, I offer Goodman’s translation, almost always with modifications. Regarding al-ḥikma al-mašriqiyya, it is no secret this claim to expound so-called eastern philosophy has caused quite a stir in the last generation of scholarship on Ḥayy. As my vocalization makes clear, I do not read this term as entailing any illuminationist intimation. Since this point has been discussed elsewhere and is not pivotal to my argument, I refer you only to Gutas’ 1994 article, which settled the issue. More on this below.
² Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 18.
widely have they covered the land and done universal damage.”³ In this latter passage, he is more explicit about the way in which he sees the text actually addressing this problem.

Fearing that the weak-minded, who throw over the authority of the prophets to ape the way of fools, might mistake these notions for the esoteric doctrines which must be kept secret from those unfit to know them, and thus be all the more excited to embrace them, I decided to afford them a fleeting glimpse of the the secret of secrets (sirr al-asrār) to draw them to the way of verification (jānib al-tahqīq) and turn them away from this other, false way.⁴

Thus, a sound reading of Ḥayy must account for both intentions as stated in the text.

The meaning of Ibn Ṭufayl first stated intention is relatively uncontroversial, since he clearly intends to set out—as much as he can—the heights of philosophical endeavor. There has been much discussion on the meaning of Ibn Ṭufayl’s claim to espousing Avicenna’s eastern wisdom, which I will discuss in the next section. Regarding the supposed question that Ibn Ṭufayl will answer, he articulates two possible types of request. The first is a request for exactly what is witnessed by the person achieving a taste of this truth. Ibn Ṭufayl claims that such communication is impossible. The second interpretation is that the request is for a discursive introduction to this act by the path of the people of contemplation (ṭarīqa ahl al-naẓar), and this response is possible.⁵ However, he emphasizes that the experience is “rarer than red sulphur (a’dam min al-kibrīt al-aḥmar),” a clear reference to al-Ġazālī’s discussion in his Jawāhir of knowledge of the divine

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³ Ibid., 155.
⁴ Ibid., 156.
⁵ Ibid., 11.
essence (dāt al-haqq) as al-kibrīt al-ahmar.⁶ Let us take a look at Ibn Ṭufayl’s stated goal just before he begins the story of Ḥayy. At the end of the prologue, Ibn Ṭufayl explains his motivation for writing as follows. He claims that after spending much time studying and comparing the works of Avicenna and al-Ġazālī, “The truth became clear to me, first by the method of logical investigation and examination (bi-ṭarīqi al-bahthi wa-l-nażar), and then I achieved of it now this small taste by witnessing (bi-l-mušāhada).”⁷ Ibn Ṭufayl claims that on account of this taste he now wants to lay out a discourse in his name (li-waḍa’a kalāmun yu’tiru ‘annā wa-ta’ayyana ‘alaynā), and he wants the friend whom he addresses to be the first to read it. He then tells us what he intends to do in his text.

Nonetheless, if I tell you of the highest levels I reached without first going over the preliminary steps that lead there, it would do you no more good than blind faith (taqlīd) as if you approved not because my words merit acceptance, but because we are friends.⁸

A good follower of al-Ġazālī, Ibn Ṭufayl will not abide taqlīd, but demands that the reader go through the steps he himself completed. He concludes as follows.

I want only to bring you along the paths in which I have preceded you and make you swim in the sea (nusbiḥu bi-ka fi-l-baḥr) I have just crossed, so that it may bear you where it did

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⁶ See See al-Ġazālī, Jawāhir al-Qur’an, ed. by Muhammad R. R. al-Qabani, Dar iḥyaʾ al-ulūm (1990), and the English translation in The Jewels of the Qur’an: al-Ġazālī’s Theory, tr. by Muhammad Abul Quasem, The University of Malaysia Press, Kuala Lumpur (1977) 25. This notion of dāt al-haqq will be recurring through Ḥayy. Griffel notes that Ibn Ṭufayl’s references to al-Ġazālī and his motif of the sea are so extensive that he says, “Ibn Ṭufayl almost mockingly alludes to it.” See Frank Griffel, al-Ġazālī’s Philosophical Theology (Oxford, 2009), 90. This notion of dāt al-haqq will be recurring through Ḥayy.
⁷ Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 18, my translation.
⁸ Ibid., 18–9.
me and that you experience something of what I experienced, and verify with the insight of your soul all that I have verified (fa-tašāhidu min ǧalika mā șāhadnāhu wa-tataḥaqqaqu bi-baṣīrati nafsika kullan mā tahqaqqaqnāhu). ⁹

He says, “I turn now to a small glimpse along the road of arousing yearning (al-tašwīq) and urging upon the beginning of the path (duḥūl al-ṭarīq).” ¹⁰ He then says he will give us the story of Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān, Absāl, and Salāmān, the story of which, then, is intended to take us to the road that arouses desire for and urges us along the path of truth.

Understanding Ibn Ṭufayl’s second, political intention in more difficult, especially given the way in which the story will proceed and conclude. Scholars have nearly unanimously interpreted Ibn Ṭufayl’s depiction of political engagement as being one of political renunciation, driven to this conclusion by the way in which Ibn Ṭufayl ends the story of Ḥayy. The complete failure that Ḥayy experiences during his one and only excursion into the realm of politics, and his subsequent return to his life of contemplative seclusion on his own island, might make one suppose that such an interpretation is unavoidable. But as I have indicated already, there are reasons to doubt such a conclusion. First, Ibn Ṭufayl wrote Ḥayy as a work of literature, intended to be read on different levels. Thus, reading the text as a treatise—as if what Ibn Ṭufayl says is what he means and thus as what he intends for us to take away from the text—is at best an unwarranted assumption. Second, has told us that he intends to address a political reality with his text. Thus, a conclusion in which the protagonist does the opposite should at least suggest Ibn Ṭufayl does not endorse such renunciation.

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⁹ Ibid., 19.
¹⁰ Ibid., 20, my translation.
Regarding the first reason, we must remember that Ibn Ṭufayl wrote this text as a work of literature, not a treatise. Not only that, but he said explicitly—twice—that the text itself is difficult to understand. Further, Ḥayy is first and foremost a work of literature. This fact enriches its philosophical bounty, but also demands a careful methodology for interpretation of the text. Since Ibn Ṭufayl includes a prologue and an epilogue to this narrative allegory, there are three voices in Ḥayy. The first is Ibn Ṭufayl’s own voice, with which he directly addresses the reader in said prologue and epilogue. The second is the voice of the narrator. The third is Ḥayy. As a result, recognizing these different levels in the text requires us to read different parts in different ways. My procedure in reading the text of Ḥayy will be, in the first case, to take Ibn Ṭufayl at his word, specifically in the matter of his sources and purpose in writing the text. In the second case, I will maintain a distinction between Ibn Ṭufayl the author and the narrator, since it is not granted de facto that these voices always coincide. Most importantly, one must keep both of these voices separate from the experience and declarations of Ḥayy, for he is a character in this story—constructed by Ibn Ṭufayl, not identical to him. Further, Ibn Ṭufayl makes clear that one must not read the story straightforwardly, but must interpret it in order to discern the meaning behind the text he has intentionally veiled.

The second reason follows readily from the first. Ibn Ṭufayl says that he wants to set straight those who have been misled onto the path toward truth, specifically those who have taken on the mantle of philosophy but are weak minded. Thus, he clearly intends for the text to have an effect beyond the few philosophically-exceptional people who read the text. That the text is not only for those on a par with Ibn Ṭufayl’s own intellectual prowess is in a way supported by and follows from Ibn Ṭufayl’s choice of format. The story is amenable and accessible to anyone who can read or hear it, and there are varying levels of depth and information one can glean from such
a format (as Ibn Ṭufayl himself tells us). If we keep in mind both his clearly-stated intention to correct those who are intellectual weaker, and the requirements of reading a work of literature in the first place, then it is clear that one ought not to take Ibn Ṭufayl’s depiction of social failure as a universal proclamation that political intervention on the part of the philosopher is in vain. At the end of the last chapter, I will argue that Ibn Ṭufayl does suggest a model for social intervention. But all I want to make clear here is that Ḥayy’s failure in his political endeavor at end of the story does not in itself justify an inference one way or the other on whether Ibn Ṭufayl himself thinks that such failure is inevitable.

4.2 Ibn Ṭufayl on his Influences

In this section, I will examine Ibn Ṭufayl’s mention and use of his philosophical predecessors and influences, with an eye to the way in which he uses them to conveys his own conception of intellectual history. I will argue that his creative sketch of the philosophical development of Andalusia allows him to situate his own thought both as the pinnacle of Andalusian intellectual development and as the consummation of true philosophy, which he traces to Aristotle through Avicenna. Ibn Ṭufayl portrays himself as the most developed thinker of al-Andalus, since he is the best and first real instantiation of a philosopher. By explaining intellectual history in this way, Ibn Ṭufayl claims to do what Ibn Bāǧga failed to do with his theoretical endeavors and what al-Fārābī failed to do in his non-logical works. By contrast, Ibn Ṭufayl stands as a true philosopher, making clear for the first time in Andalusia what philosophy is in itself—which he calls eastern philosophy. By his exposition of Avicenna—who, he says, interpreted and added to Aristotle—and al-Ǧazālī, Ibn Ṭufayl aligns himself with the true path of philosophy against Ibn Bāǧga and al-Fārābī, whom he sees as not yet free from the second moment on intellectual development, i.e. logic.
Ibn Ṭufayl discusses Andalusian intellectual history and philosophical progress after specifying the kind of possible response to his addressee’s request for an exposition of eastern philosophy.

Do not believe that the philosophy that has reached us from the books of Aristotle and al-Fārābī and in the Šifāʾ are sufficient for this goal that you want, nor that [there is any] one of the books from the people of al-Andalus in which [these] things are sufficient.11

Ibn Ṭufayl then provides a brief account of the development of Andalusian intellectual thought. He claims that the reason his reader will not find anything sufficient in Andalusian thought is that most Andalusians had committed their time to mathematics, which he explains as the first step in Andalusia’s intellectual development. Members of the next group were interested in logic, until there came those who were, “more skillful than they in reflection (naẓar) and nearer to the truth (al-ḥaqīqa),” the greatest of whom he identifies as Ibn Bāǧga.12 This structure of intellectual development is important for the way in which Ibn Ṭufayl situates those thinkers he mentions and quotes.

Further, after his assessment of Andalusian intellectual development Ibn Ṭufayl discusses the works of the above-mentioned thinkers (i.e. al-Fārābī and Avicenna) and of al-Ğazālī that had reached al-Andalus. Here one questions Ibn Ṭufayl’s method, namely, whether he really intends to relay all those texts that had indeed reached him, or whether he merely intends to give a summary of the thinkers and views as he perceived them, either on the basis of what he knew in general or what he found to be important. His discussion of his predecessors is ostensibly to explain

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11 Ibid., 12–3.
12 Ibid., 13.
the reason one will not find an introduction to eastern philosophy elsewhere, and therefore the reason Ibn Ṭufayl felt compelled to commit his own views to writing. One expects a catalogue of the texts that were available in al-Andalus, since Ibn Ṭufayl begins his discussion by saying, “Do not believe that the philosophy that has reached us from the books of Aristotle and al-Fārābī and in the Šifāʾ are sufficient for this goal.” However, one could equally (or even more accurately) read this claim as highlighting the philosophy contained within the books available. As I will argue below, Ibn Ṭufayl interprets the philosophical positions of these authors as fitting with his conception of historical development in al-Andalus and his own place within and relation to that development.

Ibn Ṭufayl quotes six different individuals in his prologue: Hallāj, al-Bistāmī, Avicenna, al-Ḡazālī, Waqqāšī, and Ibn Bāǧga—and to this list we may add Aristotle and al-Fārābī, whom he mentions but does not quote. Before examining the way in which he uses these figures, let us make explicit the way in which Ibn Ṭufayl see his own philosophical goals in general. According to Ibn Ṭufayl, this eastern philosophy he intends to expound is identical to Avicenna’s own al-ḥikma al-mašriqiyya. Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl seeks to lay out a philosophical project that he sees as influenced strongly by Avicenna, but which, as I will make clear in a moment, one may not read as being truly Avicennian. One thing I will highlight throughout the following chapters is Ibn Ṭufayl’s commitment to both Avicenna and al-Ḡazālī, but this dual commitment is exemplified even in the opening passages, where after identifying his philosophical project as Avicennian, Ibn Ṭufayl goes on to quote famous sufis such as Hallāj and Bistāmī, including the same three quotations al-Ḡazālī includes in the Miškat in his own discussion and explanation of the highest experience of the

13 Ibid., 11–2.
gnostic. Ibn Ṭufayl attempts to specify the kind of experience he intends to convey in his text, by using as a contrast case, Ibn Bāǧga’s account of ittiṣāl, conjunction, describing it as the rationalist’s experience, idrāk ahl al-nazar. Ibn Ṭufayl contrasts this experience and goal with his own, which he describes as țawr al-wilāya. He says the experience of this level is similar to that of one who, after being blind, regains sight: although the content of the experience is the same, there are two changes, “The daybreak on a new visual world,” and “great joy.” He explicitly critiques Ibn Bāǧga for failing to go beyond the way of nazar, as well as for Ibn Bāǧga’s censure of the sufis in his Conjunction.

I now want to briefly go through Ibn Ṭufayl’s remarks on each person he cites, in order to try to situate them in respect of his own conception of philosophy. In so doing, Ibn Ṭufayl’s own conception of what philosophy is will come into starker relief. Let us turn first to those thinkers whom Ibn Ṭufayl quotes, the first of whom are Sufis. I have just noted that Ibn Ṭufayl includes the quotations from Hallāj and Bistāmī al-Ġazālī uses elsewhere. Ibn Ṭufayl cites these three exclamations (“Praise be to me, great am I!”, “I am the Truth!”, “There is within this robe nothing but God!”) as examples of the fact that no one who experiences the sublime state he has just experienced is capable of keeping it a secret. (One might see this point as an internal structural reason that Ibn Ṭufayl feel compelled to write down his experience and write it down now, namely, after having just experienced the state he will communicate.) The sayings he includes all explicitly

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15 Ibn Ṭufayl, Hayy, 9.
16 Ibid., 9.
17 Ibid., 10. For Ibn Bāǧga’s critique of the Sufis, namely, that their experience stems from their imagination and stimulates their capacity for awe, while failing to engage the capacity, the rational capacity for awe, see his Conjunction of the Intellect with Man, in Classical Arabic Philosophy, 33; and his Ittiṣāl in La conduite de l’isolé, 201.
claim or indicate that the individuals who are lifted to such a state are identical with God. Ibn Ṭufayl connects these references to al-Ǧazālī, by quoting him as a learned individual falling within the same group. Although Avicenna is the first thinker mentioned in the prologue, Ibn Ṭufayl refers to and discusses al-Ǧazālī more than any other thinker. He cites, in alignment with the sayings of Hallāj and Bistāmī, al-Ǧazālī’s line from the Munqiḏ in which he says, “It was what it was, something of what [it was], it do not recall.”\(^{18}\) Remember that Ibn Bāǧga highlight and targeted this claim for criticism in multiple works. I will examine Ibn Ṭufayl’s discussion of Ibn Bāǧga in a moment, but I want to highlight that already the former starkly disagrees with the latter’s assessment of the ultimate philosophical and spiritual goal.

The most extensive engagement with al-Ǧazālī and his thought occurs during Ibn Ṭufayl’s communication of the ideas found in his works. I mentioned above that Ibn Ṭufayl’s commitment to listing all works with which he was familiar is not beyond doubt, and with the figure of al-Ǧazālī we see this quite clearly. Noticeable to anyone familiar with Andalusian intellectual history is the absence of any mention of al-Ǧazālī’s Iḥyāʾ (Revival of the Religious Sciences)—banned and burned during the reign of the Almoravids. Further, one familiar with the Iḥyāʾ will notice its influence on Ḥayy, so that both points render the lack of any mention of the text in the prologue quite strange. One would not imagine that there was relevant animosity toward the Iḥyāʾ when Ibn Ṭufayl wrote, as al-Ǧazālī’s reputation was restored and his thought embraced with Ibn Tumart and the Almohad movement generally. Ibn Ṭufayl mentions several of al-Ǧazālī’s texts, making four remarks about his thought. First, he says that al-Ǧazālī preached to the masses, as a result of which, second, his writings, “bind in one place and loose in another.” Third, he highlights that al-Ǧazālī distinguishes what one ought to tell the masses as opposed to those who share one’s beliefs.

\(^{18}\) Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 4.
As a result of this point, Ibn Ṭufayl highlights that, fourth, what one receives in al-Ǧazālī’s works is a hint and pointer (ramz wa-išāra), for one who is especially gifted.19 Ibn Ṭufayl lingers on the fact that al-Ǧazālī’s supposed esoteric works had not reached al-Andalus.20 Before concluding his prologue, Ibn Ṭufayl makes it a point to objection to a characterization of al-Ǧazālī’s Miškat, in which a critic claimed that al-Ǧazālī denied God’s unity in this text. Ibn Ṭufayl does not actually defend al-Ǧazālī here, but may have intended his own account of God’s unity and the heights of divine reality as a response. Since Ibn Ṭufayl neither names this critic nor completes his criticism in more detail, it is difficult to specify what Ibn Ṭufayl’s response might be.

After responding to this critic, Ibn Ṭufayl indicates his commitment to examining both Avicenna and al-Ǧazālī, which brings us to Ibn Ṭufayl’s use and misuse of Avicenna’s text. At this point in scholarship on Ibn Ṭufayl, it nearly goes without saying that his relationship to Avicenna is the fraught subject of much debate. Avicenna is the first thinker Ibn Ṭufayl references, saying in the opening lines, “You have asked me to unfold for you, as well as I am able, the secrets of eastern philosophy mentioned by the prince of philosophers, Avicenna.”21 As I mentioned above, according to Ibn Ṭufayl this eastern philosophy is identical to Avicenna’s own al-ḥikma al-mašriqiyya. Gutas has shown that Ibn Ṭufayl had no real access to this text, and was aware of it only from its mention at the beginning of the Šifāʾ.22 Thus, even at the very beginning of the text, there is indication that Ibn Ṭufayl’s account of his sources and the philosophy espoused by them may be at least inaccurate, but even creatively edited. Ibn Ṭufayl refers to Avicenna again when he discusses the stages that precede the state that is the aim of eastern philosophy. There he quotes

19 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 16.
21 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 3–4.
nearly verbatim from Avicenna’s *Išārāt*, and Ibn Ṭufayl cites Avicenna’s description of unification with the active intellect as a description of his own notion of eastern philosophy. He cites Avicenna’s likening of the preparation of one’s soul for truth to a mirror that one polishes in order that it reflect the truth. Ibn Ṭufayl describes Avicenna’s account of the attainment of this level as follows: “Now these states, as Avicenna describes them, are reaching not by theorizing, syllogistic deductions, postulating premises and drawing inferences, but solely by intuition.” This claim is consonant with Ibn Ṭufayl’s later claim that one does not find Avicenna’s true philosophical theory in the *Ṣifāʾ*, but only in his work on eastern philosophy. Gutas has also shown that Ibn Ṭufayl, while indeed quoting the preface of the *Ṣifāʾ*, misconstrues what Avicenna said and clearly meant when he refers readers to his book on eastern philosophy, by being selective about which parts of Avicenna’s claim he included. Most significantly, Ibn Ṭufayl represents Avicenna’s eastern philosophy as something secret, which must be revealed to the reader. Further, it would seem that Ibn Ṭufayl is fairly liberal in his portrayal of what Avicenna meant in the text Ibn Ṭufayl quotes from the former’s *Išārāt*, insofar as he attributes to him a level of knowledge higher than that attained by rational activity alone, something it is not at all clear Avicenna would have conceded.

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Ibn Ṭufayl later cites Avicenna as an interpreter of Aristotle’s books, saying that Avicenna “undertook an exposition of their contents, in accordance with Aristotelian thinking, and he followed Aristotle’s philosophical approach in his own Šifāʾ.” Further, he claims that although Avicenna generally follows Aristotle’s approach, there are things in the Šifāʾ that are not in Aristotle. Here he again asserts that the eastern philosophy of Avicenna is something simply different than what is found in the Šifāʾ, and that “if you take everything in Aristotle and the literal meaning of the Šifāʾ (without grasping its subtle, inner meaning (sīruhū wa-bāṭinuhū)), you will end up, as Avicenna warns, far from perfection.”

What we have found here is that Ibn Ṭufayl identifies Avicenna both as the true expositor of philosophy pure, i.e. of Aristotelian philosophy, and as the interpreter of the deeper meaning found within this original, Greek philosophy. Thus, as the expositor of what he presents as Avicenna’s own true philosophical output (this eastern philosophy), Ibn Ṭufayl situates himself as the expositor of philosophy as such in al-Andalus par excellence. He accomplishes this philosophical completion on two fronts, both as the first philosopher to move beyond the second moment of Andalusian intellectual development, namely, beyond logic—which is completely missing in the story of Ḥayy—, and as the thinker to realize this truly philosophical activity on a level with he who made Aristotle’s thought complete in the first place, namely, with Avicenna. Since Ibn Ṭufayl has himself moved beyond this last

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Graeco-Arabic philosophical thought. See Ali Humayun Akhtar, Philosophers, Sufis, and Caliphs: Politics and Authority from Cordoba to Cairo and Baghdad (Cambridge, 2017), 214–5. Surely he is right in his claim about Ibn Ṭufayl’s relationship to Avicenna and al-Ġazālī. However, the connection between Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Barrajān on the ground of the supposed use of al-Ġazālī is doubtful. Yousef Casewit has shown conclusively that Ibn Barrajān, who did not identify as a Sufi, was neither in any significant way influenced by al-Ġazālī nor introduced to al-Ġazālī’s texts until late in his life. (The first self-identified Sufi of al-Andalus was Abū Madyan. Ibn Barrajān refers to the Sufis as a distinct group, and refers his students to them on topics such as extreme asceticism, a practice of which Ibn Barrajān himself did not totally approve.) See Yousef Casewit, The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barrajan and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, 2017), 57–90. To the contrary, it seems to me that Ibn Ṭufayl stands in a lineage distinct from figures like Ibn Barrajān, and that insofar as he sees himself as heir to Avicenna and al-Ġazālī—the Mashriq—, he is doing something quite different from those thinkers. Indeed, he may very well be targeting them with his charge of pseudo-philosophy.

28 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 14.
29 Ibid., 15.
developmental phase, he has Ḥayy proceed in his investigations soundly, but he does not present Ḥayy as needing instruction in logic per se, since in doing so, Ibn Ṭufayl would run the risk of falling below the intellectual bar he set for himself and for those he deems true philosophical thinkers.30

Al-Fārābī is the final eastern thinker that Ibn Ṭufayl discusses by name. Generally, his approach to al-Fārābī is quite critical, and he criticizes him on multiple fronts. Most of the texts by al-Fārābī that have reached al-Andalus were on logic, Ibn Ṭufayl says, while those that were on philosophy had many doubts, by which he refers to Farabi’s position on the survival of the soul after the death of body. Ibn Ṭufayl’s greatest criticism is that al-Fārābī leads many people astray due to his mixed accounts on the survival of the soul after death (as Ibn Ṭufayl presents them).31 This criticism suggests that Ibn Ṭufayl thinks that al-Fārābī fails as a philosopher, since he both does not supersede his logical studies and he fails to effectively communicate those philosophical ideas he does hold. This criticism, namely that he failed as a philosopher to make his ideas effectively understood, is found in Ibn Ṭufayl’s criticism of Ibn Bāġga as well. Thus, it is clear that in Ibn Ṭufayl’s view, a philosopher must not only write, but must write in such a way as to be effectively understood by his audience. This criterion yet again shows Ibn Ṭufayl’s concern for the misuse of a text, not because of some desire for appreciation, but because writing in a way that could be easily misunderstood could be injurious to the spiritual well-being of those who read it.

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30 On this point, See Germann’s discussion of the absence of logic in Nadja Germann, “Philosophizing Without Philosophy? On the Concept of Philosophy in Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān,” in Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales 75, 2 (2008): 298–9. She interprets Ibn Ṭufayl’s decision to render logic “no philosophical science” as due to “programmatic reasons,” although she gestures toward his account of intellectual history, acknowledging it as a potential criticism of al-Fārābī, who would at least be implicated in Ibn Ṭufayl’s criticism of logic. Thus, like al-Gazālī, Ibn Ṭufayl relegates logic to a mere instrument of philosophy proper.

Ibn Bāǧga is the only Andalusi thinker that Ibn Ṭufayl engages at any length or mentions by name, and he at once commends Ibn Bāǧga for his development, and chastises him for his shortcomings. As we saw above, representative of this mixed attitude is his praise of Ibn Bāǧga as the best of the most developed group of Andalusi thinkers quickly cut by emphasis on Ibn Bāǧga’s limitation and failure to grasp philosophy’s ultimate goal. Goodman identified Waqqāšī, an 11th century polymath, is the only other Andalusi thinker whom Ibn Ṭufayl quotes, although he does not cite him by name. The quotation Ibn Ṭufayl uses functions as an example of the second developmental stage of Andalusi thought, a stage at which an investigation of metaphysics is yet out of reach. Although Ibn Ṭufayl does refer to his own contemporaries, he mentions none by name. Importantly, he acknowledges that there may be some others at the level of Ibn Bāǧga, but he tells us that if there were, either he was unaware of them or they were too young to be cited as fully mature figures.

Ibn Ṭufayl initially quotes Ibn Bāǧga in comparison to Ibn Ṭufayl’s own intentions in his reference to eastern philosophy. Ibn Ṭufayl includes part of Ibn Bāǧga’s Ittiṣāl, saying that what Ibn Bāǧga identified as the highest state is something different than the level, *rutba*, that Ibn Ṭufayl himself identifies as his goal. He labels Ibn Bāǧga’s level as that which one arrives at “by the path of theoretical science and cognitive understanding (*bi-ṭarīq al-‘ilm al-nazārī wa-l-baḥṭ al-fikrī*).” One of the most important lines of the prologue follows. In characterizing the state he wishes to convey in Ḥayy, Ibn Ṭufayl says, “There is not uncovered in it an issue contrary to what was uncovered in this [*al-`ilm al-nazārī wa-l-baḥṭ al-fikrī*].” Rather, the change is “by the addition of clarity and by witnessing it through a something we only metaphorically label a power.”

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33 Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy*, 5.
34 Ibid., 5.
35 Ibid.
extends this criticism later when he specifies the level Ibn Bāǧga reached, that is, “The state of the theorizers (al-nāzarīna) who do not attain the level of friendship (ṭawr al-wilāya).” These thinkers are like the blind, who get to know the city of their birth through all channels of perception besides sight, such that they are acquainted with it in every way, except by way of the color they cannot see. As a contrast to this condition, he describes those who attain the level of friendship by means of this metaphorical power. Ibn Ṭufayl specifies that when he refers to the apprehension of the people of theoretical science (idrāk ahl al-nazar), he does not mean the apprehension only of the natural world, but of the metaphysical as well. Necessarily, the exposition of idrāk ahl al-nazar will lead to something true and sound (ḥaqqaṣaḥīḥan), but idrāk ahl al-wilāya leads to additional clarity and greater pleasure.

The remaining discussion of Ibn Bāǧga constitutes Ibn Ṭufayl’s scathing reply to Ibn Bāǧga’s criticism of the Sufis and their delight at reaching what they claimed was the highest stage of realization. “Ibn Bāǧga censures [the Sufis] for the pursuit of this joy. He claimed it was owing to the power of imagination (li-l-quwwa al-ḥayyāliyya), and he promised that he would describe how it is necessary to [attain] the state of those who are happy after that, with an elucidating and clear account.” Recall that Ibn Bāǧga’s criticism of the experience of the Sufis and al-Ḡazālī was indeed that it rested in their imagination and failed to leave the world of sense experience entirely. Ibn Ṭufayl’s retort is, “It is appropriate that it is said to him here—do not reject the flavor of something that you have not tasted, and do not step over the necks of the friends (al-ṣadiqīna).” In addition to claiming that Ibn Bāǧga worked from a position of spiritual ignorance, he claims that Ibn Bāǧga in fact never fulfilled his promise to give an account of the state of happiness,

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36 Ibid., 8–9.
37 Ibid., 9.
38 Ibid., 10.
39 Ibid.
suggesting that Ibn Bāǧġa’s travels and his decadent lifestyle might have kept him from doing so. Besides his disapproval of Ibn Bāǧġa’s reproach of Sufi attainment and his reproach of his lifestyle (which borders on personal attack), Ibn Ṭufayl says that this Andalusian predecessor also failed to complete his texts. In his placement of Ibn Bāǧġa as the best representative of the third group of Andalusian thinkers, those closest to the truth, Ibn Ṭufayl highlights the fact that many of Ibn Bāǧġa’s text are incomplete, end suddenly, and are not polished. Some of the writings Ibn Ṭufayl mentions by Ibn Bāǧġa are his writings on logic (in addition to the *Ittiṣāl, De Anima*, and *Tadbīr*).

One wonders whether, in his assessment of the three stages of intellectual development, Ibn Ṭufayl actually thinks that Ibn Bāǧġa—or anyone in the third stage—has actually reached full intellectual fulfillment. I have argued above that Ibn Ṭufayl utilizes a particular account of the history of Andalusian intellectual history as a platform on which to show that his own development and philosophical output is in fact the best al-Andalus has produced and in line with philosophy in its truest form. If we suppose this argument to be true, then it is clear that Ibn Ṭufayl does not regard Ibn Bāǧġa as a fully developed thinker. In his description of al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧġa, Ibn Ṭufayl depicts them both as philosophical thinkers (as opposed to mere mathematicians or logicians), but as falling short of the final moment of intellectual development that he himself has reached, and certainly failing to lead contemporary Andalusia onto the path toward truth. In his portrayal of their thought—and its inadequacy—he weaves their texts and theories into the tapestry of a history of his own making, in which he sits at the center, the culmination of what he considered to be the philosophical accomplishments of the east and west.

These considerations bring us to the question of what exactly Ibn Ṭufayl thinks philosophy is. It is evident Ibn Ṭufayl intends *Hayy* to be utilized by philosophers, on the same playing field as philosophy. That Ibn Ṭufayl intended *Hayy* to be a work of philosophy proper was also quite
clear in his assessment of Andalusian intellectual development, as well as from his position as the Andalusian expositor of Avicenna’s philosophy. One might worry that Ibn Ṭufayl does not offer a definition of philosophy *per se*, and that as a result one must be on guard to differentiate between the parts of Ḥayy that may be titled “philosophy,” versus those that may not be. For example, one might think that Ibn Ṭufayl’s arguments on the eternity of the world are without a doubt philosophical in nature, but worry that his analysis of Ḥayy’s diet is not. However, this worry seems to me to be misguided. Since Ibn Ṭufayl situates his work within a line of philosophical inquiry, *and* aims to address philosophers and their concerns with the text, whatever we get in Ḥayy is simply philosophy as Ibn Ṭufayl understands it. Any attempt on the interpreter’s part to draw a firm line on what does or does not count as philosophy in Ḥayy both begs the question on what philosophy is, and fractures what Ibn Ṭufayl intended to be taken as a unified whole. To this end, Nadja Germann has convincingly argued that Ibn Ṭufayl’s conception of philosophy is decidedly *practical* in nature, since in order to reach his philosophical goals Ḥayy must undertake a rigorous routine that affects his overall behavior.⁴⁰ Thus, throughout the next two chapters I emphasize a conciliatory approach to questions of philosophy versus Sufism versus religious-social critique. Although there were certainly distinct and disparate strands that fed Ibn Ṭufayl’s production of Ḥayy, as I have argued above, it is my contention that he intended to unite them within his greatest work of philosophy. To put it simply, whatever Ibn Ṭufayl considers philosophy to be, it is exactly what he does in Ḥayy, so that we must take the text as it is and draw our conclusions within Ibn Ṭufayl’s own parameters.

4.3 Origins

Before he begins the chronicle of Ḥayy’s life, Ibn Ṭufayl must account for the way in which Ḥayy comes to be on an island by himself. Here at the beginning Ibn Ṭufayl offers a perplexing account of Ḥayy’s origin, namely, by offering two competing accounts of the way in which the boy comes to be on this “certain equatorial island, lying off the coast of India.” Many have written extensive explications of these two accounts, and I will not reproduce them here. What I want to examine instead is the way in which these accounts relate to the rest of the text, specifically whether Ibn Ṭufayl intends the accounts to be equal, or whether he intends one to be the real account. I will argue for the former interpretation, and I will suggest that Ibn Ṭufayl intends the two accounts to be representative of his two main influences, Avicenna and al-Ġazālī. One account explains Ḥayy’s existence on the island as an infant castaway, born on a second island and thrown to the sea like Moses. I follow Bashier in referring to this account as the traditionalist account. The other account says Ḥayy comes about through an act of spontaneous generation, an account which Bashier calls the naturalist account. (For clarity and ease, I use these two terms throughout.) Ibn Ṭufayl’s narrative about Ḥayy’s origins is generally understood to begin with the naturalist account, which is interrupted by the traditionalist account, after which Ibn Ṭufayl completes the naturalist account. The storyline that ostensibly begins the account according to spontaneous generation actually gives us information only about the island on which such generation will be said to happen—we are told nothing about spontaneous generation proper there, only that the

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island itself was perfectly suited for such a thing to happen and the reasons for its suitability.\textsuperscript{43} The description of the location of the island is interrupted by the traditionalist account, but again Ibn Ṭufayl first accounts for the island on which the baby is born before beginning the account of his birth. So the order is (1) island of spontaneous generation (on which Ḥayy grows up), (2) island on which Ḥayy is born according to the traditionalist account, (3) traditionalist account of Ḥayy’s birth, and (4) naturalist account of Ḥayy’s birth.\textsuperscript{44} We ought to consider whether by ordering the accounts in this way, Ibn Ṭufayl intends to frustrate any attempt to privilege one account of Ḥayy’s birth over the other. In fact, one of the most (surprisingly) difficult details of the story proves to be little Ḥayy’s ark, \textit{tābūt}. Although accounted for only in the traditionalist origin account, it appears again \textit{after} Ibn Ṭufayl has said the two stories merge. Why include the ark, when it is disharmonious with the naturalist account? Is this an indication that the traditionalist account is the true one? If one is awake to the fact that Ibn Ṭufayl intends to thwart attempts to relegate one account to an inferior position, the detail of the ark may be read as a purposive frustration. After depicting the two islands on which Ḥayy was born, Ibn Ṭufayl relates the tale of a woman, who is sister to a jealously possessive king, and, due to her brother’s possessiveness, secretly marries the man she loves named Yaqẓān. They have a child named Ḥayy, and, when she fears for her child, she puts him into a basket and sends him out onto the water from which he arrives onto the shores of the uninhabited island. After this account, Ibn Ṭufayl goes on to offer finally the account according to spontaneous generation, citing Avicenna as an expert and source

\textsuperscript{43} Ibn Ṭufayl, \textit{Ḥayy}, 20–4.

\textsuperscript{44} As far as I know, no one has accounted for the progression in this way. One wonders the extent to which the assumption that the account of Ḥayy’s spontaneous generation both comes first and is interrupted has buttressed the impression that Ibn Ṭufayl found this account the true one.
for this theory. On account of the uninhabited island’s excellent position, a bubble forms in the earth to which God imparts a spirit, and from which eventually an infant is born.

Ibn Ṭufayl’s ostensible motivation for offering two accounts of Ḥayy’s origin is that people disagree about the way in which he came into being. Since he expects some people will not accept the account according to spontaneous generation, Ibn Ṭufayl offers the so-called traditionalist account as an alternative. Either way, he intends that once Ḥayy is on the island—whether by popping out of the earth or arriving in an ark—the two stories are supposed to coincide, such that anything that may be said for one may be said for the other. Bashier highlights more precisely that the two accounts merge “with the first cry of the newborn.” After he cries, he is adopted by a doe looking for her lost fawn, and the story takes off. It is not obvious how much influence the two different origin stories are meant to have: Ibn Ṭufayl may intend them to be relevant only for the account of Ḥayy’s origin, or he may see each of them as coloring the ensuing story differently than the other. For example, one who is inclined to believe the traditionalist account may latch onto the Quranic and religious symbolism, such as Quranic verses and images. By contrast, one who believes the naturalist account may follow more closely Ḥayy’s historically philosophical endeavors, such as the two different accounts of the generation of the universe. My suspicion is that although, as I will argue, Ibn Ṭufayl intends the philosophical and religious aspect of the texts to merge, these two competing approaches to the text allow for those who are not as intellectually adept as a Ḥayy to engage with and benefit from the text. Adamson certainly sees the two as offering two different platforms for engaging with the text, and I discuss his view below. I am

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45 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 21.
47 Salman H. Bashier, The Story of Islamic Philosophy, 46.
inclined to see the different storylines as introducing opportunities for readers of different capacities to engage with the text, but am hesitant to reduce a storyline to such an opportunity.

But what do these two stories really represent, and ought we believe that one story is the real one, while the other fulfills a different goal? Hawi interpreted these two stories in such a way that the account according to spontaneous generation is the true account, inserting the traditionalist account as a safeguard against readers hostile to philosophy.49 Bashier critiques this interpretation, instead arguing that the naturalistic interpretation shows the importance of balance and equilibrium in the creation of human beings, while arguing that in the traditionalist account Ibn Ṭufayl shows us what is needful after the development of society: “There is need for a new beginning to regain balance and to reestablish the broken harmony.”50 Kukkonen interprets the first account as a naturalist one, and the real one, according to which the rest of the story proceeds. He claims the second story “is merely an entertaining diversion, something that could conceivably have happened and might plausibly account for Ḥayy’s presence on the island, but nothing more than that.”51 Most recently, Adamson has argued that the account according to spontaneous generation, which he calls the Aristotelian account, is the “privileged” account, although he concludes that we ought to interpret the two accounts simply as aimed at different audiences, one philosophical and the other religious.52 However, assuming that the explicitly philosophical account is the true account, without otherwise showing that Ibn Ṭufayl takes Avicennian philosophy alone to be true, simply begs the question, as it assumes the conclusion it takes the two stories to show. As I will argue in the following chapters, Ibn Ṭufayl presents a model within which the religious and

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51 Taneli Kukkonen, Ibn Ṭufayl, 39.
52 Peter Adamson, “Beginnings.” For the first claim, see 6–10, and for the second see 12–3.
historically philosophical are blended, and he takes aspects from each in order to reach what he considered to be an accurate model of philosophical engagement. The second account he interprets as a symbolic religious account.53 His argument is that the first account proceeds in the manner of the rest of the story, namely, according to Avicennian science, and is thus supported both by that very science and its internal coherence with the rest of the story. The argument from internal coherence further supports such adjudication with respect to the question of divine power. Adamson argues the account of providence we find in the rest of the story is consonant more with the naturalist account of Ḥayy’s birth than the traditionalist: according to the first account, divine power/providence is universal, while according to the second account it is particular.54 His argument for the inclusion of the second account at all is that it will be believed by some people, namely, those who need an allegorical interpretation, and that is has a specific internal purpose insofar as it connects to the second island. He argues that the second island from the traditionalist account of Ḥayy’s birth and the second island at the end of the story are the same, and therefore that we ought to see the two plot points as essentially connected. Since the second island is full of people who are unable to see the truth in a sophisticated way, we ought to understand the second version of Ḥayy’s birth to be aimed at people with such limited understanding.55

Broadly speaking, I think Adamson has the general timbre of the two accounts correct: the first is philosophical, and the second rife with religious symbolism. I also agree with him that we ought not suppose that one account is true, while the other is given only as an appeasement for a certain audience. One of the most illuminating things he does is to show that the traditionalist origin story signals a connection to the second island that surfaces toward the end of the text.56

53 Ibid., 6.
54 Ibid., 5–6.
55 Ibid., 10.
56 Ibid., 3, 11.
Even though it is not absolutely clear that the island of the traditionalist account and that at the end of the text are one and the same, I am convinced that we ought to see a political concern in the background of Hayy, and that the traditionalist account of Ḥayy’s birth signals that what follows would be somehow pertinent to society and its ills. The goal in sending Ḥayy away from the island of his birth is not to free him from society simpliciter, but to get him to a place where Ibn Ṭufayl’s imagination could roam freely. Such freedom allowed Ibn Ṭufayl to construct Ḥayy’s environment in whatever way he saw fit, which I discuss in detail below.

However, there is reason to doubt that Ibn Ṭufayl intended the scope of the second account to be limited, or that he thought it to be less sophisticated than the first account. First, the fact that the naturalist account is obviously Avicennian should call to our attention the possibility that the other account is dedicated to a different figure, and we could do worse than suspect the second of Ibn Ṭufayl’s šayḥān, al-Ġazālī. I want to suggest two reasons we ought to think it is. First, let us recall Ibn Ṭufayl’s description of his intention he offers at the end of the prologue. There he says that he is leading us so that we might swim in the sea (fi-l-bahr) he had just crossed. There is obvious parallel between this intention and the traditionalist account, where Ḥayy’s mother takes him down to the sea (al-bahr) and then throws him into it (qaḍafat bi-hi fi-l-yamm, an obvious reference to the 20:39 account of Moses’s relinquishment, where his mother is told fa-ʾiqdifiḥī fi-l-yamm), which begins the journey toward knowledge and awareness, eventually of God. We should also recall the fact that al-Ġazālī implores the reader in his Jawāhir that they dive into the sea (al-bahr), explore the islands, and learn from the animals there, which is quite literally an account of Ḥayy’s life, especially when it begins with the traditionalist account.

Second, we ought to consider the mother’s faith in God as consonant with al-Ġazālī’s account of the highest level of tawakkul, a level of trust that he likens to the comportment of a
corpse in the hand of its washers. Goodman notices this allusion in Ḥayy’s mother’s renunciation of Ḥayy to the sea and God’s protection. Consideration of al-Ḡazālī’s discussion of trust in divine care in Book 35 of the Iḥyā’ reminds us that the second level of faith in God is likened to a child’s faith in his mother (ka-hāl al-tifl ma’a ‘ummihi), who “whenever he see her, in every situation he hangs onto the hem of her skirt.” Ibn Ṭufayl will later recollect this level of tawakkul in his depiction of Ḥayy’s trust in and devotion to his doe mother. Al-Ḡazālī’s example alludes to the developing depiction of God as a mother, such that separation from God is similar in experience to separation from or loss of a mother. This motif of the mother, and specifically the journey toward understanding that her loss incites, is something that Ḥayy’s human and non-human mothers have in common: loss of one instigates a certain yearning on Ḥayy’s part. Loss of the former is symbolic of Ḥayy’s journey on the sea of knowledge, and loss of the second begins his journey to self-understanding and awareness of God (as I will argue in the next chapter). The traditionalist account lays out that there is a crucial connection between Ḥayy, his journey toward the truth, and the mother figure. As I will argue in part two of this chapter, Ibn Ṭufayl depicts Ḥayy’s true education in such a way that his connection to the doe is crucial. The traditionalist account (p)reiterates this point, highlighting the necessity of loss for Ḥayy’s journey.

As a result, in the two origin stories, Ibn Ṭufayl offers a story each along the line of Avicenna and of al-Ḡazālī, and such a stratagem aims at the following results. First, it emphasizes Ibn Ṭufayl’s own indebtedness to each thinker, insofar as, he clearly states, these two were most important for his philosophical understanding. Second, it allows the text to cast a broad net, yet either story may not be reduced to any one group over which the net falls. And third, it illustrates

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58 Lenn Goodman, Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān, 189, fn 73.
59 al-Ḡazālī, Iḥyāʾ, 2513, my translation.
Ibn Ṭufayl’s own position on al-Ḡazālī’s conciliation to Avicennian philosophy, namely, he seems to find such reconciliation both possible and necessary. In addition to the origin account, I will argue that Ibn Ṭufayl’s inclusion of al-Ḡazālīan thought into the heart of his philosophical picture requires interpreters of Hayy to refrain from reading the text in a way that privileges—or, even worse—reduces what is valuable and central in Hayy to intellectual investigation and scientific inquiry. Consideration of some of the most recent scholarship on Hayy reveals that the inclination to read the text in this way is very much alive, and in this and the following chapter I want to push against what I see as a reductive tendency, namely, the proclivity to read Hayy as advocating, as its sirr al-ʿasrār, an intellectual investigation that aims at knowledge of all of reality, which is followed by some strange pages about mysticism before a political debacle. Moving forward, we will see that Ibn Ṭufayl continues to weave together Avicennian and Ǧazālian notions of philosophical and spiritual progress, and that the combination of these two thinkers on the question of desire is crucial to understanding the whole of the text.
Chapter 5

Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān and the Desire for the Infinite

His attachment was transferred from the body to the master of the body and its mover, and there remained in him yearning only for that.

I suggested in the previous chapter that one of Ibn Ṭufayl’s main goals in his composition of Ḥayy was to incite yearning (al-tašwīq) in the reader for the path to truth, and we may now continue the consideration of this intention and resume our main line of investigation by considering the role of desire throughout the narrative story of Ḥayy. The role of desire in the text has not been carefully or systematically considered, and it might not appear even to be relevant except in the fact that Ḥayy desires to know and understand the nature of reality. However, consideration of the terminology in the text reveals a pattern in Ibn Ṭufayl’s depiction of Ḥayy’s desire for the Truth, marked by consistent terminological usage. Attention to the terms within these passages further shows that Ibn Ṭufayl systematically accounts for Ḥayy’s progression toward the truth with a mechanism constructed of desire and attachment by which he is pushed and pulled in tandem toward the Necessary Existent. In order to determine to what extent the account of desire Ibn Ṭufayl offers corresponds to either of the models presented so far in this investigation, I will examine not only the presence of desire within the text, but also both Ibn Ṭufayl’s discussion of the subject and object of that desire and the process of education by which his desire is directed.

Thus, in this chapter, I will provide a careful examination of the way in which desire functions in Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān, beginning with further consideration of the function of tašwīq in
the prologue. I will argue that the term šawq and its derivatives carry special significance, and nearly always indicate a yearning that points toward truth, echoing Ibn Ṭufayl’s stated intention in the prologue to incite yearning for the path toward truth in his readers by showing the education of this yearning for truth along that path. I will argue that Ḥayy’s yearning for the truth, which on Ibn Ṭufayl’s account is simply the reality of the True Agent, begins after he loses his adoptive doe mother. I turn next to consider Ḥayy’s education. I will argue that the backbone and aim of Ḥayy’s education rests on the progression of his tašawwuq. I discuss first the goal of Ḥayy’s education, which I take to be mušāhada of the Agent. I argue that the rest of his inquiries must be understood within this context, including his temporary commitment to tašrīḥ. Second, I examine what the subject of this education is, and argue that it is Ḥayy’s power for witnessing the Agent. However, I maintain that Ḥayy’s fikr, discursive reasoning, is important both for his ultimate connection to the Agent and for uniting the different strands of inquiry Ḥayy undertakes. Last, I argue that the mechanism of this education is taʿalluq, attachment, combined with tašawwuq. At each crucial point of Ḥayy’s education and in descriptions of his goal, Ibn Ṭufayl utilizes this notion to account for the way in which one is successful, namely, one must be attached to the Agent alone and nothing else. Returning to al-Ġazālī’s conception of tašawwuq, I argue that Ibn Ṭufayl offers a picture of education that begins with the death of the doe, and concludes with unification with the divine.

5.1 Desire

In this section I argue that there are three different ways in which Ibn Ṭufayl discusses desire, and that two of them are both systematic and irreducible to rational activity. They are as follows. The first kind of desire Ibn Ṭufayl indeed indicates by use of š-w-q, yearning, and its derivatives. As I
discussed in the previous chapter, Ibn Ṭufayl uses this term both in the prologue and epilogue in his statement of what he intends with the story, and in the first appearance of desire in the story of Ḣayy. Šawq, I will argue, is always aimed at what is real or essential of another. He uses this term systematically and positively, that is, šawq drives Ḣayy’s movement toward the Truth. In fact, it is this desire that eventually leads Ḣayy to and makes possible his realization of the Truth. The second kind of desire is šahwa, appetite. Ibn Ṭufayl also uses this term systematically, but this desire does not drive one toward the truth, as it refers always to an appetite. It indicates at best distracting and at worst destructive passions. The third sort of desire is a broad category of desire into which the other instances of desire fall, such as the desire to know, and are terms that Ibn Ṭufayl uses neither systematically nor frequently.

Šawq

In the previous chapter, I discussed Ibn Ṭufayl’s stated intention that his story intervene in some political reality of al-Andalus that he found deleterious. Thus, one might wonder precisely what Ibn Ṭufayl intends the relation not only between the text and the reader to be, but between himself as author and the reader to be, mediated by and through Ḣayy. Here I want to show that Ibn Ṭufayl intended to lead the reader in such a way that that the texts arouses yearning (tašwīq) for the path he lays out in the text. In the previous chapter, I briefly examined Ibn Ṭufayl’s claim that he intends to lead his reader through the paths he had himself crossed. Here I will examine this point more closely, specifically with an eye to the way in which Ibn Ṭufayl says he will induce the reader by arousing yearning for the path and the way in which his method is starkly reminiscent again of al-Ġazālī’s Jawāhir.
At the end of the prologue, Ibn Ṭufayl claims, “I want only to bring you along the paths in which I have preceded you and make you swim in the sea (nusbiḥu bi-ka fi-l-bahr) I have just crossed, so that it may bear you where it did me.” He also says, “I turn now to a small glimpse along the road of arousing yearning (al-tašwīq) and urging upon the beginning of the path (duḥūl al-ṭarīq).” We see this theme highlighted again in the epilogue, where he says, “I wanted to facilitate in the discourse the desiring and arousing of yearning for the beginning of the path (al-targīb wa-l-tašwīq fī duḥūl al-ṭarīq).” In the previous chapter, I suggested that Ibn Ṭufayl’s use of the notion of red sulphur was a reference to the beginning of al-Ġazālī’s Jawāhir. Here I want to highlight that Ibn Ṭufayl gestures toward this text also in his encouragement to the reader to swim in the sea and, germane to our discussion of desire, here with the intention to awaken desire and incite yearning, al-targīb wa-l-tašwīq, for the path to truth. There is further similarity between the two when we consider the nature of the venture Ḥayy inadvertently undertakes. At the beginning of the Jawāhir, al-Ġazālī asks the reader a series of questions, repeatedly mentioning the sea (baḥr), its shore (sāḥil), and the need to dive deeply into the sea, by which he means the Quran. He enjoins the reader to emulate those before them who have searched, and who “became attached their islands (taʿallaqū ’ilā jazā’iḥā) and derived from their animals the greatest antidote and the strongest musk” (by which he means al-kibrīt al-aḥmar). Ibn Ṭufayl situates Ḥayy on an island outside of the reach of human culture, and has Ḥayy raised by and learn from the animals on that island. Further, as I will show below, important to Ḥayy’s development is the attachment

1 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 19, translation modified.
2 Ibid., 20, my translation.
3 Ibid., 156, my translation.
he has to object of desire, the first of which is an animal, his doe mother, whom he yearns for after she dies.

Additionally, in his explanation of the six divisions of the Quran, al-Ġazālī claims, “One describes the states (ahwāl) of those who answer to the call to God, and His delicate dealings with them, the secret and purpose of this being the arousing of yearning and desiring (sirruhu wa-maqṣūduhu al-tašwīq wa-l-tašwīq).” Ibn Ṭufayl’s purpose, above the content of the story, is to produce in his reader yearning—al-tašwīq wa-l-tašwīq—for the path of truth that Ḥayy follows. Consideration of the apparent source of the images Ibn Ṭufayl utilizes to explain his goal suggests that Ibn Ṭufayl sees this practice as analogous to procedure of Quran explication as sketched by al-Ġazālī. Namely, in his production of Ḥayy, Ibn Ṭufayl mimics one of the characteristics of the Quran, displaying divine care in order to facilitate yearning toward to the path to truth. I will argue below that he reproduces this practice in his depiction of Ḥayy’s life and education. As I will discuss next, tašawwuq is integral to Ḥayy’s education, picking up on the intended instigation of yearning, tašwīq, Ibn Ṭufayl (imitating al-Ġazālī) wants to incite in the reader. Not only do these thematic and terminological parallels suggest Ibn Ṭufayl’s indebtedness to al-Ġazālī, they reveal the unity of the goal and procedure of Ḥayy between the pro- and epilogues and the narrative.

We find šawq in eight distinct discussions in Ḥayy. In seven of these, Ḥayy’s šawq is directed at the notion of essence and self, and in the eighth and last instance, it is directed at his fellow aspirant Absal. It will become clear that in the pivotal moments of Ḥayy’s awareness, šawq is always accompanied by variants of ʿ- lf, which I will discuss in detail in the third part of this chapter. The first instance of šawq, and of the notion of desire in general, occurs after Ḥayy’s adoptive doe mother dies from old age. Despondent, Ḥayy tries to bring her back to life by opening

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5 Jawāhir, 23–4, and The Jewels 21, translation modified.
her chest to “remove” that which, according to his analysis, blocked her life functions.\(^6\) After locating the central organ “without which none of the external parts could function,” and seeing that not only was there no blockage, but that it was empty, he understands she is dead.\(^7\) Supposing whatever was in the heart was the true life principle of his mother, he realizes that whatever she was, it was not her body, and it was not coming back. Ibn Ṭufayl describes Ḥayy’s realization of her identity and her loss as follows.

The whole body was simply like a tool of this being, like the stick with which he fought the animals. His attachment (‘alāqatahu) was transferred (intaqalat) now from the body to the being that was its master and mover. There remained desire (šawq) only toward that.\(^8\)

Here is the first instance that Ḥayy looks behind physical bodies to something else that is not reducible to them. Doing so shifts his vision from the bodies he can see to something that is not such a visible body, and in the process his estimation of such bodies falls. After he realized that the body of the doe was not his mother, “The body became contemptible in his opinion, and there was no value to it (fa-ṣāra ‘indahī al-jasadu kulluhu ḥāsīsan lā ṣadrān laḥū).”\(^9\) Ibn Ṭufayl’s description indicates that Ḥayy was already attached to his mother before she died (since his attachment was transferred). Indeed earlier Ibn Ṭufayl tells us that, as an infant, Ḥayy was fond of his mother to the point of severe tears when she was gone for long (‘alīfa l-tīflu tilka l-ẓabyata ...ištadda bukāʾahu fa-ṭārat ‘ilayhi), and that, shortly before her death, he and the doe were

\(^6\) Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 38–9.

\(^7\) Ibid., 44–5. It has not always been appreciated in the literature that Ḥayy does not realize the doe is dead until after he attempts to operate on her. More on this point below.

\(^8\) Ibid., 45, modified.

\(^9\) Ibid., 45, my translation.
inseparable from one another (*lam tuʃāriqhu wa-laʃ fāraqaḥā*).10 In fact, given that Ḥayy had recently learned to cover himself with an old eagle skin—terrifying the other animals—the doe was the only one who would approach him.11 What changes is Ḥayy’s conception of what the doe *is*. Since he now knows that “the mother who had nursed him and showed him so much kindness could only be that being which had departed,” he looks to what was responsible for the doe’s action.12 Ḥayy does not yet name this thing that he now identifies as his mother. But, upon making the Platonic distinction between the user and the tool, he makes an (as yet) implicit ontological distinction between what appears to be real and what actually is real. He had believed that his mother was the body he saw. However, he now realizes that she is that thing which has left the body, the thing which he later identifies as spirit, *rūḥ*.13 He also universalizes this vague conceptualization of the true essence or identity of his doe mother. After he sees that his mother’s real identity is not her body, he identifies it as something she held in common with the other deer with which he grew up. The deer were afraid of him, so he did not share with the deer the intimacy that he enjoyed with his mother. But he is nevertheless fond of them (*yaʾlafū*), and even feels tender toward them because of their likeness to his mother (*yaḥinu ilayhā*). His discovery of the universal nature of form and figure (*šakl, ʃūra*) begins a line of investigation that leads him to the notion of vital spirit.14

A *šawq* derivative appears next as part of Ḥayy’s realization of soul. First, Ḥayy realizes that his former conception of the object of his desire was not specific enough.

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10 Ibid., 33, 39.
11 Ibid., 37–8.
12 Ibid., 45.
13 Ibid., 64.
14 See ibid. 51, 56. More on the notion of spirit below.
When Ḥayy understood, through this line of reasoning, that the substance of the animal spirit (al-rūḥ al-ḥiyawānī), toward which all his yearning (tašawwuuquhu) had been directed, was compounded out of the corporeal factor and another factor additional to the corporeal (min maʿanan aḥarin zāʿidin ʿalā l-jismiyya), and that it had the former in common with every other body, while the latter, linked (muqtarin) with it, belonged exclusively to this spirit, he felt contempt for physicality (hāna ʿindihī maʿanā l-jismiyya).¹⁵

Note that Ḥayy’s altered estimation of physicality parallels the alteration that happens after the death of the doe. There, after realizing that his mother was not the body, he judged the body to be contemptible and without value (ḥāṣīsan lā qadran lahu). The same process occurs here, as Ḥayy realizes that the corporeal was not what he really wanted, he no longer finds it valuable. His yearning and attachment adjust in turn. “He dropped the physical and his attention fastened (taʿallaqa bāluḥu) on the other factor, which is called simply the soul (al-nafs). He now yearned to be sure about it (fa-tašawwaqa ilā al-taḥaqquqi bi-hī).”¹⁶ Ḥayy undergoes the same pattern of change here that he experienced above, as his attachment changes alongside his desire. Here, Ibn Ṭufayl claims that Ḥayy also wanted to verify or be sure of the object of his yearning. Ibn Ṭufayl highlights Ḥayy’s desire to verify and deepen his grasp of the object as Ḥayy becomes aware of the final object of his yearning, the Agent responsible for all things. He explains that “Ḥayy found in himself a burning desire (šawq ḥaṭīḥ) for realization of it (maʿrifahu) in detail (ʿalā-l-tafṣīl).”¹⁷

Further, once Ḥayy began to see the Agent behind all of his effects, “His desire for it intensified

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¹⁵ Ibid., 65, modified.
¹⁶ Ibid., 65, modified.
¹⁷ Ibid., 74.
(ištada šawquhu), and his heart was entirely removed from the world of sense (al-ʿālam al-mahsūs), and attached to the world of what is thought (al-ʿālam al-maqūl).” Note that as Ḥayy comes closer to the Agent, which he also identifies as the essence, ḍāt, his desire intensifies. Further, once Ḥayy realizes that his ḍāt is not “this embodiment (haḏīhi al-mutajassima),” he “felt contempt for his body altogether (hāna ʿindahu bi-l-jumlati jismihi),” following the prior instances of self-realization.

After Ḥayy’s initial realization of the Agent—and his desire to grasp and realize it further—Ibn Ṭufayl provides an extended analysis of the power responsible for and capable of the realization and experience, mušāhada, of the Agent or essence. This discussion follows Ḥayy’s realization that his true self (ḍātuḥu al-ḥaqīqiyya) cannot perish, and his curiosity concerning what happens to his self after his body perishes. Notably, he identifies his true self as that by which he apprehends (idraka) the existent that is necessary with respect to its existence. I will undertake an examination of this passage here, since it is the most extensive account of tašawwaqa Ibn Ṭufayl offers. The section begins with an explanation of a power of apprehension, quwwa mudrika, and examines the presence of desire in the power depending on whether the power is active or potential. Ibn Ṭufayl does not limit the quwwa mudrika to a faculty of perception, but instead describes a power that is proper to human beings and that is responsible for mušāhada of the Real. This section offers the fullest and most precise account of the nature of the power for mušāhada, the desire that is its propulsion, and the relation between the subject and object of this power. Of special interest are the identity of the subject of desire and Ibn Ṭufayl’s apparent identification of the quwwa and the subject or person to whom the power belongs. First, he explains the nature of a power as such.

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18 Ibid., 90, my translation.
19 Ibid., 92, my translation.
20 Ibid., 92. I will discuss this point at length below.
So he examined all of the *quwan mudrika*, so that he saw each one of them sometimes was *mudrika* in potentiality (*bi-l-quwwa*) and sometimes was *mudrika* in actuality (*bi-l-fiʿl*), just like the eye in the state of having been closed or turned away from what is seen, so that it is *mudrika* in potentiality. And the meaning (*maʾnan*) of *mudrika* in potentiality is that it does not apprehend now and it apprehends in the future, and in state of being open and being receptive so that what is seen is *mudrika* in actuality. And the meaning of *mudrika* in actuality is that it apprehends now.\(^{21}\)

In addition to a clear articulation of the potentiality and actuality of *quwwa*, Ibn Ṭufayl offers an example. Clear from this passage is the apparent conflation between a power and the subject of that power, namely, between the power of sight and the eye which is capable of seeing. He continues with this example, as he adds an analysis of desire to the framework.

And each one of these powers that does not ever apprehend in actuality is something that remains in potentiality. It does not yearn (*tatašawwaqū*) for the apprehending (*ʾidrāk*) of the thing proper to it (*mahṣūs bi-hā*), because it is not acquainted with it yet, like someone born blind. And if [the power] had already apprehended in actuality, sometimes it then goes into potentiality, so that as long as it is in potentiality, it yearns (*taštāqu*) for apprehending (*ʾidrāk*) in actuality. For it had already been acquainted with that which is apprehended, and was attached (*taʿallaqat*) to it, and longed (*ḥannat*) for it, like someone who is endowed with sight, and then becomes blind, so that he does not cease yearning (*yaštāqu*) for objects of sight.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., 93, my translation.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 93–4, my translation.
Let us consider his claim that if a power has never been in actuality, that is, never apprehended its appropriate object, that power does not yearn for its object. It may seem that the claim is easily false—it is possible that someone who learns about a certain power that she lacks, e.g. for seeing, tasting, hearing, she might well wish that she had that power. But Ibn Ṭufayl seems to speak not about the individual endowed with the power, but the power itself. Thus he claims that the very power that at one time apprehended its appropriate object, and yet now has ceased in its apprehension, yearns to apprehend its object again in actuality. The reason is that the power itself had become attached (taʾallaqat) to its object of apprehension and in turns desired it. This situation is like the power of someone who was at one time able to see, but has now gone blind. It is here that the conflation between the power and the person endowed with the power becomes quite clear. Ibn Ṭufayl specifies that the desire for and ache at the loss of the apprehensible object intensifies in direct proportion to the perfection of the object.

According to the greater perfection, greater brilliance, and greater beauty of the apprehended object has, the yearning (al-tašawwuq) for it is greater, and the ache on account of its loss is more severe. In a similar way, the ache of someone who loses his vision after seeing is more severe than the ache of one who loses his sense of smell, since the things that vision apprehends are more perfect and more beautiful than those which smell apprehends. If there is something infinite in its completeness and without limit in its beauty and brilliance, it is beyond perfection and beauty and brilliance. And [regarding such an object] there is not in existence [any] perfection, nor excellence, nor brilliance, nor beauty, that is not emanating from it and abundant on the part of it. So, there is no doubt
that one who loses apprehension (‘idrāk) of something after he was aware of it is in endless agony as long as he is devoid of it. In turn, the one who is apprehending permanently is in unbroken bliss and happiness without limit, seeing it (rāʾihā) with limitless delight and pleasure.23

Here Ibn Ṭufayl makes clear that the intensity of the desire proper to a power increases when its object is more perfect. He offers as an example the fact that the loss of vision pains people more than the loss of smell. This contrast is not only of two kinds of apprehensible objects, but also of two distinct powers, the power to see and the power to smell. Clearly then, the power to sense the most perfect, brilliant, and beautiful object is something additional to the five senses, as Ḥayy himself enumerates just prior to our passage.24 Following this investigation of power, Ibn Ṭufayl transfers this discussion to one’s realization of that being which is necessary with respect to its existence, and articulates all three options vis-a-vis apprehension of the Necessary Existent. He explains that if one, while embodied, has never been made aware of the Necessary Existent, “then on leaving the body he will neither long (yaštāqu) for this being nor mourn his loss.”25 Conversely, to have apprehended the most perfect object temporarily and not permanently means the greatest desire, which Ibn Ṭufayl later expresses. After Ḥayy first unifies with the Necessary Existent, his yearning intensifies, ‘ištadda šawquhu, for the object of its apprehension.26 As I have traced it above, this yearning develops and redirects as Ḥayy himself consistently redefines and strengthens his understanding of the truth and the essence he seeks. His šawq first aims at the spirit, then the soul, and at last the Agent, truth and essence itself.

23 Ibn Ṭufayl, 94–5, my translation.
24 Ibid., 90–2.
25 Ibid., 95.
26 Ibid., 134.
Ibn Ṭufayl’s position concerning šawq is that it belongs to power as such, and is therefore distinct from something like appetite, šahwa. He makes this position clearer by describing the ruin of the bodily powers (al-quwan al-jismāniyya) after the death of the body, stating that they will no longer yearn for the demands made on them (lā taštāqu aidan ʿilā muqtaḍīyāt). However, one might wonder what the real difference between šahwa and the yearning of these bodily powers is: what is appetite, besides one of the powers of the body? The difference may be found in contrasting what Ibn Ṭufayl seems to have in mind when he refers to al-quwan al-jismāniyya as opposed to his examples of šahwāt. This passage occurs in a larger discussion of what happens after the death of the body. Those who have not been aware of the Necessary Existent do not yearn for him (lā yaštāqu), just as their quwan jismāniyya do not yearn (lā taštāqu) for their objects. The examples he gives of bodily powers throughout this discussion are vision and smell, such that he seems to be thinking of powers capable of ʿidrāk. In fact, the discussion as a whole requires that he speak only of mudrikāt: otherwise, the distinction between that which is mudrik bi-l-quwwa and bi-l-ʿil is no longer possible. This analysis stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of šahwa we find in the text. As I will illustrate in the following section, šahwa indicates something of an impulse, something that springs to life on its own, instead of something that can be activated and deactivated at will. Further, and more fundamentally, appetite or lust is certainly not capable of ʿidrāk, which is integral to what Ibn Ṭufayl has in mind in this section. Thus we can and must maintain a strict distinction in kind between šawq and šahwa if we are to understand Ibn Ṭufayl’s assessment of desire.

What then is the connection between Ḥayy himself and this power for witnessing the Necessary Existent? First, I showed above that Ḥayy identifies his ḡāt al-ḥaqiqiyyya as that part of

27 Ibid., 95.
him that can apprehend the Necessary Existent.\textsuperscript{28} Thus, we have a clear identification between Ḥayy and the power at issue. Before moving on to discuss šahwa, I want to highlight the remaining distinct occurrences of šawq. Ibn Ṭufayl once claims that the celestial bodies long for the true Agent (\textit{tatašawwaqa ʾilayhi}), a longing Ḥayy both shares with and models after them.\textsuperscript{29} Last, and perhaps most intriguingly, Ibn Ṭufayl claims that once Ḥayy has observed Absal and has realized he must be one who searches for the truth, Ḥayy desires (\textit{tašawqu ʾilayhi}) him.\textsuperscript{30} I will address both of these instances of desire below, so here I want to highlight only that in both cases there is a connection between the thing that desires and the truth: the celestial bodies desire the Necessary Existent, and Ḥayy desires Absal after he realizes Absal “is one of those essences that is aware of the truth” (\textit{man al-dawāt al-ʾārīfa bi-l-ḥaqq}). Even though this last usage appears anomalous, there remains a fundamental connection between Ḥayy’s šawq and al-ḥaqq.

One may well wonder whether and in what ways Ibn Ṭufayl’s conception of šawq was influenced by earlier theories. The two obvious thinkers one ought to consider as sources of influence are his Šayḫān, Avicenna and al-Ǧazālī. Here I want to highlight similarities between Ibn Ṭufayl’s use of \textit{tašawwuq} and both Avicenna’s and al-Ǧazālī’s accounts of \textit{tašawwuq}, although he utilizes different aspects of each account. Avicenna discusses desire at length in his discussion of the motive power in the psychology section of the \textit{Šifāʾ} and also in the section on metaphysics. In both, we find an account of desire greatly indebted to the \textit{De Anima}, as we found in the cases of al-Fārābī and Ibn Bāǧga. In his account of the motive power, Avicenna argues that the yearning power, \textit{al-quwwa l-šawqiyya}, is a primary principle of motion.\textsuperscript{31} He also emphasizes the fact that one must be aware of (\textit{šaʾara}) the object of desire before desire is possible, such that

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 141.
desire follows upon an act of imagination (taḥayyul) or cognition (fikr). Further, in the discussion of šawq and the motive power in the discussion on psychology from the Šifāʾ, Avicenna connects the presence of yearning to witnessing.

The apprehending power (al-quwwa l-mudrika) singles out that about which it apprehends, and about which it is turned around in it some of the issues which are renewed by the witnessing (al-mušāhada) [of them], or something from the forms, for example it singles out pleasure, so that whenever it suffers by its absence, it yearns for it naturally.  

In this passage, the influence of Aristotelian psychology is clear, as al-quwwa l-šawqiyya is one among other powers.

We also find the influence of al-Ǧazālī, as we find a strong similarity between Ibn Ṭufayl’s depiction of tašawwuq and al-Ǧazālī’s discussion of šawq in the ninth section of the thirty-sixth book of his Ihya’. He calls this part of the Ihya’ The Book of Love, Yearning, Intimacy, and Contentment (Kitāb al-maḥabba wa-l-šawq wa-l-uns wa-l-ridā), and in it he outlines the steps involved in love of God, which he cites as “the utmost goal among the stages (maqāmāt) and the supreme summit of the steps.” In his “Explanation of the Meaning of the Yearning for God the Exalted” (bayān ma’ana al-šawqi ’ilā allahi taʿālā), al-Ǧazālī’s goal is to clarify that yearning for God is necessary and then to explain what yearning for God is. He does by explaining two different types of yearnings, and by showing that these two types of yearning apply to cases in which God

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33 Psychologie d’Ibn Sinā, 195.
is the beloved. Following these clarifications is extended citation of sayings and verses about human beings’ yearning for God. He explicates the first type of yearning for God in terms of a yearning for a beloved due to different types of concealment, ḡayba.

Every beloved (maḥbūb) to which one yearns is undoubtedly in concealment. A beloved who is present and attained cannot be yearned for because yearning (al-šawq) seeks and yearns (tašawwaqa) for something, and something found is not sought. But it is plain that yearning is not conceivable except toward something [which] is apprehended (šay’ ‘udrika) from one aspect and [which] is not apprehended (lam yudrak) from one aspect. As for what is not apprehended at all, there is not yearning for it.\(^{35}\)

Al-Ġazālī clarifies the two types of concealment that lead to yearning, in each case using a visual example to clarify his meaning, since vision is the most perfect apprehension (ʾakmāl al-ʾidrāk bi-l-ruʿya). The first cause of yearning is the need to complete an image or concept of the beloved. In this case, one who can imagine only some parts of the beloved, longs for the beloved, until one can see it in its perfection. The second cause of yearning is that one sees only part of the beloved, and wishes to see the rest of the beloved and its features. This experience would be similar to that in which one sees only the face of the beloved, and not the rest of the features, such as the hair.\(^{36}\) In both cases, part of the beloved is “visible” in some way, while remaining invisible in another. This yearning, namely, the yearning that something concealed be made apparent, is the first type of yearning for God. He claims that

\(^{35}\) Al-Ghazali on Love 88–9, Iḥyāʾ 2618–19, my translation.

\(^{36}\) Al-Ghazali on Love 89, Iḥyāʾ 2619.
Both these aspects are conceivable with respect to God; indeed, acceptance of them is incumbent on every gnostic (ʿārif). Divine matters are not always perfectly plain to gnostics even when these matters are themselves utterly clear. Rather, the gnostic seems to stand behind a fine veil that is not fully transparent; it is blemished by the specks of vain imaginings (taḥayyulāt).³⁷

Further, revelation of all that is concealed does not happen in one’s worldly life. Rather, “Complete clarity comes about through direct vision (mušāhada) and the perfected radiance of complete revelation, but this happens only in the hereafter.”³⁸

The second type of yearning is due to the fact that “divine matter and infinite and unbounded,” such that the ʿārif knows that there will always be infinite details about the divine that will be unknown to him, although they are known to God.³⁹ Of the gnostic, he claims, “He yearns incessantly to acquire some primary, as-yet-unattained knowledge (maʿrifā) of all remaining things knowable and which he knows not in the least, either clearly or even dimly.”⁴⁰ Unlike the first kind of yearning, this yearning is proper only to God and divine matters. Al-Ġazālī next explains the ways in which these yearnings may come to fulfillment. The first yearning is able to be fulfilled, although it happens only in the next world (al-dār al-āḥar). He specifies this experience as a fulfillment, “in the sense that it is termed, ‘vision’, ‘encounter’ and ‘witnessing’.”⁴¹ However, he explains that the second type of yearning has no end.

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³⁷ Al-Ghazali on Love 89, Ḩyāʾ 2619.
³⁸ Ibid.
³⁹ Al-Ghazali on Love 89–90, Ḩyāʾ 2619.
⁴⁰ Al-Ghazali on Love 90, Ḩyāʾ 2619.
⁴¹ Ibid., translation modified.
The second yearning appears to have no end, either in this world or in the next, since any end would imply that in the next world God’s majesty and His attributes, His wisdom and His acts, as they are known to God Himself, would be disclosed to man. This is impossible because such knowledge is infinite. Hence, man remains constantly aware that something in the divine beauty and grandeur remains irreducibly inexplicable.\textsuperscript{42}

The infinite nature of God can never be experienced by the finite mind, so that even after death, it is impossible for one to grasp fully that for which one has yearned. Al-Ḡazālī’s last comment on this point is important. He claims that the seeker’s yearning is not painful, but pleasurable. For, even though the yearning cannot be stilled, the seeker still learns and obtains deeper and deeper understanding of God. “It is very probable that the twin graces of disclosure (\textit{al-kašf}) and contemplation (\textit{al-nażar}) continue infinitely, just as bliss and pleasure keep increasing forever and ever.”\textsuperscript{43} This second type of yearning, insofar as its object is proper to God alone, can never be fully satisfied, only deepened and made pleasurable by that object’s nature. The yearning itself is not pleasurable, but the discomfort attendant upon it is overpowered by the pleasure and delight of deeper understanding of God.

There are immediate points of overlap and divergence between al-Ḡazālī and Ibn Ṭufayl’s paradigms. The most obvious overlap between the two is the overlap in vocabulary and explication. Besides the evident overlap in desire terminology, there is also the shared use of ʿıdṛāk as the means of attaining that for which one yearns, and the use of mušāhada as the goal of the yearning. Both terms are based on the sight analogy underlying the discussion of the aspirant’s connection with God, which again al-Ḡazālī and Ibn Ṭufayl both share. The most significant point

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Al-Ghazali on Love} 90, \textit{Iḥyāʾ} 2620.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
of divergence is that al-Ġazālī has a twofold division of yearning, which Ibn Ṭūfayl’s description lacks. Incumbent upon this division is a special nature of yearning for God. Although Ibn Ṭūfayl identifies Ḥayy’s yearning for God within a special power, this power operates according to the same framework as all other powers of apprehension such as hearing and sight. This comparison between yearning for the Agent and the yearning proper to any other power is the most extended we find in Ḥayy. In it, Ibn Ṭūfayl seems to speak of yearning as if it were a zero-sum game: the power that yearns apprehends either *bi-l-quwwa* or *bi-l-fiʿl*, and when it apprehends *bi-l-quwwa* it yearns for its object, and when *bi-l-fiʿl* it does not. On such an account, one may think that al-Ġazālī’s conceptualization that yearning is due either to concealment or to infinite beauty does not fit Ibn Ṭūfayl’s portrayal. But if we take a step back and examine the global role of *tašawwuq* in Ḥayy’s progression toward the Agent, the picture looks more nuanced than the discussion of yearning and power would suggest. Ḥayy’s *tašawwuq* toward *al-haqq* is not something that begins in its fully matured form. Rather, it must develop along a trajectory toward *al-haqq*, and begins at the moment Ḥayy has his first, rudimentary realization about *al-haqq*. After his doe mother dies, he realizes that she was not what he had believed her to be: she was not her body, but something else, something he cannot completely conceptualize that was in her heart but which has now left her. His educational goals then form around clarifying what this thing is: he discovers fire, identifies it as the spirit that lives in the heart, continues to clarify the self as the soul, and then finally realizes the Agent as the essence behind all things. Considered along *this* trajectory, Ibn Ṭūfayl’s portrayal of yearning owes much to al-Ġazālī’s account of *šawq* in *Kitāb al-maḥabba*, insofar as Ḥayy must incrementally uncover that which he desires.

Ibn Ṭūfayl’s incorporation of both ways of locating and talking about desire leave him with a combined model of desire and its function. Although he identifies yearning as belonging to a
power of apprehension, following an Avicennian model, he places this power within a Ġazālian framework according to which one yearns as one uncovers true nature of the beloved, in Ḥayy’s case, the Necessary Existent. His power for apprehending this object was initially awakened with his awareness of the reality of his doe mother, whom he loved and for whom he continued to long. As I will argue in the next part of this chapter, Ḥayy’s education proceeds along a curriculum of tašawwuq, which places it at the center of Ibn Ṭufayl’s conception of philosophy. Such a picture disrupts an image of Ibn Ṭufayl as staunch rationalist who values knowledge for the sake of knowledge as the end of philosophy. Instead, he selects a sufi-inspired notion of desire to place at the heart of his theory of reality.

Šahwa, ṭirāda

Ibn Ṭufayl systematically uses the notion of šahwa to connote desire in the sense of passion, appetite, or lust. As a result, he exploits the characteristically negative connotation of the word: it does not aim at the good, but at apparent bodily goods. Ibn Ṭufayl uses this term only six times. The introduction of šahwa occurs when Ḥayy, having discovered fire, happens to throw a fish into the flames, and discovers an appetite in himself for the food: “As it began to roast and the savory odors spread, his appetite (šahwa) was aroused.” The use of šahwa to indicate appetite, specifically as a bodily impulse toward a desired object, occurs three additional times, when Ḥayy discovers šahwa for “food, water, mates, shade, and shelter” to be common to every animal, and then twice when he condemns the inhabitants of Absal’s home island for their moral failure, claiming that “they had made their passions (šahawāt) their god” and that the worst life was one that failed to go beyond “satisfying some lust (šahwa).” The other two appearances of šahwa

44 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 49.
45 Ibid., 98, 151, 153, respectively.
concern Ḥayy’s program of dissection. His obsession with dissection is one of the most disconcerting parts of the text, especially given that his first post-mortem is performed on his doe mother. Here I want to offer an argument first for an inherently negative appraisal on Ibn Ṭufayl’s part of Ḥayy’s dissection program, and second to offer a brief suggestion concerning the motivation for a negative appraisal.

In two places, Ibn Ṭufayl discusses Ḥayy’s appetite for understanding animals organs, which he satisfies with tašrīḥ, dissection. This term requires discussion. Usually this term in Ḥayy is translated (correctly) as “dissection.” But tašrīḥ connotes both dissecting and anatomizing, and thus it is used in medical texts to refer to anatomy or anatomization. However, one of the more confusing point in Ḥayy is the way in which Ibn Ṭufayl seems to blend the boundary between medicine and natural philosophy. I will discuss this point at length below, but here I want only to highlight tašrīḥ’s ambiguity regarding the purported end of the activity. Ibn Ṭufayl discusses Ḥayy’s dissective inquiry and procedure in detail, but it is not always clear what exactly the goal of this inquiry is. The first instance of tašrīḥ properly speaking follows the arousal of Ḥayy’s appetite for meat.

An appetite (šahwa) was aroused in him for research (li-l-baḥṭ) into all the other animal organs (‘a’dā’ al-hayawān), their organization, placement, number, and interdependence, how the heat of that steam reaches them, giving life to them all, how it lasts as long as it does, where it comes from, and why its heat does not dissipate. He followed this up by dissection (bi-tašrīḥ) animals living or dead.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid., 50, translation modified.
The second passage is found five pages later, as Ibn Ṭufayl explains the process of Ḥayy’s accomplishments in his concentration on natural philosophy. After an overview of everything Ḥayy has learned by age twenty-one, Ibn Ṭufayl characterizes his motivation.

He accomplished all these things during the time when he was still engrossed with dissection (bi-l-tašrīḥ) and his one great passion (šahwatuhu) was in grasping (al-wuqūf) the differentiation and the characteristic functions of all animal organs (ʾaʿdāʾ al-hayawānāt)...ending [at] his twenty-first year. At this point he took up another tack.47

In both passages, Ḥayy’s šahwa is for researching or grasping the inner working of animal body, and he feeds this appetite with tašrīḥ. There are two points in favor of a negative appraisal of Ḥayy’s šahwa. The first point is Ibn Ṭufayl’s usage of šahwa rather than something like ʿirāda, which, as I will show in a moment, he utilizes elsewhere in claims that Ḥayy “desired” to know something. The second point is that although this enterprise provides fodder for Ḥayy’s philosophical reflection, it does not actually advance his understanding of essence, or of the Truth. It may deepen his understanding of ‘spirit’, but it is not tašrīḥ that moves him beyond the notion of ‘spirit’ to ‘soul’. For that, natural philosophical reflection concerning the nature of body as such is responsible. As a result, it is possible that Ibn Ṭufayl is, in these passages, critical of such an endeavor when it is unnecessary and does not aid in one’s understanding. I examine the notion of tašrīḥ in detail below, and I will argue more extensively for its minor role in Ḥayy’s overall education. Here I only want to suggest that we have reason to interpret this term systematically, and that it carries a negative moral connotation.

47 Ibid., 55.
The last distinct notion of desire is ʿirāda, and Ibn Ṭufayl does not bestow on it the status of a terminus technicus, such as he does with šawq. He uses the term to refer to his own wishes in the prologue and epilogue.48 There are places in which Ibn Ṭufayl uses the term to indicate an instance in which Ḥayy is curious to enhance in his understanding. First, when Ḥayy considers the heavenly bodies, “He wished (ʿirāda) to know what shape they had,” and second, he wished (ʿirāda) to know the way in which he knew of the Necessary Existence.49 Another instance of the term occurs in the discussion of the meeting between Ḥayy and Absal, as Ibn Ṭufayl explains, “[Absal] knew (ʿalima) that Ḥayy did not want (lā yurīdu) to harm him.”50 Šawq and šahwa are not closely bound to reason, for the former indicates a yearning that is simply separate from reason (it belongs to a specific power that may or may have a connection to reason, but is not in any meaningful way reducible to rational activity), and the latter indicates an impulse that is capable of working against and interfering with reason. By contrast, ʿirāda indicates a rational desire, or at least one that has been developed with and is directed by reason. It is also ʿirāda that designates the desire of the inhabitants of the second island, namely, that “they were wanting knowledge of God from the method of men,” bal kānū yurīdu maʿrifatahu min ṭarīqi l-rijāl.51 The only potentially technical way in which Ibn Ṭufayl uses ʿirāda is for God’s will, to which he refers twice. First, when Ḥayy realizes that, for his highest level of imitation, he was required “to attain His attributes, to imitate His ways, and remodel his character to His, diligently execute His will (ʿirādatuḥu), surrender all to him.”52 The second reference to the Agent’s will is in Ḥayy’s description of the third and highest way in which the celestial bodies imitate the Necessary

48 See Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 19 (nurīdu ʿanna yahmilaka...) and 156 (ʿirādu taqrib al-kālām...).
49 Ibid., 77, 90, respectively.
50 Ibid., 141.
51 Ibid., 151.
52 Ibid., 106.
Existent, namely, “Their attributes in relation to the Necessary Existent, their continuous, undistracted awareness of Him, their yearning (tatašawwaquhu) for Him, their total submission to His rule and devoted execution of his will (ʾirādatuhu), moving only at His pleasure and always in the clasp of His hand.” This list is not been exhaustive, but I think it suffices to show the manner in which the term is used.

In this section, I have offered an overview of these different terms that Ibn Ṭufayl deploys in his discussion of desire. I argued that he uses šawq consistently to denote a desire for essence, the truth, or the Necessary Existent, all of which we find have coextensive connotation. This yearning begins after his doe mother dies, and is directed first toward the spirit, then the soul, and at last the Agent of all things, essence itself. The next term is šahwa, and I argue that Ibn Ṭufayl uses it to denote appetite both physical and intellectual. However, his use of this term to denote the desire that leads Ḥayy to dissection portrays the enterprise in a negative light. I then offer an overview of ʾirāda, which, although occurring somewhat frequently in Ḥayy, does not play a significant role in Ibn Ṭufayl’s account. Before moving forward, I want to recall Ibn Ṭufayl’s stated intention in the prologue and epilogue to incite in one who reads Ḥayy yearning (tašwīq) for the path to truth. Examination of the vocabulary of desire has shown that Ibn Ṭufayl uses šawq and its derivatives in such a way that he reproduces in Ḥayy what he said he aimed to produce in the reader of the text, namely, yearning for the path toward truth. I will argue in the next part of the chapter that Ibn Ṭufayl constructs Ḥayy’s education around the development of this yearning.

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53 Ibid., 114, translation modified.
54 Ibid., 20, 156.
5.2 Education

Now that I have sketched the role of desire within Ḥayy, I want to place it within the broader education and goal of the story of Ḥayy. I will argue in what follows that Ḥayy’s education rests on the progression of his tašawwuq. I will discuss first the goal of Ḥayy’s education, which I take to be mušāhada of the Agent. I argue that the rest of his inquiries must be understood within this context, including his temporary commitment to tašrīḥ. Second, I will examine what the subject of this education is, and argue that it is Ḥayy’s power for witnessing the Agent. However, I will maintain that Ḥayy’s fikr, discursive reasoning, is important both for his ultimate connection to the Agent and for uniting the different strands of inquiry Ḥayy undertakes. Last, I argue that the mechanism of this education is taʿalluq, attachment, combined with tašawwuq. At each crucial point of Ḥayy’s education and in descriptions of his goal, Ibn Ṭufayl utilizes this notion to account for the way in which one is successful, namely, one must be attached to the Agent alone and nothing else. Returning to al-Ǧazālī’s conception of tašawwuq, I argue that Ibn Ṭufayl offers a picture of education that begins with the death of the doe, and concludes with unification with the divine.

Goal of Ḥayy’s Education

Before the beginning of the actual tale of Ḥayy, Ibn Ṭufayl makes clear in his introduction that the goal of the story is the level of friendship, taʿawr wilāya, which consists in mušāhada of the Necessary Existent. Specifically, this goal is an experience to which Ibn Ṭufayl aims to lead the reader: “So that you witness (tuṣāḥhidu) something of that which we witnessed (ṣāḥadnāhu) and you verify (taḥaqqaqqu) by your own sight all of what we verified (taḥaqqaqqānu).” Above, I

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55 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 4, 9, 11, 19.
56 Ibid., 19.
showed that Ibn Ṭufayl marks the basic shifts in Ḥayy’s pursuit of an experience of the Necessary Existent with šawq, which is redirected and redefined when Ḥayy discovers spirit, soul, and the Agent itself. Since the goal of Ḥayy’s education is mušāhada of the Agent, one would expect his curriculum to proceed in such a way that it leads to and is formative of that experience. We find that, corroborative of the course suggested by the development of Ḥayy’s šawq, his education proceeds according to the threefold structure marked by his discoveries of spirit, soul, and the Agent.

At each of these points, his conception of the truth is specified, and he progresses forward along a path toward his eventual witness of the Agent. In his realization of spirit, which actually occurs before he gives it a name, he realizes that the external, visible body (in this case, of the doe), is not what the animal is. Rather, the animal is something that lives inside the heart. After clarifying this point for about fourteen years, he identifies it as the fiery spirit that gives vital heat to the rest of the body and directs it by way of the nerves. With spirit, he conceives of the self as physical. By contrast, the notion of soul specifies his earlier conception, awakens him to the non-physical, and introduces him to formal distinctions. It shows him that spirit is twofold, with one corporeal non-specific part and one that is proper to the individual in kind. His conception of soul is the conclusion of his initial awareness of the spiritual world (al-ʿālam al-rūḥānīyya) and of forms of bodies (ṣuwar al-ajsām). His last realization ensues from his awareness that each form must have a cause. This conclusion rests on a specific definition of form.

57 Ibid., 52.
58 Ibid., 65.
59 Ibid., 64.
He then considered the possessors of forms (dawāt al-ṣuwar) and saw nothing more than a body’s propensity (ʾistiʿdād) for such and such and action to arise from it. Water, for example, has a propensity to rise when strongly heated. This propensity is the form, for there is nothing there but body and certain perceptible things—qualities and ways of moving, for example—which come into being, and the cause who creates them. Thus the susceptibility (ṣulūḥ) of a body to certain kinds of motion as opposed to others must be its propensity or form.60

Ibn Ṭufayl interprets the nature of form simply as a certain ʾistiʿdād of the body. Thus, on his account, form is inherent to the body. This account may at first appear to be materialist, but we must remember two qualifications of form Ibn Ṭufayl has already made. When he introduced the concepts of form and soul—Ḥayy’s first glimpse into al-ʿālam al-rūḥānīyya—he identifies form with the animal soul (al-nafs al-Ḥayawānīyya) after connecting it to the spirit that resides in the heart:

It dawned on him that the animal spirit (al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī) which lives in the heart and at which he had first probed with his dissections, must itself have a notion added to its corporeality (maʿnan zāʿidʿalājismiyyatuhu) which would enable it to carry out its wonderful tasks of the various modes of sensing, apprehending, and moving.61

From these two qualifications—that soul is (1) a principle for the spirit and (2) equivalent to form—Ibn Ṭufayl’s identification of form with ʾistiʿdād is not surprising. After this identification,

60 Ibid., 73–4, modified.
61 Ibid., 64, modified.
he offers a Ġazālian understanding of the causal source responsible for the action that appears to manifest from that form.

Ḥayy realized that the same would be true of all forms. Clearly the acts (afʿāl) emerging from forms were not in reality by them, but the actions attributed to them were brought about through them by acting agent (li-fāʿil yafʿalu). This idea to which he had now awakened is the meaning of the Prophet’s words: “I am the ears He hears by and the sight He sees by.” As it is written in the unshakable Revelation, “It was not you but God who killed them; and when you shot, it was not you who shot, but God.”

Ḥayy now concludes that there is some ultimate agent that is responsible for all actions. This is the third and last of his realizations concerning the true nature of the world, and Ibn Ṭufayl adduces a hadith and sūra 8:17 in support of this thesis. I call this explanation Ġazālian because al-Ġazālī cites this same verse in his Kitāb al-tawhid wa-l-tawakkul in his own account of causality. Ibn Ṭufayl continues to utilize this account of causality through the text. After coming to this realization, Ḥayy now burns with desire (šawq ḥaṭṭīṯ) for maʿrifat fī-l-tafṣīl, after having an impression only generally and without detail (ʾirtisāman ʿalā ʾamūmi dūna tafṣīl).

If we are correct in reading Ḥayy’s education as tripartite in this way, what then are we to make of Ḥayy’s investigations that do not appear to fit into this specific account of education, such as the question of the eternity of the world? This question is more difficult than it may perhaps seem. Ibn Ṭufayl makes explicit in his prologue that his goal is to go beyond al-nāzarūn and

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62 Ibid., 74.
64 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 74.
beyond rational inquiry. Further, the goal is not knowledge of the Agent, but an actual experience of it. The interpretative task is to discern in what way Ibn Ṭufayl intends these naẓarī inquiries to be related to those that are essentially constitutive of Ḥayy’s goal. Let us take as an example Ḥayy investigation into the question of the eternity of the world. After running through arguments for and against the eternity of the world, Ḥayy comes to the conclusion that regardless of whether he assumed the eternity or non-eternity of the world, he reached the same picture of the Agent responsible for it. Since he aimed to understand the Agent through this investigation, the question of which paradigm was correct was moot, since each investigation reached the same conclusion: “He was no longer troubled by the dilemmas of creation versus eternity, for either way the existence of a non-corporeal Agent remained unscathed.” In what way ought one to understand the relation of such an inquiry, which ultimately remains unanswered, to the educative goal? Is such investigation necessary? The more important question is whether these investigations are in any way constitutive of Ḥayy’s educative goal. Perhaps this question really boils down to the relation between philosophy and the goal of the education as it appears in the text. In short, what is philosophy for Ibn Ṭufayl, and does Ḥayy supersede it? If he does indeed supersede it, what role does philosophy play for his education in the first place? Can we continue to call Ibn Ṭufayl’s system “philosophical” in a way that is non-equivocal?

I want to suggest that philosophical endeavor for Ibn Ṭufayl is comprehensive, meaning it both includes and is constituted by naẓarī and mušawwiqī inquiry. I discuss the role of fikr, discursive reasoning, which I take to ground the role of rationally inquiry in the attainment of the educative goal set forth in Ḥayy. But even outside of and prior to that discussion, there are formal suggestions of Ibn Ṭufayl’s stance on this question. The combination of naẓarī and mušawwiqī

65 Ibid., 86.
inquiry is evidenced by Ibn Ṭufayl’s sufistic distortion of Avicenna’s philosophy in his prologue, and specifically his insistence that *naẓārī* conjunction is formally identical to but superseded by higher sight. It is corroborated by the fact that in his comparison of Avicennian and Ḡazālian texts, he does not indicate that he differentiates them in kind, as many scholars have since chosen to do. Rather, he appears to read them and the often conflicting views found therein as operating on the same, philosophical plane. The fact that Ibn Ṭufayl sees no tension between his text and Avicennian philosophy is further evidence of this universalism. This conception of philosophy may not be entirely consonant with what modern scholars want to identify as philosophy, namely, rational investigation operating by means of concepts and arguments. But, as I argued above, Ibn Ṭufayl intends what he presents in *Ḥayy* simply to be a work of philosophy, and one cannot selectively reject certain parts of the text without begging the question.

Of those investigations that fall outside of the core of Ḥayy’s curriculum, there are more than I have space to examine here, and his different pursuits have been well-discussed elsewhere. However, of particular difficulty in this regard are his dissective pursuits, which seem in turn both harsh and unnecessary. I see two interpretive difficulties concerning Ḥayy’s temporary obsession with *tašrīḥ*. First, there is the question of in what way one ought understand his *tašrīḥ* of the doe as he endeavors to save her after her death. This impulse on Ḥayy’s part has troubled most commentators on the text, in large part because of its apparent severity and callousness. Second, one must settle the role of *tašrīḥ* in relation to Ḥayy’s broader education. The dissection of Ḥayy’s doe mother has proven to be a sticking point for interpreters in large part since, in his apparent attempt to save his mother, Ḥayy both destroys her body, and appears to treat the dissection as an end in itself. Kukkonen highlights this aspect best, observing that Ḥayy’s attempt to save his ailing

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66 See ibid., 7–9.
mother, “seems to be lost halfway through,” and that “Ḥayy, or the author, becomes so engrossed in recounting the intricacies of the heart that when...it finally comes to assessing whether any hope remains for the subject, the notion registers as little more than an afterthought, and a cold and impersonal one at that.” Malti-Douglas reads Ḥayy’s dissection of the doe as an act of domination, claiming that, “The precocious Ḥayy proceeds to dissect her to discover the cause of her demise, and we understand this act as a furthering of his own scientific knowledge.” I want to respond to this sort of interpretation of Ḥayy’s dissection of his mother by highlighting that, even though it forms the foundation for later acts of dissection, it is different in kind than Ḥayy’s later dissections. Yes, Ḥayy learns much about the anatomy of animal organs in this dissective act (how could he not?), but the purpose of his actions is to restore to the doe to health. After the doe becomes unresponsive, that is, after she dies due to old age, Ḥayy examines her in order to “discover the place where she was hurt so he could take away the hurt and allow her to recover.” In turn, when he realized the damage must be internal, he hesitated to operate: “He tried to think whether he had ever seen any animal recover from such a state; and, unable to do so, he lost hope of her getting better unless he did something.” It is not until after he sees the empty left ventricle that he realizes that his doe mother has in fact died: “Realizing that whatever had lived in that chamber had left while its house was intact, before it had been ruined, Ḥayy saw that it was hardly

69 Fedwa Malti-Douglas, “Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān as Male Utopia,” in The World of Ibn Ṭufayl, ed. by Lawrence Conrad, 61–2. Malti-Douglas reads the lack of a biological mother in the narrative to be in part constitutive of the concept of this male utopia. But the reductive conception of motherhood in this reading misses the point, and because it reduces the concept of motherhood to a biological one, it obfuscates the fact that Ḥayy’s adoptive mother teaches him to survive on his own, is the subject of his first imitative endeavor, and continues to be the object of his yearning, eventually being identified with God (more on this below). It is worth acknowledging what will later become commonplace in England during the 16th and 17th centuries: the frequent and public anatomization of female bodies ostensibly for the sake of furthering natural science. See Katharine Park’s Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Dissection (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2006), specifically ch. 5. Such procedure was commonplace neither in Islamic society at large nor in Andalusia, and one ought to avoid the temptation to read this particular instantiation of systemic subjugation of the female body back into an earlier time and place.
70 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 28.
71 Ibid., 41.
likely to return after all the cutting and destruction.” At this point, Ḥayy makes a distinction between what the doe is, and the body that lies in front of him. After he realizes the doe’s body is not identical to the doe, he leaves it behind, and instead contemplates on what he now considers to be the true nature of his mother. Since Ḥayy’s endeavor is to save his mother, this act of dissective surgery is a primitive medical procedure, not simply an act of anatomization.

The ambiguity between Ḥayy the physician and Ḥayy the natural philosopher should not surprise us, since there was already a long-standing overlap between the higher strata of medicine and the lower strata of natural philosophy. Ibn Ṭufayl’s placement of dissection/anatomy within medicine follows the commitment of Andalusi physicians to the necessary of anatomy an integral and initial part of medicine as such, while the seamless continuation of medicine into natural science reflects an Avicennian commitment to tašrīḥ as proper to medicine and natural science, as evidenced by his Qanūn and Kitāb al-Ḥayawān. Richter-Bernburg argues that Ibn Ṭufayl “generally reduces the role of medicine as an empirical discipline to that of a handmaiden to philosophical theory.” He identifies, “the sources of Ibn Ṭufayl’s outlook on medicine in Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān...to be found in al-Fārābī’s and Ibn Sina’s separation between medicine as an epistemologically inferior and application-oriented discipline on the one hand, and propedeutic theoretical basis, considered part of natural philosophy, on the other.” The higher branch of medicine, that which was part of natural philosophy, “fell within the philosopher’s purview.” Ibn Ṭufayl also follows the Arabic Aristotelian rebuttal against Galenic science, and subordinates

72 Ibid., 44–5.
73 Ibid., 46.
76 Ibid., 94.
77 Ibid, 95.
anatomy, with its concentration on particulars, to natural philosophy’s investigation into universals. In addition to Richter-Bernburg’s analysis, it is important to highlight that in Avicenna’s own commentary on animals in the Šifāʾ, there is large overlap between medicine and natural philosophy, insofar as much of his Kitāb al-Hayāwān comes directly from his Qanūn. Musallam estimates that 40% of the Kitāb al-Ḥayāwān is from the Qanūn, such that “the space devoted to anatomy was more than doubled.” Of course, Ibn Ṭufayl, being a doctor and apparently a successful one at that, would have been familiar with different medical texts. But his blending of medical procedure with the investigations of natural philosophy suggest Ibn Ṭufayl’s devotion to Avicenna might have held strong even on this point. A useful contrast case is Ibn Bāǧga’s own commentary on Aristotle’s Kitāb al-Ḥayāwān, in which he focuses largely on the theoretical points of the text. Thus, it is evident that philosophical texts that straddle the gray area between medicine and philosophy were not uniform in their attention to anatomical detail. Even in what I have argued is a surgical procedure, Ibn Ṭufayl integrates philosophical growth. It is in his surgical examination of the doe that Ḥayy first makes the Platonic distinction between the user and used, and thus make an (as yet implicit) ontological distinction between the two, even though he thinks of both in purely physical terms. Even though the post-mortem of the doe appears harsh, Ibn Ṭufayl is clear that Ḥayy does not realize the doe is dead until he has examined her heart. After this realization, he ceases his examination of the body, and continues to think about his mother, wondering for what reason and to what place she has gone.

There is now the second question raised above, namely, in what way one ought to understand the role of dissection in relation to the rest of Ḥayy’s education. I propose that we

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78 Ibid., 95–6.
assess the rest of Ḥayy’s dissecive practice under the criterion of whether it aids in the broader education for which I argue above. We find that, at the end of his twenty-first year, before he moves on to other considerations, Ḥayy has not progressed beyond the notion of spirit, of which he initially conceived in his examination of the doe. However, this notion has been specified during the fourteen years between the doe’s death and his promotion beyond natural science. In fact, when Ibn Ṭufayl enumerates the things that Ḥayy has learned during this time, he explains them such that they form a more exact and sophisticated account of death. He explains as follows.

Every one of these organs is at the service of the spirit and would be deprived of its functions were it not directed by this spirit through what we call the nerves: for when nerve pathways are cut or blocked, the functions lapse in the organ to which they lead. These nerves do no more than transmit the animal spirit emanating from the brain, which in turn derives it from the heart…If for some reason any organ does not receive this spirit, like a useless, discarded tool, it can work no longer. And should the vital spirit leave the body altogether or in one way or another disintegrate or become extinct, the whole body is stilled and dies.81

His dissections, no longer acts of medicine, have still been directed at understanding what happened in the death of the doe. Ibn Ṭufayl makes clear in this passage that Ḥayy’s conclusion have focused on the role of the animal spirit in the body, and the results of the termination of the spirit’s residence in the body. His investigation of fire similarly concerns understanding the incident of the doe’s death, an investigation that leads to the vivisection of some unfortunate beast.

81 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 52.
The result of this vivisection is Ḥayy’s conclusion that the spirit in the heart is like fire, and that, “when this departs, the animal dies.” Further, all of these conclusions are physicalist conclusions, and do not propel him toward his next point of progression in his education aimed at *tawr wilāya*, and it is only in the summary of Ḥayy’s progress before he proceeds that Ibn Ṭūfayl finally gives “spirit,” as the vehicle of life in the body, its name at all. Ḥayy moves on from a materialist understanding of the user of the body only after he has “taken up another tack” at the end of twenty-one years. Thus, the dissections undertaken by Ḥayy appear to be peripheral to his real task. Nevertheless, Ibn Ṭūfayl clearly sees them as necessary for Ḥayy, if only because no seven-year-old is prepared to take up consideration of divine unity and the nature of God. Here I think we find the motivation for Ibn Ṭūfayl’s implicitly negative estimation of dissection, that it is driven by *šahwa*. I suspect that it is because of its subsidiary nature that Ibn Ṭūfayl flags the impetus behind dissection pejoratively. Strictly speaking, Ḥayy’s post-doe dissection is extraneous to his true goal, and he risks being dragged into it longer than necessary. During the time in which he is driven by his *šahwa* for understanding animal organs, Ḥayy becomes a predator, consuming whatever animals he pleases—whether this be by hunting, feeding, or dissecting. This consumption is not what we find in the dissection of the doe. Even though Ḥayy learns about the make-up of natural bodies in his attempt to restore to doe to health, he is not consuming her body for the sake of knowledge, but trying to heal her. I take the strong distinction to be, if anything, an implicit critique by Ibn Ṭūfayl of human willingness to destroy for the sake of knowledge. From this point on in the text, Ḥayy is pointedly aware of the damage he might do to other beings.

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82 Ibid., 50.
83 Ibid., 49, 53–4.
Subject of Education

Although the entirety of Hayy Ibn Yaqzân is the story of Ḥayy’s education, it is not crystal clear what exactly is being educated at any given time in the text. Although we have variegated references throughout to Ḥayy’s heart, mind, and power for witnessing God, Ibn Ṭufayl appears to be inconsistent in his portrayal of Ḥayy as a subject of education. Thus, it would take us some way to determine (1) whether there is a consistent subject of education, and (2) what exactly this subject is. Doing so will allow for a determination of the mechanism of education, an investigation I undertake in the next section. One basic difficulty for such an undertaking is that Ibn Ṭufayl does not offer a clear psychology in Hayy. The discovery of the soul is one I highlighted above, but besides its identification with form, it is not specified further, and Ibn Ṭufayl’s psychology must be extracted from glimpses offered throughout the text.\textsuperscript{84} Additionally, one does not find an explicit noetics in Hayy, although Ibn Ṭufayl refers to the “world of mind.”\textsuperscript{85} In this section, I will argue that Ibn Ṭufayl makes clear that Ḥayy’s true self is the power to witness the Necessary Existent, and that this power is the ultimate subject of education in Hayy. It is clear that in addition to and alongside this quwwa, Ḥayy’s fikr must develop as a tool by means of which Ḥayy is able progress in his education. As a result, there is an intimate connection between Ḥayy’s fikr and his quwwa to witness the Agent, in which the former plays an instrumental role for the latter, his fikr acting as the connector between Ḥayy and the Agent in his final graduation to mušāhada. This connection is the grounding for my claims in the preceding sections, that naẓarī and mušawwiqī inquiry both constitute philosophical activity, while the latter eventually supersedes the former.

\textsuperscript{84} For an analysis of Ibn Ṭufayl’s psychology, see Taneli Kukkonen, “Heart, Spirit, Form, Substance: Ibn Ṭufayl’s Psychology,” 195–214, in In the Age of Averroes, Warburg Institute Colloquia 16 (2011).
But more on this point below. First, I will go through passages that show Ḥayy’s fikr to be instrumental. Then I will examine Ibn Ṭufayl’s explanation of Ḥayy’s dāt as his power for witnessing the Agent. Last, I examine Ibn Ṭufayl’s consistent vocabulary in each turning point of his education, and will argue that the subject of realization in each one is his power for witnessing the Agent.

Shifts of focus in Ḥayy’s fikr occur according to the now familiar threefold pattern. The first is after he realizes that the doe is not her body, at which point he “confines [his] fikra to that thing,” namely, that which had been in his mother’s heart but left, which he later calls the animal spirit, and begins “thinking (yatafakkaru) about that thing that controls the body.”86 We find this shift again when Ḥayy becomes aware of the necessity of soul, as “he dropped the physical and attached his attention (bāluhu) on the second factor, which is designated as the soul...and he turned his thought (fikra) toward it.”87 Again we find a similar characterization following Ḥayy’s awareness of the true Agent, which he seeks to know. First, his fikra is turned toward the heavenly bodies, and after astronomical reflection, he learns to see the Agent in each of its effects, such that

Already this subject was deeply rooted in his heart [that] his thought (fikra) in each thing was occupied only with it...For now his eye fell on nothing without immediately detecting in it signs (athar) of His craft—then instantly his thought (fikruhu) would shift from the crafted thing to Craftsman, until his desire for it intensified (ištada šawquhu), and his heart (qalbu) was entirely removed from the world of sense (al-ʿālam al-maḥṣūs), and attached to the world of what is thought (al-ʿālam al-maqūl).88

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86 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 45–6, translation modified
87 Ibid., 65–6, translation modified.
88 Ibid., 90, translation modified.
Each new realization is a turning point in Ḥayy’s *fikr*, and he trains it until it is in all things aware only of the Agent itself. When Ibn Ṭufayl describes the goal of Ḥayy’s education, Ḥayy’s *fikr* and *ḏikr* remain as a bridge between Ḥayy and the Agent.

From his thought and his remembrance vanished (*fa-ġābat ‘an ḏikrihi wa-fikrihi*) heaven and earth and all that is between them, all of the spiritual forms and the bodily powers, all of the powers separate from matters, which are the essences that know the true Existent. And among all of these essences his essence vanished (*wa-ġābat ḏātuḥu fi-jamla tilka ḏawāt*).89

This passage is important insofar as it makes clear that *fikr* remains, although it is free of content other than the Agent, and it suggests that Ḥayy’s own *ḏāt* vanishes. It is not clear what such a claim could amount to, since presumably his *ḏāt*, namely, his power to witness the Agent, would be fully active only during such an experience.

It is thus imperative to understand exactly what Ibn Ṭufayl means when he identifies Ḥayy’s essence as that by which he is aware of the Necessary Existent. The most extensive discussion of this essence occurs as Ibn Ṭufayl explains Ḥayy’s wonder at the way in which he came to know the Necessary Existent. After ruling out that it cannot be the sensible part of him that made him aware of the non-sensible Agent, he connects whatever has made him aware of the Agent with his true self.

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89 Ibid., 120, my translation.
It had already been made clear to him that he apprehended [the Agent] (ʾidrākahu) on the basis of his essence (bi-dāthihi), and now that his understanding of Him was better, he recognized that this essence too, by which he had some to know Him, was non-corporeal and not qualifiable by any physical predicate...his true essence was that by which he had apprehended the Necessary Existent.90

Ibn Ṭufayl does not here offer the grounds on which Ḥayy makes his inference concerning his true self, namely, that it would be the same thing as that by which he apprehended the Agent, but leaves it open for us to complete. He might rely on the principle that like is known by like, or perhaps the inference rests on Ḥayy’s conclusion that the Necessary Existent is the true agent and cause of all things, such that he infers that whichever part of him obtains the highest level of reality must be his real self. Following this realization, Ḥayy concludes that his true self cannot perish, since it is non-sensible and does not decay.91 Here we reach again Ibn Ṭufayl’s lengthy discussion of the nature of quwwa, which I discussed above.

The most important question for us now is whether one can with any certainty claim that it is the same power active throughout the progression of Ḥayy’s education. If Ḥayy’s education has been, in part, a process of self-awareness, are we entitled to conclude that this true self was active the entire time? Or rather, when exactly did Ḥayy activate this power? As I showed above, at each integral moment of Ḥayy’s awareness of the notion of essence and of agency, one finds a parallel formula: Ḥayy becomes aware of a new, truer conception of agency and essence, changes his attachment to that notion, desires it, and no longer values what he had previously considered to be the true agent or essence. Most consistent is Ibn Ṭufayl’s use of tašawwq to flag such instances,

90 Ibid., 92.
91 Ibid., 93.
as well as the fact that this yearning becomes more intense the closer Ḥayy gets to the true notion of the Agent. In his discussion of power and tašawwuq, Ibn Ṭufayl explicitly remarks on the nature of the yearning proper to any given power, claiming that, “According to the greater perfection, greater brilliance, and greater beauty the apprehended object has, the yearning (al-tašawwuq) for it is greater, and the ache on account of its loss is more severe.”92 As a result of these considerations, Ḥayy concludes “self-realization and happiness meant constant actual experience of the Necessary Existent,” and when he struggles to gain an awareness of the Agent before taking up his mimetic exercises, Ibn Ṭufayl claims, “he feared death might surprise him in a moment of distraction, leaving him to sink into the everlasting misery and torment of deprivation.”93 The formulaic progression, in addition to the fact that Ḥayy’s education is centered around exposing the truth about one notion, essence, suggests that Ibn Ṭufayl does indeed depict Ḥayy’s true self as in some way active throughout the entirety of his education. Ibn Ṭufayl’s failure to identify the soul as the subject of this desire explicitly leaves the relation between the soul and the power for witnessing the Necessary Existent obscure.94

Ḩayy’s realization about his true self is not the end of the story. Above, we found that everything vanishes in the experience of mušāhada. In the pages following this realization, Ibn Ṭufayl describes Ḥayy’s final but problematic realization of his true identity and true essence: he is in a way the same as ḍāt al-ḥaqq. The exact nature of this identity relation is difficult, and Ibn

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92 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 94, my translation.
93 Ibid., 97. Similar to Ibn Ṭufayl’s use of tašabbuh, see Avicenna’s account of the tašabbuh in his commentary on the Theology of Aristotle, which is also a threefold structure of resemblance to intellect, heavenly bodies, and earthly bodies. See Abd al-Rahman Badawi, Arisṭu ‘inda al-ʿArab (Cairo, 1947), 51; Adamson, “The Arabic Plotinus: A Study of the ‘Theology of Aristotle’ and Related Texts,” PhD Diss, University of Notre Dame (2000), 336–7.
94 The obscurity regarding the subject of apprehension may stem from Ibn Ṭufayl’s source, Avicenna. The question of what exactly apprehends—the soul or the power—was a topic of debate in post-Avicennian philosophy. Various objections to Avicenna’s account were quickly levelled by Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī and Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī (cf. the latter’s Al-Mubāḥīth wa-l-Šukūk, 209ff.). I am grateful to Fedor Benevich for bringing this debate and this text to my attention. On the notion of the faculties in Arabic philosophy in general see Taneli Kukkonen, “Faculties in Arabic Philosophy,” 66–96, in The Faculties, ed. Dominik Perler, Oxford University Press, 2015.
Ṭufayl expresses himself carefully. He must account for the ontology of mušāhada in such a way that he neither claims divinity for Ḥayy—as the sufis did in their own (somewhat misguided) analysis of mystic experience—nor fails to surpass the realm of al-nāzarūn. Ibn Ṭufayl attempts to account for this experience “by coining symbols, for there is no way of finding out what truly occurs at this plateau of experience besides reaching it.”⁹⁵ He makes clear that what Ḥayy experiences at this level cannot be expressed in the heart. Desiring that one express them is analytically impossible, like wanting to taste color. Nevertheless, he attempts to give a presentation of what the experience is like, but calls for caution, “For it is dangerous to make pronouncements on the ineffable, and the margins in which I work are narrow.”⁹⁶ These nature of this experience is not often discussed in the literature, but I attempt a reconstruction here in order to show the nature of Ḥayy’s self vis-a-vis the Agent, which will shed light on the subject of Ḥayy’s educative program.

After making explicit that the practice for the experience Ḥayy wished to have was something in addition to what he accomplished with nazār, Ibn Ṭufayl draws mušāhada closer to the other extreme, namely, Ḥayy’s unity with the Agent. Ibn Ṭufayl identifies Ḥayy’s success within terms of fanāʾ, annihilation of the self: “He vanished from himself (fanīya ‘an ḍātuḥu) and from all other selves (ḍawāt), and he did not see in existence anything other than the Everlasting One (al-wāḥud al-qayyūm), and he witness what he witnessed (šāhada mā šāhada).”⁹⁷ This experience is like a state of drunkenness (šabīha bi-l-sukrī), and it occurs to Ḥayy, after leaving this state, that his essence and the true essence are one and same, ḥaqīqatu ḍātihi hiya ḍātu al-ḥaqq. He is convinced of the Agent’s absolute unity, and extends this unity to himself. However,

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⁹⁵ Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 122.
⁹⁶ Ibid., 122.
⁹⁷ Ibid., 122, my translation.
he catches himself: “This specious thinking (ḥaḍḥi l-ṣubḥa) might well have taken root in his soul (fī-nafsihi), had not God in his mercy caught hold of him and guided him back to the truth.”

Ibn Ṭufayl altogether dismisses the question as a category mistake. Instead, he offers a mirror analogy.

He saw a being corresponding to the highest sphere, beyond which there is no body, a subject free of matter, and neither identical with the Truth and the One nor with the sphere itself, nor distinct from either—as the form of the sun appearing in a polished mirror is neither sun nor mirror, and yet distinct from neither.

Ibn Ṭufayl consistently implements his rejection of the notions of the “one” and the “many” in his discussion of this non-physical essence. Instead, he offers the image of light reflected into many mirrors: the mirrors themselves are many, but the light itself is the same, but since it is inflected into many mirrors, one would not want to call it “one” light. To do so would be to mischaracterize the nature of light. He emphasizes that one must not apply physical standards to one’s understanding of the non-physical. Light shone into many mirrors is in a way the same light and in a way a different light: all the instantiations share the same nature, although they are present and exist in different ways. Ibn Ṭufayl embraces this apparent paradox, and tells us that trying to understanding it exactly will result in failure and misunderstanding.

98 Ibid., 124.
99 Ibid., 127.
What then can we learn about the nature of the Ḥayy’s self and the subject of education from this discussion? It was clear that Ibn Ṭufayl sees the education of *fikr* as part and parcel of philosophical education, and its utilization constitutive of philosophical progress. As a result, Ḥayy’s *fikr* must be trained so that Ḥayy can utilize it in his search for the Truth, although it must be silenced in order for Ḥayy to witness the Truth. On this account, *fikr* works as a tool for leading Ḥayy to his experience of the Agent, but one that in itself is insufficient. More fundamentally, Ḥayy’s power for *mušāhada* must itself be actualized as the true subject of education. Both are subject to the true education driven by the *tašawwuq* of Ḥayy’s power for *mušāhada*. Ḥayy’s *fikr* is adjusted and redirected at each important turn of his realization of essence. Eventually, his *fikr* and *ḏikr* must be silenced in order to make way for the experience of identity with the One. Earlier, I highlighted that Ḥayy’s goal is to realize completely and eternally his power for witnessing the One, a power we find trained by practice and realized as a twin light indistinguishable from but not reducible to *ḏāt al-haqq*. I turn now to the way in which this identity occurs and by what mechanism Ḥayy proceeds.

5.3 Mechanism of Education

I have argued for a certain understanding of the object and subject of Ḥayy’s education, that the object of Ḥayy’s education is *mušāhada* of the Truth and that this education proceeds according to a threefold realization, and that the subject is Ḥayy’s own power for witnessing the Agent, which utilizes Ḥayy’s *fikr* to attain its goal. What remains to be clarified is the mechanism by which this progression is successful. Identifying the mechanism by which education occurs will clarify (1) the way in which the subject of education is consistent throughout the curriculum and (2) the way in which Ḥayy’s self becomes aware and active in the first place. Establishing the consistency of
the subject throughout the education is necessary for accounting for the way in which Ḥayy progresses: if the subject changes throughout the progression, there must be some additional mechanism that moves Ḥayy from one level to the next. Accounting for the beginning moment of this education will help to corroborate the consistency of the subject and to clarify some oddities about Ḥayy’s story, especially the death of the doe. In this section, I will argue that the mechanism of Ḥayy’s education comprises jointly his tašawwuq and taʿalluq, and that consideration of Ibn Ṭufayl’s adoption of al-Ḡazālī’s notion of tašawwuq clarifies this mechanism. Then I will argue that the structure of the mechanism accounts for the emphasis Ibn Ṭufayl places on the death of Ḥayy’s doe mother, and shows that the loss is integral to the activation of the power of witnessing the agent, which is identical Ḥayy’s true self.

Consideration of the recurrence of taʿalluq and other ‘-l-q derivatives reveals that it is essential to Ibn Ṭufayl’s accounts of each point of Ḥayy’s realization of true essence, just as I showed shawq to be in the beginning of this chapter. I will go through six passages in which Ibn Ṭufayl discusses Ḥayy’s progression toward realization of the Agent or his success in that progression, and show that the notion of attachment, taʿalluq (or some variant thereof), is operative in the explanation. Then I will discuss the way in which this mechanism makes clearer the subject of this education. Before discussing taʿalluq in Ḥayy, a brief overview of the use of this term in Ibn Ṭufayl’s influences is of help. The term itself has a Neoplatonic heritage, one that Ibn Ṭufayl undoubtedly evokes. We find this term in the work of both Avicenna and al-Ḡazālī. Taʿalluq is used by Avicenna in logical discussions, but germane to this discussion is his use of the term in discussions of the soul or spirit’s relation to the body. He uses it to describe the connection of the soul to the heart, saying, “Since the soul is one, it is necessary that is has a primary attachment
(taʿalluq) to the body...and that [attachment] is by the medium of spirit (al-rūḥ).”¹⁰⁰ Since the soul connects to the body by way of what is first generated, Avicenna concludes that “the first attachment of the soul is to the heart.”¹⁰¹ Al-Ğazālī follows generally this Avicennian notion of the spirit’s connection to the heart in his account of the two meanings of “heart” in Book 21 of his Ihya’.¹⁰² Avicenna also utilizes the term frequently in his commentary on the Theology of Aristotle, especially when discussing soul’s dual attachment to the body and to intellect.¹⁰³ Although this term is utilized by his šaykhān, and although Ibn Ṭufayl does evoke such connotation in certain places in Ḥayy, it clear that he gives it a redefined, central role to the concept not found in his predecessors.¹⁰⁴

The first three passages we have already seen, and I will go through them quickly. The first is Ibn Ṭufayl’s account of Ḥayy’s altered attachment after he realizes the doe was something distinct from the body that she moved: “His attachment (ʿalāqatahu) was transferred (intaqalat) now from the body to the being that was its master and mover. There remained desire (šawq) only toward that.”¹⁰⁵ Next we find that after Ḥayy realizes that soul is something non-corporeal and distinct from the corporeality of animal spirit, his attachment toward spirit changes. “He dropped the physical and his attention fastened (taʿallqa bāluhu) on the other factor, which is called simply the soul (al-nafs). He now yearned to be sure about it (fa-tašawwaqaʾ ilā al-taḥaqquqi bi-hi).”¹⁰⁶

Again, we find the same paradigm in Ḥayy’s realization of the Agent. “His desire for it intensified

¹⁰⁰ Psychologie d’Ibn Sīnā, 261, my translation.
¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰⁵ Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 45.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 65.
(ištada ṣawquhu), and his heart was entirely removed from the world of sense (al-ʿālam al-
maḥsūs), and attached to the world of what is thought (al-ʿālam al-maqūl).”\textsuperscript{107} In each of these
passages, Ḥayy’s attachment changes along with his understanding of the truth, and his desire
changes in tandem. Ḥayy’s attachment becomes ubiquitous to devotion, and he is committed to
confirm and actualize that to which he is attached. Once Ḥayy has becomes aware of the ultimate
Agent, Ibn Ṭufayl reiterates the necessity that Ḥayy be attached only to it and nothing else. In his
imitation of the heavenly bodies, Ḥayy must be bound solely to the Necessary Existent.

His method of becoming like the heavenly bodies in the third respect was to fix his mind
on the Necessary Existent, cut away the bonds (yaqtuʿu ʿalāʾiq) of all objects of the
senses—shut his eyes, stop his ears, use all the force at his command to restrain the play of
imagination—and try with all his might to think only of Him.\textsuperscript{108}

The heavenly bodies are aware of and bound to the Agent alone, and Ḥayy must cultivate this
commitment. After his explanation of the experience of friendship, Ibn Ṭufayl makes explicit that
those individuals that reach the level of friendship with the One must be attached only to it.

As for the divine essences and the sovereign spirits all of them are free from bodies and
things dependent [on them] and at an utmost extreme above them. And they have no bond
and no attachment (lā irtibāt wa-lā ta`alluq) to it…but rather their bond and their
attachment is by means of the essence of the one true Necessary Existent, which is prior to

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 90, my translation.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 116.
them and their principle and their cause and their originator. And it is that which gives them perpetuity and extends them into eternity and endless duration.109

Within these essences, which include the celestial spheres and enlightened individuals like Ḥayy himself, the only attachment present to them is to the Truth itself. It was this sole attachment to which Ḥayy’s education led, and it was by way of lower manifestations of this attachment that Ḥayy reaches his end goal. He saw an object that, at the moment, appeared to be the truth, he became attached to it, desired it, and then followed it until he moved on to a higher specification of the notion of essence, which leads him to the Agent. There seems to be no priority between ta’ālluq and tašawwuq: they come into being simultaneously, such that what it means to be attached to something is to yearn for it, to have it in one’s sights as a goal.

Although it is clear that ta’ālluq plays a vital role in Ḥayy’s education and that it works in tandem with tašawwuq, it must yet be situated within the whole of the text as something that both drives and grounds Ḥayy’s educative progression. I argued at the beginning of this chapter that Ibn Ṭufayl adopts al-Ǧazālī’s account of tašawwuq offered in Ihya’ 36, and utilizes the term in largely the same way. Within this account, the object of yearning must (1) have been revealed in part to the one who yearns, although (2) there must still be some aspect of that object yet unrevealed. Ibn Ṭufayl’s discussion of quwwa relies on two analogous criteria for tašawwuq, that (1) the power must have experienced its proper object, and (2) this object must not currently be present and experienced. If one considers the progression of Ḥayy’s education along the paradigm of the Ǧazālian account of tašawwuq, one finds even clearer parallels. In each major moment of Ḥayy’s education, he develops the notion of essence or of an agent (both of which prove to be one and the

109 Ibid., 133, my translation.
same), and this particular inquiry begins after the death of the doe. After she dies, he reassigns his attachment to (what he believes to be) the “master and mover” of the doe. The fact that his attachment was transferred (intaqalat ʿalā qatahu) presupposes that he was already attached to the doe, a claim the text bears out. After she dies, he became attached to the notion of the agent of the doe, the essence of the doe, and as he progresses, this notion becomes more universal, especially as he begins to desire the realization the true Agent and the notion of essence simpliciter. Although the notion is universalized over the course of the investigation, it begins and ends in a particular: Ḥayy yearns for the individual doe, and he concludes in realization of another individual, namely, the Necessary Existent. Under the terms of the Ġazālian picture, Ḥayy sees and then loses part of his beloved, and his tašawwuq continues and intensifies as he uncovers more of it. Put in Ibn Ṭufayl’s terms, Hayy’s quwwa experiences part of its proper object exemplified in the doe, and, having lost its object, continues on a search to gain it, developing a clearer picture of that object and experiencing it in its greater fullness as it progresses. The most elementary way that education of this power happens is the process whereby Ḥayy becomes or makes himself aware of the Agent, even in its lower manifestations. Ibn Ṭufayl makes clear in his explanation of quwwa that a power must have experienced its object and had its object removed in order for the power in question to desire it.

So that as long as it is in potentiality, it yearns (tashtāqu) for apprehending (ʾidrāk) in actuality. For it had already been acquainted with that which is apprehended, and was attached (taʿallaqat) to it, and longed (ḥannat) for it, like someone who is endowed with

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110 Ibid., 45.
sight, and then becomes blind, so that he does not cease yearning (yashtāqu) for objects of sight.  

Our question then becomes when Ḥayy’s quwwa was first awakened, and whether it was in some way active throughout his entire education. In accounting for this initial awakening, one can account for an oddity in the story of Ḥayy, which is the extensive space and energy Ibn Ṭufayl devotes to the episode in which Ḥayy loses his mother. Ibn Ṭufayl devotes many pages to the discussion of the doe death, from her twilight to her final dissection and burial. One may be tempted to dismiss this attention by allusion to narrative coherence: Ḥayy is cared for by the doe, so Ibn Ṭufayl must account for his disappearance. But this claim is unsatisfactory. Ibn Ṭufayl is happy to include some narrative dissonance—consider the two origin stories, and the problematic reappearance of the ark. On this point, one may also adduce the way in which Ḥayy’s former family of deer quickly disappear after the death of the doe. Ibn Ṭufayl could much more easily had Ḥayy wander away from the doe at age seven, independent and brash, and simply never mentioned her again. He also need not have discussed the connection between Ḥayy and the doe in such tender terms, making them inseparable, and her his only companion. Given the polished and intentional nature of Ḥayy, this episode warrants careful interpretation in order to make good sense of Ḥayy’s childhood, which, besides the discussion involving the doe, is not given much specific attention. In order for Ḥayy to have desired the Agent, he must have had some inkling of it, and then lost it. Ibn Ṭufayl commits such detailed attention to the death of the doe because Ḥayy cannot begin and progress along his educative path until he loses her. The mechanism of Ḥayy’s education is the tašawwuq and taʿalluq that drives him toward the Necessary Existent, but in order for the desire

111 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 94, my translation.
to be activated, it needs to have lost its object. On this account, the death of the doe marks the beginning of Ḥayy’s path toward the One, and thus was Ibn Ṭufayl’s motivation for (1) spending so much time on the doe’s death and (2) depicting Ḥayy as being so distraught about it.

In his analysis of Ḥayy, the 14th-century Granadan polymath Ibn al-Haṭīb interprets the doe as key to understanding the text, arguing similarly that Ḥayy’s inquiry toward the Agent begins with her death. He describes the result of Ḥayy’s examination of the heart of the doe in the following way.

He saw that the parts of the body traced [back] to it, and it supported them from itself, so that he knew that that lamp was the hearth of that light (ḏalika-l-miṣbāhū kāna mawqida ḏalika l-nūrī) that departed from [her], and the secret (al-sīr) from which she was bereft, and he did not stop inquiring by thorough investigation until he knew the world of that secret. And he gathered information about it from the exalted things (al-ʿulwiyyāt) and about them from it, and he gathered information afterward by the trace of the cause (bi-l-athar ‘alā al-mu’aththir) until he knew himself.\(^{112}\)

Ultimately, Ibn al-Haṭīb sees Ḥayy as an Adam-like figure, citing the way in which Ḥayy guides and arranges creation as evidence. Interpretation of Ḥayy as the archetypal human being, in Ibn al-Haṭīb’s view as Adam, includes an additional motif, which is Adam’s separation from God. Ibn al-Haṭīb does not make this explicit in this passage, but the notion of Adam’s separation from God aligns with another, similar motif, which is the likeness of the individual’s separation from God to the separation from one’s mother. As I highlighted above, Ibn Ṭufayl’s account of the doe follows

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this motif, wherein separation from God is likened to the loss of a mother. It will become common in sufi parlance, and is utilized soon after Ibn Ṭufayl by Muhyiddin Ibn al-ʿArabī.\textsuperscript{113} This motif is discernible in \textit{Ḥayy}, and, given the educative path I have argued Ibn Ṭufayl develops, such a motif is even explicit. If we follow Ḥayy’s awareness of the concept of agency in its most straightforward form, we find that Ḥayy’s initial awareness is that of the “master and mover,” which he concludes is the reality of the doe mother that he has lost. Ḥayy may have been interested in his own singularity before the doe dies, but it is only after her death that the agent becomes an object of desire.

\textit{Conclusion}

After examining the instances of desire within the narrative, we find that Ibn Ṭufayl presents a model of desire that is a unique combination of the Plotinian model and the power among powers model. As such, the yearning that is connected to the Necessary Existent or God belongs to power, but is in itself the actualization of that power, which yearns always to come into actuality. In addition to sharing an adjusted Plotinian model, Ibn Ṭufayl’s account of yearning also shares the feature of being independent of reason. Again, I do not mean independent in the sense of it being against or even wholly separated. Rather, I mean that the yearning that Ḥayy has for the Necessary Existent operates outside of the bounds of reason, even if it carefully directed by it, and supersedes reason insofar as reason must cease as soon as Ḥayy begins witnessing the Necessary Existent. Ibn Ṭufayl makes clear in the prologue that reality of the the Necessary Existent is infinite and without comprehension, as well as being irreducible to rational explanation.\textsuperscript{114} As a result, Ḥayy’s desire


\textsuperscript{114} Ibn Ṭufayl, \textit{Ḥayy}, 11.
to witness the Agent will never be fully satisfied because it can never fully obtain the object, since its yearning is simply the power striving to actualize what can never be fully actualized. Again, we find that the non-rational nature of the object entails that the yearning for that object be ultimately unsatiated, and therefore permanent.

Thus to a large extent what philosophy is on Ibn Ṭufayl’s account is the education of desire for the truth, once this desire has been activated. We saw that he devotes much time to the explication of this education, and in this investigation we focused on the mechanism underlying his educative progress and success. What we found what that desire is the foundation of movement within this education, and that the rational endeavors Ḥayy undertakes—lengthy and intricate as they are—ultimately serve this desire for realization of the divine, true Agent. Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl has offered a counter account to Ibn Bāġga’s, namely, while in Ibn Bāġga’s account desire ought to be ultimately dispensable and was not part of the human essence, Ibn Ṭufayl places desire as the very actualization of the human essence, built into it as its unceasing drive.
Chapter 6

Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ethical Theory: Ḥayy as Instrument

Ḥayy’s pity on human beings intensified, and he desired that their salvation would be by his hands.

Although Ibn Ṭufayl has given us an account of what the ideal human being will accomplish, it is not the end of the story, both literally and in the sense that most human beings will fail to live up to this goal. One might still wonder whether Ibn Ṭufayl sees any hope for perfection of those who are not capable of perfection at this highest level. This question—in what ways does Ibn Ṭufayl think the philosopher ought to address or aid in the perfection of those who are her inferiors—connects us to two difficulties at the end of the text, how one ought to engage with nature and with the general human populace. Thus, before bringing this investigation to an end, in this final chapter we must address the final section of Ḥayy: his venture to the neighboring island and general renunciation of the world, an episode that has proven to be a thicket for interpreters. To what end Ibn Ṭufayl includes this venture and in what way we are to understand Ḥayy’s renunciation of society and the world in general remain unaccounted for, and they are especially pertinent to this investigation, since I have highlighted and argued that Ibn Ṭufayl intended to address political concerns with his text. Upon consideration of Ḥayy as a work of literature—that is, as constructed—and attention to the detail of his only political success (Absāl), it is possible to build an interpretation of the ending that resolves much of the confusion that ending creates. This chapter concludes the general investigation of the function of desire in Ḥayy, but also offers an account of the end of the narrative that both makes sense of the text, and remains consonant with Ibn Ṭufayl’s
political aims, for which I argued in Chapter IV. The takeaway is that Ibn Ṭufayl provides his text as an example of what he thinks the readers of his text should do: lead those with weaker understanding and provide a model upon which all living beings may fully flourish. The mechanism by which Ibn Ṭufayl thinks these things will happen is the desire he intends to generate in his readers.

In this chapter, I will offer an interpretation of Ḥayy’s relation toward the natural world within which the value instilled in other beings rests in the aid they give toward the perfection of other individuals. I argue that this value extends to non-human beings insofar as they individually and specifically aid in the perfection of others, in this case, of Ḥayy. Second, I consider the attempted political intervention at the end of the text. There I argue that Ibn Ṭufayl does indeed offer us a solution to the political ills of the second island by way of the mimetic system.

6.1 Ḥayy and the Natural World

Much has already been written about the moral status of the natural world and the political order in Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy. Regarding the placement of value in general, the role of Ḥayy’s mimetic praxis has been covered thoroughly by others, and I will not repeat that here. Regarding the allocation of value and the natural world, Kukkonen showed that in Ḥayy, “every living creature possesses a dignity and worth all its own due to having its own naturally given aims to pursue.” Adamson further showed that within the causal structure Ibn Ṭufayl offers, Ḥayy must imitate the Agent by acting providentially toward all natural beings in order to avoid harming their potential for flourishing. Kukkonen’s interpretation, that animals have some kind of inherent self-worth—I will call it the activity interpretation—rests upon the premises that they have inherent value insofar as they are purpose-driven effects of God, and that the actualization of these effects is better than
their mere potential. Adamson’s interpretation, that human beings must care for animals because the former are more perfect than the latter—I will call it the providence interpretation—rests upon the fact that, according to Ibn Ṭufayl, human beings are more perfect than animals, and that in turn, human beings must take providential care to ensure the flourishing of those beings less perfect than they. In this section, I want to add to this account of natural value by arguing for a third kind of value that Ibn Ṭufayl affords natural beings. This value is relational value, and I will argue that the relational value found in Ḥayy is the only value that affords individual natural beings self-value. By self-value, I mean value that proper to the individual as a particular. A second benefit of this additional appraisal is that it renders environments important and particularly valuable. I will argue in the last section of this chapter that this emphasis on environments—even natural ones—is consonant with Ibn Ṭufayl’s final appraisal of the life of the second island that Ḥayy visits and repudiates. Both points show that Ibn Ṭufayl had an even more nuanced approach to animal ethics than has been appreciated thus far. This account of value complements the inherent value argued for by previous commentators, with the result that within Ibn Ṭufayl’s system all natural beings have inherent value insofar as they have a kind of perfection proper to their species, and particular natural beings have inherent, self-value as relational parts of the perfection of other individuals, in our case of Ḥayy’s perfection through his education.

Natural Relations

Although natural beings are rendered valuable as effects of the true cause within the activity interpretation, it is not clear that this value is proper to any one given individual. The account of the value of natural beings with respect to God can be skewed in two directions. On the one hand, insofar as everything is an effect of the true Agent, each thing qua effect is as valuable as any other
thing qua effect. On the other hand, Ibn Ṭufayl allots greater value to things that are more sophisticated. On this account, the more complex and perfect something is, the more valuable it is. However, on both accounts, individuals in themselves have no value proper to them and them alone. A rabbit may be more valuable than a daisy, but that is not because it is, for example, this particular rabbit, but only because rabbits are more sophisticated than daisies. The most individual value one can achieve on this account is specific value, and this value rests solely on formal sophistication. As a result, individuals are rigidly stratified and interchangeable: it makes no difference whether this doe or that doe fulfilled the role of being Ḥayy’s adoptive mother. On this account, there is no notion of individual value in Ḥayy. Even though natural beings are inherently valuable, this value is not proper to each as a particular being. According to the providential interpretation, ethical obligation rests fundamentally upon the formal and moral superiority of human beings, and not on the value of the natural beings themselves. This providential obligation surfaces in Ḥayy’s second stratum of mimetic practice in which he likens himself to the heavenly spheres. The reason Ḥayy must care for plants and animals is that he is more perfect than they, and his level of perfection entails that he exerts providential care over the natural world. This motivation for valuing animals relies not at all any inherent value the animals themselves might possess, but only on the value and status human beings obtain by being superior.

Although Ḥayy’s education occurs on an uninhabited island, contrary to autodidactic interpretations of Ḥayy, his education does not occur in a vacuum: he is aided (at times quite crucially) by animals, until he begins the very last part of his mimetic praxis in which he likens himself to the Necessary Existent. In this section, I will argue for a new kind of value within the text, arguing that this relational value is the way in which Ibn Ṭufayl affords natural beings value proper to themselves as particulars. Then I will examine the constituents relating to Ḥayy’s
education, and argue that they have individual value on account of this relational structure. Before diving into the notion of relational value in *Hayy*, some brief remarks are in order, first, regarding the basic structure of such value, and second, in order to situate the concept historically. I take the basic structure of a relation to be such that it is constituted by the two relata constituting the relation. Thus, if one of the relata changes, the relation itself changes, since its constituents are different. The relations that Ibn Ṭufayl depicts are of two kinds: one in which both members of the relation gain some value, and one in which only one member gains value. I call the former a *true* relation and the latter an *instrumental* relation, since such a relation amounts merely to instrumental use of one relatum by the other, namely, the use of a relatum that does not benefit from the relation by the relatum that does. By contrast, a true relation is one in which both relata benefit from the relation, and in the relations we find in *Hayy*, this benefit amounts to aid afforded toward the fulfillment of one’s potential and attainment of one’s perfection. But how does this relational value provide a particular with *individual* value? By being a participant in the relation, a particular natural being attains individual value due to the fact that the relation is the relation that it is only because that particular individual and not another is a constituent of it. If the relatum were exchanged for another relatum, the relation would cease to be the relation it was, and would simply be a different relation. One benefit of this value is that it affords natural beings individual value that is not given by human beings, in contrast to the providence interpretation, and that is proper only to an individual, unlike the activity interpretation. Rather, the relation, insofar as it is a *true* relation, generates the value. The account does not rest on the fact that Ḥayy is a human being, such that he would be giving the natural being the value because it is valuable to him, but rather it depends on the reality of relation as such. Thus, if one has true relational value, one has
individual value. The relational value produced by true relation stands in contrast to that found in instrumental relations, in which one of the relata does not benefit by the relation.

The relation between Ḥayy and the doe most clearly exemplifies the inclusive nature of true relation, since it is a relation between a human being and an animal, and one in which both relata benefit, that is, in which both, by means of that very relation, progress toward or reach perfection. Besides Ḥayy’s experience with Absāl, it is also the relation to which Ibn Ṭufayl commits the most text. First, it is clear that he depicts Ḥayy and the doe as being in a relation to one another. The doe is Ḥayy’s primary caretaker until he is old enough to care for himself and gather his own food. Ḥayy in turn is attached to the doe, for which he cares when she grows old and frail. Second, both Ḥayy and the doe benefit by such a relation, meaning again that each reaches a higher level of perfection on account of the other. Recall that the doe found Ḥayy because she was looking for her lost fawn. By adopting Ḥayy, the doe was able to actualize her potential for motherhood. On account of the care of the doe, Ḥayy both survived his infancy, and gained, on account of the care he had for her, his first step toward the true notion of agency after she died. It is on the paradigm of this relation that Ḥayy continues toward his understanding of the Necessary Existent, for the doe gave him his first glimpse of the Necessary Existent. She cares for Ḥayy when he is an infant, and as he grows she teaches him to care for himself. Thus, she is the first being that Ḥayy imitates (foreshadowing mimetic practice), and for which he cares and nurses or protects (foreshadowing the second tier of mimetic activity). Ḥayy develops the notion of the “master and mover” into the notion of the divine essence responsible for the world in its entirety. Only by being in that specific relation does Ḥayy’s adoptive doe mother incite such investigation.

Although this interpretation of relational individual value is epitomized by the doe, it extends beyond her. Consider the second tier of mimesis, in which Ḥayy mimics the heavenly
bodies by caring providentially for the plants and animals he encounters, by helping them reach their full potential that in whatever way he can. By definition, Ḥayy’s relation to such individuals during the second tier of his mimetic practice is a true relation, since each relatum benefits and aids in the progression of the other: plants and animals are benefitted, and Ḥayy himself reaches a higher level of perfection by such activity. It may seem that the scope of true relations is rather limited. However, undertaking true relations is incumbent upon a human being as a human being. Recall that Ḥayy mimics the heavenly bodies because, as a human being, he shares with them the capacity to witness the Necessary Existent. Thus, what is special to Ḥayy as a human being is this power, which allows him to see the Necessary Existent’s providential care over the natural world, something in which the celestial beings aid. Since he shares in part of their nature, Ḥayy is compelled to imitate them as a way of doing what makes him “an ideally balanced animal, kindred spirit of the celestial bodies.” If one considers the implications of such practice for human beings in general, then Ibn Ṭufayl offers a much more radical and far-reaching program than might be initially suspected.

A remarkable consequence of this account of relations is that the desire one has when one is young is rendered valuable in an unusual way. Young desire is often valued, but usually negatively, as something to be restricted or restrained in a process of teaching the individual. Here, young desire can be valued positively, since in some form it points one toward the truth. The tašawwūq Ḥayy experienced as a boy was necessary for his realization of the Truth, and although it was not precisely correct, his conception of agency began his educative path. Speaking technically, Ḥayy’s capacity for witnessing the Agent was activated when he was young, and his

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1 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 114–5.
2 Ibid., 104–7.
yearning for the Agent began after the death of the doe. By activating this power, the doe and her death were directly responsible for the beginning of Ḥayy’s ultimate perfection.

Outside of the second tier of mimetic practice, Ḥayy’s relation to the natural world is largely instrumental. Since Ḥayy learns the nature of the Agent from his considerations of the natural world in general, Ḥayy’s environment as a whole plays a great yet passive role in the progression of his awareness. When Ḥayy becomes aware of the universal efficacy of the Agent, he examines all the plants and animals around him. From them, he learns that all things have form, sharing some forms and having another proper to themselves, and further that this form cannot be physical. All of these natural beings help to constitute and develop Ḥayy’s understanding of the Agent, and they help to educate and redirect his desire for it. Further, for a good span of his life, Ḥayy utilizes animals in various ways, eating them, cutting them up, wearing them, and so on. Ḥayy benefits from each natural being in this case, insofar as it, for example, kept him alive (having been eaten), or kept him warm (having been worn), etc. But the animals he ate and made into clothes did not gain anything from their relation: they were killed. But what about the relation between Ḥayy and his pupil Absāl? Their relation might seem to be neither a true relation nor a false one, since Ḥayy does not seem to get any benefit from his relation with Absāl (he has already reached his utmost perfection), but rather suffers in a way, due to his disappointing experience on the second island. Although Ḥayy wishes to help those on the second island, he actually fails to establish any relation with the individuals there, owing to his inability to understand what they need.3 But in the case of Absāl, Ḥayy is successful, precisely because he offers himself as an instrument by means of which Absāl can attain his ultimate perfection. It would seem that because

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3 Consider here al-Fārābī’s insistence that the ruler of a city, the one who ensures proper education, be “predisposed for it by his inborn nature (fiṭra), and…have acquired the attitude and habit of will for rulership,” al-Fārābī, Mabādi’, 238–9.
Ḥayy offers himself as an instrument, he stands in a false relation. But insofar as Ḥayy is operating within the human sphere, acting fully within human perfection requires that he aid Absāl, so that again Ḥayy, by helping another realize his perfection, is in turn aided, since he needs the other in order to act perfectly. Below, I will argue that Ḥayy is unable to offer help to those on the second island through his lack of understanding of the individuals there. I have argued in this section that Ibn Ṭufayl shows us two kinds of relation: true relation, by which both parties benefit, and false relation, by which one party benefits by using the other as a tool. Ibn Ṭufayl does not offer an argument for the reason Ḥayy must go back to the second island. However, he does ascribe two motivations to Ḥayy: pity, and a disturbance caused by the fact that he could not discern the wisdom, ḥikma, in the prophet’s use of symbolism and in the restriction of practices and duties, which allowed human beings to be more liberal than Ḥayy found necessary or appropriate. So there is an emotional response, but also, and this reason seems to be the driving one, a principled response that stems from the commitment to truth, a commitment Ḥayy has spent his life fostering and perfecting. And this response seems to be a reasonable one, if Ḥayy is truly committed to the reality of God’s oneness. Long before he encountered anyone from the second island, Ḥayy learned to see the Agent’s unity and activity everywhere he looked. Being unable to see it in the city drove Ḥayy to investigate and to attempt to ameliorate the condition of its inhabitants. Due to the lack of the inhabitants’ willingness to improve themselves and to Ḥayy’s inability to understand what they need (more on this below), he is unable to realize his commitment to the second island.

Historically speaking, the notion of relational value may appear to be anachronistic. Relations, nisab, were of course a large topic of debate. But the notion of relational value might sound more similar to contemporary ethical theories found in discussions of care ethics than the

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ethical theories of the time period in question. However, we have reason to accept such a reading as historically founded given the significant role offered to friendship throughout the tradition leading up to Ibn Ṭufayl. As a philosophical source for the importance of friendship in one’s ethical and philosophical endeavors there stands, of course, Aristotle. The philosophical and political import of friendship was not lost on philosophers in the Islamic world. Early on Abū Bakr al-Rāzī noted the importance of friendship for developing a virtuous character in his al-Ṭībb al-rūḥānī. The notion was important for al-Fārābī on account of its political importance, given the need human beings have of others. Most obviously, there are also the Iḥwān al-Ṣafa, the coterie that epitomized brotherhood, and referenced it often in their rasā’il. Miskawayh discusses friendship in his Tahḏib as something human nature requires for its perfection. We find also that it plays a significant role in Avicenna’s Epistle of the Birds, which Ibn Ṭufayl likely knew and by which he may have been influenced. There is also Book 15 of Ġazālī’s Iḥyā’, On the Duties of Brotherhood, in which he lays out the requirements of one’s comportment to a friend. I do not intend to suggest with this list that we find the same notion of relational value I am arguing for in Ḥayy. The vocabulary used in these above discussions is different than what find in Ḥayy, even though the goal of Ḥayy is to reach the level of friendship, wilāya. Further, Ibn Ṭufayl does not explicitly discuss friendship among human beings extensively. However, we do have a thematic continuity, namely, the acceptance that other beings aid us in the attainment of perfection, and that as a result

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5 On the notion of friendship in the Arabic reception of Aristotle’s text, see Anna A. Akasoy and Alexander Fidora, The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 424ff.
6 For the notion of friendship in Islamic philosophy in general, see Lenn Goodman’s entry in History of Islamic Philosophy, 198–215, edited by Oliver Leaman and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Routledge, 2001); Lenn Goodman, Jewish and Islamic Philosophy: Crosspollinations in the Classic Age (Rutgers, 1999), 134–45; and more recently Roy Parviz Mottahedeh’s entry in Alireza Korangy, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 229–39.
8 See, for example, al-Fārābī, On the Perfect State, 229–45.
9 See his Iḥyā’ 923ff.
a friend, and friendship in general, ought to be considered as something valuable, and something that ought to be maintained.

6.2 Human Beings, the Natural World, and Value

One of the most debated questions in literature on Ḥayy is the apparent ecological concern found in the text. Given Ḥayy’s stint as a vegetarian (Adamson more accurately calls him a “fruitarian”), it is tempting to extract an ecological ethic out of Ibn Ṭufayl’s text. Modern commentators have been circumspect on this point, highlighting that since Ḥayy’s final moral program requires complete denial of the natural world and everything in it, an ecological reading of the text is unwarranted and inaccurate, since his concerns are not properly ecological. In this section, I will take up the question of the moral situation of nature in Ḥayy from a different aspect. Rather than asking what Ḥayy’s relation to nature is at different points of his development—this much has been covered thoroughly in the literature—I will approach the question in a different way, by inquiring into the meaning of the very end of the story, when Ḥayy and Absāl return to the second island in an attempt to proselytize the potential aspirants there. This discussion takes us far afield from narrow topic of nature. But to clarify Ṭufayl’s stance on the relation between human beings in general and nature, it is necessary to investigate his discussion of human beings other than Ḥayy.

This remark brings us to the second problem I would like to address, Ḥayy’s political endeavor at the end of the text. This episodes forms an anticlimactic conclusion in which Ḥayy incites resentment in those he aimed to convert. After the failure to convert the learned members

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of the second island, Ḥayy and Absāl excuse themselves, return to their otherwise uninhabited island, and continue in their ascetic practice, with the result that Ibn Ṭufayl’s intended message is notoriously obscure. What is clear is that one cannot properly interpret Ibn Ṭufayl’s ethical program without first interpreting this most difficult part of the text, namely, what exactly Ibn Ṭufayl is saying about human beings in general. The most obvious and historically proximate interpretation is that Ibn Ṭufayl follows the Andalusi trend, including Ibn Bāǧga, in arguing that the wise person or philosopher must remain solitary in order to realize her philosophical goal.12 We might, with Kukkonen, call this interpretation a Neoplatonic one, insofar as the requirements of contemplation and unification with higher principles often seems to require a life detached from civic involvement.13 However, some interpreters have seen the relation of the philosopher to the general public in the light of Plato’s cave, offering the Platonic interpretation that once one has experienced the light of the truth, one ought to go back into the cave in order help others. Conrad argues for this traditionally Platonic ethics in his account of Ibn Ṭufayl’s attempt at a “socialization of knowledge,” namely, “No matter how a reader comes to the text, it communicates to him what Ibn Ṭufayl deems to be an appropriate message and challenges him to pass beyond the ‘thin veil’ to discern a more profound significance,” something he thinks Ibn Ṭufayl enjoined his readership to do.14 These two positions represent different ends of a spectrum of interpretation of Ibn Ṭufayl’s position on politics. At one end, the philosophically successful person must abscond from society completely because it is impossible for her ilk to be active in it, and at the other end she must engage politically because society needs her in order to be healthy and successful.

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12 A most recent interpretation along these lines is found in Taneli Kukkonen, Ibn Ṭufayl, 118–126.
13 This point is certainly contestable. See Kukkonen’s argument in “No Man Is an Island,” 202–4.
Recently, Akhtar has offered a new interpretation of the political episode at the end of the narrative. He argues that Ibn Ṭufayl intends to show that although he agrees generally with Sufi metaphysics, he does not approve of Sufi political engagement common to al-Andalus at the time. Rather than reading the text as a veiled espousal of a rationalist worldview, Akhtar refreshingly argues that, “The allegory attempts to synthesize philosophy with Sufi metaphysics and Islamic theology in accordance with scholarly trends of the twelfth century.”15 I am generally sympathetic to Akhtar’s approach to the text, especially since he takes seriously the political concern Ibn Ṭufayl expresses in the prologue and epilogue. He reads Ḥayy’s lack of success on the second island as indicative of Ibn Ṭufayl’s position that the contemporary mystically- and philosophically-minded ‘ulamā’ need to be more cautious about the problem of confusing the general populace,” lest “the general populace might lose their access to an understanding of eternal bliss in the afterlife.”16 Specifically, he claims that “Ibn Ṭufayl seeks to remind the reader that the Sufi elect in particular should be wary of confusing the general populace, and that neither asceticism nor philosophical and mystical conclusions should be made a burden for the masses.”17 Although Akhtar’s interpretation is certainly consonant with Ibn Ṭufayl’s stated aims in the prologue and epilogue to address pseudo-philosophers, it is difficult to see how it is applicable to the situation on the inhabited island as depicted. There, the individuals are not only incapable of understanding Ḥayy’s advanced spiritual accomplishment. They are incapable of understanding anything spiritual at all. Specifically, they are stuck in a staunch literalism that closes their minds and prevents them from learning anything. Akhtar’s interpretation of the second island seems to me to rest on its citizens being good in the first place, such that they do not need any intervention. Further, remember that

16 Ibid., 227–8.
17 Ibid., 230.
those to whom Ḥayy speaks are essentially the island’s ‘ulamā’, who should themselves be of the sort Akhtar claims Ibn Ṭufayl is warning in the first place. Although the political concern seems to me a hopeful start, it is not clear that the reading ultimately makes sense of the text.

Although there is no contesting that Ḥayy is not successful on the second island, it does not necessarily follow that Ibn Ṭufayl’s message is that the Ḥayys of the world must fail in society simply. Rather, such a presentation may function at once as a critique of a literalist society, while encouraging the reader to take from the text a model upon which a healthy, truth-focused society might exist. Ibn Ṭufayl need not present us only with a problem, but with a suggestion for a solution to the problem he raises. In the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that Ibn Ṭufayl does indeed offer us a solution. I will first sketch what I take the problem of the second island to be, and I will argue that we have reason to think that Ibn Ṭufayl intends to offer a solution in Ḥayy. Second, I will lay out what the requirements of such a solution would be before offering what I take to be Ibn Ṭufayl’s solution.

The fundamental problem of the second island is one of literalism. Ibn Ṭufayl claims that, “The moment [Ḥayy] rose the slightest bit above the literal or began to portray things against which [the people of the second island] were prejudiced, they recoiled in horror from his ideas and closed their minds.”18 This literalism, and the concomitant desire “to know [the Truth] in some human way,” results in a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of God and in ignorance about living well.19 In the end, Ḥayy despairs of teaching them anything, implores them to remain steadfast in their literalism, and returns with Absāl to his home island. Such a disappointment is both unexpected and does not help anyone progress in any way. Although in his introduction, Ibn Ṭufayl tells us that the purpose of writing Ḥayy was to make clear the secrets of eastern wisdom,

18 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 150.
19 Ibid., 150–1.
Ibn Ṭufayl’s assessment in the epilogue (and end of the prologue) makes clear that his goal is not simply to lay out a philosophical system, but to say something about its relation to politics and the human good. He claims to be more liberal than his predecessors in sharing this information, due to “the great number of corrupt ideas that have sprouted up and are being openly spread by pseudo-philosophers of today, so widely have they covered the land and caused universal damage.”20 He then specifies who the text is for and what he aims to do with it.

Fearing that the weak-minded, who throw over the authority of the prophets to ape the way of fools, might mistake these notions for the esoteric doctrines which must be kept secret from those unfit to know them, and thus be all the more enticed to embrace them, I decided to afford them a fleeting glimpse of the secret of secrets to draw them to the side of verification (jānib al-tahqīq) and turn them away from this other, false way. Nonetheless I have not left the secrets set down in these few pages entirely without a veil—a sheer one, easily pierced by those fit to do so, but capable of growing so thick to those unworthy of passing beyond that they will never breach it.21

Ibn Ṭufayl clearly acknowledges that his text will have readers of varying intellectual capacities, and he has taken steps to safeguard the truth from those who would be hurt by it. But he also intends for his text to be read by such a reader, since he intends to attempt to reverse some of the damage done by pseudo-philosophers. Since, the goal of the text is to address a political reality that Ibn Ṭufayl finds deleterious, we ought expect that he have something to say toward its amelioration.

20 Ibid., 155.
21 Ibid., 156.
The immediate problem faced by one who wants to maintain that we have an answer to the problem raised by Ibn Ṭufayl is that he does not explicitly offer us one. One might wonder for what reason, if Ibn Ṭufayl intended not only to diagnose but to offer a solution to what he saw as the current political problem, he portrayed Ḥayy as failing to offer that solution to the citizens of the second island. But it is problematic to infer from the lack of an explicit solution the conclusion that Ibn Ṭufayl thought that there was no solution, or that the solution was for aspirants to withdraw from society, or that society is itself incurable. These conclusions simply represent the problem Ibn Ṭufayl addresses.

If Ibn Ṭufayl were to offer a solution to the problem of the second island, what would such a solution entail? There are two criteria that have emerged: that the solution presents an alternative to literalist society, and that it offers a framework with broad applicability. Each criterion is germane to the problem Ibn Ṭufayl set out to address: the proliferation of pseudo-philosophy and the ensuing deception of the weak-minded. In order to ameliorate the situation, Ibn Ṭufayl must address everyone, and simultaneously correct and mollify those who would endeavor beyond their aptitude. This need is the reason he must not only address aspirants whose capacities reach the level of Ḥayy’s. If he addresses only them, and if his platform is accessible and appropriate only for them, he reproduces the very problem he aimed to highlight and to solve. Further, his solution must be active on two levels: it must guide weak-minded readers toward the path of verification without encouraging them to go beyond their means, while offering something apposite to the extra-textual political reality.

After Ḥayy’s frustration on the second island, we find one successful acolyte, Absāl. As highlighted by Kukkonen, the way in which Absāl realizes his goal is by mimicking Ḥayy: “Absāl

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imitated him (iqtadā bi-hī) until he approached the same heights, or nearly so.”23 Thus we have an indication that Ibn Ṭufayl still uses the concept of mimesis even beyond Ḥayy’s own graduation. This continued use of mimesis, and the success Absāl experiences as a result, gives us good reason to consider it as the solution Ibn Ṭufayl offers to the literalist society of the second island. Kukkonen has interpreted Absāl’s imitation of Ḥayy as an appropriation of Avicenna’s cosmology, wherein, “The celestial souls, or the proximate moving causes of the heavenly bodies, look upwards to their unmoved movers for guidance, while the unmoved movers themselves are allowed to recline in splendid impassiveness.”24 Kukkonen refers the reader to the threefold mimesis, but does not extend the value of mimesis beyond Absāl. Rather, he interprets Ḥayy’s negative appraisal of the islanders and his (unexpected) enjoinder that they stay devoted to their literalist religion as Ibn Ṭufayl’s judgment that most people will always be in such a weak, ignorant state.25 However, it is not clear to me that Ibn Ṭufayl is offering a wholesale interpretation of the way human beings develop in society in all cases. Again, we must keep distinct Ḥayy’s own assessment of human beings from what Ibn Ṭufayl might be trying to show us. As Kukkonen highlights, Ḥayy is deficient when it comes to guiding the islanders, since he does not understand that their character is not identical to his. “Ḥayy’s real failure is that he is too high-minded to engage with the rest of humanity in the ruthlessly pragmatic terms the circumstances would require.”26 With Ḥayy’s miscarriage, Ibn Ṭufayl at once critiques literalist society for the citizens it produces and highlights the problem with social abnegation. Ḥayy in fact had the tools to help those who did not or could not yet reach his level, since his mimetic program functioned at all three levels of his self. Yet, he does not utilize them, I take it, on account of a simple lack of social

23 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 154.
24 Taneli Kukkonen, Ibn Ṭufayl, 119.
25 Ibid., 122–24.
26 Ibid., 124.
experience. He claims that most people are no better than unreasoning animals, *al-ḥayawān ĝayr nāṭiq*, but does not connect this realization to the fact that before attaining his highest state, he had needed to train the part of himself he shared with the unreasoning animals, *al-ḥayawān ĝayr nāṭiq*. In fact, Ḥayy’s mimetic program covers those who operate on the level of unreasoning animals, on the level proper to human beings and celestial bodies, and those who are capable of going beyond to the Necessary Existent. Thus, the mimetic program which Ḥayy developed and completed can fulfill the universal criterion of a solution to the problem of the second island, since it can accommodate all people, no matter how low or bereft their understanding.

Further, one finds the Ibn Tufayl’s predecessors and influences discuss the role of imitation, *tašbih*, within a political context, often surfacing in discussion of rhetoric or poetics. For example, we find discussion of imitation in the work of al-Fārābī, Avicenna, al-Ḡazālī and Averroes. I want to raise some brief examples of the role of imitation in these thinkers as some evidence for the historical credibility of taking Ibn Tufayl to have intended to offer a mimetic program for his readers (and those over whom they had power). It will become clear that all thinkers utilized imitation as a method by which perfection may be attained, be it complete perfection or perfection to the extent possible for the subject. Thus imitation in this context inevitably fulfills a spiritual-religious role. Al-Fārābī discusses imitation in his *Mabādī* as the connection between religious symbols and the truth, saying that symbols imitate the truth at which the philosopher arrives through demonstration, specifically, that non-philosophers learn the truth through likenesses (*bi-l-miṭālāt*) that imitate it (*taḥākiyahā*). Avicenna also discusses imitation in the *Ilahiyyat* both regarding the planets’ imitation (*tašbih*) of the ultimate good and the role of

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27 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 106, 153.
imitation in politics and city-formation, as well as in his commentary on Aristotle’s Poetics.\(^{29}\) Last, although he postdates Ibn Tufayl, Averroes discusses imitation as length in his commentary in the Poetics as well.\(^{30}\) I raise these examples to show that imitation was not an uncommon topic and that it was utilized in a political context. Further, Averroes’ extensive and close engagement with the text shows that it should have been available to Ibn Tufayl in al-Andalus. As a result, we can consider the topic of tašbih in Ḥayy on two levels: first what Ibn Tufayl offers to the reader as imitative practice, and second, the way in which Ibn Tufayl sees the text itself operating as a piece of rhetorically intended poetry.

Related to this point is the question of the relation between Ibn Ṭufayl’s exposition and religion. Famously, Leon Gauthier interpreted Ḥayy as Ibn Ṭufayl’s attestation of the harmony between religion and philosophy.\(^{31}\) Later, Bürgel questioned Ibn Ṭufayl’s wholesale commitment to philosophy’s reconciliation, and more recently, Kukkonen has suggested that the two simply cannot exist in a society together.\(^ {32}\) It might be tempting to come away from the text believing Ḥayy’s curriculum is incompatible with religion as such, since he fails so spectacularly on the second island. However, this conclusion assumes more than permitted by the evidence. It is clear that Ḥayy’s program is incompatible with literalist religious discourse, not necessarily with religion in any given instantiation. Besides offering an argument for collapsing the two conclusions, one who would do away with religious reconciliation in Ḥayy has also to deal with the recurrent religious motifs, which, as Conrad has highlighted, often occur at crucial parts of the


\(^{30}\) Averroes’ Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s Poetics, tr. Charles Butterworth (St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), see for example p. 62ff. See also Deborah L. Black, Logic and Aristotle’s Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy (Leiden: Brill 1990), 83–4.

\(^{31}\) See Conrad’s discussion of this position in Lawrence I. Conrad, “Through the Thin Veil,” 240–47.

story. It seems to me unlikely that Ibn Ṭufayl would utilize such allusions as an appeal to authority, such that they would operate as a cover by means of which someone who is no friend to philosophy would be inclined to let philosophically controversial points pass unchallenged. Instead, it seems more likely that Ibn Ṭufayl uses them to point to *sympatheia* between religion and philosophy on the very points at which they occur. Further, Conrad points out that Ḥayy’s second level of mimetic activity “recall[s] the circumambulation of the Ka’ba,” and that Ḥayy effectively becomes a Muslim. Consider also al-Ġazālī’s encouragement to those with limited intellectual fervor in his *Miškat*, where he says that they ought to select for themselves “words that are nearer to you understanding and more suitable to your weakness.” Even those with less sophisticated comprehension can understand that “God is the light of the heavens and the earth in relation to the manifest, visual light.” But for those who cannot even be led step by step to this realization, it is better for them not to be misled by false and misleading imagination of God and his nature. When Ḥayy leaves the citizens of the second island to their outward practices, he also fails to connect these practices to those he himself undertook. That is not to say that the practices were identical. But the very concept of outward practice is not unfitting, since what matters is the conception of reality upon which one develops those practices. Although Ḥayy ultimately transcends his two initial definitions of the self (spirit and soul), and in effect silences their physical counterparts in his third mimetic activity, the first two mimetic prescriptions reflected real parts of the individual. Insofar as he was a body, it was right for Ḥayy to avoid eating more than necessary and to take care regarding what he eats. And insofar as he was a human being and therefore like

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34 Ibid., 260–1.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 24. Note how similar this warning is to Ibn Bāǧga’s criticism of al-Ġazālī on the same grounds.
the celestial spheres, it was right for him to keep himself clean and take providential care of the natural world. That Ḥayy was capable of surpassing these two levels did not render them false; it simply required him to leave them behind.

The islanders are already corrupted by their society, just as Ibn Ṭufayl might expect his readers to be. Their literalism prevents them from seeing the signs of God and his attributes, becoming self-aware, and it requires and allows them to be committed superficially to their religion. As Plato highlights in the seventh book of the Republic, implementing a new set of rules for an already-corrupted populace might require extreme measures. Unlike Plato, Ibn Ṭufayl does not explicitly suggest a method of implementation. But part of what makes the text powerful is the very ambiguity that challenges interpreters, since it requires readers to be self-reflective and to identify to which group they would like to belong, but also which group they might already represent. Thus, he requires readers to self-select, perhaps as a way of addressing such a problem. The far-reaching repercussions of the text should not obfuscate Ibn Ṭufayl’s implicit elitism. He identifies the most sophisticated group of the second island as no better than al-hayawān ġayr nāṭiq (which a careful reader might identify as the lower classes of society), rather than as human beings (which the same reader might connect to the celestial beings and second tier of the mimetic practice). The goal then would be to discourage the learned members of his community, the ‘ulamā’, from such behavior and to encourage them to be self-selective members of a more nuanced group of thinkers, a behavior probably easily achieved with most people who read Hayy. In doing so, Ibn Ṭufayl entices people to adjust their own behavior, something perhaps they would not do so readily if he were to suggest it in another, more explicit way. This methodology, in fact, may be his solution to the problem of implementation.
The mimetic program also functions as a paradigm according to which individuals could rise above a literalist understanding of reality. It resists a reading that would jump straight to the highest level, insofar as it requires a systematic progression. By having a place for a basic, physicalist understanding, it accommodates those unable by nature to rise above a literalist understanding. Further, by having a place for those who can go beyond this most basic level and see most clearly into the nature of human beings, it allows people to rise above literalism without requiring them ever to become someone like Ḥayy. And last, it provides a way in which each group can exist within a single paradigm, with tasks achievable by each group. Such a holistic, sophisticated picture provides a political environment centered around truth-seeking, such that examining and displaying God’s attributes is built into the structure of society in a way that fundamentally reflects the framework on the basis on which Ibn Ṭufayl developed Ḥayy’s education. This reading has the added benefit of accounting for the ending. It includes both a holistic account of the person and a holistic account of the social situation in which Ibn Ṭufayl found himself.

**Conclusion**

In summary, here is what I have argued. First, I highlighted that Ibn Ṭufayl intends not only to raise but to suggest a solution for a political reality he found injurious, namely, the prominence of literalism and pseudo-philosophy. Second, I highlighted that his solution needed to be universally applicable, that is, applicable to all members of the society, not only those who were of an intellectual capacity similar to Ḥayy’s. This requirement rested on Ibn Ṭufayl’s stated intention in the prologue and epilogue to Ḥayy. I must emphasize on this point that the fact that the text was directed at the ‘ulamā’ need not preclude universal application: included among the ‘ulamā’ would
have been the legal experts capable of ensuring among the general populace whatever Ibn Ṭufayl was suggesting. Next, I argued that there is textual basis for considering mimetic activity as a solution to such a society, given that Absāl is successful on such a paradigm, as Kukkonen has argued. Absāl’s imitation of Ḥayy is meant to remind the reader of Ḥayy’s mimetic program and especially its threefold structure, which is applicable to different intellectual and spiritual levels. In fact, there is direct parallel between the part of the person engaged by the lowest level of mimesis and the group that Ibn Ṭufayl would have said constitutes the largest part of society, al-ḥayawān ġayr nāṭiq. Further, Ibn Ṭufayl describes a group more sophisticated than this one, those whom he tries to proselytize when he visits the second island. This group is not as capable as Ḥayy and Absāl, yet they have more potential than al-ḥayawān ġayr nāṭiq. At the top stand Ḥayy and Absāl, both capable of the highest level of mimesis. I then argued that a mimetic solution resists a literalist interpretation, because it proceeds in a developmental order, allows those who are incapable of sophisticated understanding to approach the truth pragmatically, and builds an environment around truth seeking by sketching jānib al-tahqīq, the path of verification. And finally, in response to the original question posed at the beginning of this section, this interpretation has consequences for what Ibn Ṭufayl takes to be the individual’s relation to nature. Although it has been often argued that Ibn Ṭufayl gives us a paradigm that, in the end, leaves nature as we found it, the above interpretation of his political solution does no such thing. Rather, on such an interpretation, Ibn Ṭufayl tasks the majority of people with the care of nature Ḥayy undertook in the first and second tiers of his mimetic activity. I argued that the structure of Ḥayy’s education renders environments instrumental in one’s education. In the saga of the second island, Ibn Ṭufayl both identifies the environment of the second island as harmful, and suggests, by way of his allusion to imitation, that we consider the environment of Ḥayy’s education as the counter model implemented on a social
scale. On this interpretation, human beings are also capable of constituting a truth-seeking educative environment. But in the account Ibn Ṭufayl offers us, Ḥayy and the ‘ulamā’ of the second island are not able to engage in the relations necessary for doing so.

After arriving at the end of the text, one may wonder whether Ibn Ṭufayl has told us a success story or simply a failure. Ḥayy’s frustration and the discontent of the people on the second island render the last note an unhappy one. Rather than asking whether Ḥayy was successful, perhaps we should ask whether Ibn Ṭufayl did what he said in the preface he intended to do. In the epilogue, Ibn Ṭufayl offers us much the same account of his intentions as we find in the prologue. We find that again he highlights that his goal has been tarğīb and tašwīq, exciting desire and yearning for the path of verification. In the first part of this chapter, I argued that Ibn Ṭufayl’s aim was to address the problem of literalism by means of the glimpse of the path to the Truth which he provides in Ḥayy. I also argued that Ibn Ṭufayl suggests in the relation between Ḥayy and Absāl that those who are already at the highest level of perfection ought, when engaging humanly, to undertake true relations and act perfectly while aiding in the perfection of others. I take it that this is in fact what Ibn Ṭufayl says he aims to do in Ḥayy, when he says, “I want only to bring you along the paths in which I have preceded you and make you swim in the sea I have just crossed, so that it may bear you where it did me and you experience something of that which I experienced, and verify with the insight of your soul all that I have verified.”38 Here I want to suggest that Ibn Ṭufayl intends Ḥayy to be the instrument by means of which readers can take up this way of verification, jānib al-tahqīq. In fact, his position as a propagandist for the Almohads provides the perfect platform by which he may do so.39 Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl tries to do what Ḥayy cannot: to offer

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38 Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy, 19, 156.
his expertise and experience to individuals who, although differing in capability, want to understand something of *al-haqq* through a medium accessible to individuals of varying capacity. He thus aims to provide them a way of beginning the path of verification that will lead the reader toward a higher level of perfection, and his tools for doing so are *targīb* and *tašwīq*. In his attempt to produce yearning for the path of verification in the learner, Ibn Ṭufayl provides a picture of the education of yearning (*tašawwuq*) in Ḥayy as an example that itself incites the yearning (*tašwīq*) for the truth in the reader. In turn, Ḥayy, his education, and the development of his *tašawwuq* function as an image of what Ibn Ṭufayl essentially aims to cultivate in the reader: the *tašawwuq* for the Truth according to one’s capacity. Thus, Ibn Ṭufayl does what he thinks others should be do and what Ḥayy could not, and offers a concrete, layered approach to education and the truth.
Conclusion

I set out at the beginning of this investigation to offer a systematic analysis of the role of desire for God in Ibn Ṭufayl’s Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān. Having completed this study, it is clear that Ibn Ṭufayl’s conception of desire is complex, and if I was successful, I have shown that he combines multiple available models for placing desire within a philosophical system and within philosophical activity. I began by investigating the function of desire within Plotinus’s systematic metaphysics, and laid out for the first time the eponymous model of desire. This chapter also laid the groundwork for considering desire in terms of its function, a heuristic approach utilized throughout the study. I argued that the original Plotinian account of desire for the Good was non-rational in nature, and as a result of the subject’s limitation, this desire cannot be satisfied. Upon moving on to consider the Arabic translation of Plotinus’s thought, we discovered that desire, while functionally operative, is muted, due in part, I argued, to the translation of desire terminology from the Greek Plotinian text. This model, while Plotinian, highlights for the first time the connection between a rationally defined desire and the capacity one has to satisfy that desire. The desire for God as presented in the Arabic Plotinian texts is generally characterized as desire for unification with Mind, as a result of its object is thus rational in nature. In the third chapter I moved on to consider the Andalusian instantiation of the alternative model of desire, the power among powers model, in the work of Ibn Bāġغا, There I highlighted that although desire is important to Ibn Bāġغا’s overall thought and to his account of the human aim, it is not part of the human essence. In part as a result of its non-essential nature, Ibn Bāġغا highlights the fact that desire ought to cease, which happens through conceptualization and demonstration.
Following this examination, in chapter four I turned to Ibn Ṭufayl, and began a three-part examination of his thought by considering the framing of the narrative of Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān. There I emphasized the fact that Ibn Ṭufayl wants to incite desire in his readers for the path to truth. I moved on in the main chapter on Ibn Ṭufayl to examine the role of desire within Ḥayy’s life and education. I showed that Ibn Ṭufayl has a systematic account of the role of desire, and that the desire for God occurs in tandem with an attachment to the object of desire. I argued that Ḥayy’s desire for God, the true Agent, begins with the death of his adopted doe mother, for whom he desires and to whom he becomes attached. Further, I argued that Ibn Ṭufayl utilized a Plotinian, if modified, model of desire, according to which the desire for God was part of the very subject of desiring. Further, the object of this desire is irreducible to reason, and thus both non-rational in nature and unable to be satisfied. I ended the study with an examination of the end of the narrative text, consider both Ḥayy’s relation to the natural world and to society. I argued that Ibn Ṭufayl suggests sustained care for the natural world by offering a model on which people of varying capacities can realize the truth according to their abilities. This model addresses the problem of pseudo-philosophy Ibn Ṭufayl indicates he wishes to ameliorate, and as a result Ibn Ṭufayl both incites desire for God in his readers and provides the steps by which they may educate that desire.

In addition to providing concentrated attention to an under-studied aspect of Ibn Ṭufayl’s thought, this study has raised avenues for further investigation. One avenue is continued study of the relation between reason and desire, especially within a framework of desiring that I have called the Plotinian model. When the subject of desiring is itself fundamentally a desiring substance, a question arises as to the gratification of that desire, and whether such gratification is even possible. There may follow from the answer further ethical questions, such as in what way
ought a moral agent act if she knows her desire will never be satiated, or what is the motivating factor in ethical action if one will always continue desiring something unattainable. Another is what, in a situation in which one’s desire for God is insatiable, it might say about the nature of that God, that its subjects must desire always without being fulfilled. A second avenue for further development is in what ways we can rethink the nature of goodness if the desire for the Good, and the nature of the Good, is something irreducible to reason.

Further, there may be consequences of this study for different fields of philosophical discourse. The discussion of education in the chapters on Ibn Ṭufayl are relevant to questions about philosophy and education. The element considered most primary in education, especially in philosophical education, is normally thought to be reason, and although desire is usually treated as something that must be educated, it is usually in the sense of educated in order that desire subside, or get out of the way of real educative progress. Desire within the young is especially treated as something that must be shaped so that it may assist in reason’s quest for the truth, and to some extent this includes character virtues, which, although good in themselves, form the foundation for the higher, intellectual virtues that may follow. On the account I have sketched from Ibn Ṭufayl, desire, and even desire in the young, may in itself be something that points to goodness or to the Good, insofar as this desire is a basic constituent of the person. Thus, on this account, rather than being subordinated to reason desire is superordinate to reason, which may lead to valuable results when considered more broadly within discussions of philosophical education.

The role of the mother in in Ibn Ṭufayl’s account may also be well suited to feminist debates, both more theological debates about the nature of God, and questions about the depiction and value of women within the history of philosophy. Although within the Aristotelian
tradition women have been depicted and described in rather sexist terms, in the Platonic tradition there is already an established history of surprisingly balanced views about women. Such views certainly stem from Plato himself, but Neoplatonism, and especially Proclus, has received attention for its open-minded accounts of women and allowance of their participation in philosophical activity. Plotinus himself has much to offer on this point, and Ibn Ṭūfayl’s loyalty to al-Ǧazālī’s depiction of God as a mother displaying divine care may provide a fruitful starting point for consideration of the depiction and role of motherhood in this tradition. Further, Ibn Ṭūfayl’s depiction of the relation of care between young Ḥayy and his own mother is surprisingly prescient of contemporary discussions of care ethics.

Finally, the conclusions of chapter six have consequences for the ways in which we conceive of the philosophy of animals in this period of the history of philosophy. The model of interspecies support on the path to relative perfection for which I argued in chapter six may provide the foundation for further consideration about the grounds of human obligation toward animals. In addition, the depiction of the relation between animals and Ḥayy in Ibn Ṭūfayl’s narrative may provide an impetus for reflection on the ways in which animals really do share in parts of what is thought to be specifically human nature, and on the way that animals might be reflective of reality, since, for example, if human beings are driven by something non-rational, we might see ourselves in animals more than previously thought. These considerations may also provide fodder for consideration of animal value, and the way in which what we share with animals affects our assumptions about the extent to which and in what ways animals are valuable at all.
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