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## ■ LONELINESS AS SELF-IMPROVEMENT: IBN TUFAIL'S *HAYY* *IBN YAQZAN* AND DANIEL DEFOE'S *ROBINSON CRUSOE*

**MOHAMMED NASER HASOON<sup>1</sup>**University of Thi-Qar  
Nassiriyah, Iraq

Uprkos tome što postoje različite vrste usamljenosti – preuzeta, nametnuta, neizbežna, morbidna, ili „kolektivna“, koje na različite načine ispoljavaju svoju prirodu – neke su kreativne, neke nekreativne, prazne, neke smislene, neke bezazlene budući da ne prete nikome i ničemu, neke su vulgarne itd., svima njima je zajedničko sledeće – čovek oseća svu težinu zadatka da bude sam sa sobom i oseća strah da u tome neće uspeti. Temom usamljenosti bavio se Danijel Defo u romanu *Robinzon Kruso* i to tako što je pokazao da usamljenost vlada glavnim junakom; on živi usamljenički i preživljava usamljenost. I u romanu *Istorija Haj ibn Jakzana*, andalužanskog romanopisca i filozofa Abu Bakr Ibn Tufaila tema je usamljenost. Ovaj pak pisac pokazuje da se i u stanju usamljenosti razum može razviti nezavisno od uticaja društva. Ova dva pisca u svojim delima tako predstavljaju dva različita tipa „robinzona“ – srednjevekovnog i savremenog evropskog. Srednjovekovnog „robinzona“ Haj ibn Jakzana koga je opisao u filozofskom romanu XI veka samouki filozof iz Granade Ibn Tufail, a savremenog evropskog Robinzona Krusoa opisao je Defo u svom čuvenom romanu iz XVIII veka. Ova dva „robinzona“ odražavaju dva potpuno različita stava prema društvu, svetu, misli i Bogu. Ti stavovi, pošto su karakteristični za različite istorijske trenutke u kojima su nastali, odražavaju istovremeno i dve dimenzije ljudskog bića.

Ključne reči: kartezijanski, Defo, Ibn Tufail, individualnost, Drugost, religija, Robinzon, usamljenost, istina.

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1 Kontakt podaci (Email): mohammednaser@utq.edu.iq

## 1. INTRODUCTION: WHEN THE EAST MEETS THE WEST

It is no news that the Arabs, inheriting the knowledge of the great scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity, taking over elements of Chinese or Indian culture, managed to transmit to Europeans many universal values. They facilitated the transmission of Hellenistic cultural elements and contributed to the spread of the study of books. Through them, many Arabic, Indian or Persian legends and stories came to delight the readings of Europeans. It is well known that without the extraordinary contribution of the Muslim world, there would have been no Renaissance in Europe. This is the context in which Ibn Tufayl's philosophical work *Hayy bin Yaqzán* fits, a work considered to be the most original creation of the Middle Ages. Specialists have emphasized the Aristotelian affiliation of Ibn Tufayl's philosophy, its connections with the writings of great Arab philosophers such as Avicenna, al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, the transmission of this writing to Western Europe and the influence it had. Critics point out, on the one hand, the influence of this work on the writings of European philosophers Albert the Great (1207–1280), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), René Descartes (1596–1650), Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), and on the other hand, on fiction, the most obvious example being Daniel Defoe's adventure novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

Five centuries before Defoe, the Andalusian novelist and philosopher Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail wrote *The History of Hayy Ibn Yaqzán* (حي بن يقظان *Alive, son of Awake*), an attempt to show how reason can develop independently of the influence exerted by society: by its own efforts and by the impulse it receives from the agent intellect, human reason is able to unravel the secrets of nature and answer the most complex questions of a metaphysical kind. On the other hand, for others, the fundamental problem that the author tried to solve was that of the reconciliation between philosophy and revelation.

The figure of Ibn Tufail and his astronomical and medical works were forgotten to some extent by the fame and influence that his disciple Averroes reached. The only work that has come to us, *Risala Hayy ibn Yaqzán fi asrar al-hikma al-masriqiyya* ("Epistle of Hayy ibn Yaqzán on the secrets of Eastern wisdom"), was translated into Hebrew by Moses of Narbonne in 1349, who accompanied it with a comment.

The English Arabist Edward Pococke (1604–1691), first professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford, published, in 1671, the Arabic text accompanied by a Latin translation, titled *Philosophus autodidactus sive Epistula Abi ebn Tophail de Hai ebn Yoddhan*. Ibn Tufail's book, thus discovered five hundred years after it was composed, soon became widespread: in 1672 it was published in Dutch, shortly after it was rendered into English by Ashwell and again by the Quaker Jorge Keith (in 1674, which transformed the Islamic mystic of Granada in book of devotion for subscribers to that Christian sect, excited with its inner light). In 1700, the second edition of Pococke was published, in 1701 the second Dutch edition, in 1708 a new translation into English, by Simon Ockley, disciple of Pococke. In 1719 Daniel Defoe's work, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York*, appeared, and it is undoubtedly inspired by Ibn Tufail's account.

What follows is a comparative approach to Ibn Tufail and Defoe, meant to demonstrate not only the indebtedness of the British writer to the Arabic heritage of Europe, but also the differences and similarities between the two writers.

## 2. THE EXPERIMENT IN SOLITUDE

World literature provides numerous examples of what man is, and what he can be in a lonely situation. Sophocles's *Philoctetes* in Greece, Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, and Baltasar Gracian's *El Criticon* in Spain, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in England – all in the European tradition – and *Hayy Ibn Yaqzán* in the Hispanic Muslim literature are nothing but novel examples of situations raised by the philosophy of Plato, for example, or Aristotle, Avicenna, Descartes, Rousseau, Nietzsche. What is involved in all cases is to make the unusual experiment of observing the broken man, torn from society, thus facing his most pressing, serious and urgent problems. If society gives them, supposedly, resolved, in part or in full, the question is to know to what extent they can solve them alone, with their own means, without the help of others. It all depends on the answer, because it could very well happen that there were questions for which society could not only not help but even become a positive obstacle. It is that, basically, the problem is, first of all, in knowing the value that society itself has, compared to the individual person alone; and, secondly, to find out what kind of problems and needs are those that are at stake. And it is clear that, to a large extent, these problems and needs will be marked by the historical time and moment in which they are formulated or, more generally, by the philosophy of man and the world that beats behind them. And on those problems and their solution, the value of the society or the isolated individual will also depend.

But the experiment in solitude has another perspective: isolating man from his social environment, his true dimensions that might otherwise be hidden and still hidden by society, culture and environment in which he lives, will eventually become visible. There is no doubt that the historical moment and the vital and social circumstance of the hypertrophic individual or atrophy, on many occasions, of certain dimensions of the human personality that, on the other hand, are perhaps essential to him.

The two Robinsons, the medieval and the modern, depart from society, being confined to life on an island: the first, because from the beginning of its existence lives in it – it is not known whether for having been born on the island by spontaneous generation or for having arrived at its shores in a basket, new-born and abandoned by a princess from neighbouring lands – the second, because he found rescue on the island after a shipwreck. From the very beginning, there is a great difference between them, because although both intend to return to the “natural state”, however, the medieval Robinson does it in a more radical way for not having previously known social life, as Robinson Crusoe had.

On the other hand, what they want to put into play and find out is also very different. Let us consider the ending of the two novels. Hayy ibn Yaqzán, after having known the solitary life and then the social one, chooses the first one again, only accompanied by another person, Asal, with whom he agrees in his approach to existence. Hayy, who initially believed in the natural goodness of man, ends up being disappointed by social depravity and prefers to go on living alone, in the company of his friend. But that company turns out to be extraordinarily superficial, oblivious to the most intimate aspects of being which remains mired in the deepest loneliness: Hayy and Asal coexist side by side, juxtaposed, as mutual confirmation of their own views.

In such circumstances in the midst of the harsh reality and in total solitude, the castaway laments his fate, expresses complex thoughts, reflects on the human condition and expresses fears as a consequence of the social exclusion to which he is exposed. But at the same time Robinson is the king of an uninhabited territory, small but immense, he is a monarch who dictates laws and dreams of a slave. This is undoubtedly a political issue that Jacques Derrida underlines throughout the seminar that he dedicates in the years 2002 and 2003 to the reading of this novel with Heidegger.

That is precisely the ambiguity of loneliness, the sovereignty of the self over the world without others, and at the same time, anguish that there are no others. The Robinsonian drama in Derrida's reading is the human drama in front of the world, the man in the world from the suggestive and necessary interrogation of the most basic and personal of every subject, his world. There Robinson is a man and is all men in the face of the ambiguity of loneliness: abandoned and distraught in the face of absolute human loneliness, he is comforted in becoming a master and lord, absolute king of a territory without others. Derrida says:

Does solitude *distance* one from others? What am I saying when I say "I am alone"? Does it distance me or bring me closer to the other or the others? Am I coming closer or distancing myself from the others or a particular other by the simple statement that "I am alone," be it a complaint, a sigh of despair, or on the contrary the sign of a complacent and narcissistic presumptuousness? (Derrida 2011: 62)

It is true that Robinson suffers from his loneliness, he is distressed, he panics (Defoe is ahead of psychiatry for about 300 years describing the panic attacks suffered by the unfortunate Robinson), but at the same time he protects himself narcissistically from others, from enjoyment of the others, who could devour him cannibalistically or make him a slave, seize his assets, his achievements, his small objects of enjoyment.

The protagonist of *Robinson Crusoe* knew of himself that he had never done what was right, it seemed to be understood that what is right is not what everyone knows, which is gained through a standardized education of society. "What is right" is to find out, to get through search and risk (direct action on reality), by temporarily placing brackets to the public convention. Luckily, in full swing – even helped by his helplessness – Robinson will find, amazed, that the bitterness of his loneliness is full of gifts, and that in the disorder of his destiny there is profound order. From now on, the island is sufficient: from a space of wandering it becomes a place of founding. Loneliness becomes the "instructor" demanding for life in the world: the island is no longer escape, nor detachment – as it is commonly believed – but propaedeutics, exercise, and self-discipline.

The road to the paradisiacal euphoria of communion with others is utopian, exalted unless you pass through the radical-formative experience of the "wilderness." Loneliness has a sacred descendancy since cosmogonic myths tell about God's loneliness. Sociability is the "conspiratorial" act of man against divine motivation, which founded the world. Every human community is, from this perspective, a refined protest against loneliness.

### 3. HAYY, CRUSOE AND THE OTHER

For the reader uninitiated in Islamic literature, the story of Hayy ibn Yaqzán, the Spanish-Muslim Robinson, is, briefly, as follows: on a "Great Island", the sister of a "Price of a Proud and Jealous Disposition" marries in secret and gives birth to a boy, Hayy. In order to save him from the rage of the prince, she placed the baby into "a little Ark" and let him float on the sea, accompanied by her prayers: "O God, thou form'd'st this Child out of nothing, and didst cherish him in the dark Recesses of my Womb, till he was compleat in all his parts; I, fearing the Cruelty of this proud and unjust King, commit him to thy Goodness, hoping that thou who art infinitely merciful, will be pleas'd to protect him, and never leave him destitute of thy care." (Tufail 1929: 43)

And God provides salvation, as the boat carrying the child is washed ashore another island, where a Roe (or gazelle), takes care of him until he "attain'd the State of highest Perfection." Here is Tufail's account of the rescue:

The Nails and Timbers of the Ark had been loosen'd when the Waves cast it into that Thicket; the Child being very hungry wept and cry'd for help and struggled. It happened that a Roe which had lost her Fawn, heard the Child cry, and following the Voice (imagining it to have been her Fawn) came up to the Ark, and what with her digging with her Hoofs from without, and the Child's thrusting from within, at last between 'em both they burst open a Board of the Lid. Thereupon she was moved with Pity and Affection for him, and freely gave him suck; and she visited and tended him continually, protecting him from all Harm. This is the account which they give of his Origin, who are not willing to believe that a Man can be produced without Father or Mother. We shall tell 'anon how he grew up and rose from one State to another, till at last he attain'd the State of highest Perfection. (ibid. 44-45)

Eventually the gazelle dies and Hayy suffers a strong impact from the loss. But that emotional situation leads him to wonder about life and death, about the order of the world, about its constitution and cause, thus questioning all the principles of Philosophy. His final state of mystical ecstasy deepens as the culmination of philosophy and wisdom. Asal and Hayy soon get to understand each other, and Hayy decides to go to the island to preach the wonders he has found in his life as a loner to those who practice external religiosity. Despite his efforts, he is not understood, and is rejected. In the end, Hayy and Asal turn to the island to continue their practices of inner religiosity and mystical life alone, in no way constitute a proper social body and life. Basically, Hayy's story is a denial of the social and an apology of loneliness.

Robinson's case is very different because, having lived in solitude, he not only leaves the island, returning to society, but recreates it: he marries, has family and property, also reproducing all this, in the form of children and inheritances, giving the island willingly to the inhabitants. It is a denial or overcoming of lonely life, demonstrating, on the one hand, the values of loneliness; on the other, the convenience and wisdom of social life; and, finally, the essence and individualistic structure of the same social order and of the State, as a synthesis of the binomial loneliness society.

In Robinson's drama, the man apparently frees himself from the dangers of the other. His biggest problem is that he has to deal with the Other all the time, being someone taken all the time by ghosts, terrors, mandates and words that constantly resonate. One of the highest points of Robinson's anguish is when on any given day, walking along the beach finds a lonely footprint. Is it the final announcement of the presence of others on his island, or is it a hoax, his own abandoned, unrecognized footprint? That mysterious imprisonment captures him, encloses him in his small and strong fortress. He refuses to leave, makes sure he cannot be seen from anywhere, he is absolutely locked in the face of the possibility that someone may surprise him in his den.

The imminence of those other strangers is a drama he faces, and before which diverse elucidations arise: Who is that other? What does that other want? Why does that other love me? These are the questions that resonate permanently in their dialogues. Building a house, moving forward, exploring, maintaining a logistics of daily life, obtaining and producing food, and manufacturing various tools, are human activities in which he has a resounding success; here, he triumphs over nature, he is always in action and all this becomes a problem that, although it occupies him all the time, is clearly of the second order, because at each step, the problem that distresses him is the imminence of the encounter with the other.

Robinson is a lonely but absolute king on his island. The presence of the other as a footprint, or as a party of cannibals who periodically visit the island and whose presence is hidden among the trees, threatens such sovereignty. When a multitude of others appear at the end of the novel, he will need guarantees and they will sign documents to be recognized by the owners of that territory and of what lives there. Order everyone to recognize your total sovereignty, and others grateful for the rescue they are subject to will sign full of joy. Loneliness and sovereignty are two complementary circumstances: absolute sovereignty reaches it in the face of the absence of others, nobody threatens the free exercise of their joys, but at the same time they are empty and narcissistic joys in that lonely fortress. We are facing the other problem of loneliness, as a fortress that protects but at the same time contains. Robinson's problem is the other as missing. In the absence of the other, he is tormented among anguish, he fears being eaten and that the earth opens and swallows him, but he is tortured before the threat of his possible presence, being eaten, being enslaved, losing his sovereignty.

Robinson feels he is the exclusive owner of the island and everything in it, to the point of living as absolute king of it, with total powers in his hands. It is the staging of the bourgeois Absolute State at the time of Defoe. His dream comes true at the end of his days, making the island an effective object of inheritance. And in another place, seeing that it is surrounded by goods, flocks, farms, dogs, cats and a parrot, which is named Poll, who accompany him, cannot help but exclaim:

It would have made a Stoick smile to have seen, me and my little Family sit down to Dinner; there was my Majesty the Prince and Lord of the whole Island; I had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command. I could hang, draw, give Liberty, and take it away, and no Rebels among all my Subjects. Then to see how like a King I din'd too all alone, attended by my Servants, Poll, as if he had been my Favourite,

was the only Person permitted to talk to me. My Dog who was now grown very old and crazy, and had found no Species to multiply his Kind upon, sat always at my Right Hand, and two Cats, one on one Side the Table, and one on the other, expecting now and then a Bit from my Hand, as a Mark of special Favour. (ibid. 125-126)

Finally, the day he sees some canoes approaching with people on board, he has again those feelings of absolute dominance and power:

My Island was now peopled... My People were perfectly subjected: I was absolute Lord and Law-giver; they all owed their Lives to me, and were ready to lay down their Lives, *if there had been Occasion of it*, for me. It was remarkable too, we had but three Subjects, and they were of three different Religions. My Man *Friday* was a Protestant, his Father was a *Pagan* and a *Cannibal*, and the *Spaniard* was a Papist: However, I allow'd Liberty of Conscience throughout my Dominions: But this is by the Way. (ibid. 203)

Robinson does not see the neighbor – the other – as another self in terms of egalitarian, interpersonal, social and human relations, but as an object of command and dominion: he feels he is king of a territory and, for that royalty to be full, he needs subjects. It is the object and purpose of the existence of other selves: that they are subjects in their territory. Then there is the topic of people's dominance, and the liberal element of the bourgeois state, even proclaiming freedom of conscience, of religion. In the end, it is the desire to dominate the interiors, under the layer of giving them freedom to have the faith they want.

Such is his sense of royalty, of power over his domains and his cave that he calls "castle", only that this notion houses not only the idea of government but also that of defense and misgivings against others, of isolation of the self in the middle of the community. It is curious that, when he discovers some human footprints on the ground, he is invaded by such fear and terror that take away his dream and even take him away from God. It is then that his castle is less than a king's palace than the defensive fortress of his solitude against any possible aggressor:

When I came to my Castle, for so I think I call'd it ever after this, I fled into it like one pursued; whether I went over by the Ladder as first contriv'd, or went in at the Hole in the Rock, which I call'd a Door, I cannot remember; no, nor could I remember the next Morning, for never frighted Hare fled to Cover, or Fox to Earth, with more Terror of Mind than I to this Retreat. (ibid. 131)

Robinson embodies the maximum realization of the right of property, the ideal of the absolutist state that capitalism, instead of dissolving, atomizes. It gives the anthropological experiment that should reveal the constitution of that "State of Nature" that most political thinkers of the time speak of so much. In his *Second Treatise on Government*, John Locke explains:

To understand political power aright, and derive it from its original, we must consider what estate all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of Nature, without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man. (Locke 2003: 101)

It is not easy to imagine another situation more suitable for carrying out the adventure of self-determination of will than that of Robinson on his island. In this absolute state, in this society, ultimately, what prevails is the individual, the right to property and freedom, the three concepts being essential and closely linked. We are in the individualism of modern and bourgeois society, as Stuart Mill puts it:

The laws of the phenomena of society are, and can be, nothing but the laws of the actions and passions of human beings united together in the social state. Men, however, in a state of society, are still men; their actions and passions are obedient to the laws of individual human nature. Men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance, with different properties... Human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of the nature of individual man. In social phenomena the Composition of Causes is the universal law. (Mill 1882: 1066)

Ibn Tufayl's attitude towards society, before others, is not at all similar to that of Robinson: no symptoms of desire for dominance, royalty, submission of territories or people. The natural and human world, the island and its future inhabitants are seen as other selves, as subjects of exchange of consciousness, of ideas, never as meat of submission and subjects. Later we can see it with some added detail. On the other hand, Ibn Tufayl sees social life not as the only and exclusive form of social realization, but as the other alternative beside lonely life. He says thus, on the subject of the religion that was professed on that island that was next to his own, that of Asal and Salaman:

Now there were in this Law some Passages which seem'd to exhort Men to Retirement and a solitary Life, intimating that Happiness and Salvation were to be attain'd by it; and others which seem'd to encourage Men to Conversation, and the embracing Human Society. Asal gave himself solely to Retirement, and those Expressions which favour'd it were of most weight with him, because he was naturally inclin'd to Contemplation, and searching into the Meanings of Things; and his greatest hope was, that he should best attain his End by a solitary Life. Salman, on the other side, applied himself to Conversation, and those Sayings of the Law which tended that way, went the farthest with him, because he had natural Aversion to Contemplation and free Examination of things. (Tufail 1929: 157-158)

On the other hand, this society is seen by Hayy ibn Yaqzán in two different ways: one, before coming into contact with her and another after. Before, he is convinced of



the natural goodness of man and, consequently, dreams of a utopian society; but then, seeing the reality, he is disappointed by the ambitions, passions and egoisms of the people who live in society.

Hayy ibn Yaqzán comes to this disappointing conclusion when, after preaching his message, his inner truth, they ignore him. Hayy preaches to the men of the island and they don't understand what he tells them: things contrary to those that they had previously understood, whereby he says that they turned away from him, their souls took horror of the doctrines that he brought inside, they were irritated against him, although they showed him a good face, out of consideration for his character as a foreigner and out of respect for his friend Asal. People preferred to follow "along the common path of men" without giving entrance to the truth of Hayy even though they were good and sincere. In this way, Hayy becomes aware of the vices that these people have and the passions that drag them. Thus, he sees that his preaching was useless and that the greatest utility that the vulgar could derive from religious law, referred only to his worldly life, to pass the existence quietly, without anyone opposing them to enjoy what they judge their own thing; that they would not achieve the happiness of the next life, except for rare and isolated individuals, namely, "whoever desires the Hereafter, and pursues it as it should be pursued, while he is a believer; these – their effort will be appreciated. To all – these and those – We extend from the gifts of your Lord. The gifts of your Lord are not restricted" (Al-Qur'an XVII. 19–20).

Hayy realizes that, as a solution to human depravity, and as a means of coexistence, there is the law, but the law emanated from the supreme Truth, of thought, of reasonable and rational revelation. It is the law deduced from absolute principles. Interestingly, Hayy ibn Yaqzán, who did not know the law when he was alone, hearing Asal, accepts it. So says ibn Tufayl: "Then he began to ask him concerning the Precepts which the Messenger of God had deliver'd, and the Rites of Worship which he had ordain'd. And Asal told him o Prayer, Alms, Fasting and Pilgrimage, and such other External Observances. These Hayy Ibn Yaqzán accepted and took upon himself and practis'd, in Obedience to his Command, of whose Veracity he was very well assured" (ibid. 167–168).

In this respect, let us compare the soft morals, liberal morals tolerant, uncompromised and ambiguous, not deductive or founded on higher principles of bourgeois society, as Robinson puts it. It is a moral in which, hidden behind it, beats the individualism that previously showed. It is a moral that, if it speaks of God, it is not in a religious sense, but utilitarian and as a personal and subjective criterion of man. Thus, Defoe says that Robinson, once he saw some human remains that had been victims of cannibalism, hesitates to judge this wild attitude and thinks:

What Authority, or Call I had, to pretend to be Judge and Executioner upon these Men as Criminals, whom Heaven had thought fit for so many Ages to suffer unpunish'd, to go on, and to be as it were, the Executioners of his Judgments one upon another. How far these People were Offenders against me, and what Right I had to engage in the Quarrel of that Blood, which they shed promiscuously one upon another. How do I know what God himself judges in this particular Case? (Defoe 2007: 144)

These are, therefore, two types of society (that of Robinson and that of Hayy ibn Yaqzán) that are totally different. Or rather, it is about two different social dimensions of man. One, moral, religious, facing the ultimate destiny of man (with all the variations and nuances that I have pointed out); the other, dominant, stately, powerful. And in the face of the two social forms, two attitudes of man as an isolated subject: the moral, authentic individual who dispenses with corrupted society, departing from it (it is the case of Hajj) and the individualism of bourgeois society and state which carries with it the same characteristics of the State and society, as with Robinson.

And in both cases, two forms of morality and law: one founded, another unfounded; one clear, another ambiguous; one that springs from an interiority, another one of pure convenience and no social compromise.

But returning to the individualistic attitude embodied by Robinson, it is important to underline the epochal mood that he expresses, along the same lines as bourgeois society and state. Indeed, it is curious that Robinson's desire for power and dominance is also manifested in the colonialist and stately sense that pervades his attitudes:

He kneel'd down to me, seeming to pray me to assist him; upon which I shew'd my Ladder, made him go up, and carry'd him into my Cave, and he became my Servant; and that as soon as I had gotten this Man, I said to my self, now I may certainly venture to the main Land; for this Fellow will serve me as a Pilot, and will tell me what to do, and whether to go for Provisions; and whether not to go for fear of being devoured, what Places to venture into, and what to escape. (ibid. 167-168)

And when he meets Friday for the first time, that young man who will accompany him continuously until the end, which will be his closest being, the first thing he can think of is to turn him into a servant (the concept of friend seems to be excessive and improper): "now was my Time to get me a Servant, and perhaps a Companion, or Assistant; and that I was call'd plainly by Providence to save this poor Creature's Life" (ibid. 171).

The attitude of Hayy ibn Yaqzán, very in line with the values it represents, is totally different. When Asál is found, he who teaches to speak is this, not Hajj, although the religious foundations of the Muslim Robinson are superior to those of his visitor Asál. Moreover, Asál teaches him the religion that is practiced in his city, a religion of external norms, of laws, and that Hayy accepts: "Then he began to ask him concerning the Precepts which the Messenger of God had deliver'd, and the Rites of Worship which he had ordain'd. And Asál told him oi Prayer, Alms Fasting and Pilgrimage, and such other External Observances. These Hayy Ibn Yaqzan accepted and took upon himself and practis'd, in Obedience to his Command, of whose Veracity he was very well assured" (Tufail 1929: 167-168).

In this way he assumed Asál's honesty, in such a way he accepted his inner superiority (even though his was really unquestionable) that he decided to listen to him and be his servant in everything: "Upon which he address'd himself to wait upon him, and imitate him, and to follow his Direction in the Performance of those Works ordained by the revealed Law which he had occasion to make use of, and which he had formerly learn'd from his Religion" (ibid. 66).

Finally, within this chapter of individualism and bourgeois society embodied by Robinson, its concept of work and progress must be emphasized. Indeed: what dominates Robinson Crusoe is a labor desire, an obsession to demonstrate various aspects of work. First, make it clear that what society gives it can only be provided by its own means. Second, the important thing is to make sublime, great, that which is really as trivial and everyday as work is. The work that was developed in society in a normal way, remains in the pages of the novel as a true heroic. And this, because work is no longer punishment (within the classical and biblical conception of it), but a factor in the world domination, power and progress. Robinson, with his personal power (expressing political-social power) not only wants to dominate men but also nature. The world, which surrounds it, is not an object of contemplation but of transformative work, because Robinson is the man who opens the future, which advances material well-being, which is the important thing.

On the other hand, Hayy works to survive, but without giving importance to the subject. To the world, therefore, he does not see it as an object of transformation on which he pours his labor digestion, but rather contemplates and thinks it, in the way that we will soon see him. Its objective is not progress in the external material-transforming sense of work, but in that of deepening within, deepening in consciousness and in the sense of the world. Hayy, does not seek to manipulate the world but to seek its why and its ultimate meaning. For the rest, and consequently, Hayy does not believe it is important to prove to anyone that he can only do what others, collectively, do. What matters to him is to think alone, that which others do not think; he alone reaches the depths of consciousness and the world that others do not reach.

## 5. CARTESIAN CONCERNS AND THE SOLITARY SEARCH FOR GOD

The different ways of thinking of Hayy ibn Yaqzán and Robinson Crusoe have been mentioned several times. It is that behind these attitudes, deep down there are different gnoseologies and, behind them, in turn, different conceptions of man as a thinking being, as a *Ζωον λογικον*, as a rational or thinking animal, according to Aristotle. It is what he said at the beginning: at the bottom of the Robinsonian experiment, what is debated is a concrete conception of man. And, by contrasting the Islamic Robinson with the European, what we put on the table are two essential or possible dimensions of man as such.

For Robinson, thinking is reduced to mere calculation, to simply organizing the world mentally, in order to take advantage of it. It is a thought that resembles, on the other hand, when thinking about quantifying Descartes for which, seeing the world as a *res extensa* ("things extended"), is to consider it under the only point of view that provides me with evidence, which gives me clear and distinct ideas, for the fact of having been reduced to mathematics and mechanics: in the background, Cartesian thinking beats utilitarianism. It is also thinking even of Ignacio de Loyola, who organizes the reasons for and against, as if they were two armies that face each other, to see which of the two wins, providing usso tranquillity to our spirit, or ease to make any decision, all of which are nothing more than simple utilities that I look for with orderly thinking.

That passage in which Robinson says that “to deliver [his] Thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting [his] Mind” and to console himself, he wrote down the reasons for and against two columns, the bad and the good that he had in his situation, he began “to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the Evil, that I might have something to distinguish my Case from worse, and I stated it very impartially, like Debtor and Creditor, the Comforts I enjoy’d, against the Miseries I suffer’d” (ibid. 57).

Some examples of this two-column annotation: as a bad aspect, being separated from humanity (the corresponding good was the one who did not starve), and as a negative side, not having anyone to talk to or who can comfort him (The corresponding good: that God, miraculously, would have left the ship to rescue some things to meet his needs): “let this stand as a Direction from the Experience of the most miserable of all Conditions in this World, that we may always find in it something to comfort ourselves from, and to set in the Description of Good and Evil, on the Credit Side of the Account” (ibid. 58). The allusion to Descartes has not been futile. At another time Robinson says the following:

So I went to work; and here I must needs observe, that as Reason is the Substance and Original of the Mathematicks, so by stating and squaring every thing by Reason, and by making the most rational Judgment of things, every Man may be in time Master of every mechanic Art. I had never handled a Tool in my Life, and yet in time by Labour, Application, and Contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing, but I could have made it, especially if I had had Tools. (ibid. 59)

And, seeing that he spent a lot of time doing certain things, he concludes: “I had no Remedy for but Patience, any more than I had for the prodigious deal of Time and Labour which it took me up to make a Plank or Board: But my Time or Labour was little worth, and so it was as well employ’d one way as another” (ibid.).

The conception of reason leads Robinson to consider only as good and reasonable, the useful, what gives benefit. And elsewhere, he abominates money, not because in itself it is not valuable or for moral reasons, but because, in those circumstances of solitude, it is not useful. It seems, then, that in Robinson any trace of thought about good is absent as good, as attractive, as valuable in itself. We are very far from that platonic conception of good as solar light that blinds the sublime and grandiose. Returning to utilitarian thinking: when he ever talks to his parrot Polí, he does not do so as the one who carries out an authentic interhuman selfless communication, but as one who seeks a simple personal, mechanical utility; which arises when he hears nothing but his name, automatically said by the bird, because he simply repeats what Robinson taught him, without the slightest sign of personal contribution, of awareness of what he says, even when it’s about the fate of Robinson himself.

With this we reach the top of the mind of Hayy ibn Yaqzán and, therefore, to the theme of God, both in him and in Robinson. He uses the Bible he found among the spoils of the ship he was traveling on. He puts himself eagerly to read it, but not as something that gives thought and meditation. He sees the sayings of Holy Scripture as an instrument and means, to be saved and survive. In a word, he uses religion for his

own inner survival, for his own comfort, and does not live it as a profound experience that arose from solitude, or from the contemplation of an admirable world, or from an intimate experience of pain or joy. In this way, the dialogue with God that he often establishes becomes a business rather than a prayer, a deal between two beings, one of whom is all-powerful, as if it were a king or emperor, without there being any underlying mystery that seduces Robinson, or makes him kneel. Providence becomes Robinson's hands on a matter of simple calculated comfort, with the same rational calculation that measures matter to make it useful through work.

It is only necessary to remember the pros and cons that he manages to see the hand of a providence that watches over him, when he observes that spikes have grown unexpectedly for him, inadvertently, he had thrown some grains of seed of some old bags. The utilitarianism of the Robinsonian God reminds us once more of that of Descartes, who, after the demonstrations of his existence, appears a God whose sole reason for being seems to be solely to serve as a guarantee for the evidence of clear and distinct ideas.

Needless to say, the difference that separates the two loners at this point: Robinson and Hayy ibn Yaqzán. For the latter God is the Supreme Truth, mysterious, hidden, which we can reach by reason, up to a certain level, but which, to penetrate Him, we must go to other records, which are the purely religious of prayer, of intuition, ecstasy, love. We are facing a philosophical but rapidly religious God, in the biblical sense of the word. Access to God requires a prior rational effort, but on condition that it is only instrumental, introductory, of the other supreme mode of knowledge, the super-rational, reserved for transcendent truths.

Revealed religion is necessary for both, for Robinson and for Hayy, with the only difference that the former considers it essential, as he confesses when he instructs Friday. The second, on the other hand, sees it as necessary for social life, for greater security in the fulfilment of duties, for the general public, for those who do not have intelligence. On the other hand, the God discovered on the island is for Hayy ibn Yaqzán the true God, the one who gives life inside and from within to existence at all levels. In fact, when he finds Asal, he agrees with him on the subject of the conception of divinity and mystical union; religious laws are adopted because they see that they are interesting, because they arise from the divinity in which both believe and because they serve to live with others. On the contrary, Salaman is oblivious to this problem with his religious conception of simple compliance with external law. Hayy demands that this fulfilment be impregnated with the inner sense of God that he has discovered and shares with Asal.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS: FROM LONELINESS TO SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Robinson's labor and material (and even philosophical and religious) purposes are only achieved in society. Precisely the seclusion on the island and the experience of the loner are focused on demonstrating that man alone can also achieve all that; so much so that even in society, it must be constituted as a community and state of individuals. On the other hand, in the case of Hayy ibn Yaqzán, man's ultimate goal is not material life

or rational philosophy, but his ultimate destiny expressed in great wisdom, hikma. And this task is the responsibility of man alone, of the individual as such. Society can help, power can lead to good, the authority may demand compliance with even religious laws. But the ultimate responsibility is the human subject as such, regardless of society.

This is one of the reasons for the myth of Hayy ibn Yaqzán: to make it clear that ultimate happiness does not depend on the social, on others, but on man alone, on his inalienable responsibility, on his personal freedom. There is no alienation or abandonment of responsibilities in the hands of fellow citizens or of power. Remember, no doubt, this situation to that Platonic caveman that, coming out of it after breaking the chains, caught on to the supreme truth. This adventure was carried out on condition of leaving society and going out alone to the outer light.

The end of both novels is so different: Robinson has just returned to the middle life of the average man, having experienced the idealization of the trivial of material work. Hayy ibn Yaqzán, returns to his solitude, in the company of Asal, after having proven that society is either inoperative or even an obstacle to the supreme end of the contemplation of the ultimate meaning of life, in which contemplation is integrated into a single block: Philosophy and Mysticism, Science and Ecstasy, World and God.

These are the two aspects of man that the two Robinsons raise in their solitary experience: social life, normal life, life of laws and norms, versus or beside a life that freely assumes the personal project of existence, of interiority of consciousness that is taken as the basis of entire existence; scientific-technical rationality sewn to the social community that provides us with material goods versus life in solitude that plunges into the depths of what is beyond reason and calculation and looks out to the seductive mystery; existence, reduced to simple space and time, to quantitative and material needs, versus or next to another, open to transcendence, to the divinity that gives meaning to the whole and to the whole man, both socially and alone. Finally, there is the perception of a utilitarian, mechanical, rationally known, versus a religious God, transcendent, patent and hidden at the same time that drags and enchants man and the entire creation.

To conclude, what the two stories have in common is the loneliness that has become almost palpable in the two islands on which the protagonists of Ibn Tufayl and Daniel Defoe have landed in turn. The loneliness of Hayy Ibn Yaqzán is voluntary, intended by the author, but with a metaphysical purpose. Robinson Crusoe's is accidental, reflecting the Western spirit tossed about by a violent mercantilist movement. In addition, Ibn Tufayl situates his fictitious island in a well-tempered region, suitable, according to him, for philosophical speculation, one capable of allowing him to develop his thesis on the natural disposition of man to orient himself towards the Creator. Daniel Defoe does not stray far from it. Thanks to his strength of imagination, to the stories of sailors, he allows himself to locate his island in Latin America, but at the expense of geographic truth since he has never travelled beyond his native England. His protagonist spent a little over twenty-eight years on his island following a shipwreck before returning to the civilization. And to say that at first, Defoe was inspired by a true story about a simple castaway on an island located, somewhere, in West Africa. So his imagination did the rest. In other words, the two stories have nothing in common except loneliness itself as a starting point for achieving two different goals from every point of view.

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## SUMMARY

## LONELINESS AS SELF-IMPROVEMENT: IBN TUFAIL'S HAYY IBN HASSAN AND DANIEL DEFOE'S ROBINSON CRUSOE

There are several kinds of loneliness: assumed, forcible, imposed, morbid, or "collective". Loneliness may be creative, or empty; there is even loneliness with nothing at stake, as there is meaningful loneliness, and vulgar loneliness. All seem to share something – the ordeal of being with oneself, the fear that one will not be able to bear it in the end. In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, loneliness becomes the protagonist's tutor, he lives with loneliness and survives. In *The History of Hayy Ibn Yaqzán*, the Andalusian novelist and philosopher Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail shows how reason can develop independently of the influence exerted by society. The two writers introduce two types of Robinsons, such as the medieval Hayy ibn Yaqzán, in the philosophical novel of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the self-taught philosopher of the Grenadian Ibn Tufayl and the modern European Robinson Crusoe, as Daniel Defoe shows him in his renowned 18<sup>th</sup> century novel. The two protagonists present two completely different attitudes to society, the world, thought and God: attitudes that, being characteristic of the historical moment of each one, mark, at the same time, two dimensions of the human being.

**KEYWORDS:** Cartesianism, Defoe, Ibn Tufail, individuality, otherness, religion, Robinson, solitude, truth.

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