



The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl's Influence on Modern Western Thought

Samar Attar

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The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment is a collection of essays which deal with the influence of Ibn Tufayl, a 12th-century Arab philosopher from Spain, on major European thinkers. His philosophical novel, Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, could be considered one of the most important books that heralded the Scientific Revolution. Its thoughts are found in different variations and to different degrees in the books of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Isaac Newton, and Kant. But if Ibn Tufayl's fundamental values, such as equality, freedom and toleration, which the thinkers of the European Enlightenment had adopted as theirs, paved the way to the French Revolution, they certainly marked the end of the age of reason in southern Spain and the rest of the Islamic world. Ibn Tufayl's philosophy was appropriated, subverted, or reinvented for many centuries. But the memory of the man who wrote such an influential book was buried in the dust of history. The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment reexamines Ibn Tufayl's momentous book and its continued influence over contemporary philosophy. This intriguing book will appeal to those interested in comparative literature and religion.

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