

The Flightless Man: Self-Awareness in Fakhr al-Din al-Razi

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Abstract: The flying man thought experiment upon which Avicenna grounds his theory of self-awareness (*al-shu'ur al-dhāti*) and justifies the argument that the soul is an immaterial, incorporeal and independent substance, has drawn as much interest in the modern era as it has in the classical Islamic and Latin worlds, spawning various interpretations on what to make of the experiment's basic claim and purpose. Commentators of both traditions differ on the basic claim and purpose of the flying man experiment, depending the ontological and epistemological attitudes they emphasize. This study firstly tries to clarify the claim and purpose of the experiment, inasmuch as it forms the basis of Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī's criticisms. It proceeds to briefly point out the context of the experiment from Avicenna to al-Rāzī, and examine al-Rāzī's comments and criticisms thereof. Since he rejects the claim that the soul is an immaterial, incorporeal and independent substance, it follows that al-Rāzī does not understand the term essence (*dhāt*) in self-awareness (*al-shu'ur al-dhāti*) in the same way as Avicenna, who through the experiment, argues the exact opposite. Al-Rāzī rather interprets essence directly as the self, from which he proceeds to develop a distinct understanding of self-awareness.

Keywords: Avicenna, Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, flying man, *al-shu'ur al-dhāti*, self-consciousness, self-awareness, soul, body.

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Introduction

Contemporary neuroscientist Antonio Damasio reports that a patient with an asomatognosia condition gradually lost most body sensation over a short period of time and remained so for a few minutes, yet her mind and self-awareness did not diminish. While skeletal and musculature sensation faded in both the torso and limbs, visceral sensations, namely of the heartbeat, continued to exist. During the evolution of these unsettling episodes, the patient stayed awake and her consciousness remained alert, although she was unable to will herself to move and could think of nothing beyond her extraordinary condition. Obviously, the patient was hardly in a normal state of mind, nevertheless she was mindful enough to observe and give an account of the commotion with the following vivid description: “I didn’t lose any sense of being, just lost my body.” Damasio thinks that the patient would have been more precise in describing her condition if she had stated that she lost part of her body, not all of it. In Damasio’s interpretation, this condition “raised the possibility that as long as there is some body representation—as long as the rug was not pulled completely from under the mind—the mind process could be grounded.” Furthermore, this condition provided the possibility that some body representations, specifically those related to the body’s interior and more precisely to the viscera and internal milieu, to perhaps have greater value than others in terms of grounding the mind.¹ The patient’s experience can be partially viewed as Ibn Sinā’s famous flying man thought experiment. One may immediately notice external differences between these two: While Ibn Sinā’s flying man experiment can be experienced by any healthy person on their own (at least according to Ibn Sinā), what Damasio reported is a real case that can only occur in a patient with asomatognosia. However, beyond these superficial similarities and differences, we can ponder the deeper similarities, differences, and connections. From this perspective, we see that Ibn Sinā and Damasio follow different paths based respectively on complete and partial examples of the flying man. Ibn Sinā discusses, even if hypothetically, the perception of existence in relation to one’s soul, self, and quiddity in a domain where corporeality and any form of sensation is completely absent and views this as an admonition (*tanbīh*) to the immaterial and incorporeal self within us which we refer to as the “I” that is independent of material and physical circumstances. Damasio, meanwhile, takes the limited representation

1 Damasio, Antonio R. *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. 1st ed. Orlando, Fla: Harcourt, 2003: 192-193.

the patient had about her body as the ground for a mental process. While the body, physical circumstances, and representations for Ibn Sīnā are factors that need to be temporarily eliminated, even if just at the imaginary level, in order to arrive at pure knowledge of self and mind, Damasio considers bodily representation as a minimum requirement for the mental process and the possibility for its continuity. Albeit between two figures with fundamental differences in their approaches to what constitutes the mental and the bodily, we have attained a justified foundation for asking the following sorts of questions thanks to this comparison: What is the body? Is the body or relation to the body an organizing principle for the quiddity, self, and substance of the soul? Put differently, are the things we understand as the body and its physical circumstances or representations included in what we know as ourselves, souls, essences, consciousness, and mental life? If our bodies and physical circumstances are included in our “self,” which parts of them are and to what extent? If the body is neither part of the soul nor a mental existence and therefore not fundamental to the self, is it then something that needs to be evaded or sidestepped in order to completely recognize or be aware of what is claimed to be the real “self”? What is self? Is the “self” something that is fixed and immutable because it is completely independent from the body, bodily elements, parts, and conditions? Or is it something that is dynamic and changeable because it also includes the body and its physical circumstances? What is self-awareness and what does it exactly refer to? These sorts of fundamental questions have been asked throughout the history of philosophy with various expressions. Answers have varied depending on whether concepts like soul or mind were understood as something material and corporeal or otherwise.

As one of the most influential figures in the history of philosophy, the flying man thought experiment that Ibn Sīnā employed as a foundation has also attracted the attention of thinkers from the classical Islamic and Latin worlds, as well as from the modern era in relation to the questions listed above. Those thinkers have had varying opinions on how to understand the primary argument and aim of the experiment. Contemporary commentators on Ibn Sīnā have also struggled with how to understand the term “self” in the concept of self-awareness that Ibn Sīnā uses in reference to one’s self-consciousness: either as the quiddity of the self or as its totality, in a general sense referring to its existence. While attempting to ground the immaterial and incorporeal essence of self, the view that Ibn Sīnā mainly referred to the quiddity of the self with the concept of self (*dhāt*) has become the prevailing position that is also in accordance with the claim of this study. In this respect, neither body nor anything related to it can be part of the quiddity of the soul in

Ibn Sinā's thought. Most of his views on this subject have been shaped within the context of his metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological theories. Therefore, this article first will provide a short description of the place the flying man thought experiment has in Ibn Sinā's theory of self by referring to the relevant debates. The purpose of this will be to clarify the Avicennan framework that can then serve as the basis for Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's interpretation and critique of Ibn Sinā.

The flying man thought experiment has been widely commented on and criticized by later thinkers. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 547/1152), Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), and Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) are among the major names who have commented on Ibn Sinā's flying man. In this work, al-Rāzī will be treated as one of the early thinkers who accelerated the transformation from the commentaries and debates that focused on the ontological aspect of the flying man (such as the immateriality and independence of the soul from the body) to the more epistemological discussions that analyze the issue of the soul's perception and awareness of its own self. Thus the second part of this study will briefly address alternative employments, interpretations, and criticisms of the flying man in Islamic thought. This research aims to identify al-Rāzī's position from Ibn Sinā's time to his own and the time after him in regards to his interpretation of the flying man and his views on the various themes concerning the soul. At first glance, al-Rāzī leaves the impression that his engagement with the flying man is limited to technical and minor criticisms about the details of the experiment. The following question needs to be posed here: How does al-Rāzī understand the self (*dhāt*) in the concept of self-awareness? Does he share Ibn Sinā's ontological concern of laying the basis for the immateriality and incorporeity of the soul and understand the self (*dhāt*) as the quiddity of the soul? Or does he draw no conclusion about the nature and quiddity of the soul, at least from the flying man thought experiment, and understand it as the general existence of the *self* that can be what is referred to in its totality when one says "I"? If al-Rāzī rejects the implication of the flying man concerning the immaterial and incorporeal quality of the soul and takes a more epistemological position on the soul's awareness of self towards itself, then what is his position on whether the body is included in soul? Does he agree with Ibn Sinā? This study will examine al-Rāzī's comments and criticism of the flying man thought experiment in light of the themes that have been mentioned so far. Al-Rāzī's criticism towards the ideas expressed in Ibn Sinā's flying man has not received as much scholarly attention as the flying man itself. A study directly related to this subject was produced by Michael Marmura, who examined al-Rāzī's criticism directed towards

the third version of the flying man in his *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*.² However, Marmura's work solely focuses on the issue of the constancy of the soul's self-awareness in the first admonition (*tanbīh*) of *al-Ishārāt* and al-Rāzī's assessment of it. Kaukua's book on self-awareness in Islamic philosophy, which investigates the issue of the soul's self-awareness particularly in the cases of Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardi, and Mulla Sadra, handles al-Rāzī's views in a very limited manner.³ Eşref Altaş's recent article provides a more suitable background for this article. In it, Altaş examines al-Rāzī's views on the incorporeity of the soul and then reaches the conclusion that al-Rāzī had rejected the idea of the incorporeal soul and defended the position that the truth and quiddity of the soul are incomprehensible. However this work does not address issues like whether al-Rāzī had developed his own approach for the idea of self and self-knowledge after critiquing the conception of self-awareness Ibn Sīnā had presented in the flying man.⁴ Noting here that al-Rāzī's engagement with the flying man in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* goes beyond the first admonition (*tanbīh*) and extends to discussions on the second and third admonition regarding that which perceives self-awareness and that which is perceived by self-awareness is important. Furthermore, al-Rāzī's other works contain analyses of the self's awareness of self, the mind-body relationship, and personhood, as well as his approaches that depart from Ibn Sīnā and other philosophers that deserve examination. This study aims to carry out a tentative investigation on whether al-Rāzī, who maintained a critical attitude toward Ibn Sīnā's version of the immaterial and incorporeal conceptions of self, had his own different conception of self that might possibly explain his critical position, something that has not been dealt with in depth in the relevant literature.

The Enduring Legacy of Ibn Sīnā's Flying Man

The flying man thought experiment is Ibn Sīnā's expression of the Platonic/Neoplatonic mind-body dualism and has three versions: two in *Healing (al-Shifā)* / *Kitāb al-Nafs* and the third in *Pointers and Admonitions (al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt)*.

- 2 Michael E. Marmura, "Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī's Critique of an Avicennan *Tanbīh*", *Historia philosophiae aevi: Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ed. Burkhard Mojsisch and Olaf Pluta (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: B. R. Grüner, 1991), 627–641.
- 3 Jari Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 116–118.
- 4 Eşref Altaş, "Fahreddin er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati –Mücerred Nefs Görüşünün Eleştirisi–", *İnsan Nedir? İslam Düşüncesinde İnsan Tasavvurları*, ed. Ö. Türker, İ. H. Üçer (İstanbul: İLEM Yayınları, 2019), 139–201.

The terminological and methodological issues in these three versions of the flying man underlie the differences of interpretation among contemporary commentators on Ibn Sinā. The first version is in *al-Shifā / Kitāb al-Nafs* (Vol. I, p. 1)⁵ the second version in *al-Shifā / Kitāb al-Nafs* (Vol. V, p. 7),⁶ and the third version is in *al-Ishārāt*.⁷ Although both *al-Mubāḥathāt* and *al-Ta'liqāt* contain no direct reference to the flying man, Ibn Sinā expresses his views in these on the issues central to the flying man, such as the difference between self-awareness (*al-shu'ūr bi-l-dhāt*) and awareness of awareness (*al-shu'ūr bi-l-shu'ūr*).⁸

Because the aim of this research is not to directly examine Ibn Sinā's views concerning the flying man but to analyze the three versions separately, we will focus on the points shared among these versions in order to get a holistic picture of the thought experiment. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, who has put forth one of the major theses about Ibn Sinā's flying man in modern times, analyzes the flying man around the three primary issues this study will also consider:

- 5 Ibn Sinā, *Avicenna's De Anima (Arabic Text): Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā*, Fazlur Rahman (Ed.; London: University of Durham Publications, 1959), 15–16. We can reconstruct Ibn Sinā's points here in the form of premises: 1. The [flying man] FM is aware of the existence of his self without being aware of the existence of his body. 2. The FM affirms the existence of his self without affirming the existence of his body. 3. The FM is taken without his body; all that is left is his self, which does the affirming [i.e., his self affirms itself]. At this point, one may conclude that: 4. Denying the existence of his self is inconceivable, since it is a necessary condition for affirming his existence. 5. Denying the existence of his body is conceivable, since it is not a necessary condition for affirming his existence. 6. From (4 and 5) it follows that affirming the existence of the self without affirming the existence of the body is conceivable." (Ibn Sinā on Floating Man Arguments", *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 9 (2013): 52–53). In a different work, the premises and conclusions of the flying man have been reconstructed as follows. Premise 1 (P1): The senses of the flying man are inactive. P2: The flying man is not aware of his body (from P1). P3: The flying man is aware of his existence/soul. P4: What the flying man is aware of is different from that which he is unaware of. Conclusion 1 (C1): The soul is different from the body (from P2, P3, & P4). C2: The body is not needed in order to become aware of the soul (from P1, P2, & P3)." Juhana Toivanen, "The Fate of the Flying Man: Medieval Reception of Avicenna's Thought Experiment". *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (2015), p. 68.
- 6 Ibn Sinā, *De Anima*, 255–257.
- 7 Ibn Sinā, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt* (with *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*), In 'Alī Rūḍā Najafzāda (Ed.), II (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār wa Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 2005), 202.
- 8 Even though *al-Mubāḥathāt* and *al-Ta'liqāt* are occasionally mentioned as not having been taken into consideration enough in studies on the flying man, Black does talk about these two texts as she is of the opinion that Ibn Sinā's explanations of self-awareness in *al-Mubāḥathāt* and *al-Ta'liqāt* form the background of the flying man: "But Avicenna's reflections on the nature of self-awareness and self-consciousness are by no means confined to the various versions of the Flying Man. Two of Avicenna's latest works, the Investigations [*al-Mubāḥathāt*] and the Notes [*al-Ta'liqāt*], contain numerous discussions of the soul's awareness of itself." Deborah L. Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows", *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition* (Logic, Epistemology, and The Unity of Science 11), ed. Shahid Rahman, Tony Street, Hassan Tahiri (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 63–64.

- 1) Is “*dhāt*” understood in the flying man as quiddity or self?
- 2) What is the actual thesis Ibn Sinā draws support from when he devises the experiment?
- 3) What is the logical status of the story of the flying man?⁹

Both Ibn Sinā’s own narrative of the flying man as well as the criticisms and interpretations made after him, including those from al-Rāzī, can be comprehended with the help of these three issues. To this end, this section will outline the flying man thought experiment within the framework of these three problems by also taking some contemporary interpreters of Ibn Sinā into consideration. Standing out among the contemporary commentators are Marmura,¹⁰ Druart,¹¹ Hasse,¹² Black¹³, Lopez-Farjeat,¹⁴ Alwishah,¹⁵ Kaukua,¹⁶ and most recently Adamson-Benvich.¹⁷ We can turn to them for the main issues that have been discussed around the flying man.

Concerning the first problem, Ibn Sinā begins with the aim of determining the quiddity of the soul in the first version of the flying man as mentioned in *al-Shifā* (*Kitāb al-Nafs*) and carries out an investigation into the possibility of a man assumed to be floating in the air or a void to be able to assert his self-existence. This man eventually rises above all doubt in terms of affirming his self and asserts the existence of his soul, which is neither his body nor its parts. The second version of the flying man (*al-Shifā/ al-Nafs*, Vol. V, p. 7) mentions that what the person under these same circumstances apprehends is *inniyya*, which can also be understood as one’s self-existence. The problem of understanding the term self (*dhāt*) in terms of self-awareness, which Ibn Sinā used as an admonition for the existence of the flying

- 9 Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna’s De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300* (London: The Warburg Institute, 2000), 81.
- 10 Michael Marmura, “Avicenna’s ‘Flying Man’ in Context”, *The Monist* 69, 3rd ed. (July 1986): 383–395.
- 11 T.-A. Druart (Ed.), “The Soul and Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes,” *Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction* (Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1988), 27–49.
- 12 Hasse, *Avicenna’s De Anima*.
- 13 Black, “Avicenna on Self-Awareness”, 63–87.
- 14 Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, “Self-Awareness (*al-shu’ūr bi-l-dhāt*) in Human and Non-Human Animals in Avicenna’s Psychological Writings,” *Oikeiosis and the Natural Bases of Morality: From Classical Stoicism to Modern Philosophy*, A. G. Vigo (Ed.; Hildesheim, Zürich & New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2012), 121–140.
- 15 Alwishah, “Ibn Sinā on Floating Man Arguments,” 49–71.
- 16 Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*.
- 17 P. Adamson & F. Benvich, “The Thought Experimental Method: Avicenna’s Flying Man Argument”, *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 4(2/Summer 2018): 147–164. Online edition retrieved 10/18/2018 from: <https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2018.2>

man in these two versions, has led his commenters to have different opinions. In this context, some understand *dhāt* to correspond with quiddity (*māhiyya*) or, more precisely, the quiddity of the soul, while others consider it to mean the self. This preference has significant implications for al-Rāzī's criticisms on the flying man and, as such, self-awareness as much as it relates to what Ibn Sīnā means by *dhāt*. If Ibn Sīnā intends quiddity of the self with *dhāt*, then the self-existence that we become aware of will have the same connotation with the quiddity of self; however, in case where self is what is meant by *dhāt*, then the equality between the quiddity of the soul and self cannot be easily established. In the issue of whether to understand *dhāt* as quiddity or self, Hasse draws on the concept of *inniyya* as mentioned in the second version of the flying man in addition to the concept of *dhāt* from the first version. According to Hasse, if *dhāt* and *'inniyya* are terms that can be used interchangeably in Ibn Sīnā's two versions, then even though *dhāt* can correspond with the *self*, the same will not be possible for *inniyya*. Therefore, Ibn Sīnā uses *dhāt* to refer to quiddity, not to self. Hasse's reasoning seems to be supported by Ibn Sīnā's emphases in *al-Shifā/al-Nafs* immediately preceding the flying man. In this passage, Ibn Sīnā states that up until that section, the soul had been discussed as the soul in connection with matter and movement, or the soul as perfection. He states that such a conception of the soul does not reveal its essence, substance, or quiddity, and that this is what will be investigated next with the flying man after this section.¹⁸ While Hasse did not preclude the possibility of self as an option (but made it very unlikely), these sorts of evidence did justify his view where the concept of *dhāt* means *quiddity* more.¹⁹ Hasse claims that the inference one needs to draw concerning the question of what Ibn Sīnā wants to demonstrate with the thought experiment is not that "the Flying Man affirms his own existence, therefore the soul exists independently from the body." The correct inference should rather be that "the Flying Man affirms the existence of essence not his body, therefore the soul -being this essence- exists independently from the body." Thus the thing the Flying man is aware of is not the self or the conscious of his existence or personal identity. Rather it is the affirmation of his core entity, his essence known as the soul. Consequently, Ibn Sīnā has shifted from the flying man

18 Ibn Sīnā, *De Anima*, 10–11, 15.

19 Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 82–84. Adamson and Benevich also discuss whether *dhāt* refers to the *quiddity* or to the *self*. They emphasize that, in the first version of the experiment, the flying man does not affirm the essence of his soul but rather his own essence. Nevertheless, they agree with Hasse's position that what is meant is quiddity (or essence in their own words). Adamson & Benevich, "The Thought Experimental Method," Vol. 4, 2nd ed. (2018): 147–164.

experiment to a more general conclusion, and the term ‘*dhāt*’ in the meaning of quiddity has been replaced by the word soul (*nafs* or to be faithful to Hasse’s words, “with the immaterial and incorporeal soul”).²⁰ Consequently, the Avicennan system substantiates selfhood and soul to a degree that does not accept differentiation between the quiddity of the flying man’s self and the quiddity of the soul; it makes the question of whether quiddity belongs to the flying man or the soul irrelevant. As you will see later on, this sort of reading dominates al-Rāzi’s evaluation of the flying man. In order for al-Rāzi’s interpretation and criticism of the flying man to be meaningful, Ibn Sīnā firstly has to understand and intend the quiddity of soul from *dhāt* and secondly needs to equate the soul’s quiddity with the self. Kaukua opposes Hasse’s claim that what is intended in the flying man is not related to self-awareness. He argues that if Hasse’s claim were valid, it would be incoherent with the specific conditions he discusses in the context of the thought experiment. Thus Kaukua finds Hasse’s arguments insufficient and claims that the flying man argument “hinges on the phenomenon of self-awareness.”²¹

- 20 Hasse, *Avicenna’s De Anima*, 86–87. Adamson & Benevich also mention the debate on whether the flying man argument involves “an illegitimate form of inference,” a shift from the claim that he was conscious of his own quiddity to the claim that the flying man was conscious of the essence of his soul. Is the flying man really aware of the soul or essence/quiddity of his own individual soul? According to them, no difference exists in this distinction, and the flying man is just his soul; from Ibn Sīnā’s viewpoint, this is exactly so. “Otherwise, the connection of his incorporeal soul or self to the body could not be accidental and his personal identity would not continue after the death of his body.” In fact, in *al-Shifā/al-Nafs*, Vol. I, p. 1, Ibn Sīnā actually writes the following: “Therefore, as to the essence whose existence he [the flying man] affirms, it is specific (*khāṣiyya*) for it that it is identical to him (*annahā huwa bi-‘aynih*) and distinct from his body or his limbs, which he has not affirmed.” (Adamson & Benevich, “The Thought Experimental Method,” 16). Marmura also criticized Ibn Sīnā’s flying man thought experiment for having an illicit shift. In his view, the flying man “operates within an imagined, hypothetical framework” and therefore its conclusion has to be “hypothetical and tentative.” However, Marmura argues that Ibn Sīnā makes “an unwarranted swerve from the hypothetical to the categorical.” The language of Ibn Sīnā’s conclusion is categorical and the other versions of the flying man also show that Ibn Sīnā intended the conclusion to be categorical. Marmura further adds that Ibn Sīnā’s logical writings also contain instances in which a similar hypothetical example is used for categorical ends. According to Marmura, the flying man argument without any discussion assumes the very thing it aims to prove, an immaterial self capable of self-awareness. See Marmura, “Avicenna’s ‘Flying Man’ in Context”, 388. Hasse on the other hand doesn’t see any need to accuse Ibn Sīnā of employing a hypothetical example for a categorical conclusion as the experiment is meant to be an admonition. Hasse, *Avicenna’s De Anima*, 87.
- 21 Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*, 38–42. Kaukua uses *dhāt* for the self as frequently as he does for quiddity. See J. Kaukua & T. Kukkonen, “Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness: Before and After Avicenna,” in ed. S. Heinämaa, V. Lähteenmäki, & P. Remes (Eds.) *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 108. Druart also pointed out much earlier that the closeness of Ibn Sīnā’s terminology makes it difficult to identify whether what he intended was quiddity or self. Druart himself tends toward understanding *dhāt* as *self* by considering Ibn Sīnā’s views on issues like the unity and continuity of consciousness and subject and the identity of the subject of consciousness and action. Druart, *The Soul and Body Problem*, 34.

The two issues Ibn Sīnā discussed in relation to awareness (*shu'ūr*) are not in *al-Shifā/al-Nafs* but can be found in his other works such as *al-Ishārāt*, *al-Mubāhathāt*, and *al-Ta'liqāt*. In *al-Ishārāt*, Ibn Sīnā investigates that which is aware of *dhāt* or that apprehends *dhāt* as being on one side and the thing which is apprehended as being on the other. Meanwhile, the distinction between self-awareness (*al-shu'ūr bi-l-dhāt*) and awareness of awareness (*al-shu'ūr bi-l-shu'ūr*) is discussed in *al-Mubāhathāt* and *al-Ta'liqāt*.

Examining the debate over determining that which is aware of *dhāt* or becomes aware as *dhāt* and the thing which is being made aware is worthwhile, as this debate is related to the first problem concerning the flying man as well as to its potential for preparing the groundwork to discuss al-Rāzī's evaluation of the subject in his commentary on *al-Ishārāt*. This issue is also important for its relation to the issue of including/excluding the body and its physical circumstances in/from the soul, which has been pointed out in the introduction of the article and in the previous section as part of the debate on understanding *dhāt* (whether as quiddity or self). Ibn Sīnā begins by investigating the possibilities that may exist for that which is aware of *dhāt* or that which becomes aware as *dhāt* and he rules out the internal senses and mind from this possibility. Another option Ibn Sīnā eliminates is the possibility of becoming aware of *dhāt* through an intermediary such as the actions of the *dhāt*. Therefore, according to Ibn Sīnā, a person becomes aware of his *dhāt* either through other faculties or without intermediaries.²² In a similar vein, another issue Ibn Sīnā examines is the determination of what is being made aware of as *dhāt*. This issue was already partially pointed out above in the discussion on whether *dhāt* refers to quiddity or self. If we read Ibn Sīnā's statements more systematically alongside al-Rāzī's comments, three possibilities emerge here. Accordingly, the thing that is being made aware of as *dhāt* is either the external or internal parts of the body or the entire body. Ibn Sīnā eliminates all of these possibilities and arrives at the conclusion that what we become aware of as our *dhāt* is something that cannot be apprehended by the senses or sense-like perceptions.²³ Ibn Sīnā is understood to want to exclude all sorts of incorporeity from the scope of *dhāt* and self.²⁴ If Ibn Sīnā went to the flying

22 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt*, II: 205, 208.

23 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt*, II: 206–207.

24 Ibn Sīnā, *De Anima*, 255–257. Ibn Sīnā draws our attention to six things here: “the soul/self cannot be a body, or the parts of a body; b) the body is an instrument of the self and, if we could imagine it without a body or without some part of our body (or maybe in another body), this would not mean that we would lose our self; c) if the self were reducible to a body or a part of the body, then the perception of the self would be identical to the perception of that body or of that part of the body; d) if the self

man while investigating the *dhāt*, substance, and quiddity of what we refer to as “I” (the self) and eventually clarified this to be *dhāt*, substance, or quiddity. We may interpret this as meaning that *dhāt*, quiddity, substance, and “I” (the self) all refer to the same thing in Ibn Sinā’s mind. Thus Ibn Sinā mentions this specifically in *al-Ishārāt*: “This substance in you is one, once verified [you will discover that] it is you.”²⁵

The issue that Ibn Sinā includes in *al-Mubāhathāt* and *al-Ta’liqāt* is the distinction between self-awareness (*al-shu’ūr bi-l-dhāt*) and awareness of awareness (*al-shu’ūr bi-l-shu’ūr*). As neither relates to the purpose of the flying man experiment or has a direct connection to al-Rāzī’s assessments, this study will not deal with it in detail. Nevertheless and for the sake of the integrity of the scenario, what Ibn Sinā constructed concerning awareness (*shu’ūr*) in the context of the flying man can be briefly mentioned. With regard to the flying man, Ibn Sinā mainly deals with self-awareness (*al-shu’ūr bi-l-dhāt*), the primary level of awareness towards one’s own soul, its essence, substance, and quiddity that is attained directly, immediately, and uninterruptedly without any thought or inference. Awareness of awareness (*al-shu’ūr bi-l-shu’ūr*), on the other hand, refers to a secondary awareness towards one’s self that is indirect, reflexive, and inferential; it is being conscious of one’s primary awareness.²⁶ Ibn Sinā distinguishes self-awareness from a scientific sort of comprehension of the body, psychological faculties, or essential human nature and conceptualizes the capacity to know that we know something as a different form of self-knowledge.²⁷

were reducible to the body we would not be able to express any indicative judgment in the first person, because the body itself would not be able to perceive by itself what it feels, just as the brain cannot be aware by itself that it actually understands; e) the self is necessarily something different from the body; f) and the body is an instrument of the self”, Lopez-Farjeat, “Self-Awareness”, 126. On the place of body and corporeality in Ibn Sinā’s thought in the context of questions like the definition of soul qua soul, self-awareness, the mind-body relationship, faculties of the soul, whether individuation remains after the separation of the soul from the body, and if it does how this takes place, see the following studies: M. Zahit Tiryaki, “Ibn Sinā’nın *Kitābū’n-Nefs*’inde Beden ve Bedensellik,” In Ö. Türker and İ. H. Üçer (Eds.), *İnsan Nedir? İslam Düşüncesinde İnsan Tasavvurları* (İstanbul: İLEM Yayınları, 2019), 383–414. Also one may consult Alwishah, “Ibn Sinā on Floating Man Arguments”, 58–60; Adamson & Benevich, “The Thought Experimental Method”, 13–15 for Ibn Sinā’s views on the relationship between self and body.

25 Ibn Sinā, *al-Ishārāt*, Vol. II: 214

26 Ibn Sinā, *al-Mubāhathāt*, In M. Bidārfar (Crit. Ed.) *Qom: Intishārāt-i Baydar* (1992), 61, 435–447; Ibn Sinā, *al-Ta’liqāt*, In S. H. Mūsawiyān (Crit. Ed.) *Qom: Mu’assasa-i Pajūhash-i Hikma and Falsafa-i Irān*, (HŞ1391/2013), 325–331; 803–810, 882–889. The distinction between self-awareness (*al-shu’ūr bi-l-dhāt*) and awareness of awareness (*al-shu’ūr bi-l-shu’ūr*) is also used as the basis for the Avicennian views on the existence of self-awareness in addition to the explanations on human self-awareness. For a few studies on this issue, see: Kaukua & Kukkonen, “Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness,” 101–111; López-Farjeat, “Self-Awareness,” 124–134.

27 Black, “*Avicenna on Self-Awareness*,” 64. In this sense, we can point out the following primary features

The second fundamental problem concerning the flying man is to identify what Ibn Sīnā's actual thesis was and the purpose for which he had devised the experiment to support. Various interpretations are found regarding the purpose of the flying man in classical and modern commentaries.²⁸ The terminological ambiguity in Ibn Sīnā's writings has led classical and contemporary commentators on the flying man to have different readings according to their own positions. Contemporary interpretations of Ibn Sīnā have developed theses on the flying man and self-awareness in two main aspects. While some interpreters are of the opinion that Ibn Sīnā highlights the immateriality and incorporeality of the soul and its independence from the body in the flying man, others argue the actual emphasis is to be on the soul's awareness towards its own self-existence. According to this, those who understood *dhāt* to mean quiddity and who concentrated on the ontological differentiation of the soul and body in the flying man argued that self-awareness was not the primary aim in the flying man, which conforms to their preferred terminology. Others who believe that the self is what the term *dhāt* intends focus more on the epistemological dimension and defend the implication of self-awareness in the flying man. In this regard, Hasse and Kaukua's stand out among the many interpretations that exist, each representing two different views. Also important for clarifying al-Rāzī's interpretation of the flying man are the crystallization of the positions of these two interpretations or disagreements that manifest in the particular examples from Hasse and Kaukua, which connects to a more general context concerning whether the ontological or the epistemological dimension of the flying man is more central. Hasse argues that *dhāt* means quiddity in the flying man, whereas Kaukua is of the opinion that Ibn Sīnā intentionally left the term *dhāt* ambiguous in order for it to be understood both as quiddity and self. Thus, the aim of the flying man according to Hasse is the substantiation of the claim about the independence of the soul from the body, not self-awareness, whereas for Kaukua, the soul's awareness of itself (i.e., its self-consciousness) is additionally among the main objectives of the flying man. At

of self-awareness: "1. It [self-awareness] is essential to the soul; nothing could be a (human) soul if it did not possess self-awareness; 2. There is no cause outside the soul from which it acquires awareness of itself; 3. No instrument or medium is required in order to become self-aware; we perceive the self "through itself;" 4. Self-awareness is direct and unconditioned; 5. It is present in the soul from the beginning of its existence; 6. It is continual, not intermittent and episodic; and 7. The self just is awareness: for the self to exist at all is for it to be aware of itself." Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness," 66.

28 On Ibn Sīnā's aim in designing the flying man thought experiment see Marmura, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context," 387–388, 391; Marmura, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's," 629; Druart, "The Soul and Body Problem," 30–34; Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness," 63.

this point, focusing on Hasse's and Kaukua's claims would be appropriate both in terms of their being two opposing views with high degrees of representation and in terms of these opposing views being suitable as the foundation upon which this study intends to base al-Rāzī's criticism and interpretation of the flying man thought experiment.

Hasse, who appears to have most comprehensibly mentioned the possibilities for the theses Ibn Sīnā could propose in the flying man, identifies five alternatives that might be the aim for having devised the flying man experiment: 1) the incorporeality of the soul, 2) the independence of the soul from the body, 3) the existence of the soul, 4) the self-awareness of the soul, and 5) the substantiality of the soul. According to him, the primary objective is the second one – emphasizing that the independence of the soul from the body and all other four alternatives are only implied.²⁹ Hasse objects to the conventional understanding (especially supported by Faḍl al-Raḥmān) that suggests the flying man to have been intended for proving the substantiality or incorporeality of the soul. Based on the evidence from other texts, including *al-Shifā/al-Nafs*, *Al-Ḥikma al-Mashriqiyya*, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*, and *al-Aḍḥawiyya fī al-ma'ād*, Hasse claims that the primary aim of the flying man is to demonstrate the soul as a different entity independent from the body. Although the aforementioned texts imply topics such as the existence of the self and the constancy of self-knowledge, the main discussion is on the role of the body and organs with emphasis on the idea that these are not the essence of human existence and that the senses cannot attain knowledge of the self. Similarly, even though Ibn Sīnā accepts the soul as the substance (*jawhar*) and later on demonstrates this, substantiality (*jawhar*) of the soul is not the central theme in the flying man thought experiment.³⁰

Antitheses have been made against Hasse's views concerning the issue of what the flying man's general argument is as well as what the flying man proves the existence of. These antitheses claim the aim of the flying man thought experiment to be for proving the immaterial and incorporeal quiddity of the soul

29 Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 81, 84.

30 Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 86. Adamson & Benevich also seemingly agree with Hasse's interpretation in terms of viewing the separation of materiality from the quiddity of the soul to be the specific argument of the flying man. See: Adamson & Benevich, "The Thought Experimental Method," 2–4, 7–8, 13. For the relationship the soul and its powers have with materiality in the Avicennian system and al-Rāzī's criticism on this, see M. Zahit Tiryaki, "From Faculties to Functions: Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī's Critique of Internal Senses," *Nazariyat Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 4 (2), 85–86.

and its independence from the body, as well as is to justify individuality specific to self-awareness.³¹ The most outstanding interpretations of the individuality thesis constructed in connection with self-awareness can be found from Kaukua. For Kaukua, the problem of self-awareness appears to come from Ibn Sīnā's new interests; Ibn Sīnā had been committed to the peripatetic system but at the same time he was interested in the Neo-Platonist transformations that had occurred in the philosophical schools of Late Antiquity and in opening new discussions that were non-existent before him, coining philosophical concepts in order to analyze his own issues. According to this thesis, Ibn Sīnā wanted to use the flying man experiment as a pointer towards his idea of substance dualism. But this experiment at the same time does not consider human awareness of the self as just a transcendental and logical condition but also as a phenomenological experience, therefore leading to the conclusion that self-awareness can only be affirmed from one's own experiences. Therefore, Ibn Sīnā avoids resorting to matter on this point to explain the individuation of immaterial substances and to some extent departs from the Aristotelian account that explains individuation by means of matter. Particularly in *al-Ta'liqāt*, Ibn Sīnā introduces self-awareness as an important factor in enabling the possibility of the individuation of the human soul.³² Kaukua believes that a theory of self-awareness can be constructed from the materials in Ibn Sīnā's writings, that this has two consequences, and that it can also serve as a basis for the discussions and criticism of post-Avicennan thinkers. The first consequence is that Avicennan self-awareness is static and allows no room for development because self-awareness is something human beings possess as their "birthright" and cannot be associated with the processes of the soul's acquisition of the second perfection. Much as human beings are responsible for developing their own character, what one will have achieved will not make much difference on what one is: One will never be more or less than one's own self. The second consequence appears in the case where what Ibn Sīnā indicates as the self is a static entity akin to an Aristotelian substance. In this case, Avicennian selves as substances are presented as things that come into existence but are not subject to any change or development.³³ However, in connection with his main thesis about Ibn Sīnā's flying

31 López-Farjeat, "Self-Awareness", 121-4, 138-9; Alwishah, "Ibn Sīnā on Floating Man Arguments", 50-1; C. P. Hertogh, "Ibn Sīnā's Flying Man: Logical Analyses of a (Religious) Thought Experiment", *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 9 (2013): 64-68.

32 Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*, 9-10, 30-34, 44, 51, 86-87.

33 Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*, 103.

man, Kaukua claims the Avicennan human substance, which is unable to be either conceptualized or described with something more basic than itself and which is abstracted from all senses and bodily elements, does not reflect the entire picture of the individuality we apprehend in our selves.

Subsequently, the differences in the approach to the question of which thesis Ibn Sīnā intends in the flying man, whether the immateriality of the soul, its independence from the body, its existence, its self-awareness, or its substantiality, can be summarized in the two theses mentioned above. From these two theses, Kaukua's proposition in particular differs from the framework wherein this study aims to place Ibn Sīnā-al-Rāzī relations in the context of the flying man and therefore requires consideration.

Kaukua's reading of the flying man and self-awareness in regard to Ibn Sīnā first and foremost contradicts the negative remarks Ibn Sīnā, who adopted the Neo-Platonic view of the immateriality and incorporeality of the soul in order to overcome the problems emerging from the Aristotelian conception of the soul that had defined it as the perfection of the body, eventually makes about the body and physical circumstances. Apart from the claim that the soul is an immaterial and incorporeal substance, Ibn Sīnā does not seem to consider the phenomenological aspect of the experiment in the flying man, at least not in the sense that Kaukua does. The reason for this is the claim that Ibn Sīnā regards the flying man as a pointer toward substance dualism as well as the phenomenological feature of the experiment, which contradicts the Avicennan argument that bodily and sensory experiences are not contained in what is apprehended by self-awareness. As Hasse rightly points out, the flying man proves the quiddity of the immaterial and incorporeal soul as the core of being, not the existence of the body. If what is meant by phenomenological awareness or experience is a first-person consciousness or experience perceived through the body and physical circumstances without being reduced to the body, how can one find the phenomenological in the self-experience of a soul that does not remain at the phenomenological level that at the same time is assumed to be cut off from all kinds of bodily and sensory components and concluded to be immaterial and incorporeal, which Ibn Sīnā himself aspires to point out in the flying man? Ibn Sīnā tries to establish the relationship of the soul with the body and physical faculties particularly at the beginning of the abstraction process by introducing a number of intermediary powers such as the internal senses that are between and the external senses, which are associated with the singular and particulars, and the intellect, which is related with the universals.

When the self that is referred to as *dhāt* in the flying man is combined with the idea that it is unique and particular, this situation conveys the impression that Ibn Sīnā is arguing for a phenomenological experience of the self. However, Ibn Sīnā both thinks that the self (*dhāt*) we are aware of as us in the main flying man narrative corresponds to the immaterial and incorporeal soul and at the end of the abstraction process also eventually views the body as an obstacle by reducing the emphasis on the body and physical circumstances. At the center of the issue referred to here lies the strained relationship between the Aristotelian aspect of the Avicennan theory of the soul that defines the soul as the perfection of the body and the Platonic and Plotinian side of the theory that conceptualizes the soul as a substance separate and independent from the body. Therefore, Ibn Sīnā, by identifying the self with the immaterial and incorporeal soul independent from the body and emphasizing the phenomenological aspect of the self-experience that manifests throughout the body and physical circumstances, seems to be proposing two irreconcilable things.

Kaukua's interpretation appears to make the criticism thinkers such as al-Ghazzālī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī had leveled against the flying man to be based on the notion of the body being meaningless. In order for the criticisms of any post-Avicennan scholars like al-Baghdādī or al-Rāzī about the flying man to be meaningful, they must interpret Ibn Sīnā as a philosopher who accepts the immaterial and incorporeal soul as the fundamental basis of the self. When considering Ibn Sīnā's negative references to the body and physical circumstances in order to justify the soul's immateriality and independence from the body on one hand and al-Rāzī's criticisms against the soul's immateriality and independence from the body in the Avicennan thought in favor of physical and sensory states on the other, the question arises as to whether Ibn Sīnā and al-Rāzī understand the same thing from self-awareness. Indeed, Kaukua himself views post-Avicennan criticisms about self-awareness, particularly in the cases of al-Baghdādī and al-Rāzī, as objections to the theses expressed in the flying man. Though Kaukua's emphasis on the phenomenological aspect of the experience of the self is important, its attribution to Ibn Sīnā is questionable. In addition, while plenty of references to Ibn Sīnā exist that can be interpreted as his emphasis on subjectivity and self-experience on the phenomenological level and self-awareness as something that enables individuation, Ibn Sīnā's primary thesis makes it

difficult to draw the conclusion Kaukua wants from this material.³⁴ Therefore, if the term *dhāt* is understood as self, the claim that an emphasis on self-awareness exists in the flying man becomes merely a verbal solution; in this case, another verbal problem will then emerge on how to understand the term *ana*; assuming that *dhāt* refers to the self, the systematic problem arising from the immaterial and incorporeal nature of the self for which Ibn Sinā received criticism afterward will remain unsolved.

How are the remarks that suggest the flying man of Ibn Sinā (who has attributed the most possible ontological purpose to the flying man) implies not only the soul's awareness towards its quiddity but also toward its existence (and therefore self-awareness) to be understood? Probably the only remaining solution will be the following: We can talk about Ibn Sinā's thoughts on the soul's self-awareness directed at its existence in relation to dealing with what we refer to as the self and the awareness of this thing towards itself. However, Ibn Sinā means the essence (*dhāt*) of the soul, its quiddity, and its substance when he mentions the self, not the soul's state of existence together with the body, the soul in terms of being a soul, or the soul as perfection. He refers to this aspect of the soul's existence with the body and the physical as the accidental (*araḍī*) soul.³⁵ If self-awareness is used in the meaning of the soul's awareness towards itself, then we can talk about the presence of self-awareness with respect to Ibn Sinā. Here, however, the concept of the self will be a very specific one: Notwithstanding the terminological difficulties arising from the concept itself, the self will be that which can be subject to the definition of the self in accordance with Ibn Sinā's understanding. Hertogh's interpretation essentially supports this idea. For him, the conclusions can be drawn both from the traditional translations Hasse rejected and from the structure of the thought experiment itself where Ibn Sinā describes the soul/self. Speaking of Hasse in particular, a skeptical reading suggesting that Ibn Sinā makes no reference to self-awareness might be more compatible with naturalist or empiricist readings. Though less likely these days, however, the metaphysical interpretation is more viable considering the historical conditions of Ibn Sinā's age.³⁶ In light of this interpretation, we can assume that Hasse is under the impression that among the philosophers of the Latin world who had adopted and interpreted the flying man, those who focused

34 On interpreting statements that can be considered to favor the body and physical states in Ibn Sinā within his general narrative, see Tiryaki, "Ibn Sinā'nın *Kitābū'n-Nefs*'inde Beden ve Bedensellik", 383–414.

35 Ibn Sinā, *De Anima*, 256.

36 Hertogh, "Ibn Sinā's Flying Man", 67–68.

on the ontological dimension of the experiment concentrated more on references to the soul's independence from the body rather than references to self-awareness, whereas those with a more epistemological focus did the opposite. For this reason, Hasse may have considered Ibn Sīnā to be after ontological aims in the flying man, and therefore self-awareness is not primarily included in the thought experiment. Meanwhile, as just pointed out, we can in fact think about including a notion of self-awareness in the flying man that is constructed on Ibn Sīnā's own concept of the soul, even though that may not be compatible with our current understanding of the self.

The third problem concerning the flying man is the logical status of the story. As you will remember, Ibn Sīnā uses the word *tawahhum* while constructing the flying man experiment. This choice of word in the flying man as a thought experiment is worth noting for the subject of our study. However, this issue also has a more general aspect concerning the nature of Ibn Sīnā's thought experiments in general and how he employed the power of estimation (*wahm*) in various thought experiments in physics as well as certain aspects of this issue that are beyond the scope of this study.³⁷ On one hand, Ibn Sīnā approves this sort of use of the faculty of estimation (*wahm*); on the other, he criticizes his opponents for relying too much on their *tawahhum*. Most probably, Ibn Sīnā overcame this dilemma with the idea that a thought experiment built upon *wahm* or *tawahhum* would later have to be justified with a demonstration (*burhān*). McGinnis indeed refers to this and mentions that whenever thought experiments are part of his arguments, Ibn Sīnā points out that he does not limit his conclusions to the potential of the faculty of the estimation. According to Ibn Sīnā, if one therefore wants to move from the possibilities that are imagined or estimated with the faculty of *wahm* to that which actually exists, evidence or actual examples of the thing being assumed with the faculty of estimation (*wahm*) would be required in the world.³⁸ On exactly this point, Ibn Sīnā's effort to bring separate evidence for the soul's substantiality

37 This aspect is related to the claims that Ibn Sīnā tried to overcome this problem, which Aristoteles attempted to overcome by resorting to hypotheses and assumptions in the inadequacy of *Phantasia* and *Nous*, by using the faculty of estimation (*wahm*) and *tawahhum*. Historical details of this issue can be found in Taneli Kukkonen, "Ibn Sīnā and the Early History of Thought Experiments," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52(3) (2014), 434–454. For the use of the faculty of estimation (*wahm*) in the context of self-awareness in Ibn Sīnā also see: López-Farjeat, "Self-Awareness", 134-135.

38 Jon McGinnis, "Experimental Thoughts on Thought Experiments in Medieval Islam", *The Routledge Companion to Thought Experiments*, ed. Michael T. Stuart, Yiftach Fehige and James Robert Brown (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2018), 80.

after mentioning that the flying man is an *admonition* (*tanbīh*) playing the role of a reminder or indicator becomes meaningful.³⁹ Ibn Sīnā himself is very explicit about the flying man's design in relation to self-awareness not being a logical argument. As a result, evaluating the flying man thought experiment as a purely logical argument and criticizing Ibn Sīnā according to this become meaningless.

The Flying Man after Ibn Sīnā

Rāzī lived at a time that had witnessed different interpretations and criticisms of Ibn Sīnā's flying man. Therefore, before we move on to al-Rāzī's views on the flying man and analysis of his conception of self and self-awareness, mentioning some of the views of pre-Rāzī thinkers on the flying man and briefly sketching the changes and transformations these views had shown from Ibn Sīnā's own conception of self are important.

After Ibn Sīnā, most critiques and interpretations of the flying man –and thus of the self– were put forward by Muslim theologians with few exceptions. Ibn Sīnā himself already was aware that theologians would mainly be the ones who would oppose his conception of self. In *Risāla fī ma'rifat al-nafs al-nātiqa*, he notes explicitly that:

We thus say: The meaning of the soul (al-nafs) is what is meant when anyone points to themselves and says "I". The scholars have indeed disagreed about what this word indicates, whether it be this visible sensible body or something else. In regard to the first view, most men and many Muslim theologians (al-mutakallimūn) have assumed man to be surely this body. Someone who refers to themselves by saying "I" [actually referring to the body] makes a false assumption and has an absurd view, as we shall explain later, Allah Almighty willing. With regard to the second view, man is assumed to not be this visibly perceived body. The advocates of this view differ among themselves... Some consider man to be neither a material body nor a corporeal entity, but to be a spiritual substance emanated into this structure (a human being), and this spiritual substance gives life to the body and uses it as a vehicle for acquiring sciences and cognition [of the existence] until it becomes perfect. It recognizes (ʿārif) its Lord and becomes acquainted with the truth of His creation. The substance is then prepared to return to His (Allah's) presence; it becomes an angel from among His angels [and will live] in happiness to infinity. This view is the view expressed by the school of metaphysician philosophers (al-

39 On whether or not the flying man is truly a logical argument, see Marmura, "Avicenna's Flying Man in Context", 391; Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 86–87; McGinnis, "Experimental Thoughts", 81. A logical treatment of the flying man thought experiment can be found in Hertogh, "Ibn Sīnā's Flying Man", 55–64.

hukamā' al-ilāhiyyūn) and the school of monastic scholars (al-'ulamā' al-rabbāniyyūn). Their views are in agreement with some groups from the masters of spiritual exercise (arbāb al-riyāḍiyya) and those possessing spiritual illuminations (ashāb al-mukāshafa) because they perceive the substance of their souls when they separate from their bodies and re-unite (ittisāl) with the divine light... For us, proofs (burhān) exist for establishing the authenticity of this thought, from the point of view of investigation (baḥth) and inference (naẓar).⁴⁰

Muslim theologian's conception of human and self is indeed as Ibn Sinā indicates here. Both *Mu'tazilite* theologians like Qādi 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) and *Ash'aris* like al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) think that we possess specific knowledge of our individual existence and that our perception of our individual existence is among the necessary knowledge. Therefore, the disagreement between Ibn Sinā and theologians is not about whether we have certain knowledge about our existence but rather about the nature of *dhāt* (i.e., the self that is referred to with the first-person pronoun). For this reason, the primary problem in this subject is the question of the nature of the self: Is it the immaterial and incorporeal rational soul as advocated by Ibn Sinā or a material being as upheld by the theologians? Similarly, Ibn Sinā departs from the traditional Islamic doctrine, which largely resembles the view of the *Mu'tazilite* theologian Nazzām (d. 231/845) and suggests that life means the combination of the soul and body.⁴¹

At this point, based on the two opposing views outlined in the quotation above, we can assess Suhrawardī and Ibn Kammūna under the second category of thinkers and names like al-Ghazzālī, Baghdādī, and al-Rāzī who all made criticisms concerning the flying man and whom Ibn Sinā accused of viewing the self and human to contain the body only under the first category. Al-Ghazzālī opposes the philosopher's view of the soul being a substance independent from the body more on philosophical and rational grounds than religious.⁴² Al-Ghazzālī's views about

40 Ibn Sinā, "Risālā fi ma'rifat al-nafs al-nātiqa", *Aḥwāl al-nafs*, In A. F. Ahwānī (Ed.) *Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Isā al-Bābī al-Halabī*, 1952, 183. The English version has been adapted from Mostafa Mokhtar's (1994) translation.

41 Marmura, "Avicenna's Flying Man in Context", 384. As Marmura points out, *Mu'ammār* (d. 215/830) and *Nazzām* (d. 231/845) are interesting exceptions to the theologians advocating the atomist view and to a large extent adopting a materialist position concerning the human and mind-body relationship. While not rejecting atomism, *Mu'ammār* considers the human soul to be an immaterial and spiritual soul. *Nazzām*, on the other hand, rejects atomism and claims the soul to be a materially subtle substance spreading over the body and giving life to it. For an important treatment of the views of early theologians on human, soul, and body that can provide a background for al-Rāzī's views on the soul, see Altaş, "Fahredden er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti", 149–145

42 Al-Ghazzālī, *Filozofların Tutarsızlığı: Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, M. Kaya & H. Sarioğlu (Trans. & Eds.). İstanbul, Turkey: Klasik Yayınları, 2005, 181

humans' awareness of their existence that can be connected to the flying man can be found in *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* [The Incoherence of the Philosophers] in the section where he mentions philosophers' evidence of the soul's substantiality independent from the body (more precisely in the sixth evidence). In fact, al-Ghazzālī has no problem with the existence of human awareness of self, for al-Ghazzālī considers the soul of which the human being is aware to correspond with the identity (*huwiyya*) of the soul. Yet al-Ghazzālī objects to the philosophers' view by arguing that the human body and matter are part of the awareness a human being experiences toward the self because a human being inevitably views the self as part of one's body according to this critique.⁴³ Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, on the other hand, questions the Peripatetic claim suggesting that "the connection between the incorporeal substance of dualist psychology and the 'I' one is constantly aware of is self-evident." For al-Baghdādī, an ordinary person will not feel obliged to "commit either to the hylomorphic theory of the soul as the enmattered form of the body or to the dualist notion of the self as an independent entity that acts by means of the body but does not exist in it". What is important for al-Baghdādī is that the use of the term soul (*nafs*) signifies "the speaker's awareness of his individual existence, that is, of the fact that he exists as an individual (*huwiyya*)". According to Kaukua, the aim of al-Baghdādī's critique is to point out the failure of Ibn Sinā's proposed phenomenon of self-awareness to be convincing enough in regard to the problem of "the proper category and correct metaphysical classification of the self."⁴⁴ Suhrawardī too gradually departed from Ibn Sinā's metaphysical explanation that views self-awareness as the existence of human substance and opted for explaining self-awareness in phenomenological terms rather than more fundamental metaphysical terms. Moreover, Suhrawardī's interpretation moves self-awareness from beyond being psychological evidence to being situated into a central context of the *ishrāqī* theory of knowledge and existence in which presence (*ḥuḍūr*) as a concept of knowledge and appearance (*zuhūr*) as the concept of existence are very significant. While self-awareness is a subject of psychological interest for Ibn Sinā, with Suhrawardī, it consequently becomes the backbone of epistemology and metaphysics and a foundation through which other things become explained.⁴⁵ Ibn

43 Al-Ghazzālī, *Filozofların Tutarsızlığı*, 191–192.

44 Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*, 115–116.

45 For a detailed treatment of Suhrawardī's views on the flying man and the soul's awareness of its quiddity and the connection of those views with Ibn Sinā, see L. R. D. Marcotte, "Irja' ilā nafsik: Suhrawardī's Apperception of the Self in Light of Avicenna", *Transcendent Philosophy*, 5(1) (2004): 4–5, 7, 9–10, 17; Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*, 10, 104–114, 124–134.

Kammūna examines the flying man in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, *Sharḥ al-Talwihāt*, and *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma*. In *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, Ibn Kammūna considers the main account of the flying man, whereas in *Sharḥ al-Talwihāt* he takes *al-Mubāḥathāt* into account. Thus in the process, he develops two different attitudes toward the flying man, each with a different aim. For this reason, while the capacity of self-awareness to be evident in itself takes precedence in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, Ibn Kammūna's original comments on the logical structures of the flying man attracts one's attention in *Sharḥ al-Talwihāt*. Ibn Kammūna agrees with Ibn Sinā in regard to one of the principles in the interpretation of the flying man, which is the proposition "The known is different from the unknown;" he thinks that his proposition is sufficient for demonstrating the nature of the soul and body to be different. Similarly, both thinkers are in agreement that the conclusion of the flying man is based on the proposition that the soul is unaware of anything other than itself. One of the issues where Ibn Kammūna thinks differently than Ibn Sinā is on the quantification of the propositions upon which consciousness toward self-awareness takes place. Ibn Sinā considers these propositions to be particularly quantified, whereas Ibn Kammūna claims them to be universally quantified. Finally, one more remarkable difference exists between Ibn Kammūna and Ibn Sinā in the context of the flying man. Although Ibn Kammūna had claimed the flying man to be sufficient for substantiating the argument about the soul as an immaterial substance in *Sharḥ al-Talwihāt*, he later gave up this view.⁴⁶ As our aim in this section is to identify the historical background of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's criticism on the flying man, a detailed analysis of the opinions of these scholars remains outside the scope of this section and the study as a whole.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Criticism of the Flying Man and Interpretation of Self-Awareness

This section addresses Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's views about the flying man in connection with the points where al-Rāzī disagrees with Ibn Sinā concerning the main issues about the soul. It will further discuss whether al-Rāzī has a different conception of self or self-awareness than Ibn Sinā's. Some fundamental differences exist between the theory of the soul as developed by philosophers and that developed

46 Lukas Muehlethaler, "Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) on the Argument of the Flying Man in Avicenna's *Ishārāt* and al-Suhrawardī's *Talwihāt*" *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 183, 202-3

by theologians. In the particular case of al-Rāzī, theologians develop their notion on the concept of *qudra*, whereas this becomes *quwwa* in philosophers' accounts.⁴⁷ In *al-Maṭālib al-Āliya*, al-Rāzī provides a general classification of the views about the soul and points out the major positions theologians have concerning the soul, including his own position. These views have accordingly been classified into three groups:

1) The first group includes those who view human beings as a corporeal being. This group itself is divided into two subgroups: those who consider the corporeal being to be the body and those who claim it to be a corporeal entity entwined into the body. The first sub-view, which also includes theologians, regards the human soul to be constituted of a specific body and specific structure (*al-haykal al-makhṣuṣ*), while the second subgroup believes that the human being is entwined with this body or exists within it as a specific corporeal entity. This entity has various versions and possibilities that include the four humors, blood, subtle blood, an indivisible unit located in the heart, and many other subgroups. Those who claim human beings to be a temperament (mixture) and those that explain human beings in reference to the first issue where humans are created fall under this first group.

2) The second group includes people who believe that human beings are an accident (*'arad*) that penetrates the body. Al-Rāzī dismisses this possibility by saying that no rational person would hold this view.

3) The third and last category that al-Rāzī mentions is for those who view the human being as an abstracted substance that is not space-occupying (*mutahayyiz*). al-Rāzī includes most philosophers, religious teachings, the Shi'a, the Mu'tazilites, some of the Ahl al-Sunna, and the majority of verifying (*muḥaqqiq*) Sufis in this group.⁴⁸

To which of these three views did al-Rāzī commit? The first possibility that comes to mind is the position attributed to theologians who claim the human soul consists of a specific body and structure. However, Marmura argues that al-Rāzī does not reject Avicennian doctrine about the immaterial self, nor the two other doctrines adopted by various schools of Muslim theology. One of these two views is the one adopted by the majority of the Mutazilites and identifies *dhāt* [self] with the physical body/structure (*haykal*). The second one is the position of the

47 This issue is also important in regards to some of the discussions around the question of whether or not theologians have a specific theory about the soul. For a recent work that provides a comparative perspective on this see Altaş, "Fahredden er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati," 153-156.

48 Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-Āliya min al-'ilm al-ilāhi*, critical ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Shāhin (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1999), Vol. VII, 35-38.

Ash'arite school, which al-Rāzī himself also followed, and claims the self to not be the physical body but to be something bodily that contains life (*hayā*) accidentally (*'araḍ*). Dismissing the other material theories of the soul that he associates with the Greek philosophers, al-Rāzī adopts the view of the soul as a “living material substance that is diffused through the body, animating it.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, as will be pointed out later in the context of al-Rāzī’s views on the flying man, al-Rāzī states that what a human being is aware of as the self is not a body.⁵⁰

At this point, mentioning a question beyond the scope of this study becomes important: What was al-Rāzī’s own stance, as he did not want to view the soul or the self as something immaterial and incorporeal as Ibn Sīnā had but still used Avicennan arguments to refute those who identify the soul with the physical body in relation to the *Ash'arite* school, which considers the soul as something physical but not the physical body? In other words, how is al-Rāzī’s view different from the mainstream *Ash'arite* position? As an *Ash'arite* theologian, however, al-Rāzī’s real problem with Ibn Sīnā is neither with the idea of the self’s awareness of itself being evident (i.e., *a priori*) nor the constancy of self-awareness; rather it is Ibn Sīnā’s consideration of the soul as being immaterial. al-Rāzī’s view on the issue of whether the quiddity of the soul is a body or an abstract substance differs from what Ibn Sīnā discusses as primitive self-awareness and cannot be derived from this. It has to be investigated through demonstration (*burhān*). Nevertheless, al-Rāzī refrains from passing final judgment on the essence and truth of the soul, instead calling attention to the difficulty of investigating the truth of the soul. At the same time, al-Rāzī thinks that what a human being can know best is the self, and the truth of a human being is a particularized self (*al-dhāt al-mahkūsh*) that is referred to as the unknowable self, truth, or essence. Anything knowable about it is only through its action and effect. What is possible for the human being is a sort of awareness specific to self-identity (*huwiyya*) and the self (*al-shu'ūr bi-l-huwiyya*). Although this awareness gives knowledge that a self exists different from the body, one still cannot draw forth the knowledge of soul or self as an abstract; in other words, knowledge about the soul or self’s essence is unknowable.⁵¹

49 Marmura, “Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī’s Critique”, 630–631. For the references on theologians’ use of Avicennian psychology in the example of al-Rāzī and different positions they took vis-a-vis intellectualist Neoplatonism, see: Kaukua & Kukkonen, “Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness”, 113–115.

50 Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*, ‘Alī Riḍā Najafzāda (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār wa Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 2005), 208–209.

51 Altaş, “Fahredden er-Rāzī’ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati”, 144–148, 190. See also: Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, XXI (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1981), 39.

What has been mentioned so far may give the impression that al-Rāzī's position is contradictory by rejecting the two opposing ideas about the essence of what primarily constitutes the reality of the human being that is known as the self: both the idea that the self is a sensible material substance or body and the contrary idea that it is an immaterial and incorporeal substance. For now, we can mention the following concerning this issue that falls outside the scope of this study. In discussing the mind-body relationship, if at least within this context we leave out al-Rāzī's theological perspectives that recall approaches like pre-established harmony and the occasionalism that allows for divine intervention either in the very beginning or perpetually onward, he appears to have adopted a position that neither finds the discussion on the nature and quiddity of the soul useful nor considers coming to a final judgment on this possible. This approach resembles the contemporary attitudes known as neutral monism, or the dual-aspect theory. According to this approach, which mainly adopts a monist position, mind and body in their essences are two interconnected aspects of a primary substance that is neither mental nor material. Just as with the theories of pre-established harmony and occasionalism, this theory rejects the direct relationship between the mental and physical. Unlike these two theories, however, it does not resort to divine causal action in order to explain the mental-physical interconnections. The observed connections exist because they are two aspects of a single basic reality.⁵²

After briefly pointing out al-Rāzī's basic views on the soul, which is not the focus of this study yet serves as a background, we move on to al-Rāzī's comments regarding the flying man and self-awareness. In the preceding section, we discussed Ibn Sinā's views concerning the flying man around three problems. Accordingly, we can discuss al-Rāzī's views on the Avicennian theory of the self in the particular case of the flying man in a way that corresponds to these three issues:

1) The issue of what al-Rāzī understands from *self* (*dhāt*), or how he answers the question "What does the flying man prove?"

2) The issue of what Ibn Sinā's actual thesis is in support of which he devises the experiment. What is the issue, claim, or aims of the thesis in the context of which al-Rāzī's evaluates the idea that is expressed in the flying man and his criticisms of it?

3) The issue of al-Rāzī's assessment of the logical status of the story of the flying man.

52 Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2011), 96.

As far as al-Rāzī is concerned, the first and second issues appear to overlap. The issue of how to understand the term *dhāt* and the issue of the main thesis, or aim of the flying man, are not easily separable for al-Rāzī.

The first assessment of the flying man appears in *al-Mabāhith al-Mashriqiyya*. Here, al-Rāzī mentions that everyone is aware of the existence of the soul that is one's self, but the debate is on what exactly is this special (*makhšūš*) thing. At this point, he states that some people have accepted the view that what we know as self or I-ness is this sensible private corpus (*al haykal al makhšūš*), and he provides three arguments to show the absurdity of this view. The first argument al-Rāzī mentions is the one known as the flying man, which suggests that the external physical corpus is not the self or I. Nevertheless, the three arguments al-Rāzī mentions that include the flying man in his view do not necessitate the human soul's immateriality because animals also perceive their own special (*makhšūš*) identities. This is firstly because of the fact the universals are not intelligible to animals. The second reason for this is that animals do not flee from pain happening to others, even if this is painful in itself. They only run away when they themselves suffer. Ibn Sinā indeed talks about the existence of self-awareness in animals, yet he does not draw the conclusion that their souls are immaterial or incorporeal. Therefore, for al-Rāzī, the implication of the first argument about the flying man is nothing but the fact that human identity is other than this sensible entity and body. But the question of whether this identity (*huwiyya*) is related to or different from the body is something else that requires further investigation.⁵³ As a result, al-Rāzī here objects first of all to the claims philosophers have about the non-corporeality of the soul, and secondly to those who associate the self and human identity with our sensible body and physique. Al-Rāzī's use of the term identity (*huwiyya*) is also worth noting. Al-Rāzī is understood to purposefully have used the word *nafs*, the quiddity of which is

53 *Al-Mabāhith al-mashriqiyya: fi 'ilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabī'iyyāt*, In M. Mu'taṣim-Billāh al-Baghādādi (Ed.), Vol. II (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-'Arabī, 1990), 238–239. See also Marmura, "Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī's Critique," 631–633. For al-Rāzī's own statements claiming that what we refer to as "I" is something other than the sensible bodily external structure, *haykal*, internal and external bodily parts, see *Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, Kitāb al-nafs wa-l-rūh wa sharḥ quwāhumā*, In M. Saghir Ḥasan (Pub.), *el-Ma'sūmī* (Tehran: Ma'had al-abhāth al-Islāmiyya, 1985), pp. 27, 38, 35, 40 [hereafter *al-Nafs*]. In these sections, although al-Rāzī provides rational and religious arguments for the claim that what is referred to as I is not the sensible body or its external parts, this does not validate Ibn Sinā's views on the immaterial and incorporeal soul being the self we refer to as I. This can be deduced from al-Rāzī's own words: "Similar to the way we are aware of our individual selves while being ignorant of our body, we can also be aware of our individual selves while being ignorant of envisioning or imagining the quiddity of the self in bodily or incorporeal form." Al-Rāzī, *al-Nafs*, 35.

what philosophers are after, differently than *huwiyya*, which refers to the existence in-concreto. Although al-Rāzī accepts identity (*huwiyya*) as existence in-concreto of what we perceive through a primitive awareness and refers to it as soul, he objects to swerving from the idea of self-awareness to the idea that something immaterial exists beyond the self's identity, its existence in-concreto. Therefore we can safely say from the word *dhāt in al-shu'ūr bi-l-dhāt* that al-Rāzī understands the self or identity (*huwiyya*) that comes into existence in the external world, not the quiddity in the philosophical sense referring to what makes an object what it is. In this case, when the concept of the soul's essence, substance, and quiddity and the notion of the immaterial and incorporeal soul are used as in Ibn Sinā, the flying man becomes a subject of criticism that becomes acceptable if used for *self* and *identity*, but not for *quiddity*. Ibn Sinā understands the self that the flying man is aware of as the quiddity of the soul and concluded that the self and soul's quiddity refer to the same thing. al-Rāzī on the other hand avoids considering the self that the flying man is aware of as the quiddity and leaves the door open to view the flying man as an pointer toward the self that everyone is aware of and toward the existence of the identity.

In *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, al-Rāzī evaluates philosophers' proofs concerning their claims that what we all call "I" when referring to our self or soul is not the body or something contained within it. In al-Rāzī's own words, the claim of philosophers can be established with the following evidence: 1. The self that is peculiar to each person can be known without knowing any of one's organs. 2. This necessitates that the self that is peculiar to each human being has to be something other than one's organs. According to al-Rāzī, the first part of the evidence can be explained in two forms: 1.a. A human being cannot be claimed to be ignorant of one's own self, and the proof can be built upon this. 1.b. A human being can be explained as being aware of one's own self even when ignorant about all one's organs. According to al-Rāzī, the first one is the conclusion aspiring to be reached. In other words, a human being will first be expressed as being unable to be unaware of one's peculiar self. Then the objective aiming to be reached is the possibility of being aware of one's own self while being ignorant about any of one's organs and will be constructed upon the previous explanation. Al-Rāzī makes Ibn Sinā's assumption in the flying man the first premise of what is intended to be proven on this point, in his argument about the impossibility of one's ignorance of one's own self, al-Rāzī talks about four levels of human perception: i. Having a healthy temperament and perceiving and knowing sensible things. ii. The state of sleep in which comprehension (*fahm*) and the external senses are not functioning soundly. iii. The state of drunkenness in which the comprehension is more impaired than the state of sleep because the internal senses are not suspended in the state of sleep whereas

they are impaired when one is drunk. iv. The hypothetical state in which parts of a human being are not adjacent and don't touch each other, while at the same time being separated from everything and suspended in the air. In this situation, a human being will not be aware of anything other than one's own self. After this, al-Rāzī lists Ibn Sīnā's assumptions in the flying man and their reasons. Accordingly, this thought experiment requires (1) the parts of the flying man to be outstretched, (2) his organs to not be touching each other, (3) being suspended in the air, and lastly (4) the air has to be an absolute air free from qualities like warmth or coldness. According to Ibn Sīnā, the self-awareness of a human being would therefore never cease in a situation that fully provides all four of these conditions.⁵⁴ All these conditions turn out to be able to be reduced to the realization of a single aim: In order to argue for self-awareness that is independent of everything, we need to assume a scenario in which no awareness takes place toward anything other than the self. Ibn Sīnā's whole aim is directed at showing that human being's self-awareness would certainly exist in a situation where one is conscious of nothing except one's self.

After presenting Ibn Sīnā's aim in this way, he then moves on to his criticisms and suggestions regarding this issue. According to al-Rāzī, Ibn Sīnā has two issues he has failed to clarify fully: 1. Ibn Sīnā has not mentioned if this premise of a human being never being unaware of the peculiar self is *a priori* or in need of proof, and in the case of needing a proof, Ibn Sīnā has not provided any; 2. The other thing that Ibn Sīnā left unclear according to al-Rāzī is the possibility of being ignorant of the self's awareness of self, even when one is aware of the self. Al-Rāzī claims that the first proposition is not *a priori* because this premise is not evident like the proposition "The whole is bigger than its parts." It is even doubtful and thus requires proof. In al-Rāzī's view, whatever indicates the impossibility of the soul's inability to be aware of itself also indicates the certainty and constancy of the soul's self-awareness. But the opposite is not necessarily true. Not everything that indicates the certainty and constancy of the soul's self-awareness necessarily points out the impossibility of one's unawareness of one's own self. Therefore, al-Rāzī suggests two things that need to be proven: 1. Proof of the certain and constant self-awareness of the soul. 2. Proof of the impossibility of the soul being unaware of the self. al-Rāzī believes the first proof must be valid not just for human beings but also for the self of other living beings; the second one, however, is peculiar to the human soul.⁵⁵

54 Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 202–203

55 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 203–205.

A few things have to be mentioned concerning al-Rāzī's views on the flying man based on what has been discussed up to now. Al-Rāzī eventually views both of the required proofs insufficient and the first one even weaker. Nonetheless, what has been mentioned up to now reflects al-Rāzī's fundamental views. Al-Rāzī's dispute with Ibn Sīnā is not about the certainty or the constancy of self-awareness but about the nature of the subject of this self-awareness. The question is about whether the self (*dhāt*) is material or immaterial. As the following clears this up, al-Rāzī seems to be in agreement with Ibn Sīnā on the idea that the self is something other than the body or bodily organs.⁵⁶ Indeed while criticizing Ibn Sīnā's flying man, al-Rāzī does not want to claim that the sensible or physical body or internal/external bodily organs are referred to by what is called the "self." As is highlighted in *al-Mabāḥith*, however, the conclusion about the self being immaterial cannot be drawn from the premise about the certainty and constancy of self-awareness. Material things differ in terms of their quiddities and cannot be reduced to one another.⁵⁷ As in Ibn Sīnā's concept of self-awareness, al-Rāzī discusses the concept over the self, not the *soul* (*dhāt*, not *nafs*). Therefore, by equating the self and soul, the discussion has to be about the self's materiality or immateriality, rather than on the soul's materiality/ immateriality. If the soul is used interchangeably with the self as Ibn Sīnā does, the view that the soul is immaterial and incorporeal cannot be assumed. While discussing the self, Ibn Sīnā equates it with the immaterial soul at the foundational level and argues that selfhood takes place in the immaterial and incorporeal soul, not in the sensible components. In terms of the position of this study, equating the self with the immaterial and incorporeal soul in Avicennian terms is significant for this is what al-Rāzī's criticisms are directed toward. Because al-Rāzī views the human soul as something other than the body in terms of quiddity but at the same time also as a material substance existing within the body giving it life, equating the soul with the self does not constitute a problem for al-Rāzī as much as it does for Ibn Sīnā.

After evaluating the version of the flying man in the first admonition of *al-Ishārāt*, he discusses Ibn Sīnā's investigations in the second and third admonitions about the thing that perceives or is aware of the self and the thing of which the self is aware. We have already seen Ibn Sīnā's views on this. On these issues, al-Rāzī also continues to understand the self as identity and does nothing more than clarify Ibn

56 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 206–208.

57 For Marmura's comments on these passages see: Marmura, "Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī's Critique," 630–637.

Sinā's views. After eliminating both the external and internal senses as the possible perceivers of the self along with other possibilities that may be intermediary in self-perception, the self/identity is eventually concluded to be directly perceived by something other than external/internal senses with no intermediaries. Pointing out a fundamental difference in this context is important between Ibn Sinā and al-Rāzī concerning whether the truth and quiddity of the soul can be known and, if something of it can be known, through what and how this knowledge is attained. As seen before, Ibn Sinā rejects the idea that the awareness of the soul occurs through actions and claims this awareness to occur directly.⁵⁸ We have also mentioned that al-Rāzī, on the other hand, claims that the thing referred to as self can only be known through its actions and effects while its truth and quiddity cannot be known. Ibn Sinā in the flying man talks about self-awareness in an absolute air absent any sort of action or activity; al-Rāzī, however, speaks of the self that can only be known through actions, activities, and effects.⁵⁹

Here al-Rāzī's position may appear at the first glance as self-contradictory, as the soul/self he is talking about can be known only through its action and effects while its truth and quiddity cannot be known at the same time. How will al-Rāzī reconcile the idea that he views self-awareness as intuitive (*badīhi*) on one hand, while on the other he views the idea that self or soul can only be known or inquired about through action and effect? Highlighting that the existence of the soul and self does not require proof because it is self-evident and intuitive is important here. However, the quiddity of the self is what is not evident and requires proof, even though al-Rāzī does not consider this to be possible. Secondly, the question of whether the existence of which we are aware of is the self or the soul is irrelevant for al-Rāzī once he abandons the idea that the soul is an immaterial and incorporeal substance. For al-Rāzī, the problem emerges when we equate the self with the soul that has self-awareness in the flying man and is accepted as an immaterial and incorporeal substance as Ibn Sinā does. But after abandoning the idea that the soul is an immaterial and incorporeal substance, whether that which is self-aware in the flying man is the soul or self does not constitute a problem for al-Rāzī. On the point what it is that we are aware or conscious of, al-Rāzī provides justifications for three possibilities: the external parts of the body, the internal parts of the body, or the body as a whole, all of which Ibn Sinā had dismissed. The first one is that any

58 Ibn Sinā, *al-Ishārāt*, 205, 208.

59 Altaş, "Fahreddin er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati", 144–147, 190.

deficiency in the external parts of the body has no impact on one's self-awareness. The second argument for dismissing the possibility of the external parts being the self is that these external parts can only be known through external senses, and these are suspended in the flying man. In terms of the internal parts or organs, as they are only known through certain intermediary ways like surgery, the fact that a person is aware of the self even while ignorant of one's internal parts also negates this possibility. The possibility of the entirety of the body as being what one is aware of is also eliminated because of issues emerging from the problem of whether the whole is an absolute or whether this entirety exists in a particular person.⁶⁰

After this examination, al-Rāzī reaches some conclusions. Accordingly, a human being can know one's existence and identity when unaware of all organs. If what is known is different from what is unknown and the human identity can be known while one's body and bodily organs are unknown, then human identity is not material. Therefore, if human identity is not body, identity cannot be known through the sensory faculties. Whatever the faculty is that has self-awareness, this awareness cannot be proven or demonstrated (*burhān*). Paying attention to the fact that al-Rāzī here does not talk about the reality or the quiddity of a human being but rather the existence and identity is highly important. According to al-Rāzī, self and identity are different from all human organs as well as from the human self (*fa-huwiyyatuh mughāyira li-jamī' ajzāih...*). Someone may have no concept of the soul that is being discussed, but every human being is certainly aware of their own self. Similarly, the thing that a human being is aware of as the self is not physical.⁶¹

One last point concerning the debate on what it is the self is aware of (i.e., that which is perceived as the self) that also needs to be mentioned is from al-Rāzī's *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*. Al-Rāzī here refers to a distinction similar to the distinction of the first person perspective (i.e., subjectivity) from the third person perspective (i.e., objectivity) in the debates on mind and consciousness. Accordingly, that which everyone refers to as "I" differs from what is referred to as "you" because when someone points to one's self by saying "I," what is being referred to is neither body nor any of its parts. Truly when a human being is strongly directed toward comprehending something or performing an action, expressions like "I did so" or "I said so" are used. When saying this, that which is referred to as "I" becomes

60 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 206–208.

61 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 208–209.

more evident in the mind, whereas one may still be ignorant of the body and all its organs. This thus signifies that the thing we refer to as “I” differs from the body and all its parts. However, when we point to someone by saying “you,” we indicate the body because the thing being indicated by “you” is nothing other than what is perceived through the eyesight, which is nothing but the particular body (*al-jism al-makḥṣūs*). Al-Rāzī also explains this with another example. Similarly, when a person dies, nothing remains in the body of what had been referred to as “I.” However, the existence of what is indicated by “he/she”, (i.e. the body/corpse) continues to exist after death. Therefore, when mentioning that person, “is the corpse placed here” is not what is said but rather “they perished,” which signifies the soul that was the self that one refers to when saying “I”. This is because the person’s “I”-ness has disappeared from existence, not their corpse. When one says, “This corpse is that person,” what is meant is that which is referred to when people use third-person speech.⁶² In other words, when we say “I,” what is intended and indicated is not an external and sensible thing. However, when we use third person speech, we mean and indicate the self that is external and sensible.

In *al-Maṭālib*, al-Rāzī alludes to the idea that part of the knowledge of the soul that does not require a demonstrative proof (*burhān*) is the knowledge of its existence. However, the knowledge of the quiddity of the thing we refer to as the self in terms of being an abstract substance, body, or something bodily is a different issue that does require proof. Actually, al-Rāzī states this at the very beginning of *al-Maṭālib*, where he classifies his views about the soul, his position on the reality and quiddity of the soul (i.e., human being), and the possibility of attaining knowledge about its reality and quiddity.⁶³ The flying man is discussed in *al-Maṭālib* under the title “Strong Proofs Indicating the Soul to be Abstract/Immaterial.” Al-Rāzī alludes to the idea that the thing a human being can know best is the self, but investigating its truth and quiddity is difficult. In this case, what can be known is an identity, awareness of identity (*al-shu‘ūr bi-l-huwiyya*), and primary awareness/awareness of self. This awareness a human being has about one’s self provides knowledge about the existence

62 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, In A. Hijāzī al-Sakkā’ (Ed.), Vol. II (Tehran: Mu’assasat al-Ṣādiq li al-ṭibā’a wa-l-nashr, 1415), 269–270. Thomas Nagel wrote an article “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” in 1974. Since then this short but effective piece of writing has been consulted in the debates in the philosophy of the mind concerning the first person perspective or subjectivity. We can think that al-Rāzī asks the same question with “what is it like to be I or he?” See Tiryaki, “Ibn Sīnā’nın *Kitābū’n-Nefs*’inde Beden ve Bedensellik,” 377–382. for perspectives on the problem of objectivity-subjectivity in the context of discussions concerning mind and consciousness.

63 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib*, Vol. VII: 21–25.

of a self that is different from the body but that does not provide knowledge about its quiddity in regard to the self being an abstract immaterial substance. According to al-Rāzī, we cannot know the substance of the soul; we can only investigate the actions of the soul through induction (*istiqrā*).⁶⁴ At the end of this discussion concerning the first problem of understanding the self (*dhāt*) in the flying man, the following has to be mentioned. If al-Rāzī can still talk about self-awareness while at the same time denying the substantiality of the soul, what he understands from the *self* has to be different from Ibn Sinā's understanding, as Kaukua rightly suggested by taking Baghdādī's idea a step further, "for instead of merely questioning the demonstrative force of self-awareness in the question of substantiality, al-Rāzī expressly denies any necessary connection between *self-awareness* and *substantiality*."⁶⁵ Additionally, the self-awareness discussed by Ibn Sinā, who accepts the soul as an immaterial substance, and the self-awareness discussed by al-Rāzī, who does not accept the soul as an immaterial substance, must be different things.

In the beginning of this section on al-Rāzī, we mentioned that the second issue will be about the main thesis, claim, and aim in the context of how al-Rāzī evaluates the main idea in the flying man and his criticisms against it. The last and third problem is the logical status of the flying man. Although al-Rāzī's responses to these two issues have already become clear to a large extent from what was discussed above, we can nevertheless briefly restate some of those ideas here. First of all, al-Rāzī examines the flying man and the issue of self-awareness in the context of the question of the possibility of identifying the definition and reality of the soul.⁶⁶ The second context in which al-Rāzī analyzes the flying man and self-awareness is where he evaluates the rational and transmitted evidence on the difference and independence of the soul from the body.

64 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib*, Vol. VII: 41–43. see also Altaş, "Fahreddin er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati," 144–147, 164–169, 171–173, 177–178. Altaş claims that if we accept that al-Rāzī defended the notion of an abstract substance, this will have some consequences. It will become difficult to explain al-Rāzī's views on wide-ranging topics including the quiddity of knowledge, atomism, *hayūla* and form, bodily resurrection, the meaning of religious rituals, *mūjib bi al-dhāt*, emanation, the principle of *şudūr*, *fā'il al-mukhtār*, faculty of the soul that perceives the particulars and universals, the possibility of the existence of other universes, the ability of the heavens to be torn, the possibility of two universes, the temporariness of the universe and the possibility of its corruption" Altaş, "Fahreddin er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati," 194–195.

65 Kaukua, *Self-Awareness*, 116–118. From his earlier study it seems that Kaukua was aware of the dissimilarities between Ibn Sinā and al-Rāzī: Kaukua and Kukkonen, "Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness," 113–115.

66 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib*, Vol. VII: 38–39.

We have already mentioned Hasse's five alternatives for identifying Ibn Sīnā's main thesis and aim in the flying man. According to this, the flying man's aim was to establish the groundwork for issues such as the soul's 1) incorporeality 2) independence from the body, 3) existence, 4) self-awareness, and 5) substantiality. Based on these alternatives, al-Rāzī would accept the flying man if it had signified the soul's 3) existence or 4) self-awareness. The flying man being aimed at 1) the incorporeality of the soul or 2) the independence of the soul from the body would constitute a problem for al-Rāzī. As for the fifth alternative where the flying man is intended for the substantiality of the soul, al-Rāzī would accept this if the substance here were not an abstract incorporeal substance but a spiritual substance, as Altaş mentioned.⁶⁷ Among the five alternatives, al-Rāzī's unwillingness to use the flying man for the soul's immateriality or independence from the body while having a positive attitude towards the viability of issues like the soul's existence or self-awareness in the flying man makes one think that al-Rāzī had separated the flying man from its Avicennan ontological dimension and used it for epistemological aims.

Lastly, let us remember the remarks about the logical status of the flying man. Al-Rāzī discusses whether the Avicennian premise in the flying man is an *a priori* proposition. His conclusion is that the premise is not *a priori* and thus requires a proof. Therefore, al-Rāzī is of the opinion that Ibn Sīnā was quick to pass judgment on a non-*a priori* and therefore a non-self-evident item (immateriality and incorporeality of the soul/self). However, if we remember that Ibn Sīnā himself did not view the flying man as a proper proof, but rather as an admonition for wise people and that he had also brought proofs for the substantiality of the soul in subsequent sections of *Shifā'/al-Nafs*, we are safe in saying that Ibn Sīnā and al-Rāzī are in agreement concerning the logical status of the flying man. Nevertheless, we have also mentioned that al-Rāzī differs from Ibn Sīnā by believing in the impossibility of identifying the reality and quiddity of the soul and by viewing the induction about the actions of the soul as the only way to attain knowledge about the soul and its existence.

As a result, al-Rāzī's thoughts differ from Ibn Sīnā, particularly in the first two of the three central issues that we examined over the flying man. Accordingly, this break from the Avicennan position on the first issue concerning understanding the self in self-awareness as either quiddity or each person's peculiar identity also led

67 Altaş, "Fahredden er-Rāzī'ye Göre İnsanın Mahiyeti ve Hakikati," 14.

to their difference on the second issue. In light of this break from the idea, while Ibn Sinā himself and those after him used the flying man more in the ontological realm to demonstrate the immateriality of the soul and its independence from the body, al-Rāzi has focused on the epistemological dimension of the flying man that is centered around the issue of the soul's self-awareness by eliminating Ibn Sinā's ontological implication due to having a different ontological perspective.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Owing to his focus on the immateriality and incorporeality of the soul, Ibn Sinā is concerned with the soul and its quiddity more than the human in the notion of self-awareness he developed with the help of the flying man thought experiment. The flying man was brought into question in the context of a more advanced investigation into the essence, substance, and quiddity of the soul only after being defined as perfection in terms of how being relates to matter, movement, and body (i.e., in terms of being soul or soul *qua* soul). This investigation expectedly forced Ibn Sinā into a search for a fixed and unchanging thing or principle, and thus the immaterial and incorporeal soul becomes crystallized as a fixed, unchanging, eternal, and primordial ontological principle. Ibn Sinā intends quiddity with the term self (*dhāt*) in self-awareness (*al-shu'ūr bi-l-dhāt*). He thinks that even though

68 The transformation that can be traced through al-Rāzi's criticisms is also present in the versions of the flying man thought experiment in the Latin world. In this regard, William of Auvergne (d. 1249), Peter of Spain (d. 1240?), John of la Rochelle (d. 1245), Matthew of Aquasparta (d. 1302), Vital du Four (d. 1327) are some of the prominent names. In the interpretation of the flying man by these scholars, the first transformation that can be observed concerns the logical status of the thought experiment. From the 13th century onwards, the role of the flying man began to change and started to be used in the epistemological context about the soul's direct perception or awareness of itself. In the 13th century, the second change about the flying man was the emphasis on the body. For this reason, while the claim that the flying man is unaware of his body was a necessary premise for Ibn Sinā and his followers who used the flying man with ontological concerns, with the 13th-century shift towards the epistemological use of the experiment, the soul-body separation became superficial for the experiment and the claim ceased to be a necessary premise. Within this period, a division also emerged within the ontological use of the experiment and the ontological claim about the nature of the soul became separate from the ontological claim the existence of the soul. By the 13th century, the flying man was devised to prove the immaterial nature of the soul or to prove its existence. The focus of the epistemological use, on the other hand, gradually shifted to self-awareness and only the awareness of the self or the soul about its self-existence, not its nature, began to be posited from the second half of the 13th century. Within this period, the flying man was used only to prove the consciousness of the soul towards itself in the epistemological context and remained as something that was appealed to by those who rejected Thomas Aquinas's Aristotelian interpretation of self-awareness. For a more detailed account of the reception of the flying man in the Latin World, see Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 80–92; Toivanen, "The Fate of the Flying Man", 64–65, 75–80, 94–95.

something exists within everyone the existence of which we are all aware of and which we refer to as “I,” the real self is not the accidental self that incorporates the physical and sensory components but is the immaterial and incorporeal self. Therefore, whatever is intended for perceiving or being aware of the self in the flying man, whether self-knowledge based on self-awareness or self-consciousness, the self here is used in the Avicennan sense. Nevertheless, one thing has to be pointed out here concerning Ibn Sīnā that can undermine the framework and the interpretation expressed in this study. References from Ibn Sīnā in his later works as well as discussions on those references in the modern literature suggest that the thing being made self-aware is not the quiddity of the soul but its existence. This study focuses on Ibn Sīnā’s theses on self-awareness as limited to his primary works with the assumption that al-Rāzī’s criticisms concerning the flying man and self-awareness are directed to Ibn Sīnā’s main account. Thus the question of whether Ibn Sīnā has a conception of self-awareness in his later works that differ from his primary version has been left outside the scope of this study.

If Ibn Sīnā’s flying man retains an ontological character based on the claim that the soul is an immaterial, incorporeal, and abstract substance independent from the body, someone whose stance is against the substance dualism (e.g., some early 13th century thinkers) would eliminate the ontological implications of the flying man and, by adopting a more epistemological attitude, would not need to eliminate or suspend the body in order to attain self-awareness of one’s soul or individual existence of the self; on the contrary this person would develop an approach for self-awareness that takes into account the bodily existence. This is almost an answer to the question “What would a theologian make of the flying man?” When accepting the existence of an account of self-awareness founded upon an immaterial and incorporeal understanding of self as in Ibn Sīnā, then al-Rāzī’s criticism and objection will clearly be about the immaterial and incorporeal nature of the self, not the idea of the existence of the soul in every human being and the individual awareness of the self towards itself. As a result, al-Rāzī would reject the remarks about the soul’s immaterial and incorporeal nature and about quiddity in the flying man. Yet, he would still accept the points on self-awareness. To put differently, when used as the basis to establish the essence (*dhāt*), substance, or quiddity of the immaterial and incorporeal soul, the flying man becomes a subject of criticism for al-Rāzī. However, if the flying man serves to establish the existence of the self as an individual *dhāt*, al-Rāzī would accept it. With this acceptance, the *self* becomes neither a completely material and physical body nor a purely

immaterial and incorporeal substance for al-Rāzī. Therefore, the self cannot be reduced to pure matter while being related to the physical body and matter; yet at the same time the self cannot be thought of as a purely immaterial and incorporeal substance either. Therefore, the self for al-Rāzī is not immaterial, incorporeal, abstract, fixed, unchanging, independent from the body, or immune to time and space conditions, which it is for Ibn Sīnā. On the contrary, self, self-awareness, self-consciousness or any account of the self is historical, temporal, dynamic, and limited to the conditions of time and space for al-Rāzī.

Rāzī's flying man cannot take off enough to fly notwithstanding his ability to have awareness, realization, and consciousness of the soul, self, personhood, and individual existence; he cannot disembody himself from what is bodily and corporeal even hypothetically for a moment, perceiving the self as a purely immaterial and incorporeal being. While one has awareness of one's identity, individual self, and existence that distinguish one from another, this person will interact with one's body, senses, surroundings, and environment through the material, corporeal, and worldly realm to an extent unattainable for and even contrary to Ibn Sīnā's flying man. For al-Rāzī or any other theologian, bodily/corporeal existence is similarly so important that even if an existence in a contingent/possibly different world exists, the existence or absence of it cannot be known with certainty; it must not be purely spiritual but bodily/corporeal. The issues of whether this can be justified and, if a justification can be made, will it be on a demonstrative, rhetorical, or revealed proof is a secondary issue.

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