



The Self-Consciousness of the Soul in the Context of Avicenna's Flying Man Theory *

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Abstract

While the concepts of dhāt/self, shu'ūr/consciousness, and al-shu'ūr bi-l-dhāt/self-consciousness have gained prominence in recent philosophical discourse on the mind, particularly in the light of developments in neurobiology and neurophysiology. However, these concepts have a long history of usage in both Islamic and Western thought, dating back to the earliest periods. In his thought experiment, the Flying Man theorem, Avicenna (c. 980–1037 CE), one of the most influential philosophers of Islamic thought, addressed several key issues pertaining to the relationship between the soul and the body, the essence of the soul, the question of whether the soul has a separate and independent existence from the body, and the nature of consciousness. In his theory, which he discusses with partial differences in different works, Avicenna, initially posited that the soul has a separate and distinct existence from the body and that the soul has an immaterial essence. In the second stage, offering an indirect explanation of the existence of a single essence, namely the dhāt which prioritizes the functions of the different faculties of the immaterial, separate, and distinct realities of the soul and uniting these functions with the consciousness of 'I'. Nevertheless, there have been numerous interpretations of the objective that Avicenna sought to establish with his theory. While some have argued that he dealt with the essence and existence of the soul in his theory, others have argued that he also grounded the self-consciousness of the soul in addition to this. This study will examine Avicenna's theory of the flying man, elucidating its principal objective through an analysis of the theory's explanatory framework. Subsequently, an explanation will be provided regarding the notion of the soul being in the consciousness of its own dhāt. This study will evaluate Avicenna's distinction between the consciousness of the self (*al-shu'ūr bi-zāt*) and the consciousness of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*) will be evaluated. It demonstrates that although Avicenna's theorising primarily concerns the soul as having an immaterial essence, separate and distinct from the body, at a secondary level he also seeks to prove that the soul is conscious of its own essence.

Keywords: Philosophy of Religion; Avicenna; Flying Man Theory; Soul; Self; Consciousness

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Highlights

- This study deals with Avicenna's understanding of soul and consciousness in the context of the flying man theory.
- One of the basic claims of the flying man theory is that the soul has an essentially self-consciousness.
- The self-consciousness of the soul is self-evident, direct, and unmediated.
- The self-consciousness that the soul has is essentially identical to the dhāt/self itself.
- The soul's consciousness is divided into self-consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*) and consciousness of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*).

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İbn Sînâ'nın Uçan Adam Nazariyesi Bağlamında Nefsin Benlik Bilinci *

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Öz

Modern dönemde zihin felsefesi alanında, nöro-biyoloji ve nöro-fizyolojinin verilerine bağlı olarak yapılan çalışmalarda, zihin kavramıyla bağlantılı olarak zât/benlik, şu'ûr/bilinç ve benlik bilinci/kendilik bilinci kavramları daha fazla ön plana çıkmış olsa da erken dönemden itibaren gerek İslam gerekse Batı düşüncesinde bu kavramlar kullanılmıştır. İslam düşüncesinin önemli filozoflarından İbn Sînâ, nefsin bedenden ayrı ve farklı bir mevcudiyete sahip olduğuna dair geliştirdiği düşünce deneyi Uçan Adam nazariyesinde, nefs-beden ilişkisi, nefsin mâhiyeti, nefsin bedenden farklı ve bağımsız bir varlığa sahip olup olmadığı, nefsin bilince sahip olup olmadığı ve nefsin kendilik bilincini nasıl ve ne zaman kazandığını ele almıştır. Farklı eserlerinde kısmi farklılıklarla ele aldığı nazariyesinde İbn Sînâ ilk aşamada, nefsin bedenden ayrı ve farklı bir mevcudiyeti ve nefsin gayri maddi bir mâhiyete sahip olduğunu temellendirmiştir. İkinci aşamada ise gayri maddi, ayrık ve farklı gerçekliğe sahip olan nefsin farklı melekelere işlevlerini önceleyen ve bu işlevleri 'ben' bilinciyle birleştiren tek bir özün yani zâtın varlığını dolaylı şekilde izah etmiştir. Bununla birlikte İbn Sînâ'nın nazariyesinde asıl neyi temellendirmeyi amaçladığına dair farklı yorumlar yapılmıştır. Kimi nazariyede nefsin mâhiyeti ve gerçekliğini ele aldığını savunurken kimi de buna ek olarak nefsin kendilik bilincini de temellendirdiğini savunmuştur. Bu çalışmada, İbn Sînâ'nın düşünsel deney olarak geliştirdiği uçan adam nazariyesi ele alınacaktır, nazariyenin izahına bağlı olarak nazariyenin temel amacının ne olduğu ortaya konacaktır. Daha sonra nefsin kendi zâtının şu'ûrunda/bilincinde olmasından kastının ne olduğu izah edilecektir. İbn Sînâ'nın şu'ûra ilişkin yaptığı *kendilik bilinci* (eş-şu'ûr bi-zât) ile *bilincini bilinci* (eş-şu'ûr bi-şu'ûr) ayrımı değerlendirilecektir. Sonuç olarak da her ne kadar İbn Sînâ nazariyede öncelikli olarak nefsin bedenden ayrı ve farklı gayri maddi bir mâhiyete sahip olduğunu ele almış olsa da ikincil düzeyde nefsin kendi zâtının bilincinde olduğunu da kanıtlamayı amaçladığı temellendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Felsefesi; İbn Sînâ; Uçan Adam Nazariyesi; Nefis; Benlik; Bilinç

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Öne Çıkanlar

- Bu çalışma İbn Sînâ'nın nefs ve bilinç anlayışını uçan adam teorisi bağlamında ele almaktadır.
- Nefsin öz-bilinci apaçık, dolaysız ve aracıdır.
- Nefsin özsel olarak sahip olduğu özbilinç, zâtın/benliğin kendisiyle özdeşdir.
- Nefsin bilinci öz-bilinç (*eş-şu'ûr bi'z-zât*) ve bilinç bilinci (*eş-şu'ûr bi'ş-şu'ûr*) olarak ikiye ayrılır.

Atıf Bilgisi

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Introduction

Depending on the question “What is a human being?”, the relationship between soul and body, whether the soul has a self and consciousness, and how and when the soul acquires self-consciousness have been discussed by philosophers since the early period, both ontologically and epistemologically. In the modern period, studies in the philosophy of mind based on the data of neuro-biology and neuro-physiology have emphasized the concepts of mind, *dhāt*/self, *shū'ūr*/consciousness, and self-consciousness/self-consciousness in connection with the concept of mind, but similar concepts have been used with slight differences in the debates in Islamic and Western thought since the early period, especially in the Middle Ages. The main question discussed in both periods is the essence and origin of mind and consciousness, whether the mind has a reality separate and distinct from the body, and whether mind and consciousness are a function of the soul or a function of the brain, which is a part of the physical body. Although there are partial differences in the way philosophers in the classical period addressed the issue within their own philosophical and metaphysical systems, the contemporary philosophy of mind retains its meaning and importance as a source of discussion. This is because the question of the nature of consciousness and the source of conscious mental states, which make human beings human and form the basis of their personal identity (*I/dhāt*) as well as their nature, has always maintained its importance and value as the most fundamental problem of philosophy.

In the history of philosophical thought, there are two principal perspectives regarding the origin of the self and the phenomenon of self-awareness. The first of these is the monist/physicalist view, which reduces the self and consciousness to the physical material body, and the second is the dualist understanding, which explains the self and consciousness through the incubation of two different entities, the soul and the body. The subject of our study, Avicenna, whose views will be the subject of our study, discussed issues such as the soul, essence/self, *shū'ūr*/consciousness, and individuality in a unique way within his own philosophical system in his Works, which he addressed the issue in the context of substance dualism. By employing a set of concepts to elucidate his understanding of the soul and the meanings and functions ascribed attributed to these concepts, he posited that the soul has a discrete and distinct existence from the body, constituting an immaterial divine substance. Depending on the soul on which he grounded the reality of the soul, he postulated that the soul has an essence/self and consciousness/*shu'ūr* by virtue of its essence in his intellectual experiment, the Flying Man theorem.

This study aims to demonstrate that Avicenna addressed the issue of consciousness, self-awareness, and the origin, formation, and maintenance of the self in a systematic and unique manner. This is a fundamental problem in the philosophy of mind, and his approach will be a source of contemporary discussion. Discussions in the philosophy of mind are informed by the premise that the soul is a discrete entity, separate from the body, with a distinct ontological status. This is exemplified in his thought experiment, the Flying Man theorem, which posits that the soul possesses *dhāt*/self and consciousness/*shu'ūr* as a consequence of its essential nature. In the context of Avicenna's doctrine of the soul, this paper will examine his views on the classification of self (*dhāt*), consciousness (*shu'ūr*), and consciousness of self (*al-shu'ūr bi al-dhāt*) and consciousness of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-*

shu'ūr). Additionally, contemporary commentators have offered differing interpretations of the philosopher's intentions in developing his theory. The discrepancies in opinion can be attributed to a number of factors, including Avicenna's stylistic approach, the premises he employed, and the manner in which he differentiated the concepts utilized in his analysis of the soul's nature. This study will examine the differences of opinion held by contemporary commentators on Avicenna's work and the reasons behind these differences, with reference to his theory.¹ Due to the limitations of this study, we will not elaborate on the philosopher's understanding of the soul, his proofs for the existence of the soul, the faculties of the soul, and so on.

Definition and Essence of Nafs

In his philosophical work, Avicenna defines the soul as "Thus, the soul ... is the first completion of natural bodies that have organs carrying out the actions of life."² In contrast to Aristotle's definition of the soul an immaterial, simple, and naturally present force or structure in the body,³ Avicenna defines the soul as the first perfection that is externally included in the body and enables the body, which is the natural organic body, to exist in actuality. Avicenna considers Aristotle's understanding of the soul as the form of the body⁴ to be inadequate on the grounds that the soul does not occupy any part of the body, is not immanent to the body, and so on. Consequently, he defines the soul not as the form of the body but rather as its perfection.⁵ In this context, Avicenna does not view the soul as the

¹ In addition to those who argue that Avicenna aimed to prove that the soul has an immaterial existence that is separate and distinct from the physical body, there are contemporary commentators who argue that he also aimed to explain that the soul has self-consciousness. These arguments are as follows: Therese A. Druart Dag, "The Soul and Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes", ed. Therese A. Druart, *Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies-Georgetown University, 1988), 27-49; Michael Marmura, "'Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context'", *The Monist* 69/3 (1986), 383-95; Deborah L. Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows", *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Shahid Rahman, Tony Street, and Hassan Tahiri (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2008), 63-87; Jari Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Peter Adamson and Fedor Beneviseh, "The Thought Experimental Method: Avicenna's Flying Man Argument", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 4/2 (2018), 147-64; Ahmed Alwishah, "Avicenna on self-cognition and self-awareness", *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Ahmed Alwishah and Josh Hayes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 143-63. Apart from these studies, there have recently been important studies on Avicenna's understanding of the soul, essence/self, consciousness and immortality at the doctoral dissertation level: In addition to the aforementioned studies, a number of significant doctoral dissertations have recently been published on Avicenna's conceptualisation of the soul, essence/self, consciousness and immortality. Ahmet Erkan, *Soul and Immortality in Avicenna*, (Ankara: Ankara University Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Thesis, 2023)) and Ömer F. Görücü, *Avicenna - Descartes Psychology: A Comparative Analysis* (Izmir: Izmir Katip Celebi University Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Thesis, 2023).

² Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima: Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (London: University of Durham, 1959), I.1, p. 12, line 7-8; Aristotle *De Anima*, 2.1.412b 4-6. The English translations of the quotations from the *Liber de Anima* are taken from Simon Kemp's translation of *The Psychology of Avicenna: An English Version of the Liber de Anima*. However, the emphases and the Arabic quotations in brackets are those of the author.

³ Aristotle, *De Anima* II.1, 412b5-6, 412a27-28.

⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima* II.1, 412a20-1.

⁵ Jari Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 44.

form that unites with matter in its potentiality and actualises it. Instead, he considers the soul to be the principle of perfection of the body composed of matter and form. This is because Avicenna employs the term 'form' in the sense of a perfection that is intrinsic to a given species, thereby conferring upon it the characteristics of that species. Similarly, the definition of the soul as the form of the body provides insight into the soul's relationship with the body and the effects/phylaxis that the soul exerts upon the body within this relationship. However, it does not provide information about the essence of the soul.⁶ Such a definition of the soul would be a definition based on its actions rather than its essence or essence:

We say that when we know that the soul is the perfection (*kamāl*) of the body and then explain what perfection is, we do not know what the essence (*mahiya*) of the soul is, but rather we know what the soul is in terms of its being the soul. The term soul is not derived from the substance itself, but rather from its role in governing the body and assuming responsibility for its actions.⁷

To elucidate the essence of the soul, Avicenna, with the aid of the flying man theorem, postulates that one can become aware of the existence of the soul by directly perceiving the essence of the soul in the absence of the body, bodily limbs, and perceptual experiences. As Avicenna postulates, an examination of the essence (*dhāt*) of the soul, conducted with concentration, reveals that it is devoid of a locus and exists as a substance in itself.⁸ He posits that the soul has a separate and distinct reality in the body. The most accurate and precise definition of the soul is one that is based directly on the essence of the soul, that is, intrinsic nature, as opposed to a definition that is contingent on the body or bodily limbs. This is because attempting to define the soul in relation to bodily faculties would constitute a definition, rather than essential definition (*hadd*).⁹ A definition based on the actions of the soul, which are its effects on the body, would be a relative definition rather than an essential definition. A definition of the soul based on its functions within the body would effectively reduce the soul to a mere faculty or the collective of faculties. In other words, defining the soul in terms of the effects that arise as a result of its attribution to the body (*min jihat izāfati mā lahu ay min jihat mā huwa mabda'u li hazīhi al-afā'il*) would be defining the soul in terms of accidents (*min jihat ma lahu 'arazun mā*), which would not constitute an absolute definition.¹⁰ The true definition must be based on the essence that distinguishes the soul as a soul and maintains its state, derived directly from its substance.¹¹ To illustrate this concept more clearly, Avicenna presents the example of the mover and the movable. Accordingly, observation of the moving thing reveals the presence of an agent that initiates movement, yet the specific nature of the essence (*dhāt*) of this agent remains unknown. Avicenna

⁶ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.3 27-33.

⁷ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5, p. 10, line 15-18.

⁸ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* 1.5, p. 9 line 15-16; 1.5, p.4 line 8-9, 11.

⁹ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5, p.8 line 2-3.

¹⁰ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* 1.5, p. 4 line 8-9, 11. It is evident that Avicenna acknowledges the possibility of discerning the soul through its inherent qualities and the actions it initiates within the body. *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5, p. 15 line 16-17.

¹¹ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* 1.5 4 satir 8-9, 11. Of course, Avicenna accepts that the soul can be partially known through the accidents it possesses and the actions it causes in the body (*min hadh al-'arādhi lahu ila an nuhakkiku dhātīhi li-na'rifa māhiyatahu ...*). *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5 p. 15 line 16-17.

attempts to address this issue by focusing on the essence of the soul itself.¹² To elucidate the existence and essence of the soul, which is distinct from the body, he develops the thought experiment of the "Flying Man."

Flying Man Theory

Avicenna's intellectual experience, which can be formulated as the theory of the Flying Man/Man in the Void, which he constructed to justify the realization of the soul's essence, can be found in *al-Shifā: Tabi'iyāt / Kitāb al-Nafs* (I.1; V.7), *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt* (Namat 3, Fasl 1-2, 374-78.), and *Mubāhasāt*. In *Kitāb al-Nafs* I.1, where he aims to elucidate the essence of the soul, he concludes that the soul has a separate and distinct existence from the body. In *Kitāb al-Nafs* V.7, he explains what he is aware of and knows independently of his body with the concept of *anniya*. In addition to these three works, *Ta'liqāt* (pp. 30, 79-80, 147-48, 160-61), provides a detailed discussion and justification of the soul's direct consciousness of its own essence as opposed to its relation and difference from the body. In this work, he addresses self-consciousness in the sense of the soul's awareness of itself and makes the distinction between *al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt* and *al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*. Although the narratives and descriptions of the theory in these three works contain partial differences, the main point that draws attention is to prove the existence and essence of the soul and to justify that the soul has a separate and distinct existence from the body. Additionally, it is posited that individuals are conscious of their *dhāt/self*, meaning that they can directly perceive their *dhāt/self*.

The interpretation of this intellectual experiment developed by Avicenna has been the subject of considerable debate. The conceptual ambiguity inherent in the theory, the partial discrepancy between different versions of the theory, and the alternating use of different concepts in different versions have provided a foundation for the defense of disparate views on the precise nature of Avicenna's intention in developing this theory. The initial interpretation that to be examined is that Avicenna posits the existence of a soul that is separate and distinct from the body, and that the soul is immaterial. One of the most prominent advocates of this perspective is Hasse. The second main interpretation is that Avicenna justifies the soul's direct, self-evident, and permanent self-consciousness, in addition to its immateriality. An important representative of this view is Kaukua.

In his *Kitāb al-Nafs*, Avicenna formulates the theory as follows:

In this matter, it is oriented towards proving the existence of the self through warning (*tanbih*) and reminiscing (*tadhkir*) ...

We say that the one among us must imagine (*yatawahham*) himself as though (a) he is created all at once and (b) created perfect (*kāmil*), but that (c) his sight has been veiled from observing external things, and that (d) he is created falling in the air or the void in a manner where he would not encounter air resistance, requiring him to feel, and that (e) his limbs are separated from each other so that they neither meet nor touch. He must then reflect as to whether he will affirm the existence of his self (*dhātahu*).

He will not doubt his affirming his self-existing (*wujūd dhātihī*), but with this he will not affirm any limb from among his organs, no internal organ, whether heart or brain, and no external thing. Rather, he would be affirming his self (*dhātihī*) without affirming for its length, breadth and depth. And if in this state he were able to imagine a hand or some other

¹² Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5 p. 5 line 2-3.

organ, he would not imagine it as part of his self (*fî dhātîhi*) or a condition for its existence (*shartan fî dhātîhi*).

You know that what is affirmed is other than what is not affirmed and what is acknowledged (*al-muqarr bihi*) is other than what is not acknowledged. Hence the self whose existence he has affirmed has a special characteristic (*khāssiyya*) of its being his very self, other than his body and organs that have not been affirmed.

Hence the one who affirms (*al-muthbit*) has a means (*lahu sabil*) to be alerted (*yatannabah*) to the existence of the soul as something other than the body -indeed, other than body- and to his being directly acquainted (*‘ārif*) with [this existence] and aware of it (*annahu ‘ārif bihi mustash’ir lahu*). If he is oblivious to this, he would require educative prodding.”¹³

As can be discerned from the aforementioned quotation, the primary objective of this particular iteration of the theory is to substantiate the existence of the soul, the capacity to intellectually acknowledge the existence of the soul as a separate and distinct entity from the body, and the assertion that the soul is not contingent upon the body for its existence and functions. The second point concerns the essence of the soul, which is accepted from the outset as a separate and distinct entity from the body. This raises the question of what kind of essence the soul has, without considering its attribution to the body. The differentiation of the soul from the body serves to justify the immaterial structure of the soul. The third point concerns the essential relation between the soul's essence and the soul itself, or its being. This is to be achieved by justifying that the body is not a constituent or essential part of the soul's existence and essence. In other words, it is an attempt to justify the sameness between essence/self and self-consciousness. It can therefore be concluded that self-consciousness is not related to the body or any bodily limb. Consequently, the soul's dhāt, or self-consciousness, can be defined as a state that is separate and distinct from the body. Once the essence, dhāt, and self-consciousness of the soul have been established, it is necessary to demonstrate the direct cognizability, clarity, and certainty of self-consciousness.

In the theorem, Avicenna's primary rationale for requesting that the individual imagine themselves suspended in the air with immediate and comprehensive understanding is to preclude sensory knowledge/experience, which represents the fundamental source of knowledge for the mind. Consequently, this approach serves to substantiate the existence of the soul without the reciprocal affirmation of the body by the soul. For this purpose, he asserts that all sensory input must be blocked. The rationale behind the suspension of the body in the air and the subsequent conceptualisation of it as “*created all at once and (b) created perfect*” (*khulika defatan and wa khulika kāmīlan*)¹⁴ is to preclude the actualisation of the faculties of estimation, imagination, and memory. These are internal faculties (*ḥawāṣ al-bātina*) that may

¹³ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.1, p. 16 line 2-15.

¹⁴ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5, p. 16 line 3. In formulating his theorem, Avicenna posits that the human being was created by God in a state of suspension in the air. To gain a deeper comprehension of the theorem, it is essential to undertake a detailed examination of the process of creation of the human being that he postulates. In Avicenna's theory, the creation of human beings is not an instantaneous process. Conversely, in addition to the unity of the soul and body, the human being is brought into existence according to a deterministic order within the sublunar realm, under the control of the active intellect. Nevertheless, Avicenna posits that it is logically feasible for God to create a human being directly in this scenario, invoking His divine power.

be possessed by bodily limbs contingent on their sensation. The objective is to prevent the data that would otherwise activate these faculties. Therefore, it can prevent any kind of data flow that would nourish the essence of the soul based on perceptual experiences. Despite lacking experiential knowledge, an individual can still demonstrate competence and perfection in using the utilisation of their intellectual faculties. An additional rationale for conceptualising the individual as a suspended entity devoid of internal and external components is to preclude the interception of sensory data. This entails the prevention of both sensory and experiential knowledge, including tactile, olfactory, and gustatory experiences, as well as the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to one's own body. Once the soul has been purified of all internal and external data, and has reached a state of pure awareness, it intellects whether its dhāt/self exists or not, and becomes directly and without any doubt, clearly aware of the existence of the dhāt/self of its soul (*shu'ūr*). This provides evidence that the dhāt/self of one's soul has a reality that is independent of and distinct from the physical limbs. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the soul is aware of its own existence without perceptual knowledge and experience. This essence, which is realised and directly perceived, is what the person calls "I" (*'ana*), the self itself (*shu'ūrūna bi-dhātīnā huwa nafs wujūdunā*).¹⁵ It is an essential essence from whose realization one cannot escape and whose existence one must affirm. This self-awareness or self-consciousness, which Avicenna expresses with the concept of dhāt/self, points to the subjective and individual self of the soul. Based on the self-consciousness of the soul, Avicenna also aimed to justify the individuation and formation of personal identity of each individual.¹⁶

To substantiate the assertion that self-consciousness is not a function of the body, it is first necessary to demonstrate that the soul is not a function of the body or the sum of bodily functions. To this end, Avicenna presents a series of arguments to demonstrate that the soul possesses a reality that is separate and distinct from the body. The initial argument is based on the concept of intellectual perception. Accordingly, intellectual perception is realised in the immaterial soul, rather than in the physical body or perceptions. Perceptual experience based on the body is unable to abstract the forms of the things it senses from their substances. However, the immaterial soul and the faculty of perception can grasp the forms of things by abstracting them from their substances. Secondly, the faculty of perception inherent to the soul is capable of discerning universals that do not possess discrete and distinct realities. The universals that do not possess a discrete existence external to the body can only be apprehended through the faculty of perception. Thirdly, the soul is conscious of its own existence while the body and sensory organs are not aware of their own existence; only the soul is aware of its own existence. This can be achieved without the input of sensory perceptions, as evidenced by the flying man theory. Therefore, despite the closure of both internal and external perceptions, the individual conceived of in this manner will inevitably affirm the existence of their own essence (*wujūd dhātika*) even under these circumstances. Consequently, Avicenna posits that even in the absence of corporeal awareness, an

¹⁵ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahman Badawī (Cairo: Dar al-Islamiyya, 1973), p. 161 line 10.

¹⁶ Ahmed Alwishah, "Avicenna on Self-cognition and Self-Awareness", *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Ahmed Alwishah and Josh Hayes (Cambridge University Press), 145-46; For detailed information on Avicenna's individualisation of the soul, see Ömer Ali Yıldırım, "Ebü'l-Berekât el-Bağdâdî ve İbn Sînâ Bağlamında Nefislerin Bireyselleşmesi", *Bilimname* 39 (2019), 187-219.

individual will remain conscious of their own essence. This indicates that the awareness of essence is not contingent on the body or any of its constituent parts.

Despite Avicenna's justification of the soul's separate and distinct existence from the body in his theory, his argument for the soul's existence was critiqued for its lack of strength. One of the major criticisms of the theory, J. Kaukua's criticism, concerns Avicenna's error in distinguishing between the epistemological or phenomenological and the metaphysical:

... as many scholars have pointed out, it seems to commit the rather blatant fallacy of proceeding from an epistemic or phenomenological distinction to a metaphysical one... the fact that the brain or the extended neural network of my body does not figure in the phenomenology of my first-personal experience does clearly not warrant the conclusion that my experience is metaphysically independent of them, for it is perfectly possible, even likely, that my experience is opaque in the sense that mere introspection will never reveal its physical foundation.¹⁷

Kaukua asserts that Avicenna's distinction between two different realities lacks sufficient rationale and is not sufficiently clear or grounded. In accordance with this distinction, Avicenna posits that the soul and the body are discrete entities, such that the soul can exist independently of the body and is not contingent on the body for its reality and existence. However, as Kaukua notes, the fundamental issue is that the distinction between the soul and the body is inherently ambiguous, as the soul is said to possess a wholly distinct reality from the body. Does the fact that the soul is conscious of its own existence despite being purified from all bodily limbs and sensory data in the theory provide sufficient justification for the soul having a separate and distinct existence from the body as claimed? The lack of perceptual data supporting the existence of the body in the theory raises the question of whether this necessitates the existence of the soul. How can he be certain that the essence/self which he believes to be conscious is not a part of the body or the body itself? The response to this fundamental critique of the theory remains unclear and unaddressed within the theory itself.

One potential response to this criticism is that the theory in question is not a well-founded argument, but rather, as Avicenna states, an 'admonition', that is, a warning or reminder. A detailed analysis of the theory's structure reveals that Avicenna does not set out to provide a definitive, well-reasoned definition of the soul, self, or essence. Conversely, the theory can be seen as an intellectual experiment, designed to facilitate the realisation and perception of one's own self or essence.¹⁸ P. Adamson and F. Benevich contend that such an explanation is inadequate and unconvincing. They argue that Avicenna makes this distinction by observing conceptual distinctions in a way that leaves no room for doubt. In the text, Avicenna presents the soul-body distinction in a clear and assertive manner. Had he lacked confidence in this distinction, he would have stated it in the text and provided the necessary justifications.¹⁹

¹⁷ Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, 37.

¹⁸ Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, 34.

¹⁹ Adamson and Benevich, "The Thought Experimental Method", 149; Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, I.1, p. 16 line 12-13.

Another important criticism against the flying man theory is M. Marmura's claim that, just as Anselm made a leap from a concept in the mind to objective reality, Avicenna makes a leap from a hypothetical/ hypothetical existence to an existence with a definite/categorical reality. Marmura criticizes Avicenna's inference from hypotheticals that do not reflect reality to a reality that has not been conclusively proven or clearly grounded, arguing that the theory uses a false method of inference.²⁰ The part that Marmura has the following to say about this:

You know that what is affirmed is other than what is not affirmed and what is acknowledged (*al-muqarr bihi*) is other than what is not acknowledged. Hence the self whose existence he has affirmed has a special characteristic (*khāssiyya*) of its being his very self, other than his body and organs that have not been affirmed.

Hence the one who affirms (*al-muthbit*) has a means (*lahu sabīl*) to be alerted (*yatannabah*) to the existence of the soul as something other than the body -indeed, other than body- and to his being directly acquainted (*ʿārif*) with [this existence] and aware of it (*annahu ʿārif bihi mustashʿir lahu*). If he is oblivious to this, he would require educative prodding.²¹

Marmura does not find it correct to present Avicenna's hypothetical/ hypothetical conclusion as if it were a definite conclusion. In Marmura's words:

This argument, however, so very central to the first version of the "Flying Man," is problematic. It operates within an imagined, hypothetical framework and hence one expects its conclusion to be hypothetical and tentative. But an unwarranted swerve from the hypothetical to the categorical seems to take place. For the language of its conclusion is categorical. That Avicenna intended this conclusion to be categorical is also indicated by the example's other two versions.²²

As Marmura points out, Avicenna argued in his theory that if one is created perfect and rational, capable of knowing self-evident truths spontaneously and incapable of using the limbs of the physical body, then even if one is not aware of the body, one is conscious of one's own essence and possesses essential knowledge, which is natural and permanent knowledge of one's own self/dhāt. However, this is contrary to Marmura's criticism, and it is therefore incorrect to claim that Avicenna's theory is based on a hypothetical conception of existence. In the theory, the philosopher uses the expression '*al-wāhid minnā*'²³ in the sense of 'one of us' to describe the being he proposes we conceive, thereby indicating that one of us can directly imagine oneself as envisaged in the theory.²⁴ This indicates that there is a possible intellectual experiment in which each individual can envisaged themselves, contrary to Marmura's hypothetical critique that is devoid of any tangible to reality.

A further significant point of contention within the theory is the terminology employed by Avicenna. To ascertain Avicenna's perspective on the existence of consciousness and self-awareness (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*) in the soul prior to its union with the body, it is essential to define the fundamental concepts he employs to substantiate the existence of the soul and its structural characteristics. This necessitates an investigation into the denotations and connotations of these concepts, with a view to elucidating their nuances. The concepts in

²⁰ Marmura, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context", 388.

²¹ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.1, p. 16 line 2-15.

²² Marmura, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context", 388.

²³ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5 16 line 3.

²⁴ Adamson and Benevise, "The Thought Experimental Method", 150.

question are those of essence (*mahiya*) and self (*dhāt*). It is necessary to ascertain which of these concepts corresponds to the modern philosophical concepts of the mind, consciousness (*shu'ūr*), self-consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*), and self (*dhāt*). The precise meaning attributed to these two concepts, particularly the concept of *dhāt*, has resulted in a divergence of interpretations among commentators engaged in the study of Avicenna's work. In the theory, Avicenna uses the concept of *dhāt* to express what the person he imagines suspended in the air is aware of. The concept of *dhāt* is used to signify both "essence" (*mahiya*) and "self" (*dhāt*). Indeed, the philosopher does on occasion employ the concept of *dhāt* in both of its accepted senses. This has given rise to a debate as to whether the essence (*mahiya*) in the sense of the essence of the soul or the *dhāt* (self) in the sense of the self-consciousness of the soul is the truly realised concept in the theory. If we understand Avicenna's concept of *dhāt* in the theory to refer to the essence of the soul (*mahiya*), then it follows that the essence (*mahiya*) of the soul is what is realised in the theory. If the concept of essence in the theory is understood to refer to the *dhāt*/self, then the essence of the immaterial soul, which is distinguished from the body in the theory, and the self, which serves as the foundation for personal identity and individuality, will be regarded as distinct entities.²⁵ In the theory, Avicenna frequently uses the concept of *dhāt* instead of essence to express the existence of the soul and self-consciousness. If the concept of *dhāt* is understood as the soul's subjectivity, self, self-consciousness, or self-awareness, it is clear that the soul possesses a self-consciousness independent of the body, that is, *dhātiyyah*. In particular, the sentences in the theory, "He will not doubt his affirming his self existing (*li wujūd dhātihi*), ... Rather, he would be affirming his self (*dhātihi*) without affirming for it length, breadth and depth.", and especially the sentence, "The *dhāt*/self whose existence he proves is unique to him because it is the same as him (*huwa bi 'aynihi*)."²⁶ point to the soul's *dhāt*/self rather than its essence, substance, and structure.

Marmura argues that Avicenna asserts that the soul, or what he terms to as '*dhāt*/self', is the immaterial soul.²⁶ To substantiate this perspective, he draws upon Avicenna's definition, "What is meant by the soul is what each of us refers to as '*I/ana*'."²⁷ Similarly, Hasse, who opposes the possibility of reading the term *dhāt* in Avicenna's theory as denoting self and self-consciousness, posits that in the theory of the flying man, the term *dhāt* signifies essence (*mahiya*) and rather than self (*dhāt*). While the term *dhāt* can be understood as a reference to the self or self/self-consciousness when considered in isolation from the theory, he asserts that the context of the theory precludes this interpretation. He objects that the concept of *dhāt* in *Kitāb al-Nafs* I.1 and the concept of *anniya* in V.7, which Avicenna employs synonymously, cannot be understood in the same sense, namely is, as the self. Although the concept of *dhāt* can be understood as a synonym for the self, the concept of *anniya* cannot be understood in the same way. In the light of this distinction, Hasse posits that it would be more precise interpretation of the term *dhāt* within the theory would be as the soul's essence, that is, the essential structure of the soul that defines its nature and identity, taking into account the context. It should be noted that the soul is a distinct and

²⁵ Mehmet Zahit Tiryaki, "Uçamayan Adam: Fahreddin Râzî'de Ben Şu'ûru", *Nazariyat* 6/1 (2020), 8-9.

²⁶ Marmura, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context", *The Monist* 69/3 (1986), 384.

²⁷ Avicenna, *Ahwal al-Nafs*, ed. Ahmad Fuad al-Ahwani (Cairo: 1952), 183.

separate substance from the body, and that this substance is an intellectual experiment designed to demonstrate that it is immaterial by virtue of its essence and does not require a body for its existence. The concept of dhāt should be therefore understood as the essence (*mahiya*) which emphasises the essence of the soul. This is because Avicenna states that he will address the term soul instead of explaining the concept of dhāt when justifying the theory. Consequently, Hasse posits that Avicenna uses the term dhāt to signify essence, and that the two concepts are used synonymously when analysing the flying man theory in *al-Shifa: Kitāb al-Nafs* I.1. When the soul is discussed in the context of its attribution to the body, that is, it's being kamāl, it is not being discussed directly about the soul's essence or substance, but rather about its accidents.²⁸ Hasse's argument leads to the conclusion that, if the theory emphasises the substantial structure of the soul, then the essence of the soul, or its essence (*mahiya*), can be explained. However, it cannot be concluded from the theory that the soul is directly aware of its own self and conscious of its dhāt or individual existence.²⁹

Kaukua disagrees with Hasse's interpretation and states that Avicenna intentionally uses the concepts of *mahiya* and dhāt interchangeably in the theory. Although Avicenna first grounds that the soul has a separate and distinct reality from the body, in the second plan he also grounds that the soul in its immaterial structure has consciousness of its own dhāt and that this consciousness is essential and direct. Thus, Avicenna explains the personal identity and individuality of the immaterial soul through the self-consciousness of the dhāt independent of the body. He took shu'ūr as a more fundamental principle that precedes the person's all actions, enables them to be perceived as the primary singular agent, and enables the soul to realize its own essence. Avicenna's explanation of the difficulties of individualization and the formation of personal identity based only on the knowledge of one's own soul is more plausible in terms of self-consciousness, which is direct and self-evident to oneself and at the same time identical to that which has consciousness and that which is conscious. As Kaukua objects to Hasse's interpretation, what does it mean for the soul to directly perceive its own essence if the term dhāt in the theory is understood as essence (*mahiya*). A self-consciousness is required that makes it possible for the soul to perceive its own essence. There must be a kind of self-consciousness that enables the soul to be aware of its own existence, to say, 'My dhāt/self exists, I exist distinct and separate from the material body.' Isn't this kind of self-consciousness that enables the soul to become aware of and realize its essence and what kind of structure it has by ignoring this kind of self-consciousness? Therefore, Hasse's interpretation of dhāt in the sense of self-consciousness as essence (*mahiya*) and his understanding of the soul's judgment as 'I directly perceive my existence without the need for my body and bodily limbs' as 'I can directly perceive my dhāt/essence' is far from being convincing enough to eliminate alternative interpretations. The reason for Avicenna's preference for the term dhāt in the theory may be his desire to refer to the self-consciousness as well as the essence of the soul. Moreover, the concept of dhāt may also refer to the soul's self-consciousness as well as its essence in

²⁸ Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West*, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300*, ed. Aragno Quiviger, Warburg Institute Studies and Texts 1 (London: Turin: Warburg Institute; N. Aragno, 2000), 83, 87-89; Avicenna, *De Anima*, I.5, p. 4 line 12, p. 10 line 17.

²⁹ Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West*, 83-85.

the sense of its substantial essence. For the soul's consciousness of its individual existence is, in a sense, the soul's consciousness of the essence of its own existence. Therefore, Avicenna may have deliberately used a concept that can have such different meanings in his theory.³⁰ Similar to Kaukua's objection, Druart also stated that although Avicenna's alternating use of the concepts of *dhāt* and *mahiya* in different versions of his theory in different works creates a conceptual ambiguity, it would be more accurate to understand the concept of *dhāt* as the self.³¹

Consciousness of Self

In his theory, Avicenna identifies three distinct forms of consciousness. The first of these is the consciousness of one's physical body and bodily faculties (*al-shu'ūr*); the second is the most fundamental and essential self-consciousness/essential consciousness of one's own essence (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*); and the third is the consciousness of one's consciousness of oneself/reflective consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*).

Self-consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt/zātī shu'ūr*) can be defined as the introspection or direct awareness of one's own being, encompassing consciousness of one's own being, being aware of one's own emotions and mental states, and the ability to differentiate oneself from others. Self-consciousness can be defined as the direct and self-evident awareness of one's own essence/*dhāt* or being, which is free from the constraints of time and space. One is conscious of oneself in a manner that is not constrained by the limitations of the body and its constituent parts. The concept of self-consciousness can be understood to comprise two fundamental elements. The first of these is the entity engaged in the act of cognition, and the second is the entity or object that is the subject of that act. The initial question that arises is that of the perceiver and the perceived. In other words, what constitutes the perceiver and the perceived? In this context, it can be posited that the perceiver is the agent, the self, and the perceived is the *dhāt* itself, that is, its existence. As will be discussed in greater detail subsequently, Avicenna asserts that these constitute a single entity as they are identical, following his clarification of the nature of the perceiver and the perceived.³²

To elucidate the consciousness that the soul's *dhāt* possesses, Avicenna distinguished between the knowledge of oneself, in other words, knowing one's own *dhāt* (*ta'aqqul*) and being conscious of oneself (*shu'ūr*). These two forms of knowledge, which have disparate structures but are closely interrelated, serve distinct functions in the development and differentiation of the self/personal identity. In contrast to Aristotle's concept of knowledge of one's own self, Avicenna's work emphasises the notion of being conscious of one's own *dhāt*. Being conscious of one's own *dhāt* is different from Aristotle's knowledge of one's own *dhāt*; knowledge of one's own *dhāt* does not fully encompass consciousness of one's own *dhāt*. This form of knowledge is not permanent, direct, or self-evident, as it is achieved through the intellect's intellection. Upon cessation of the act of intellection, this form of cognition will also cease. However, as will be discussed in greater detail subsequently, the state of being conscious of one's own self is permanent, self-evident and direct. In the words

³⁰ Tiryaki, "Uçamayan Adam: Fahreddin Râzî'de Ben Şu'ûru", 13-14.

³¹ Druart, "The Soul and Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes", 34; Özcan Akdağ, *Din Felsefesi* (Kayseri: Kimlik, 2023) 279.

³² Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 160-61; 147-48.

of Avicenna, '... our soul (*nafsunā*) is perpetually consciousness (*shu'ūr*) of its own existence...' ³³ Therefore, while consciousness of one's own dhāt is constant, knowledge of one's own dhāt is contingent upon the process of intellection. This is due to the fact that the acquisition of knowledge regarding one's own dhāt is a process that relies on the intellect, intelligibles, and other internal faculties. The state of consciousness of one's own dhāt prioritises the process of knowing, given that the dhāt is identical and one with itself.³⁴

In contrast to Aristotle's concept of knowledge of the essence through the other, which is the intellection of the intellect based on the data it has about other beings and the realisation of its own intellection, Avicenna's notion of self-consciousness represents a distinct form of knowing. In the view of Aristotle, it is not possible for a person to be conscious of their own existence without the act of intellection, without external data to activate or actualise the intellect. This is because self-consciousness cannot be distinguished from the knowledge of other things that we perceive based on our perceptions. The knowledge of one's own essence can only be attained through the perception of external phenomena.³⁵ A comparable perspective is evident in Averroes's work. He posits that the knowledge of one's own individual soul (*'ilm bi-nafsihi al-shahsiyyah*) is acquired through sensory experience. In his own words, the essence of man (*dhātuhu*) is nothing but the knowledge of things (*'ilm al-ashyā'*). Averroes builds upon Aristotle's assertion that knowledge of the self is knowledge based on experience, arguing that one knows the essence of one's soul as one knows other things. He further points that the knowledge of self depends on knowing other things. This form of knowledge is contingent upon the acquisition of knowledge of other things and is therefore a knowledge that is realised and developed. This indicates that self-consciousness or knowledge of the individual essence is a gradual, developing, and changing type of knowledge in Averroes' view.³⁶ In contrast, Avicenna, with the theory of the man suspended in the air, precludes any external influx of data through the senses, thereby justifying the knowledge of self-consciousness as a necessary, essential, and unchanging type of knowledge.

Furthermore, the designation of the human soul as the rational soul (*nafs al-nāṭiqa*) distinguishes it from other types of souls, indicating that the most essential quality of the human soul is intellection. For the human soul to intellect, it must be conscious of its own dhāt. Regarding the essence of intellection, the question arises as to whether the unity of the intellect and the intellected – that is to say, the unity of the dhāt that is intellecting and the dhāt that is intellected – and the identity of the dhāt that has self-consciousness and the dhāt that is conscious of having self-consciousness are in question. Avicenna expresses this as follows:

³³ Avicenna, *al-Mubāhasāt*, ed. Muhsin Bidārfer (Qum: Intishārā-ı Baydar, 1992), 185-86, par. 550.

³⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima*, III.4 429b 8-430a; In *De Anima*, Aristotle does not address issues such as self-consciousness, the potential of the soul to understand its own essence, and so forth. Instead, he examines self-knowledge through the other, focusing on cognitive processes. Alwishah, "Avicenna on Self-cognition and Self-Awareness", 144-45; Yıldırım, "Ebü'l-Berekât el-Bağdâdî ve İbn Sînâ Bağlamında Nefislerin Bireyselleşmesi", 189.

³⁵ Aristotle, *De Anima*, III.4 429b 8-430a 25.

³⁶ Averroes, *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, ed. Sulayman Dunya (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1965), II, s. 522-23 par.143-44.

Self-consciousness is essential in the soul (*al-shu'ūr bi al-dhāti al-dhāti al-dhātiyyun li al-nafs*), not acquired externally. When dhāt arises, consciousness/shu'ūr arises with it (*ka annahu izā hasala al-dhātan, hasala ma'ahā al-shu'ūr*). One does not become conscious of it through a medium, but rather one becomes conscious of it through the dhāt, because of the essence (*yush'aru bihā bi dhātihā wa min dhātihā*). Our (the soul's) consciousness of our dhāt is the existence of our soul (*al-shu'ūrūnā bi al-dhātīnā huwa nafs wujūdunā*)... Self-consciousness is a consciousness that is inherent in the essence because it is the existence of the dhāt; therefore, there is no need for something external to perceive the dhāt. Rather, dhāt is that through which we perceive dhāt.³⁷

As Avicenna explicitly asserts in the quotation, the advent of dhāt is concomitant with that of shū'ūr, or self-consciousness. This implies that dhāt and shū'ūr are identical entities, both being indispensable and mutually reinforcing. In other words, the existence of dhāt is tantamount to the awareness of one's own essence. The existence of dhāt implies that the dhāt is aware of its own essence. In the words of Avicenna, one is conscious of one's own dhāt by virtue of being dhāt (*takūna anta anta*), as the self and the state of being conscious are one and the same. In light of the relationship, he posits between dhāt and shū'ūr/self-consciousness, one's shū'ūr/self-consciousness of one's own dhāt can be understood as the direct existence of one's dhāt itself.³⁸ Accordingly, the individual in the theory of the flying man has self-consciousness and self-awareness of their own existence as soon as they correctly identify their own essence. This would suggest that self-consciousness can be considered an aspect of the individualized soul. The awareness of one's own soul's dhāt necessitates the existence of an individual self, an individualized soul. He further justifies this in his *Mubāhasāt*:

Our intellect does not always intellect its essence (*dhātihi*); our soul (*nafsūnā*) is perpetually in the shū'ūr of its own existence. If the soul actually intellects something other than the essence, it will obviously be conscious (*shu'ūr*) of what its intellects as long as it is perpetually intellecting.³⁹

Consequently, an individual who is conscious of their own dhāt is also aware of their existence. Consequently, awareness of existence entails awareness of dhāt. Consequently, the act of intellection is made possible by the awareness of one's dhāt and the possession of it.

One of the arguments Avicenna develops to justify that the soul has a different and separate reality from the body is that the soul is conscious of its existence even when the body is diminished or damaged:

If this body (the material body) were just the body in its entirety, we would not be conscious of our existence as something that exists when something is missing from it. But this is not so. "I" would still be 'me' even if I did not know the existence of any of my hands, feet and organs... On the contrary, I think they are subject to me, and I know with certainty that these organs are tools that I use out of necessity. If these conditions did not exist, I would not need them, and if these needs do not arise, I renounce them. Nevertheless, without them, I continue to be 'me'.⁴⁰

³⁷ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 160-61, 147-48; *al-Mubāhasāt*, 59-60 par.60-66.

³⁸ Avicenna, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-'t-tanbihāt*, with Sharḥ Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, ed. Ayatallah Hasan Hasan-zadeh al-Amoli (Qum: Būstān-i Kitāb, 1433) II, Namat 3 Fasıl 3 line 7-8.

³⁹ Avicenna, *al-Mubāhasāt*, 185-86, par.550.

⁴⁰ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, V.7 p. 255 line 1-6.

This argument can also be interpreted as proof that the self/self-consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*) that the soul possesses actually exists independently of the body and sensory perceptions. This argument also constitutes a rejection of the view that the individual is constituted by the sum of the parts or faculties of the body or soul (*jumlatuhū*) and the view that self-consciousness is constituted by the perception of the sum of the different parts of the individual. This is because, if this view is accepted, the absence of one of these components would result in a deficit in the perception of self-consciousness. The alteration of bodily organs over time would necessitate a corresponding change in individuality (*anniyah*) and self-consciousness. However, as Avicenna correctly asserts, despite the absence of one of these components, the individual can persist in self-consciousness and awareness of their individual existence (*bi wujudi anniyatihi*). This indicates that self-consciousness is in fact identical with the existence of the *dhāt* of the soul.⁴¹

In the light of the soul's awareness of its own existence, as postulated by Avicenna, Marmura accepted the soul's self-consciousness as an inevitable consequence of the theory. However, this assertion is not aligned with Marmura's position. Rather, the notion that the soul is conscious of its own essential existence is a fundamental premise of the theory, rather than a conclusion derived from it. The theory is predicated on the assumption that the soul is conscious of its own *dhāt*, or self.⁴² If the soul is conscious of its own *dhāt*/essence without a body or the need for bodily organs, or if it can directly perceive its own essence, this entails that the soul is conscious of its own self in a way that precedes cognition, that it has self-consciousness. In the theory, the soul that we directly perceive, and which Avicenna defines as our own essence, '*al-shay al-lazī yarāhu kullun minna dhātahu*'⁴³ actually implies that the soul has a consciousness of self and that this state, which each of us directly perceives as our own *dhāt*, is actually the self. In this context, the term *dhāt* is understood to refer to a state of self-awareness, which extends beyond the existence of the soul.

Adamson and Benevich interpreted Avicenna's awareness of one's own soul and direct perception of its *dhāt*, which Avicenna presents as an important justification for the existence of the soul in the flying man theory, as not the main purpose of the theory. They understood the direct perception of one's own *dhāt* without the need for bodily limbs as a proof of the existence of the soul, in other words, the existence of the essence of the soul. They claimed that the term of '*dhāt*' used in the theory did not mean 'self' but rather 'essence'. Therefore, the concept of *dhāt* in the theory would not mean the self in the sense of the soul's awareness of its own existence, but rather the essence in the sense of the structure of the soul's substance. Adamson and Benevich claimed that the main reason for the prominence of self-consciousness in the theory was to demonstrate the conceptualising reasoning/*nātiqa* faculty of the soul.⁴⁴ Contrary to Adamson and Benevich's interpretation, if the concept of *dhāt* in the theory is understood not as essence but as self, self-

⁴¹ Avicenna, *al-Mubāhasāts*, 100 par.207, 136 par.370; *al-Risalat al-Adhawiyya fi amr al-ma'ad*, ed. Sulayman Dunya, (Cairo: Dar al-fikr al-'Arabi, 1328/1949), 94, line 6-9; Deborah L. Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows", *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Shahid Rahman, Tony Street etc. (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2008) 12.

⁴² Adamson and Benevich, "The Thought Experimental Method", 149.

⁴³ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, V.7, 253, line 18-19.

⁴⁴ Adamson and Benevich, "The Thought Experimental Method", 162-63.

consciousness, then the use of dhāt in the theory would be evidence that the soul has a self/self-consciousness independent of the body as well as the existence of the soul, a substance separate and distinct from the body:

Then he considers whether he affirms the existence of his dhāt (*wujudu dhātihi*) without a shadow of doubt. He knows the existence of his dhāt (*lihdātihi*) without any doubt about its existence...⁴⁵

If the term dhāt in this quotation is taken mean self-consciousness rather than essence, it follows that the man is conscious of his own existence through his soul. In other words, he is conscious of the dhāt of his soul, that is, the self of his soul; the dhāt the existence of which is beyond doubt is peculiar to him (*hāsiyyatun lahu*) and, unlike the body, this soul is identical with him (*annahā huwa bi 'aynihi*).⁴⁶ In this theorem, Avicenna seems to be drawing our attention to a fact that we are already aware of, namely, the existence of the soul as a separate substance independent of the body. He does this with reference to the self-consciousness, which - if we understand the dhāt as self-consciousness - exists independently of the body and limbs, whose existence can be directly perceived, and of which one is aware even in sleep. He reminds us of the existence of the soul, which we sometimes forget or do not pay attention to, but of which we are always aware, albeit in a hidden/obscure way, through the direct realisation of the dhāt. However, he explains this reminder indirectly, not through a very precise and clear argument. Therefore, the theory of the flying man is more of a reminder than a demonstration.

Although Avicenna doesn't explicitly address whether the soul has self-consciousness in the theorem, he explains and justifies the soul's having self-consciousness, i.e. *shu'ūr*, more clearly in his later work *al-Ta'liqāt*:

Man's essence is a conscious essence (*dhātun shā'iratun*), his consciousness of his dhāt (*shu'ūru al-dhāti bi al-dhāt*) is never potential, it is something inherent in his essence. The essence of man is a conscious dhāt (*dhāt al-insāni dhātun shā'iratun*), his consciousness of his dhāt is natural to him. Therefore, it is not acquired, and since it is not acquired, it is not realized through an instrument.

Man's essence is a conscious essence (*dhātun shā'iratun*), his consciousness of his dhāt (*shu'ūr al-dhāti bi al-dhāt*) is never potential, it is something inherent in his essence. The essence of man is a conscious dhāt (*dhāt al-insāni dhātun shā'iratun*), his consciousness of his dhāt is natural to him. Therefore, it is not acquired, and since it is not acquired, it is not realized through an instrument.

The essential self-consciousness is inherent in the soul (*al-shu'ūru bi al-dhāti dhātiyyun li al-nafs*), not acquired externally. When dhāt comes into being, consciousness/*shu'ūr* comes into being with it (*ka annahu idhā hasalah al-dhāt, hasalah ma'a al-shu'ūr*). One does not become conscious of it (the soul) through a medium, but rather one becomes conscious of it (the soul) through the dhāt, because of the dhāt (*yush'aru bihā bi dhātihā wa min dhātihā*). Its (the soul's) consciousness of itself is an absolute consciousness/*shu'ūr*... a consciousness/*shu'ūr* that is permanent, not occasional.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, I.5 p. 16 line 6-8.

⁴⁶ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima* I.5 p.16 line 13-14.

⁴⁷ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 160 line 18-24; 79 line 27-28.

Avicenna clearly states that dhāt is essential in the soul and is not perceived through an external limb. He criticises that those who claim that one can have knowledge of dhāt through an intermediate limb instead of the direct perception of essence do not have direct perception of their own dhāt. In mediated cognition, such as through the sense apparatus, there must be something that is sensed and that realises cognition different from the sense apparatus, and this is the soul:

The soul's consciousness of being conscious of its own dhāt (*fa inna mā an nash'ura bi annā qad sha'arnā bi zawātinā*) is because it is the act of the intellect.

Since self-consciousness (*al-shu'uru bi al-dhāt*) is actual for the soul, the soul is always conscious of its dhāt (*al-shu'ur bi al-dhāti yakūnu li al-nafsi bi al-fi'li fa innahā takūna dā'imat al-shu'uri bi dhātihā*). Being conscious of consciousness (*al-shu'ur bi al-shu'ur*) is in the potential state; if it were in the actual state, it would be permanent, in which case there would be no need for the intellect to reason.⁴⁸

Avicenna states that dhāt is perceived directly and unmediatedly, and that one is conscious of one's own dhāt:

When I say, 'I did something like this, I take into account that I perceive my dhāt, even if I am in ignorance that I am in the consciousness of my dhāt (*in kuntu fi gāflatan 'an shu'ur bihā*). If I was not aware of my dhāt in the first place (*law lā anna i'tabarru awwālān dhāti*), how would I know that I am acting in one way or another? Therefore, I am first aware of my dhāt, not its action, and I do not consider anything else through which I realize my dhāt (*lam a'tabar shay'an adraktu bihi dhāti*).⁴⁹

Avicenna then warns that our consciousness of our dhāt is the very essence of our being (*shu'urunā bi dhātinā huwa nafs wujūdīnā*).⁵⁰ This means that our self-awareness is an essential quality of our soul. Avicenna insists that it is the consciousness of our dhāt that makes it possible to know something based on its perception and enables it possible for us to perceive it (*fi 'ilminā bi idrākinā lahu shu'ur bi dhātinā*). In the process of realisation, we first become aware of our dhāt (*fa sha'arnā awwālān bi dhātinā*). If I were not first conscious of my dhāt, how could I know that I am the one who perceives the thing in question; how could I know that I am the one who perceives without knowing that I am the agent who performs the act of perception, without being conscious of it? To be able to say that I am the agent who performs the act in the first-person singular verbs such as 'I perceive, I do, etc.', I must first be conscious of my own existence, and then I must be conscious that I am the agent to whom I attribute the act in question. This means that the perceiving soul is conscious of its own dhāt (*anna al-nafsa shā'iratun bi dhātihā*). Avicenna states that for me to perceive that certain actions are done by me, the existence of the dhāt that precedes the actions must be assumed without necessarily being proven. The knowledge that requires the assumption of the existence of dhāt is contained directly in the dhāt itself.⁵¹ Therefore, this a priori self-consciousness that precedes the act is a shu'ur/consciousness of which I am always uninterruptedly self-aware of and directly aware, independent of the act. This self-consciousness, which is unique to the essence of the individual and distinguishes and him/her from other individuals, is an essential basis that enables the individual to tell 'me'

⁴⁸ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 161, line 3-5; 160-61.

⁴⁹ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 161 line 6-9; 148 line 12-13.

⁵⁰ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt* 161, line 10.

⁵¹ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 161 line 6-9, 160.

by making it possible to attribute the act to the individual who performs the act. Similar to the time-space matter that enables the material individual to individuate, it is the self-consciousness, which is an essential quality of the soul, that enables the immaterial soul to individuate.⁵²

Self-consciousness is not an acquired state; it is intrinsic to dhāt and is the very existence of the soul (*al-shu'ūr bi al-dhāti huwa garizīyyun li al-dhāti, wa huwa nafs wujūdihā*). By virtue of its essentiality, dhāt does not need anything other than itself to perceive itself; it directly perceives itself and is conscious of itself (*fa lā yuhtāju ilā shay'in min khārijī tudraku bihi al-dhātu bal al-dhātu hiya al-latī tudriku dhātahā*). Since self-consciousness is essential to the essence, it is out of the question for the dhāt to exist without self-consciousness.⁵³

Avicenna used the body-ropes analogy to justify that since the soul is immaterial, only the soul, which is an immaterial substance, can hold together faculties of the soul with different functions together, and that the body or a bodily limb cannot fulfill this function. Similarly, there must be a single agent/subject to make sense of the actions performed by the faculties, each of which has a different function, and to relate all actions to each other. However, in order for this agent to directly perceive the actions of each faculty as the primary singular person/agent, it must have a pure, simple, and essential dhāt. Although it is a reasonable assumption that these faculties with their various functions, originate from the immaterial soul, this is not a sufficient argument. It is not sufficient for the immaterial soul to be the primary singular agent performing these acts, but it must also perceive them as the primary singular agent. It is precisely at this stage that Avicenna argues that the subject who perceives these different acts is the self-conscious dhāt.⁵⁴

Marmura posits that Avicenna presents three distinct arguments for the propositions that it is the immaterial soul that unites the various faculties together.⁵⁵ One of these three arguments is the so-called flying man theory. If it is accepted that when I perceive something through different faculties, it is a bodily limb that makes this perception possible and enables me to say, 'I perceived, I did, etc.', then the destruction or damage to the bodily limb will cause the destruction or diminution of self-perception/essential shu'ūr:

As we have stated elsewhere, even if I do not know that I have hands, feet or any of these limbs, I am still 'me'. Moreover, I believe that they are attached to my dhāt and I know that they are my limbs that I use for certain needs. If these needs are not fulfilled, I renounce them. Nevertheless, without them, I continue to be 'me'.⁵⁶

We say that even if a human being is created in an instant, even if his limbs are created differently, even if he does not see his limbs, does not touch his limbs, does not have contact with them, does not hear a sound, even if he is ignorant of the existence of all his limbs, even if he has no knowledge of his limbs, he still knows the existence of his self/anniya as one thing (*'alima wujudi anniyatīhi shay'an wahidan*).⁵⁷

⁵² Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, 55.

⁵³ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 160-61; 79-80.

⁵⁴ Avicenna and Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology: An English translation of Kitāb al-Najāṭ, Book II, chapter VI, with Historico-Philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition* (Westport, Conn: Hyperion Press, 1981), p. 256 line 6-11; *Avicenna's De Anima*, V.5 p. 256 line 6-11.

⁵⁵ Marmura, "'Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context'", 389.

⁵⁶ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 5.7 p. 255 line 3-6.

⁵⁷ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 5.7 p. 255 line 7-10.

... For if I know that I have a heart and a brain, I know this only through sensation/sense, hearing, and experience, or I do not know it because I know that I am I (*anni ana*). The limb itself is not something through which I am aware of my dhāt (*ana bi al-dhāti*), but rather it is I as land (*bi al-'aradhi ana*). Therefore, what I know as the self through myself, what I mean by 'I sense, reason, do, and collect these qualities' and what I call 'I' (*ana*) is different.⁵⁸

It is not the heart, brain, or other bodily appendages that allow one to be conscious of one's own self (*ana*), but rather the fact that one is directly conscious of one's own essence (*al-ash'uru bihi annahū ana bi al-dhāt*). What makes this possible is the absence of an intermediary, an act, or a specific process between essence and essential consciousness. Therefore, Avicenna insists on grounding the immateriality of the soul, its separateness and difference from the body, while reminding us that one's individual existence (*al-anniyatihi*) is aware of one's self/dhāt.

Nevertheless, although he appears to have essentially reiterated the theory here, he has made a significant conceptual distinction. In contrast with the preceding narrative, the concept of *anniya* is employed in lieu of the concept of *dhāt*. While in other contexts he employs the concept of *anniya* to signify an individual's personal existence, in this instance he utilises it as a synonym for *dhāt*. The concept of *anniya* is employed to signify the essence that constitutes a person's identity and enables their uninterrupted consciousness of their own existence. To elucidate the interrelationship between self-consciousness/*shu'ūr* and *anniya*, he stated that the consciousness/*shu'ūr* of one's own *anniya* precedes the awareness of external and internal limbs.⁵⁹

If one reflects (*ta'ammal*) on what it is that enables him to refer to himself as 'he' or to himself as 'I' (*ana*), he will imagine that it is his body and corpse. But if he reflects (*tafakkār*) on this, he will realize that even if his other limbs, such as his hands, feet, or arms, do not belong to his body, he will still refer to himself as 'I'. He will know that these bodily limbs are not necessary for him to call himself 'I' ...

For one can know one's *anniyah* (*anniyatahu*) to which one refers ... without knowing that one has a heart, without knowing where, how and what one's heart is ... yet by *anniyah*, which is the true essence, one can mean the person/human being, that which one knows oneself to be...⁶⁰

As is evident from the aforementioned quotation, Avicenna posits that the capacity to self-identify as an 'I' is contingent upon one's *anniya*, which he defines as one's essence. Avicenna, who associates *anniya*, *dhāt*, and 'I' in this way, concludes from this that one does not require a physical body to know and be aware of oneself. The necessary essential relation between the consciousness of the 'I' and the *anniyah* allows him to reach this conclusion.

It is also noteworthy that Avicenna does not consider the self-formed due to bodily limbs and perceptions to be the real self. Rather, he refers to this as the 'accidental self' (*bi al-'aradhi ana*).⁶¹ In contrast, he considers the self that one directly perceives to be the essence of the soul. This *dhāt*, which is directly perceived and aware, is not a mere aggregation of

⁵⁸ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, V.7 p. 256 line 6-11.

⁵⁹ Avicenna, *al-Mubāhasāt*, 59-60 par.62.

⁶⁰ Avicenna, *al-Risāla al-Adhaviyya fi amr al-ma'ad* 94, line 1-13.

⁶¹ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, V.7 256 line 9.

bodily limbs; rather, it has a reality that extends beyond the body. As Avicenna himself states, this dhāt is the very existence of the soul itself (*al-shu'uru bi al-dhāti huwa garizīyyun li al-dhāti, wa huwa nafs wujūdihā*).⁶²

The Essence of Self Consciousness: Obviousness - Directness – Permanency

In his work *al-Ishārāt*, in which he briefly discusses the theory of the flying man in three paragraphs, Avicenna, as in his other works, tries to prove the immateriality of the soul and that it is a substance different/separate from the body. However, in this work, unlike the others, he points to the three fundamental characteristics of self-consciousness (*al-sh'ūr bi-dhāt*), namely its obviousness/self-evidentness, unmediatedness/directness, and permanency/continuous, to support its being the most natural and fundamental perception. Similar to his argument in *al-Shifa / Kitab al-Nafs*, he affirms that the perception of one's own self/self-consciousness is the most basic, natural and self-evident perception independent of the body and perceptions, but his style here is in the form of indication and allusion. In his *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt*, under the title *On the Terrestrial and Celestial Souls*:

Return to your own self (*nafs*) and reflect (*ta'mmal*): If you are healthy, or rather in some states of yours other than health such that you discern a thing accurately, do you ignore the existence of your own dhāt? (*dhātika*) and not affirm it? To me this [ignoring and not affirming] does not befit one who has mental vision. One's self does not escape even the one asleep in his sleep and the intoxicated in his intoxication, even though its representation of oneself (*dhāt*) is not fixed in memory.

Further, if you imagine yourself (*dhāt*) at the beginning of its creation with a healthy intellect and a healthy disposition, and supposedly it is altogether in such a position and disposition as not to perceive its parts nor have its members in contact—but separate and suspended for a certain moment in free air— you will be aware of the existence (*subūt*) of enniyyah (*anniyatihā*) even though you are ignorant of everything.

With what do you apprehend yourself (*dhāt*) at that time, prior to that time, and posterior to it? Also, what is it of yourself that is apprehended? Is that which apprehends (your *dhāt*) one of your external senses, is it your intellect, or a faculty other than your senses and what belongs to them? If it is your intellect or a faculty other than your senses by which you apprehend [yourself], then do you apprehend [it] by means of an intermediary or without an intermediary?

I do not believe that in that case you are in need of an intermediary. Thus, it is without an intermediary [that you apprehend yourself]. It remains, therefore, that you apprehend yourself without the need for another faculty or an intermediary. Hence it remains that you do so by means of your [external] senses or internal [powers] without an intermediary. Reflect further! ...⁶³

As can be discerned from the aforementioned quotation, Avicenna posits that even in the absence of physical bodily activity, sensory perception, and external stimuli, one's consciousness remains intact if the rational faculty is in a state of optimal functionality. He highlights three key characteristics of the soul's self-consciousness that facilitate this phenomenon: self-evident, direct/mediated, and perpetual/continuous. In conclusion, the self-consciousness of the soul can be defined as the self-evident, direct, and permanent

⁶² Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 160-61.

⁶³ Avicenna, *Sharh al-Sārāt wa al-Tanbihāt*, Namat 3, Fasl 1-2, 374-78; Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions: Physics and Metaphysics, 94-95; *al-Mubāhasāt*, p. 61 par.66-68.

cognition of oneself. It is futile to attempt to provide an explanation or justification for this using different arguments. It is not feasible to elucidate and obtain this form of cognition, subjective self-awareness, through the use of disparate arguments. It is our contention that the assertion that this most fundamental and intrinsic form of self-awareness possessed by the soul pertains to the essence of the soul's species is erroneous. For Avicenna, the essential consciousness of one's own *anniyya* is a consciousness that is directly perceived by the individual in a state of perfect and complete creation, devoid of any perceptual experience. He asserts that this realization constitutes a form of self-awareness that is direct and pervades all aspects of the soul's faculties.⁶⁴

In his work, Avicenna places great emphasis on the self-awareness of the *dhāt*, which he describes as a consciousness of one's own existence. This awareness is not merely a direct perception, but also a self-evident truth. The direct awareness of the *dhāt* of its own existence and its unmediated knowledge of it is indicative of the self-awareness's self-evident nature. This is because being self-evident is defined as the ability to know with certainty and without condition what one knows. Similarly, self-consciousness can be defined as self-awareness of one's own essence, or the knowledge that one is aware of oneself. This form of awareness is unconditional and direct. Does the fact that the self-awareness is self-evident, direct, and uninterrupted entail that the *dhāt* has self-awareness and is conscious of its consciousness (*al-shu'uru bi al-shu'ur*)? This is because the process of being conscious of oneself (*al-shu'ur bi- dhāt*) is a permanent and uninterrupted one, whereas the process of being conscious of one's consciousness (*al-shu'ur bi al-shu'ur*) is an intermittent and discontinuous one. Self-consciousness is a state of consciousness that is not contingent on the occurrence of specific mental states. In contrast, Avicenna posits that the essence is characterised by a permanent and uninterrupted self-consciousness, which persists even during states of sleep and intoxication. The fundamental aspect that enables this is that the intellect possesses a structure that can engage in intellection and serve as the object of intellection. Consequently, while the essence is self-conscious, it is also capable of being conscious of the consciousness of its essence. The *dhāt* is capable of taking self-consciousness as an object of consciousness. The directness or unmediatedness of self-consciousness makes this possible.⁶⁵

In the view of Avicenna, self-consciousness does not emerge as a result of the operation of a specific faculty. Rather, it is an individual consciousness that belongs to a subject and precedes the actions of each faculty, such as seeing or hearing. It enables these actions to be perceived as the first-person singular 'I', the first-person singular subject.⁶⁶ The consciousness of "I" is of such a fundamental and essential nature that Avicenna warns that it is impossible to ground this self-consciousness with arguments. Although Avicenna attempts to demonstrate the immaterial nature of the soul, which is the underlying foundation that unites the disparate faculties of the soul and allows for the perception of each faculty's actions as the first-person singular subject "I," he also indirectly substantiates that the essential quality possessed by the soul, which is an immaterial substance, is an

⁶⁴ Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt II*, Namat 2, Fasıl 19, 416-17; Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions, 94.

⁶⁵ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 160-61.

⁶⁶ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 160.

individual self-consciousness that enables it to perceive its individual existence with the subject "I." The reason for this discrepancy between the two proofs is that self-consciousness, which is the first and most obvious realization that a person possesses, cannot be proved with reference to rational justifications. In contrast with Marmura's assertion, Avicenna did not consider it necessary to provide proof of the self-consciousness that is readily apparent in each individual's own dhāt/self in the context of the soul's existence, distinctness, and immateriality.⁶⁷ One potential explanation for this is that self-consciousness is intrinsic to the soul, and the latter cannot be conceived without the former.⁶⁸

In his theoretical work, Avicenna posits that since self-consciousness is identified with the existence of the soul, there is no need for an intermediary limb or external knowledge or guidance to be in the consciousness of dhāt. This implies that self-consciousness is, in fact, a direct, unmediated and unconditional form of self-awareness. By equating the dhāt (self) with self-consciousness, it can be argued that the essence is aware of its own existence at the moment of its existence, and that self-consciousness is the constitutive element of the soul. Furthermore, this direct and unmediated form of self-awareness is a perpetual awareness that is always present and uninterrupted.⁶⁹ This state of consciousness is permanent without any conditions, mediation, or time interval:

In every situation, the dhāt presents itself to the dhāt and can never be unaware of it. This is because the existence of itself is the realization of its own essence-self-consciousness. Since it is self-conscious and is in itself, dhāt is not subsequently self-conscious. There is no distinction between them, such as the perceiver and the perceived.⁷⁰

Dhāt has consciousness of itself in a self-evident and unconditioned way. The self's consciousness of itself is always and uninterruptedly present.⁷¹

The self-consciousness of the dhāt is its natural state; it is therefore an uninterrupted state of existence. This runs counter to the knowledge of the body that is gained through the senses, which is not a constant state. Notwithstanding any lapses of memory regarding the dhāt, whether during sleep or in the waking state, the self-consciousness of the essence itself persists. According to Avicenna, the recollection of self-consciousness experienced by the dhāt is distinct from the self-consciousness intrinsic to its essence. The consciousness of the self-consciousness of the dhāt (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*) is distinct from the self-consciousness of the dhāt (*al-shu'ūr bi- dhāt*).⁷² This is because, even during periods of sleep, the activity of thinking through the intelligibles in the memory persists, as does the self-consciousness of the dhāt, which enables this intellection and constitutes its foundation. Otherwise, individual intellection cannot occur without the self-consciousness of the essence. The self-consciousness of the agent's dhāt is the enabling factor in remembering something through the recollection of dreams upon waking. This results in the ability to recall details such as "in my dream..." In this sense, the essence presents itself to us as a

⁶⁷ Marmura, "Avicenna's "Flying Man" in Context", 392-93.

⁶⁸ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 161.

⁶⁹ Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows", 4.

⁷⁰ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 148 line 15-18; 160-61.

⁷¹ Avicenna, *al-Mubāhasāt*, 60 par.65.

⁷² Avicenna, *al-Mubāhasāt*, 59 par.60.

permanent self-consciousness. The realisation of the self, of one's own being, does not necessitate any act or activity, nor does it require a specific act that would result in self-consciousness. The relationship between self-consciousness and that which is conscious of it will be that of identity. Given that Avicenna accepts self-consciousness as direct, self-evident and permanent, he rejects any kind of rational inference or act of thinking that would establish the relationship between the identical essence and self-consciousness:

When it is conscious of itself, there must be a kind of relation of identity between the self-consciousness (*sha'r*) and what is conscious (*mash'ūr*).⁷³

In consequence, the dhāt's self-consciousness, that is to say, its perception of its own existence, is in point of fact the dhāt's realisation and confirmation of its own existence. The realization and awareness of the dhāt's existence is a natural act intrinsic to the very nature of the dhāt. One might posit that self-consciousness can be regarded as a reflexive perception, given that it represents the realisation of the essence's own existence. In other words, the dhāt arrives at the consciousness of its own existence by virtue of being itself, 'I am conscious of me by virtue of not being me'. It is evident that this form of consciousness cannot be considered false or an illusion. The object of my consciousness is my own self, my dhāt, of which I am directly and clearly aware.⁷⁴ In his critique, Avicenna challenges the opposing view that the self's consciousness of its own existence is acquired through mediated means, such as impressions or thinking. This is because the consciousness of one's own dhāt is direct, self-evident, and unmediated, preceding impressions and being unique to the individual who enables the realisation of individual impressions. It is indubitable that the self-consciousness of the dhāt is the faculty that enables one to form an impression or perception, such as "I perceived this, I perceived that." It is not feasible for an individual who lacks self-consciousness to perceive "I" as a primary singular person.⁷⁵

Consciousness of Self (*al-shu'ūru bi al-shu'ūr*) and Consciousness of Consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*)

One of the key differentiations Avicenna makes in his theory of the flying man with regard to the consciousness/shu'ūr of the individual is the distinction between the consciousness of the self (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*) and the consciousness of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*). Self-consciousness can be defined as a direct, self-evident, and permanent state of essential consciousness of the essence or essence of one's own soul. In contrast, consciousness of consciousness can be understood as the awareness of one's direct, self-evident, and permanent consciousness of one's own essence. Consequently, one is not only conscious of the existence of one's essence, but also of the consciousness of one's essence:

It is not permissible for him to attain the realization of his dhāt through something other than his dhāt, for in that case something else would stand between him and his essence, which is contradictory. Moreover, if the soul does not know itself, how can other things make it know itself? This means that other things cannot enable one to know oneself.

⁷³ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 147 line 23-24; 148 line 1-18; *al-Mubāhasāt*, p. 61-62 par.66-72.

⁷⁴ Avicenna, *Shar al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt* II, Nemat 3, Fasıl 3, s.374-78; Avicenna, *Shar al- Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions*, 94-95; *al-Mubāhasāt* 161 par.446; Erkan, "İbn Sīnā'da Nefs ve Ölümsüzlük", 117.

⁷⁵ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*, 5.7 p. 256; *Ta'liqāt*, 160.

Regarding being conscious of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr fa min jihāt al-'aqli*), this is something that the intellect grasps.⁷⁶

The concept of consciousness can be defined as an essential and necessary form of cognition that the soul possesses directly and is an ever-present state. In contrast, the indirect type of cognition involved in being conscious of consciousness can be interrupted and acquired at a later stage. In more concrete terms, it can be defined as an act of cognition performed with conscious awareness. It follows that even if one is conscious of one's existence, one may not be conscious of one's consciousness. Put another way, even if one is aware of one's existence, one may not be conscious of one's awareness.

With regard to consciousness (*shu'ūr*), it is to be aware of one's own dhāt, which is through acquisition (*iktisāb*). Therefore, he does not know that he is conscious of his own dhāt (*la ya'lam*), similarly, he becomes aware of the rest of the things by acquisition. This is not something that is in him, but rather something that is acquired.⁷⁷

As the quotation indicates, Avicenna differentiates between the consciousness of the self and the consciousness of self-consciousness. He considers both to be distinct concepts. This is made possible by the fact that they are experienced in different ways. Self-consciousness is an essential, necessary, self-evident, direct, and always actual phenomenon, whereas the consciousness of self-consciousness is a potential, open to stimulation, and not self-evident phenomenon. The awareness of consciousness is only triggered by a cognitive process. Accordingly, Avicenna posits that awareness of one's own essence and recollection of one's consciousness are distinct phenomena. The rationale behind Avicenna's prioritisation of self-consciousness over the consciousness of one's consciousness is that self-consciousness serves as the foundation for all forms of soul cognition, and no form of cognition can be actualised without it. According to Avicenna, self-consciousness, which is simple and one, necessary and essential, is the very existence of the soul's dhāt (*shu'uruna bi-dhātina huwa nafs al-wujūduna*). This implies that self-consciousness is an inherent and actual quality of the soul from the moment of its existence.

The primary issue that requires elucidation is whether awareness of consciousness is an intellectual activity or a direct state of the soul's dhāt. The ability to be aware of one's consciousness is enabled by the intellect, as awareness itself is an intellectual activity. In Avicenna's terminology, consciousness of consciousness is attributed to the intellect. This differentiation is based on the assumption that self-consciousness is a natural or essential state of the essence, whereas consciousness of consciousness is a state⁷⁸ acquired by the intellect through the cognitive process:

It (*al-shu'ūr*) is an intellectual (*bi'l-'aqli*) activity. Self-consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*) belongs to the soul and is actual because it is always conscious of itself. Being conscious of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi-shu'ūr*) is in the potential state. If being conscious of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*) were in the actual state, there would be no need for intellect, since it would always be so.⁷⁹

While dhāt is innately self-conscious, this self-consciousness is a direct, self-evident, and uninterrupted consciousness. Conversely, the state of being conscious of consciousness is

⁷⁶ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 80 line 1-4.

⁷⁷ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, p. 30 line 18-21; 160 line 21; p. 161 line 6; p. 147, 79.

⁷⁸ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 147; *al-Mubāhasāt* 60 par.63-65.

⁷⁹ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 161, line 2-5.

an acquired phenomenon that emerges later in the process of intellection and rational inference. Consequently, to be conscious of one's consciousness, one must first be conscious of one's dhāt. The state of being conscious of one's consciousness is then acquired based on self-consciousness and intellection. If the converse were to be postulated, namely that one is conscious of the consciousness of the existence of one's dhāt in actuality at all times, this would render the necessity for intellection superfluous. An explicit awareness of one's own self-awareness would inevitably result in a perception of succession. Awareness of one's own dhāt can be defined as a state of consciousness. The act of being conscious of one's consciousness would necessitate the presence of consciousness itself, which, in turn, would require consciousness to be conscious of its own consciousness. This process and necessity can be continued backwards ad infinitum. Avicenna places emphasis on the directness and uninterruptedness/permanence of self-consciousness as a means of eliminating the vicious circle and succession. Since the dhāt is always conscious of its own existence thanks to its direct and permanent self-consciousness, it does not create a new state of consciousness to be conscious of its own consciousness, given that the state of consciousness of the essence continues uninterruptedly. Upon attaining the state of consciousness regarding one's own consciousness, no novel state of consciousness is created, as this new state represents a continuation of the inherent consciousness of the dhāt, which persists uninterrupted. In other words, since being conscious of one's consciousness is the consciousness of self-consciousness, it is not a new state of consciousness that is different from it. The primary distinction between these two states of consciousness is that while the self-consciousness of the dhāt represents the intrinsic and fundamental nature of the essence, being conscious of consciousness represents a subsequent state of consciousness that is acquired by the intellect, which is based on self-consciousness. The state of being aware of consciousness differs from the permanent, direct, and self-evident self-consciousness in that it is acquired at a later stage and is not permanent. Consequently, when an individual who is not conscious of their own existence, that is to say, someone who is heedless, is warned about the existence of their own dhāt, they will not have self-consciousness of self-consciousness a second time.⁸⁰ As Avicenna states, just as being warned about a truth that is already known will not result in that truth being brought into existence again, being warned about self-consciousness will not result in the emergence of a separate self-consciousness in a way that would cause succession.⁸¹ This is because the subject and the agent of knowing are one and the same thing. Black, however, argues that Avicenna's explanation of knowing that we know and that this will not continue in the form of succession will not eliminate succession, contrary to what is claimed.⁸²

As Black rightly inquires, why is self-consciousness (*shu'ūrūna bi dhātinā huve naḥs al-wujūdunā*), an essential quality of the soul, or even, as Avicenna posits, the existence of our soul, contingent upon external prompting or attention to be recognized?⁸³ In response to this question, Avicenna posits that although the essential *shu'ūr* is an intrinsic quality of the soul's existence, there are instances when it is "unaware of it" (*dhāhil*).⁸⁴ In Al-Ta'liqāt,

⁸⁰ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, 161, 147-48, 79; Erkan, "İbn Sînâ'da Nefs ve Ölümsüzlük", 119.

⁸¹ Avicenna, *al-Mubāhasāt*, 155-56, par.426-27.

⁸² Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows", 20.n

⁸³ Black, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows", 6.

⁸⁴ Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima*.1 s.16 satır 16-17.

he offers a comparable response, asserting that one can be unaware of an entity's intrinsic nature and necessitate prompting to recognize it. Additionally, he attributes this state of unawareness to the soul itself, stating that "*However the soul can be unaware (dhāhil) of its essence (dhātiha) and need to be prodded, just as it can be unaware of the first ones and need to be prodded about them.*"⁸⁵

In this case, another fundamental question that may arise is how it is possible to be unaware of something that is the very existence of the soul and that is essential to the soul (*al-shu'ūr bi al-dhāt al-dhāt al-dhāt li'l-nafs*)? In light of Avicenna's assertion that one is aware of one's own existence even in states of sleep and intoxication, it can be inferred that he distinguishes between the consciousness of the self and the consciousness of consciousness.⁸⁶ In his writings, Avicenna posits that during the state of dreaming, the dreamer acts in accordance with the intelligibles, just as they govern their actions when awake. Furthermore, he asserts that the dreamer is aware of themselves even during the dream, in a manner similar to their awareness during wakefulness. However, upon waking, he neglects to recall this, attributing it to the distinction between his memory and his self-awareness. Nevertheless, given that self-consciousness is identical to the existence (*wujūd*) of the dhāt of the soul and individual existence (*anniya*), it may seem incomprehensible and even contradictory that one may not always be conscious of one's consciousness. However, in the light of Avicenna's distinction between one's self-consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-dhāt*), which is always in the actual state, and the consciousness of consciousness, which is always in the potential state and is a cognitive activity, it becomes evident that the apparent contradiction is, in fact, absent.

Conclusion

In examining Avicenna's explanations of the theory of the flying man across his various works, it becomes evident that the initial step is to substantiate the immaterial nature of the soul, which is distinct from the body and characterised by unity and simplicity. In the second stage, the objective is to demonstrate the existence of a singular essence, namely dhāt and self-consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-dhāt*), which prioritises the functions of the diverse faculties inherent to the immaterial, discrete and distinct realities of the soul, and unites these functions with the consciousness of 'I'. As a result of this dhāt and self-consciousness, the soul is able to actualise its faculties with 'I' consciousness, regulate its functions and become individualised. He posited that this principle, which represents the pinnacle of bodily perfection, constitutes the self that we refer to as "I." The awareness of this essential 'I' is possessed directly, clearly and uninterruptedly, without the need for one's body and bodily limbs. The essential and intrinsic 'I' is a state that cannot be known through experience and observation; rather, it can be realised through a direct inner realisation. To justify the existence of self-consciousness in the soul and not in the body, Avicenna defined self-consciousness as immaterial, pure, simple, necessary, and essential, as a requirement of the soul's essence. To justify the necessity and essentiality of self-consciousness, he stated that self-consciousness is the existence of the dhāt of the soul and that the two are essentially identical. In this way, he distinguished between essential self-

⁸⁵ Avicenna, *Ta'liqāt*, p. 79 line 28, p. 79 line 28 - 80 line 1-2.

⁸⁶ Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt*, Namat 3, Fasıl 1, 375; Avicenna, *bn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions*, 94.

consciousness, which is immediate, self-evident, and actual, and intellection and rational perception. He also stated that self-consciousness precedes cognitive processes. In his theory, Avicenna distinguished between two aspects of consciousness: consciousness of the self (*al-shu'ūr bi-dhāt*) and consciousness of consciousness (*al-shu'ūr bi al-shu'ūr*). This distinction revealed two different yet interrelated aspects of consciousness. Regarding the essence, awareness, and continuity of consciousness, which is a significant topic of debate in contemporary philosophy of mind, he asserted that the individual is not only aware of the existence of his essence, but also of his consciousness.

It can be argued that Avicenna's interpretation of the theory as emphasising solely the immaterial reality of the soul, independent of the body, is incomplete. The observations of thinkers such as Hasse that the theory does not address the essence and existence of the consciousness of the soul's essence are inadequate. When the various versions of the theory are considered collectively, despite the conceptual ambiguity resulting from the alternating use of different concepts, it is possible to posit that Avicenna grounds the existence of an essential self-consciousness that forms the basis of the soul's individuality and personal identity on the basis of the soul's distinction and independence from the body.

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