

Qutb al-Din al-Razi and a Different Reading of the Flying Man Argument in the Isharat

Amirhossein Zadyousefi *

Fatemeh Soltanieh **

DOI: 10.22096/ek.2026.2086922.1638

[Received Date: 15/03/2026 Acceptance Date: 24/05/2026]

Abstract

The Flying Man Argument is one of the arguments formulated by Avicenna within the context of his discussion on the soul (nafs). This argument appears eight times across his various works, with one of its key formulations located at the beginning of the third Namat of his book, Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat. Qutb al-Din al-Razi, a prominent commentator on this work, pays particular attention to this specific version of the Flying Man argument in his Al-Muhakamat. The standard reading in both primary and secondary literature regarding the Isharat version considers the first Tanbih of the third Namat to be a complete and independent argument. However, in his commentary, Qutb al-Din al-Razi proposes a novel interpretation. According to this reading, the first chapter of the third Namat serves merely as one of the premises of a more extensive argument; together with the subsequent chapters, it forms the foundational structure of a larger logical proof. In this article, after outlining the standard reading of the Flying Man argument, we present al-Razi's interpretation and subsequently provide an evaluation of both perspectives.

Keywords: Flying Man Argument, Avicenna, Qutb al-Din al-Razi, Soul (Nafs), Body.

* Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Wisdom and Logic, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author).

Email: amirhossein.zadyousefi@modares.ac.ir

** Graduated from the Master of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

Email: f.soltanieh@modares.ac.ir



Bibliography

- Ahanchi, Omid, and Saeid Anvari. "Borhan-e Ensan-e Mo'allaq Ibn Sina va Barrasi-ye Emkan-e Tahaqqoq-e Amali-ye An", *He kmat-e Sinavi (Meshkuat al-Nur)* 15, no. 46 (2011): 79-94. [In Persian]
- Alpina, T. "The Soul of, the Soul in itself, and the Flying Man Experiment." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 28, no.2 (2018): 187-224.
- Al-Tusi, Nasir al-Din. *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat lil Muhaqqiq al-Tusi*. Vol. 2. Qom: Nashr al-Balaghah, 1996. [In Arabic]
- Amidi, Saif al-Din. *Kashf al-Tamwiyat fi Sharh al-Razi 'ala al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1971. [In Arabic]
- Amir Khani, Mahnaz, Zohre Tavaziani, Maliheh Pour Saleh Amiri. "A Comparison of the Theory of Nature of Intellect with Avicenna's Idea of Hanging Man", *Philosophical Meditations* 6, no. 16 (2016): 59-83. [In Persian]
- Baladast, Zahra. "Ensan-e Mo'allaq dar Faza az Didgah-e Ibn Sina va Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi", Master's Thesis, Al-Taha Higher Education Institute, 2018. [In Persian]
- Ehsani, Habibollah. "Man in the Sky: Reading and Examining Ibn Sina's 'Flying Man' Argument in Islamic Philosophy" *Parto Kherad* 14, no. 1 (2023): 5-30. [In Persian]
- Eichner, H. "Avicenna's "Flying Man": Contexts for Similarities with Sceptical and Cartesian Arguments in Avicenna." In *Sceptical Paths*, 67. 2019.
- Esfandiyari, Simin. "'Cogito'ye Descartes va Jahat-e Tarikhi-ye An dar Andisheh-ye Augustin va 'Ensan-e Mo'allaq' Ibn Sina", *History of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2010): 35-62. [In Persian]
- Eshaghi Nasab, Asma. "Shenasa'i va Tahlil-e Khodagahi ba Mabani-ye Mtafiziki dar Falsafeh-ye Ibn Sina", Master's Thesis, Faculty of Humanities, Shahed University, 2015. [In Persian]
- Fakhr Razi, Mohammad ibn Umar. *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*. Vol. 2. Tehran: Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries (Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi), 2005. [In Arabic]
- Hasse, D. N. *Avicenna's De anima in the Latin West: the formation of a peripatetic philosophy of the soul 1160-1300*. Vol. 1. London: Warburg Institute, 2000.

- Heshmatpour, Mohammad Hossein. *Sout-e Kelas: Sharh-e Isharat va Tanbihat*, Track 900910, 2011. [In Persian]
- Hosseini Samarghandi, Mohammad bin Ashraf. *Bisharat al-Isharat*. Vol. 2. Tehran: Miras-e Maktoob Research Institute, 2020. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Kamunah, Sa'd ibn Mansur. *Sharh al-Usul wa al-Jumal fi Muhimmat al-Ilm wa al-'Amal: Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat li Ibn Sina*. Tehran: Miras-e Maktoob Research Institute (Mu'assaseh-ye Pajouheshi-ye Miras-e Maktub), 2020. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Sina, Abu Ali Hossein. *Al-Azhawiyyah fi al-Ma'ad*. Tehran: Shams Tabrizi, 2003. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Sina, Abu Ali Hossein. *Al-Hikmah al-Mashriqiyyah*. Qom: Mehr Amir al-Mo'menin (AS), 2016. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Sina, Abu Ali Hossein. *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*. Qom: Nashr al-Balaghah, 1996. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Sina, Abu Ali Hossein. *Al-Mubahasat*. Qom: Bidar, 1992. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Sina, Abu Ali Hossein. *Al-Shifa'-Tabiiyat*. Vol. 2. Qom: Mar'ashi Najafi, 1982. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Sina, Abu Ali Hossein. *Al-Ta'liqat*. Qom: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami, 1984. [In Arabic]
- Ibn Sina, Abu Ali Hossein. *Resaleh dar Ma'refat-e Nafs-e Nateqeh va Ahval-e An*. Windsor: Hindawi Foundation (Mu'assaseh-ye Hendavi-ye CIC), 2017. [In Arabic]
- Izadi Yazdanabadi, Mostafa, and Gholamreza Fayazi. "Moghayeseh-ye Borhan-e 'Hava-ye Talaq' Ibn Sina va Borhan-e 'Shakk' Descartes bar Tajarrud-e Nafs va Javab-e Eshkal-e Falsafeh-ye Zhan be In Borhan", *Ma'refat-e Kalami* 13, no. 28 (2022): 97-112. [In Persian]
- Jafari Valani, Ali Asghar. "A Critique of An Exclusively Epistemological Rendering of Avicenna's "Flying Man" in light of His Principles", *Contemporary Wisdom* 14, no. 1 (2023): 121-145. [In Persian]
- Marmura, M. "Avicenna's" Flying Man" in context." *The Monist* 69, no.3 (1986): 383-395
- Mohaqqeq Khansari, Hossein ibn Mohammad. *Al-Hashiyah 'ala Shuruh al-Isharat*. Vol. 2. Qom: Bustan-e Ketab, 2009. [In Arabic]

Qutb al-Din Razi, Mohammad ibn Mohammad. *Al-Isharat wa Tanbihat*. Vol. 2. Qom: Nashr al-Balaghah, 2014. [In Arabic]

Ranjbar, Mostafa. "Naqd va Barrasi-ye Ensan-e Mo'allaq dar Faza", Master's Thesis, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies, 2009. [In Persian]

Shaqul, Yousef. "The analytic study on Ibn Sina's Suspended man and Descartes' Cogito", *Maghalat va Barrasiha* 40, no. 83 (2007): 47-65. [In Persian]

Shidanshid, Hossein Ali, and Ali Shirvani. "Argument of Floating Man in Avicenna: Analysis, Comparison and Criticism. *A Research Biannual Religious Anthropology* 20, no. 50 (2023): 49-70. [In Persian]

Siraj al-Din Urmawi, Mahmoud ibn Abi Bakr. *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*. Vol. 2. Qom: Dar Zayn al-'Abedin, 2019. [In Arabic]

Taghavi, Alireza. "Khodagahi-ye Basit va Morakkab az Nazar-e Ibn Sina", Master's Thesis, Shahid Beheshti University, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, 2021. [In Persian]

Zaki Far, Bahman. "Tahlil-e Rabete-ye Miyan-e Nafs va Badan va Ta'sir-e An dar Khodagahi az Didgah-e Ibn Sina va Descartes", Master's Thesis, Shahed University, Faculty of Humanities, 2018. [In Persian]