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# FIRST-PERSON AND THIRD-PERSON VIEWS IN ARABIC PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Fedor BENEVICH

## *Abstract*

There are two main methods in philosophy of mind, the first-person view and the third-person view. The third-person view draws conclusions about human nature and the nature of the mind and the mental solely based on the third-person observation of actions, attributes, and behaviours ascribed to humans. The first-person view or introspection suggests turning to our own private experiences of ourselves and to our phenomenal mental states. In this paper, I argue that there is an important transformation in Arabic-Islamic philosophy of mind between the end of the eleventh and the end of the twelfth centuries CE. The traditional physicalist understanding of human beings as corporeal structures (*binya*) or composites (*ḡumla*), which clearly dominated Muslim kalām by the eleventh century, meets Avicennian dualism. I will argue that before this meeting happened, the physicalism of kalām was almost exclusively based on the third-person methodology. But the encounter with Avicennian dualism changes the situation. Avicennian dualism is largely based on introspection. As a result of the encounter between Avicenna and kalām, a new method comes about. It combines the elements of the third-person view and introspection, with introspection gradually occupying a dominant position in post-Avicennian philosophy of mind.

If you ask a student of medieval philosophy about the definition of human being, she will probably reply without any hesitation: “rational animal.” Avicenna (d. 1037) formulates this traditional definition of human being in his *Origins of Wisdom* as “rational mortal living being.”<sup>1</sup> Almost two centuries later, one of the most influential post-Avicennian philosophers in the Islamic world, Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) writes a critical comment on Avicenna’s definition of human being. Al-Rāzī disagrees. He says that there are two ways of thinking about humans. One of them is characterised by the usage of the pronoun ‘I,’ while for the other, we use ‘he’ or ‘you.’ Al-Rāzī says that the referents of those pronouns are different: “When each of us says ‘I,’ the referent (*mušār ilayhi*) is the substance of rational soul, not a body or any of its faculties.”<sup>2</sup> But “When each of us calls someone else ‘he’ and ‘you,’ it is not the substance of the soul. Rather, it is a specific body, that is, “a specific shape and structure (*binya*).”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To clarify, this is the definition that al-Rāzī finds in Avicenna’s text available to him (see FAḤR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, ed. A. AL-Ḥ. AL-SAQQĀ, 3 vols, Cairo 1969, vol. 1, p. 66,14–15). This definition is notoriously absent from Badawī’s and Ḡabr’s editions of Avicenna’s *‘Uyūn al-ḥikma* itself (see AVICENNA, *‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, ed. A. BADAWĪ, Cairo 1954, p. 2,7 and AVICENNA, *‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, ed. M. AL-ḠABR, Damascus 1996, p. 44,3).

<sup>2</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, p. 70,25–26.

<sup>3</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, p. 71,12–13; 19. This is part of al-Rāzī’s general refutation of the Avicennian-Aristotelian theory of real definitions. Al-Rāzī argues that the only way to properly understand humans (just like most other things) is through an ostensive definition (esp. p. 73.15–18). On al-Rāzī’s critique of real definitions see A. FALATURI, “Fakhr al-Din al-Razi’s Critical Logic,” in: *Yādnāmah-yi Īrānī-yi Mīnorsky*, ed. M. MINUVI, Tehran 1969, pp. 51–79; B. IBRAHIM, “Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Hayṭam and Aristotelian Science: Essentialism versus Phenomenalism in Post-Classical Islamic Thought,” in: *Oriens* 41 (2013), pp. 379–

Al-Rāzī explains the difference in the nature of the reference to ‘I’ and ‘he.’ On the one hand, whenever I say: “I did,” “I saw,” “I heard,” the pronoun ‘I’ (in Arabic, it is the personal ending of the verb *-tu*) refers to myself or my soul (in Arabic, *nafs* can mean both). This is so, even if I am currently unaware of my body.<sup>4</sup> Apart from that, medicine proves that our bodies are in constant change, whereas the referent of ‘I’ always remains the same.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the only way to recognise a person as Zayd is to look at the “observable structure (*al-binya al-mušāhada*).” If Zayd changed his looks, I would not be able to recognise him.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, when I refer to Zayd, I refer to his body, while when Zayd refers to himself, he refers to his incorporeal soul.

I started my paper with this passage from al-Rāzī’s *Commentary* on Avicenna’s *Origins of Wisdom* because, in my view, it marks a turning point in the history of philosophy of mind in the Islamic world. Al-Rāzī distinguishes here between two different approaches to the knowledge of human nature: the first-person and third-person views. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the ‘third-person view’ in a sense of a philosophical methodology, which draws conclusions about human nature, and the nature of the mind and the mental solely based on the third-person observation of actions, attributes, and behaviours ascribed to humans.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, the first-person view or introspection suggests turning to our own private experiences of ourselves and to our phenomenal mental states. So, according to al-Rāzī, whenever I talk about Zayd, I rely on the observation of Zayd’s outer attributes (for instance, how he looks). Hence, I identify Zayd with his corporeal structure (*binya*). But when Zayd talks about himself, he uses introspection. Therefore, he identifies himself with an immaterial ‘I’.

My main thesis in this paper is that there is an important transformation in Arabic-Islamic philosophy of mind around the time that al-Rāzī writes this passage – that is, from the end of the eleventh to the end of the twelfth centuries CE. The traditional physicalist understanding of human beings as corporeal structures (*binya*) or composites (*ḡumla*), which clearly dominated kalām by the eleventh century, meets Avicennian dualism. I will show that before this meeting happened, the physicalism of kalām was almost exclusively based on the third-person methodology (something we can already suppose judging by al-Rāzī’s usage of the notion of *binya* in his presentation of the third-person view). But the encounter with Avicennian dualism changes the situation. Avicennian dualism was largely based on

431; M. ÖZTURAN, “An Introduction to the Critique of the Theory of Definition in Arabic Logic: Is Complete Definition Circular?,” in: *Nazariyat* 4/3 (2018), pp. 85–117; F. BENEVICH, “Meaning and Definition: Scepticism and Semantics in Twelfth-Century Arabic Philosophy,” in: *Theoria* 88.1 (2022), pp. 72–108. The refutation of the traditional Aristotelian definition of human being is a topos in Arabic philosophy before and after Avicenna, which keeps appearing in different contexts. Apart from al-Rāzī, see, for instance, ABŪ L-ḤASAN ‘ABD AL-ĠABBĀR, *al-Muḡnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-‘adl: al-Taklīf*, vol. 11, ed. M. AL-NAĠĠĀR and ‘A. AL-NAĠĠĀR, Cairo 1965, p. 361; ŠIHĀB AL-DĪN AL-SUHRĀWARDĪ, *al-Mašārī‘ wa-l-mutārāḥāt, al-Mantiq*, ed. M. MUḤAMMADĪ and A. ‘ALĪPŪR, Tehran 2006, pp. 98–100.

<sup>4</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, p. 71,1–7.

<sup>5</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, p. 71,8–12.

<sup>6</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, p. 71,12–16; cf. ABŪ L-BARAKĀT AL-BAĠDĀDĪ, *Mu‘tabar*, ed. ‘A. al-‘Alawī al-Hadramī, 3 vols, Hyderabad 1955, vol. 1, p. 78,17–24.

<sup>7</sup> I took inspiration from David Chalmers’s notions of the first-person and third-person views, from his 1989 unpublished paper “The First-Person and Third-Person Views” (available at <https://consc.net/notes/first-third.html>). These notions broadly correspond to his notions of psychological and phenomenal approaches in D. CHALMERS, *The Conscious Mind*, New York/Oxford 1996, p. 11.

introspection. As a result of the encounter between Avicenna and kalām, a new method comes about, which combines the elements of the third-person view and introspection, with introspection gradually occupying a dominant position in Arabic philosophy of mind.<sup>8</sup>

To substantiate this narrative, I will focus on a selection of sources that I believe is sufficiently representative. In the first section of the paper, I will present the physicalism of kalām and its third-person ways of reasoning. I will mostly discuss the Mu‘tazilite authors: ‘Abd al-Ġabbār al-Hamaḍānī (d. 1025), Ibn Mattawayh (11<sup>th</sup> century) and Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 1131). In the second section, I will first briefly summarise the core elements of Avicennian psychology, largely following the current scholarship on Avicenna’s Flying Man argument. The rest of the section will be divided into three subsections, containing case studies on the first-person and third-person view in three important post-Avicennian authors: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (d. 1111), Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī (d. 1165), and Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210). In conclusion, I will also briefly mention Šihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191) as the most radical example for the success of the method of introspection in Arabic philosophy of mind.

### 1. *The third-person view in kalām*

What we would nowadays call “philosophy of mind” is divided between different parts of the philosophical and theological discussions in kalām. The section that we need for the purposes of this paper usually has the title “On the nature of human beings” or “On life.” As Ibn Mattawayh explains, the kalām discussion of what makes humans what they are directly corresponds to what the Arabic philosophers who follow the patterns of ancient Greek philosophy, that is, the falāsifa, call “On the soul” (sc. *De anima*).<sup>9</sup>

A few recent studies have established that, towards the eleventh century CE, the predominant position regarding the nature of human beings in kalām is physicalism (or materialism, depending on the preferred terminology).<sup>10</sup> In fact, this is among a few things that the two main traditions of kalām, i.e., the Mu‘tazilites and the Aš‘arites, have in common. The Mu‘tazilite Ibn Mattawayh defines human as:

this observable compound (*al-ġumla al-muṣāhada*) that we point to (*al-muṣār ilayhi*) and that is structured in a particular way (*al-binya al-maḥṣūṣa*).<sup>11</sup>

Slightly later, another Mu‘tazilite, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, defines human as:

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<sup>8</sup> Note that I do not claim that Avicenna’s presupposition that there is some private mental world to look into is correct. Perhaps, there is none, and Avicenna has led everyone in this tradition in a wrong direction. Nor do I claim that the idea of the private mental world was completely unknown to kalām (see further fn. 31). It was just never used to determine the nature of the human beings, according to my interpretation.

<sup>9</sup> AL-HASAN B. AḤMAD IBN MATTAWAYH, *Al-Taḍkīra fī aḥkām al-ġawāhīr wa-l-a‘rād*, 2 vols, ed. D. GIMARET, Cairo 2009, vol. 2, p. 376,3–5. Same in ‘ABD AL-ĠABBĀR, *Muġnī*, vol. 11, p. 213,6–7.

<sup>10</sup> To name only the most recent ones, M. HEEMSKERK, “‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī on Body, Soul and Resurrection,” in C. ADANG and S. SCHMIDTKE (eds.), *A Common Rationality: Mu‘tazilism in Islam and Judaism*, Würzburg 2007, pp. 127–156; S. VASALOU, “Subject and Body in Mu‘tazilism, or: Mu‘tazilite Kalām and the Fear of Triviality,” in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 17 (2007), pp. 267–298; W. MADELUNG, “Ibn al-Malāḥimī on the Human Soul,” in: *The Muslim World* 102 (2012), pp. 426–432; A. SHIHADDEH, “Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology: Body, Life and Spirit,” in: *The Muslim World* 102 (2012), pp. 433–77.

<sup>11</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkīra*, vol. 2, p. 372,8–9.

that which is structured in a particular way and has a mixture (*mizāḡan*) that keeps humidity, dryness, heat, and cold in balance; it is one and the same living being, albeit it consists of different portions and parts.<sup>12</sup>

The Aš‘arites follow suit and define the human being as a particular outer and/or inner physical structure (*binya*).<sup>13</sup> The differences between the Mu‘tazilites and the Aš‘arites (as well as between different Mu‘tazilites) concern further details, beyond their common physicalism, and are irrelevant for our discussion.<sup>14</sup>

The scholars of kalām describe our knowledge that human beings are the result of the combination of physical elements that constitute their bodies as an item of immediate, necessary knowledge (*‘ilm ḡarūrī*).<sup>15</sup> “Necessary knowledge” in kalām means that an item of knowledge is directly given to the epistemic agents, so that they can have no influence on the ability to have or fail to have such knowledge.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, that kind of necessary, given knowledge cannot be doubted or rejected. The lists of types of necessary knowledge vary but typically include the knowledge of oneself and of one’s own mental states; observational knowledge through sense-perception; matter-of-fact reasoning; and judgments of morality and responsibility (the last one for the Mu‘tazilites only).

Our belief that human beings are identical to the physical composite (*ḡumla*) is an item of necessary knowledge because it derives from the direct observation of their bodies, their actions and attributes. So, Ibn al-Malāḡimī says:

There is knowledge implanted in the intellect that the one that lives, performs intellection, and acts is this one, that which is structured in a particular way (*binya maḡṣūṣa*).<sup>17</sup>  
All people with sound intellect know in a self-evident and necessary way that this body and this composition (*al-ḡumla*) is the one that knows and performs handicraft.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, Ibn Mattawayh says:

What indicates that the human being is nothing but this [corporeal] composition (*al-ḡumla*) is that we find that the features of the living being (*aḡkām al-ḡayy*) go back to it, such as its having perception or any other of the attributes.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> RUKN AL-DĪN IBN MUḡAMMAD AL-MALĀḡIMĪ AL-KHWĀRAZMĪ, *Tuḡfat al-mutakallimīn fī l-radd ‘alā l-falāsifa*, ed. H. ANSĀRĪ and W. MADELUNG, Tehran 2008, pp. 155,22–156,1.

<sup>13</sup> SHIHĀDEH, “Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology,” pp. 437–443.

<sup>14</sup> SHIHĀDEH, “Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology,” pp. 443–465. For instance, the Mu‘tazilites accept that the physical composite (*ḡumla*) of human body constitutes a genuine unity, which is guaranteed by the inherence of one and the same attribute of life in the body as a whole. They also claim that life can only inhere in a specific kind of physical structure. The Aš‘arites deny both points. I discuss the nuances of the Mu‘tazilite understanding of the *ḡumla* in my forthcoming paper “Personal Identity in the Philosophy of Kalām.”

<sup>15</sup> IBN AL-MALĀḡIMĪ, *Tuḡfa*, p. 157,16; SHIHĀDEH, “Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology,” p. 439.

<sup>16</sup> On the notion of necessary knowledge in kalām, see J. PETERS, *God’s Created Speech*, Leiden 1976, p. 53; M. R. IBRAHIM, “Immediate Knowledge According to al-Qaḡī ‘Abd al-Ġabbār,” in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 23:1 (2013), pp. 101–115; B. ABRAHAMOV, “Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology,” in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1993), pp. 20–32; and my forthcoming “Knowledge as a Mental State in Mu‘tazilite Kalām,” available at [https://brill.com/view/journals/orie/50/3-4/article-p244\\_2.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/orie/50/3-4/article-p244_2.xml).

<sup>17</sup> IBN AL-MALĀḡIMĪ, *Tuḡfa*, p. 156,9–10.

<sup>18</sup> IBN AL-MALĀḡIMĪ, *Tuḡfa*, p. 157,16–17.

If it is clear that whoever is morally responsible (*al-mukallaf*) must have power [over his actions], while the one who has power must be a living being, mustn't we check to what the features of a being disposed with life and power apply? We know that the [main] feature of the one with power is the capacity to act (*ṣiḥḥat al-fi'l*). It differentiates him from the one without power. But [the capacity to act] does not apply to anything other than this [corporeal] composition (*al-ḡumla*). Likewise, the [main] feature of the living being is the capacity to perceive (*ṣiḥḥat al-idrāk*). But [the capacity to perceive] does not apply to anything other than this composition. Therefore, it must be [this composition] that is the human being, not anything else.<sup>20</sup>

All these quotations reveal the same tendency in the kalām reasoning about human nature. Both Ibn Mattawayh and Ibn al-Malāḥimī suggest starting our inquiry into human nature with observable actions, attributes, and features, such as life, perception, knowledge, handicraft, etc. We need to verify to whom those actions and features apply or “go back.” According to both authors, if we do so, we will immediately see that we relate all those actions and attributes to the bodies of human beings taken as a whole, not to anything inside those bodies or an immaterial soul. Therefore, human beings are identical to their corporeal composites.

It might sound surprising for many readers that Ibn al-Malāḥimī and Ibn Mattawayh treat knowledge and perception in these passages as if they were some externally observable attributes that we ascribe to the physical compounds called “humans.” Aren't knowledge and perception the paradigmatic examples of private mental states, not available to a third-person viewpoint? But at least for the Bahšamite Mu'tazilites (Ibn Mattawayh is one of them), knowledge is not a private mental state fully transparent to the knower. The knower may fail to know that she has knowledge, while others may know it better, from external observation (for instance, in the case of global sceptics who deny their own knowledge).<sup>21</sup> For the Bahšamites, knowledge is an objective attribute, something that must occur to the knower when certain external and internal conditions are satisfied.

Just like knowledge, for the Bahšamites, perception is an objective process that must occur when all conditions are met: the presence of the object of perception; the presence of a living organism capable of perception; and the removal of all kinds of veils.<sup>22</sup> Once again, one can even fail to be aware that one perceives, although one does perceive in that moment. For instance, Ibn Mattawayh argues that when one is asleep, one perceives fleabites, although one does not know it.<sup>23</sup> It may be clearer to me as an observer that the sleeping person perceives those bites, because I see her scratching, while that person is not aware of the scratching herself. Hence, both knowledge and perception are available to the third-person

<sup>19</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, p. 372,16–17. See also p. 374,4–6.

<sup>20</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Kitāb al-Maḡmū' fī l-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf* (Paraphrase du Muḥīṭ du Qaḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār), vol. 2, ed. J. J. HOUBEN, revised by D. GIMARET, Beirut 1981, p. 242,4–8. Ibn Mattawayh clearly regards this argument as the main argument for physicalism in the *Muḡmū'* and keeps returning to it throughout the chapter: pp. 242,6; 245,6; 249,16.

<sup>21</sup> See further my forthcoming “Knowledge as a Mental State in Mu'tazilite Kalām.”

<sup>22</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, pp. 699,16–17; 709. On sense perception in kalām see D. BENNET, “Sense Perception in the Arabic Tradition: The Controversy Concerning Causality,” in: J. TOIVANEN, *Forms of Representation in the Aristotelian Tradition. Volume One: Sense-Perception*, Leiden/Boston 2022, pp. 99–123.

<sup>23</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, p. 697,10–12.

perspective. And from that perspective, both attributes belong to the physical structures called “humans.”

The Mu‘tazilite authors substantiate their experiential observations about the association of actions and attributes with bodies with further arguments. One of them is based on another type of necessary, given knowledge from the list above, our immediate intuitive knowledge about moral agency and responsibility. Ibn al-Malāḥimī says:

You know inevitably that this body is the one that deserves blame for its bad actions and praise for the performance of good deeds. If [the body] were only a means, then one would need to blame something else. It is just like the case when a person puts a spell on someone else and harms him. Nobody in his sound mind would ever say that it is the spell that deserves the blame rather than the person who puts it.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, we decide what human beings are by verifying to whom we typically attribute moral responsibility. Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that we intuitively associate moral responsibility with human bodies. If the bodies were only means for the actions of, say, immaterial souls, as dualists claim, then we would not blame or praise those bodies themselves. But we do blame them! Ibn al-Malāḥimī probably means that when we blame someone, we point to that person and say: “That’s her fault!” Doing this, we point to the body of that person. The argument from moral responsibility is another clear instance of third-person reasoning. It identifies humans with their bodies judging by their external features (*aḥkām*), such as moral responsibility, that other people associate with them.

Another argument in favour of identifying human beings with their bodies is based on the experimental process of the elimination of organs. Ibn al-Malāḥimī reports this argument on behalf of one of the most important later Mu‘tazilites, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044):

Our Master, Abū l-Ḥusayn, made the falsehood of the theory of the [immaterial] soul clear, by saying that the soul/self (*nafs*)<sup>25</sup> of the human agent is this composite (*al-ḡumla*), and it is not anything [else] within it or outside it. We say that because [the human agent] can properly perceive, know, and exercise power if there is a balance in the mixture and it is sound. If the balance of the mixture and its soundness perish, then all those [actions] will equally perish. Therefore, those [actions] must be the consequence of the balance in the mixture [of the composite] and its soundness.<sup>26</sup>

Once again, we start with the externally observable attributes, such as perception and knowledge, and ask to what subject they properly belong. Here, we identify the proper

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<sup>24</sup> IBN AL-MALĀḤIMĪ, *Tuḥfa*, p. 157,17–20. Same in IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, p. 372,17–19; *Maḡmū‘*, vol. 2, p. 242,9–12.

<sup>25</sup> Note that the Arabic word *nafs* is neutral as to whether the *nafs* is material or immaterial.

<sup>26</sup> IBN AL-MALĀḤIMĪ, *Tuḥfa*, p. 158,7–11; cf. RUKN AL-DĪN IBN MUḤAMMAD AL-MALĀḤIMĪ, *Fā‘iq fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. W. MADELUNG and M. MCDERMOTT, Tehran/Berlin 2007, p. 276,9–13. Note that here, just like above in Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s definition of the human being, the Mu‘tazilite school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī attempts to incorporate the Galenic medicine into their philosophy of mind. That might have been a consequence of Abū l-Ḥusayn’s education at the Baghdad School of *falsafa* (see W. MADELUNG, “Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī,” in: K. FLEET, G. KRÄMER, D. MATRINGE, J. NAWAS, E. ROWSON (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, consulted online on 10 November 2021 [http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_0011](http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0011), first published online: 2007, first print edition:, 2007.

possessor of those attributes through a process of elimination. We observe that if we eliminate the proper combination of corporeal elements from a human being, she won't possess the attributes that we typically associate with a human being anymore. Therefore, she is identical to the composite resulting from that mixture of corporeal elements.

The elimination argument can be also found in Ibn Mattawayh:

[The position of our opponents] would require that this composite (*al-ġumla*) would be a vessel for whatever is the human. It would be like a body which happens to be next to [us] or a shirt that one wears. But that would imply that the elimination of this composite would have no effect as to the elimination of the [human], in the same way as taking off the shirt would have no effect on that and would not rob [the human] of being alive. [...] If [the human] does not need [his body], it will necessarily follow that the human can exist even if the organs of this composite are cut away and separated [from him].<sup>27</sup>

So, if human beings were anything other than their bodies, then they could continue to live when their bodies are destroyed. Unlike many dualists, Ibn Mattawayh takes it for an indisputable item of observable data that humans do die when their bodies are destroyed. Therefore, human beings are identical to their bodies. As an example, Ibn Mattawayh predictably uses beheading.<sup>28</sup>

The elimination argument is not unproblematic. If A is eliminated upon the elimination of B, it only means that B is the necessary condition for A. It does not mean that A is identical with B. Ibn Mattawayh is perfectly aware of this problem. In fact, he uses this very same objection to argue against the identity of human beings with the spirit (*al-rūh*).<sup>29</sup> He argues that humans are not identical with the spirit, even if the presence of the spirit is a necessary condition for their being alive. Still, Ibn Mattawayh immediately qualifies it by saying that we are justified to move from necessity to identity in the case of some organs, for instance, in the case of the head.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, Ibn Mattawayh does not provide any principled distinction between the case of the head and the spirit.

Whether the elimination argument is valid or not, it is obviously another instance of an argument based on experiential observation from a third-person viewpoint. Ibn Mattawayh and Abū l-Ḥusayn have no interest in any kind of modal considerations about the incorporeal existence of human mind, usually derived from introspection into the private mental world, as we will see in Avicenna. Both authors rely on the experiential observation of the matters of fact alone. And the observable fact is that humans die if you cut off their head.

This brings me to the main hypothesis of this section: the third-person observation of outer attributes, actions, and behaviours is the main methodology used in kalām for its inquiry into human nature.<sup>31</sup> All arguments that we have seen so far seem to confirm this

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<sup>27</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Maġmū'*, vol. 2, pp. 248,19–22; 249,5–6.

<sup>28</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Maġmū'*, vol. 2, p. 246,11–14.

<sup>29</sup> The notion of spirit plays an important role in different theories of human nature in kalām, but is irrelevant for the purposes of this paper. See further SHIHADÉH, "Classical Ash'arī Anthropology," pp. 465–476; HEEMSKERK, "Abd al-Jabbār on Body, Soul, and Resurrection," pp. 133–136. Note that spirit is a perfectly material entity in this context.

<sup>30</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Maġmū'*, vol. 2, pp. 248,9–14; 250,6–7.

<sup>31</sup> As M. SEBTI, *Avicenne. L'âme humaine*, Paris 2000, pp. 118–119 correctly notes, the idea of the phenomenal mental world as something different from the objects of sense-perception (that is, the main idea of the Flying



hypothesis. All of them argue that humans are identical with their bodies based on the externally observable actions and the attributes of life, perception, and knowledge. Even Ibn al-Malāḥimī, who is already familiar with Avicennian philosophy (at least through al-Ġazālī), never mentions any arguments from introspection or based on the phenomenal mental content. I have focused on the Mu‘tazilite sources, but recent studies suggest that the Aš‘arite material from the same period go in a similar direction, which is predictable, since the Aš‘arites are even more radical about their physicalism than the Mu‘tazilites.<sup>32</sup>

There is only one argument that seems to approach the nature of human beings from the first-person perspective. As identified by Sophia Vasalou, this argument plays an important role in ‘Abd al-Ġabbār. The argument may be summarised as follows:

1. Each of us necessarily finds ourselves having volitions, beliefs, perceptions etc.
2. One can necessarily know an attribute (*ṣifa*) if and only if one necessarily knows that to which it is attributed (*mawṣūf*).
3. Therefore, we must necessarily know that to which volitions, beliefs, perceptions etc. apply (from 1, 2).
4. The only thing that we know necessarily is this corporeal composite (*al-ġumla*), structured in a particular way (*binya maḥṣūsa*).
5. Therefore, volitions, beliefs, perceptions etc. apply to this corporeal composite (from 3, 4).<sup>33</sup>

Vasalou interprets this argument as an argument based on introspection. We start from the immediate knowledge of ourselves and our mental states (that is, from the first type of the necessary knowledge from the list above) and conclude by identifying ourselves with our bodies. Vasalou argues that the argument is problematic. It contains a “breezy transition” from a first-person perspective to statements about the material entities: “In some mysterious ways, the ‘I’ is the material totality.” Vasalou is puzzled by the Mu‘tazilite “failure to differentiate between two subjects – the ‘I’ and the body.” If I understand it correctly, Vasalou explains the failure through the firm materialist background of kalām.<sup>34</sup>

Marwan Rashed brings Vasalou’s line of interpretation further. He notes that, properly speaking, the composite (*ġumla*) is not identical with the corporeal organs for the Bahšmite Mu‘tazilites. Rashed interprets the Bahšmite claim that various attributes are related to the whole (*ġumla*) rather than to any specific part as some kind of proto dualism. Rashed suggests that the Bahšmite Mu‘tazilites foreshadow Avicenna’s Flying Man argument. They equally rely on introspection into the private mental states, equally notice that those private mental states do not belong to any corporeal organ, and equally suggest that

Man) might have been known to Mu‘ammar (d. 830 CE). I argue for a similar point, with respect to the whole tradition of kalām, in my forthcoming article “Nonreductive Theories of Sense-Perception in the Philosophy of Kalām.” It is even more striking that the distinction between the phenomenal content of sense-perception and the physical process in the organs, clearly known to the scholars of kalām, was never used to prove the immateriality of the soul.

<sup>32</sup> See SHIHADÉH, “Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology,” esp. p. 465.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. VASALOU, “Subject and Body in Mu‘tazilism,” pp. 276–277 based mostly on ‘ABD AL-ĠABBĀR, *Muġnī*, vol. 11, pp. 312–313.

<sup>34</sup> VASALOU, ““Subject and Body in Mu‘tazilism,” pp. 279–295. M. MARMURA, “Avicenna’s ‘Flying Man’ in Context,” in: *The Monist* 69 (1986), pp. 383–395 interprets the position of the scholars of kalām as involving introspection as well.

there must be something different, beyond the corporeal organs, that is, the subject of those private mental states. In Avicenna, as we will see, it is the immaterial soul. For the Bahšamite Mu‘tazilites, it is the composite (*ġumla*).<sup>35</sup>

I agree with both Vasalou and Rashed that ‘Abd al-Ġabbār’s way of reasoning may be interpreted as introspection. In fact, Rashed’s interpretation would very well fit into the narrative of my article: as soon as introspection appears as a method of reasoning in Arabic-Islamic philosophy of mind, it gives rise to some kind of dualism. However, we need to be careful here. The Bahšmite Mu‘tazilites are not substance-dualists. They are materialists. The composite whole (*ġumla*) may be not entirely identical to the individual corporeal organs, but nor is it anything distinct from them, as Rashed acknowledges himself.<sup>36</sup> If we look more carefully at the argument analysed by Vasalou, we can see that the corporeal organs are never quite excluded from the picture. For instance, ‘Abd al-Ġabbār says:

What [further] proves this is that [the human] finds that his organs perceive pain, heat, and cold equally, even if it is the composite (*al-ġumla*) that perceives, insofar it is the one that directs perception, since initiating and refraining from actions (*al-iqdām wa-l-iḡām*) go back to a feature that belongs [to the composite as a whole], not to [particular] organs. Therefore, it must mean that the composite is the one that is the living being. This is among the strongest arguments of our master Abū Hāšim (may God have mercy upon him). He said: if one finds pain in all organs and perceives heat and cold with them, then the whole composite that [constitutes] him must be the one with life and power [over his actions]. If the one living and with power [over his actions]<sup>37</sup> were something in the heart, then [those affections] would not need to apply to his organs, just like they do not need to apply to the clothing that he is wearing insofar as it is not a part of the living composite.<sup>38</sup>

In this passage, ‘Abd al-Ġabbār says that the perception of pain and of hot and cold belongs to the whole composite human being (*ġumla*). But, still, ‘Abd al-Ġabbār emphasizes as well that those affections happen through the organs. This qualification may sound counter-intuitive if we interpret the argument as relying on introspection into the private mental states. Phenomenologically speaking, I am not sure I can always locate my pain, let alone claim that it happens through a particular organ. Therefore, the argument does not treat pain, or the experience of hot and cold, as a private phenomenal experience.

In order to explain why ‘Abd al-Ġabbār mentions organs in the last quotation, I suggest that we qualify the nature of introspection employed in his argumentation. ‘Abd al-Ġabbār’s introspection is not introspection properly speaking, that is, introspection into the private mental world. Rather, it still is the same kind of experiential observation of outer

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<sup>35</sup> M. RASHED, “Chose, item et distinction: L’homme volant d’Avicenne avec et contre Abū Hāšim al-Ġubbā’ī,” in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 28 (2018), pp. 167–185.

<sup>36</sup> RASHED (*art. cit.*, pp. 179–80) explains the relationship between the *ġumla* and the organs in the notions of *aḥwāl* (states), which are neither distinct nor identical with their bearers. I discuss the ontological status of the whole (*ġumla*) in the philosophy of mind of kalām in my forthcoming paper “Personal Identity in the Philosophy of Kalām.”

<sup>37</sup> For the identification of human being as “the living being with power [over his actions],” see ‘ABD AL-ĠABBĀR, *Muġnī*, vol. 11, p. 312,4–5.

<sup>38</sup> ‘ABD AL-ĠABBĀR, *Muġnī*, vol. 11, p. 314,5–11. For a similar point, see IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, p. 374,7–9. ‘Abd al-Ġabbār repeats the gist of this argument several times, e.g., *Muġnī*, vol. 11, pp. 314,8–9; 315,8–10.

attributes and actions as we saw in the arguments above. Just that in this case, we observe our own bodies, not the bodies of other people. It is an invitation for the reader to observe herself – let us call it ‘as if from outside’ – as the closest available example of the function of her body. For instance, ‘Abd al-Ġabbār says in the same context:

Each of us may move one of his hands in one direction and the other hand in another; if the living being were something inside us [rather than our whole body] those different motions would not have their origin in [different] organs.<sup>39</sup>

‘Abd al-Ġabbār designs this argument to prove the same point as in the Vasalou-Rashed argument, that is, that our actions belong to the whole (*ġumla*) rather than to an individual organ inside us. However, his methodology is clearer here. Nothing in this quotation reminds of introspection into the private mental world. Rather, we move our hands, that is, provide an experiment, thereby approaching ourselves from a third-person perspective.

The key to my interpretation of ‘Abd al-Ġabbār’s introspection lies in the claim that the mental states mentioned in it are not private. Rather, they are equally accessible to an external observer. In other words, whether I speak of my own experience of pain or someone else’s pain, it makes no difference for the argument. My suggestion is confirmed by the way in which Ibn Mattwayh paraphrases ‘Abd al-Ġabbār’s argument. As Vasalou has already noted, Ibn Mattwayh says:

Each of us recognises that he has volitions and beliefs and other similar attributes. Moreover, this does not confine itself to what [each of us] finds in himself. [It also applies] to that which one finds in others. For one inevitably [knows] (*yudṭarru*) in many cases that someone else has volitions and beliefs.<sup>40</sup>

In other words, Ibn Mattwayh explicitly says that it is inessential for the argument whether we look at ourselves or at other people. What is essential for the argument is that we observe some actions and attributes necessarily, whether in ourselves or in others. As I mentioned above, the direct observation of things around us and of things about ourselves are the two primary types of necessary (*darūrī*) knowledge in the epistemology of kalām. What I am suggesting now is that the second type of necessary knowledge, the knowledge of our own mental states, is not so different from the first type, the observation of things and people around us, at least in this context. Whether I know necessarily my own mental states, or someone else knows about them, the objects of knowledge are the same (again, in the context of this argument).

For instance, if the reader wondered before how knowledge and perception can be accessible from the third-person perspective, they may have the same worry now with respect to volitions and beliefs, which Ibn Mattwayh mentions in his version of the argument. Aren’t volitions and beliefs, once again, the paradigmatic examples of private mental states, available to the first-person perspective only? But the scholars of kalām are consistent here as

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<sup>39</sup> ‘ABD AL-ĠABBĀR, *Muġnī*, vol. 11, p. 339.9–10.

<sup>40</sup> IBN MATTWAYH, *Maġmū*, vol. 2, p. 241.8–10; cf. VASALOU, “Subject and Body in Mu‘tazilism,” p. 276, fn. 13.

well. In his *Taḍkira*, Ibn Mattawayh explicitly acknowledges that both volitions and beliefs are externally observable and we associate them with other humans just as we associate them with ourselves:

Just as one knows from oneself that one has a belief (*kawnahu mu' taqadan*), so one inevitably knows (*yudḥarru*) that someone else has a belief about something, if there occurs communication and [the observation of] uncertainty. Likewise, one knows that someone else has a volition by observing that he acts accordingly (*'inda zuhūr af'āl maḥṣūsa minhu*) – even if one does not immediately know that he has a volition, and one only knows that someone else has a belief through the repetition of his actions and states.<sup>41</sup>

In this passage, Ibn Mattawayh says that it might be an easier way to observe our own volitions and beliefs, but we can similarly rely on the observations of others. Ibn Mattawayh's conviction that our volitions and beliefs are equally accessible from a third-person perspective as they are to ourselves clearly shows that for him, whether we approach volitions from the first- or third-person perspective, the result is the same. In other words, 'volition' does not refer to the phenomenal experience of volition in this argument. Even if I just look at myself, with 'my volition', I refer to an objective reality, accessible to other people, just like when I say "my hand." As I mentioned above, the same applies to our knowledge and our perception. Other people may even know better whether we possess those mental states than we do.

Thus, it does not come as a surprise that, elsewhere in the same treatise, Ibn Mattawayh goes even further and abandons the idea of looking at ourselves completely. He reformulates the first premise of 'Abd al-Ġabbār's argument as: "Each of us knows which other [things] are to be indicated as living beings necessarily."<sup>42</sup> Equally, the paraphrase of 'Abd al-Ġabbār's argument in the *Muġmū'* finishes from a perfectly third-person viewpoint: "It is known by necessity that it is this composite, which is structured in a particular way, that we observe to be in charge of actions (*nuṣāhiduhā mutaṣarrifa fī l-af'āl*)."<sup>43</sup> I take the notion of observation (root *š-h-d*) to signify the third-person perspective in this context.

Thus, I conclude this section by suggesting that the third-person view is the main methodology in the philosophy of mind in kalām when it comes to determining what is the nature of human beings. Even when the scholars of kalām do seem to use introspection in their argumentation, that introspection is not the kind of introspection I mentioned in the introduction: it does not presuppose the existence of the private mental world to which the first-person subject has a privileged access. As we are about to see, Avicenna's approach to introspection is radically different.

## 2. Introspection in Arabic Avicennism

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<sup>41</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, p. 580,8–10; see further p. 524,7–14.

<sup>42</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, p. 372,20; the similar idea is expressed in ŠAŠDĪW MĀNKDĪM, *Šarḥ al-Uṣūl al-ḥamsa*, ed. by 'A. 'UṬMĀN, Cairo 1965, p. 161.8–9.

<sup>43</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Maġmū'*, vol. 2, p. 241,14–15.

Introspection is probably one of the most well studied topics in Avicenna's philosophy. There are numerous studies that address introspection in the context of four closely interconnected issues: Avicenna's Flying Man argument; the unity of perception; the permanence of self-awareness; and the metaphysical structure of self-awareness.<sup>44</sup> All these studies show that Avicenna has a notion of introspection, and it plays an important role in his philosophy. Henceforth, I will take the presence of introspection in Avicenna's philosophy as established.

For the purposes of this paper, the most relevant discussion of introspection in Avicenna is his Flying Man argument. The question how to understand the Flying Man argument and whether it is an argument at all has been a matter of scholarly disagreement. In this paper, I will focus only on two most recent interpretations: one by Peter Adamson and Fedor Benevich (2018), and another formulated in a response to them by Jari Kaukua (2020). Both interpretations discuss the version of the Flying Man from Avicenna's *Healing, On the Soul* I.1. Both interpretations notice that Avicenna provides his analysis of the soul in several steps. According to Adamson and Benevich, Avicenna proves the existence of the soul right in the beginning of the *On the Soul* I.1 just by drawing on the observable actions of the human bodies. This is also the part in which Avicenna shows that the human soul is not just a body. As a second step, the Flying Man in the end of the *On the Soul* I.1 is designed to show that being connected to the body is not essential for human souls. And finally, *On the Soul* V.2 provides a demonstration that the human soul cannot be necessarily related to bodies even externally.<sup>45</sup> In his response, Jari Kaukua propounds a different outline of Avicenna's strategy. According to Kaukua, both the observational arguments from the beginning of *On the Soul* I.1 and the Flying Man argument are designed to show the existence of the soul. The first argument is a response to a simple *whether* question about a thing designated with a nominal definition ("Is there soul?"), while the Flying Man argument is a response to a composite *whether* question ("Is there soul as an immaterial entity?"). Kaukua argues that the question about the essence of the soul is sufficiently covered with the Aristotelian definition of the soul as the perfection of human body.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> MARMURA, "Avicenna's Flying Man in Context"; T.-A. DRUART, "The Soul and Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes," in: T.-A. DRUART (ed.), *Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction*, Washington DC 1988, pp. 27–49; D. N. HASSE, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West*, London 2000, pp. \*\*-\*\*; M. SEBTI, "Avicenna's Flying Man Argument as a Proof of the Immateriality of the Soul," in: E. Coda & C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.) *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge. Études de logique aristotélicienne et de philosophie grecque, syriaque, arabe et latine offertes à Henri Hugonnard-Roche*, Paris 2014, pp. 531-544; T. KUKKONEN, "Sources of the Self in the Arabic Tradition: Remarks on the Avicennan Turn," in: J. Kaukua – T. Ekenberg (eds.), *Subjectivity and Selfhood in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, Springer (Switzerland) 2016, pp. 37-60; D. BLACK, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows," in: S. RAHMAN, T. STREET and H. TAHIRI (eds.), *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition*, Dordrecht 2008, pp. 63–87; J. KAUKUA and T. KUKKONEN, "Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness: Before and after Avicenna," in: S. HEINÄMAA – V. LÄHTEENMÄKI – P. REMES (eds.), *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy*, Dordrecht 2007, pp. 95–119; J. KAUKUA, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond*, Cambridge 2015; P. ADAMSON and F. BENEVICH, "The Thought Experimental Method: Avicenna's Flying Man Argument," in: *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 4:2 (2018), pp. 147–164; P. ADAMSON, "The Simplicity of Self-Knowledge After Avicenna," in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 28 (2018), pp. 257–277; J. KAUKUA, "The Flying and the Masked Man, One More Time: Comments on Peter Adamson and Fedor Benevich, 'The Thought Experimental Method: Avicenna's Flying Man Argument,'" in: *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* (2020), pp. 285–296; J. KAUKUA, "The Heritage of Ibn Sīnā's Concept of the Self," in P. KRITCHER (ed.), *The Self*, Oxford 2021, pp. 55–72.

<sup>45</sup> ADAMSON and BENEVICH, "Thought Experimental Method."

<sup>46</sup> KAUKUA, "The Flying and the Masked Man," 286–290.

For the purposes of this paper, one point common to both interpretations is salient. Like Adamson and Benevich, Kaukua accepts that Avicenna's analysis includes lots of different steps. Now, these steps of Avicenna's argumentation include both introspection and the third-person view. For instance, the beginning of the *On the Soul* I.1 is from a third-person viewpoint. Avicenna says:

We observe that bodies have sense-perception and move by will; moreover, we observe that bodies nourish, grow, and give birth to the similar. This is not due to their being bodies. [...] The thing from which those actions come forth, and in general anything that is the principle of the actions which are not uniform and involuntary, we call the "soul."<sup>47</sup>

Likewise, the argument from indivisibility in *On the Soul* V.2 is a third-person argument. Avicenna uses here, as Adamson recently called it, an "affinity argument."<sup>48</sup> Avicenna argues that the soul needs to be indivisible and immaterial, since the objects of its intellection are indivisible and immaterial. Just like the observation argument from the beginning of the *On the Soul* I.1, the indivisibility argument is based on the ascription of a certain kind of action to humans – this time, the intellection of universals: "There is no doubt that there is something, a substance, in the human being that receives the intelligibles."<sup>49</sup> Starting from this premise, we draw the conclusions about the nature of human mind based on the activities that it performs, which is the definition of the third-person methodology in the sense that I outlined in the introduction. Hence, the indivisibility argument is a third-person argument.

Unlike these two arguments, the Flying Man argument is based on introspection, according to the unanimous view of modern scholars. The Flying Man observes his own phenomenal private mental world and notices that he can perceive his 'self' (or his essence, depending on the interpretation) even in an imaginary situation when he is not aware of anything material, including his own body: "He has no doubt in his affirmation that his essence/self is existent, even while he does not affirm any extremity among his limbs, nor anything inward among his innards – not his heart or his brain – nor anything external."<sup>50</sup>

The opposition between introspection and the third-person view plays an important role in another, closely related, topic discussed by Avicenna and his disciple Bahmanyār (d. 1066), personal identity over time. On the one hand, there are strong observational reasons to suppose that persons change over time:

These individuals are in [constant] change in accordance with the change in [their bodily] mixture (*al-mizāğ*). What proves this is that different actions result from [those individuals] in accordance with the change in [their bodily] mixture...<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> AVICENNA, *al-Šifāʾ, al-Nafs*, ed. F. RAHMAN, London 1959, I.1, p. 4,5–11.

<sup>48</sup> P. ADAMSON, "From Known to the Knower: Affinity Arguments for the Mind's Incorporeality in the Islamic World," in: *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Mind* 1 (2021), pp. 373–396.

<sup>49</sup> AVICENNA, *Šifāʾ, Nafs* V.2, p. 209,16–17.

<sup>50</sup> AVICENNA, *Šifāʾ, Nafs* I.1, p. 16,7–8, transl. ADAMSON and BENEVICH. Equally, according to KAUKUA, "The Heritage of Ibn Sīnā's Concept of the Self," the Flying Man is unaware of any mental content other than his self.

<sup>51</sup> AVICENNA, *al-Mubāḥaṭāt*, ed. M. BIDĀRFĀR, Qom 1992, § 400, p. 146.

In other words, we observe that the actions of a human being may differ over time and conclude that possibly it is not the same human being anymore. When she was young, my friend went running for 20 kilometres, and looked like a professional sportswoman. Today, she is old, has pain all over her body, and can barely walk. Is she still the same person? She is not, if we solely rely on the third-person methodology. But on the other hand, she is, and that is so only because her own introspection speaks in favour of the preservation of personal identity:

My persistence as a single I in terms of my substantial being, [the fact] that what existed yesterday has not perished or ceased to exist while a numerically other [thing] has come to be, that I am that observer of what I observed yesterday – [all this] is something about which no doubt occurs to me.<sup>52</sup>

So, Avicenna supports the persistence of personal identity over time through introspection, although there are observational reasons to believe that individuals change over time due to the change in their bodies. This argument for personal identity from introspection will be important for us in the next sections.

## 2.1. *Al-Ġazālī*

Just like Avicenna’s Flying Man argument, al-Ġazālī’s philosophy of mind has been a matter of scholarly disagreement, not least because it is related to the sensitive question of al-Ġazālī’s conversion to Sufism.<sup>53</sup> I am not intending to contribute to this disagreement and try to determine whether al-Ġazālī was a substance dualist or a physicalist. The scope of my analysis in this section is very limited. I just want to look at al-Ġazālī’s *Incoherence* and establish the role of the arguments based on introspection and third-person observation that we can find there.

The first natural place to look for al-Ġazālī’s engagement with the first-person and third-person argumentation is the Discussion XVIII of the *Incoherence*, devoted to a refutation of all arguments that the *falāsifa* propose in favour of substance dualism. To summarise, al-Ġazālī discusses ten proofs. For some reason, they mostly come in couples.

- arguments (1) and (2) from intellection of indivisible intelligibles
- arguments (3) and (4) from the unity of perception
- arguments (5) and (6) from self-awareness
- arguments (7) and (8) from aging and weakening

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<sup>52</sup> AVICENNA, *Mubāḥaṭāt* § 403, 147, transl. KAUKUA. See further KAUKUA, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 75–76 and KAUKUA, “The Heritage of Ibn Sīnā’s Concept of the Self,” pp. 65–66 on this passage.

<sup>53</sup> R. FRANK, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash‘arite School*, Durham, NC 1994; T. GIANOTTI, *Al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Iḥyā’*, Leiden 2001; F. GRIFFEL, “Al-Ġazālī’s Concept of Prophecy: The Introduction of Avicennan Psychology into Aš‘arite Theology,” in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004), pp. 101–144; T. KUKKONEN, “Receptive to Reality: Al-Ghazālī on the Structure of the Soul,” in: *The Muslim World* 102 (2012), pp. 541–561; A. SHIHADDEH, “Al-Ghazālī and Kalām: the Conundrum of His Body-Soul Dualism,” in F. GRIFFEL (ed.), *Islamic and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī*, vol. 2, Leiden/Boston 2016, pp. 113–141.

- argument (9) from personal identity
- argument (10) from the intellection of intelligibles.<sup>54</sup>

Most of these arguments clearly follow the third-person methodology. The arguments (1) and (2) and (10) are based on the observation and ascription of an activity to human agents, intellection.<sup>55</sup> They are probably derived from Avicenna's affinity arguments for substance dualism, an example of which I mentioned in the last section, from the *On the Soul* V.2. The same applies to the arguments (7) and (8). We observe that humans, with age, lose their capacity to perform the actions that are associated with corporeal strength (like running for 20 kilometres), while they remain wise, which indicates the presence of a source of intellection and wisdom distinct from their bodies. This way, based on the third-person observation of human attributes and activities, those arguments suggest that humans have immaterial souls, the bearers of those actions and attributes.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly, al-Ġazālī presents the arguments of the groups (3), (4) and (9) as based on the third-person methodology as well, even though one would intuitively think of them as arguments from introspection. Argument (3), the unity of perception, says that if knowledge belonged only to one organ, then we would not designate the human as a whole as knowledgeable.<sup>57</sup> Equally, if knowledge resided in one organ, ignorance could reside in the other, but the human being as a whole would be both knowledgeable and ignorant (4).<sup>58</sup> There is no mention of the phenomenological experience of one and the same 'I' being the subject of all kinds of cognition and perception, so usual for the arguments from the unity of perception. Likewise, we just saw that Avicenna alludes to the first-person experience in his analysis of personal identity. But al-Ġazālī's version of the argument (9) only claims that "we say that this man is the same as that man" although we know that all parts of his body have become different.<sup>59</sup> The argument works on the level of an external observer. There is no mention of the first-person experience.

Only one group of arguments makes at least some use of introspection, arguments (5) and (6). Argument (5) derives from the opposition between the presence of consciousness in intellection, on the one hand, and the absence of self-perception in the case of senses, on the other hand. The underlying assumption (which al-Ġazālī questions in his response) is that bodily senses do not perceive themselves while they are perceiving something else. Basically, the eye does not see itself, unlike the intellect, which is aware of itself while thinking of other things.<sup>60</sup> Still, this argument is a third-person argument. Although the phenomenon of self-awareness plays a role, al-Ġazālī uses it as an observable *activity* that we as humans perform,

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<sup>54</sup> Most of these arguments are repeated in IBN AL-MALĀHIMĪ, *Tuhfa*, pp. 161–168, with a notorious absence of the argument (6).

<sup>55</sup> ABŪ ḤĀMĪD AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, ed. M. MARMURA, Provo 2000, XVIII, pp. 182–187; 198.

<sup>56</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVIII, pp. 193–194.

<sup>57</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVIII, p. 187,12–13. Al-Ġazālī is probably attacking here the argument traditionally employed by the Basrian Mu'tazilites to establish the existence of the composite (*ġumla*) beyond the corporeal organs, not Avicennian dualism (cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 185,1–5). That explains the third-person nature of the argument.

<sup>58</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVIII, p. 188,1–5.

<sup>59</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVIII, p. 196,15.

<sup>60</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVIII, pp. 189–190. The argument is probably derived from AVICENNA, *Šifā'*, *Nafs* V.2, pp. 216–218.



and which cannot be associated with our bodies. The argument makes no use of the private mental content in a proper phenomenal way, that is, to the effect that my private mental content is not reducible to any physical process. The argument just says that some entities (intellect) have private mental content, while others (senses) do not.

Argument (6) starts on a similar note. If the intellect were material, then it would not be able to perceive the organ of its activity (brain or heart), just like the senses cannot perceive the organs of sense-perception. But we can perceive our brains (in other words, I can think of my brain), therefore, the intellect must be something distinct from the corporeal senses.<sup>61</sup> Al-Ġazālī replies that the argument is a baseless generalisation from induction: why not admit that there is one particular corporeal sense that perceives its sense-organ, namely, the intellect?<sup>62</sup> The *falāsifa* reply that the intellect would need to be constantly aware of that organ with which it perceives. However, this is not the case.<sup>63</sup> To support this claim, al-Ġazālī provides the single important use of introspection in the *Incoherence XVIII* on behalf of the *falāsifa*:

If either the heart or the brain were the human himself, then their cognition would never escape him, such that he must inevitably grasp both, just as he must inevitably cognise himself. For no one escapes knowing himself, but is ever affirming within himself [the existence] of his self. But unless the human hears what is said about the heart and the brain, or sees them through dissection in another human, he will neither apprehend them nor believe in their existence.<sup>64</sup>

This is a version of the Flying Man argument to the effect that we can be aware of ourselves without being aware of our bodies. Although, unlike the Flying Man, this argument does not directly jump to the conclusion “I am, therefore, distinct from my body,” it shares with the Flying Man the common element of introspection into our private mental world. The content of my private phenomenal experience of myself is different from the content of the experience of my brain. I access the notion of my ‘self’ through introspection, but I learn about the brain through the study of other people. My awareness of myself is permanent, while my knowledge of the brain or the heart is intermittent.<sup>65</sup>

One can find a similar way of reasoning in Avicenna’s *Discussions* (§ 60). There, Avicenna argues against the physicalist identification of the human being with the material composition of the body (*al-ġumla*), characteristic of kalām, as we saw it in the first section. Avicenna says:

How can the object of awareness, which is his self, be the composition (*al-ġumla*)? Many people who are aware of the existence of ‘I’ are not aware of the [corporeal] composition. If

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<sup>61</sup> The Arabic notion of perception (*idrāk*) is an umbrella term for all kinds of cognitive acts, including sense-perception, intellection etc.

<sup>62</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut XVIII*, p. 191.

<sup>63</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut XVIII*, p. 192.

<sup>64</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut XVIII*, p. 192,3–8, transl. MARMURA modified.

<sup>65</sup> On the permanence of self-awareness in Avicenna see, e.g., BLACK, ““Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows.””

there were no dissection, they would not even know about the heart, the brain, the main organ, or the subordinate organ. Yet they are aware of their ‘I’ before all that.<sup>66</sup>

In this important passage, Avicenna does something that, according to him, escaped the attention of the scholars of kalām. He suggests checking the identification of humans with their bodies through introspection. And he concludes that the mental content of the introspection of the self, which is private and available to us at any time, is distinct from the mental content of knowledge about the brains and hearts, which is acquired through external observation. Therefore, humans cannot be just identical to their bodies.

Interestingly, al-Ġazālī – possibly influenced by the physicalism of kalām – shows little enthusiasm about Avicenna’s introspection in the *Incoherence* XVIII. He objects that the only way we can be aware of ourselves is by being aware of our bodies. There is no distinct private mental content of the ‘self’ out there. True, we might fail to know details about our organs, like whether we have hearts or brains, but we do associate ourselves with our bodies permanently.<sup>67</sup> In another move reminding us of the third-person methods of kalām, al-Ġazālī says that we know through our own experience that our concrete being (*huwiyya*) is somewhere close to our hearts and chests. To support this claim, al-Ġazālī uses an elimination argument, reminding us of Ibn Mattawayh. Al-Ġazālī says that we cannot suppose the continuation of our existence if we suppose that our hearts are removed.<sup>68</sup>

So far, we have seen that introspection plays little role in the *Incoherence* XVIII, and when it comes forth, al-Ġazālī quickly dismisses it. There is, however, another occasion in the *Incoherence*, at which Ġazālī appears to be more favourable to introspection as a method superior to external observation. It appears in the most celebrated part of the *Incoherence*, the Discussion XVII.

As it is well known, Discussion XVII is devoted to the problem of causation and occasionalism. Again, there are many different interpretations of al-Ġazālī’s strategy in this chapter.<sup>69</sup> One of the most salient questions is whether he really endorses occasionalism, the idea that all events in the world are directly created by God at every moment of their existence and that there are no necessary causal connections in the world at all. According to my understanding (which, I believe, comes closest to Frank Griffel’s recent interpretation), at least in the second part of the Discussion XVII,<sup>70</sup> al-Ġazālī is ready to grant to his opponents that there are causal connections between the phenomena in the world. But al-Ġazālī argues that we can never be sure what they are. That is why we cannot call them “necessary” causal connections, because what we judge as necessary or contingent fully depends on how we

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<sup>66</sup> AVICENNA, *Mubāḥaṭāt* § 60, p. 59,10–12; cf. AVICENNA, *al-Isārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. M. AL-ZĀR‘I, Qom 2008, *namaṭ* 3, p. 234,13–15 and *Nafs* V.7, pp. 255–256; see further BLACK, “Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows,” I agree with RASHED, “Chose, Item et Distinction” that this argument must have been a reaction to Abū Hāšim.

<sup>67</sup> A similar line of argumentation is found in ‘ABD AL-ĠABBĀR, *Muġnī*, vol. 11, p. 349.

<sup>68</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVIII, pp. 192,16–193,6.

<sup>69</sup> See e.g. D. PERLER and U. RUDOLPH, *Occasionalismus: Theorien der Kausalität im arabisch-islamischen und im europäischen Denken*, Göttingen 2000, ch. 2; F. GRIFFEL, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, Oxford 2009, ch. 6; and R. FRANK, *Creation and the Cosmos System: Al-Ghazālī & Avicenna*, Heidelberg 1992.

<sup>70</sup> That is, starting from p. 171,12 in Marmura’s edition.

understand the world, not how the world really is (al-Ġazālī understands ‘necessity’ as an epistemic notion). I would classify this position as “sceptical realism.”<sup>71</sup>

In the context of the defence of sceptical realism, al-Ġazālī needs to deal with one argument that is of a particular interest for us. I will call it “the puppet argument”:

[If you accept sceptical realism, then allow that God] can move a dead man’s hand, seating him and with the hand writing volumes and engaging in crafts, the man being all the while open-eyed, staring ahead of him, but not seeing and having no life and no power over [what is being done] – all these ordered acts being created by God together with the moving of [the man’s] hand, the moving coming from the direction of God. By allowing the possibility of this, there ends the distinction between the voluntary movement and the tremor. The well-designed act would no longer indicate either the knowledge or the power of the agent.<sup>72</sup>

This argument is designed to show that accepting sceptical realism leads to absurd conclusions. If we allow that all observable causal connections may turn out to be illusory, then we should allow that there is no necessary connection between the observable actions of a living organism and that person being alive and having will. Based on the observation of actions such as seating, writing, and moving, we cannot make any conclusions as to whether the subject that performs these actions is alive. We can suppose that the human who appears to be alive based on those actions, in reality, is some kind of God’s puppet. God moves a dead corpse in a way that makes it seem to be alive, but it is not.

From the perspective of the history of philosophy of mind, al-Ġazālī’s puppet argument shares some elements with the famous zombie argument.<sup>73</sup> Both arguments presuppose that for the external observer, that is, if we use the third-person methodology alone, there is no way to tell the difference between a zombie or a puppet and a living human being. And just like in the case of the zombie argument, to solve the problem, al-Ġazālī resorts to introspection:

As for your statement that there would be no difference between the tremor and the voluntary movement, we say: We apprehend [this difference] in ourselves. For we have perceived in ourselves a necessary distinction between the two states and have given expression to this difference by the term “power (*qudra*).” [...] If, however, we look at another person and see many ordered motions, there occurs to us knowledge of their being within his power, yet this kind of cognitions are created by God according to the habitual course [of events], by which we know the existence of one of the two possible alternatives [but] by which the impossibility of the other alternative is not shown, as has been previously said.<sup>74</sup>

Al-Ġazālī concedes to the opponent that so long as we observe the others, we cannot say that it is impossible that the observable living beings are lifeless puppets. The habitual course of events (*āda*) only provides us with knowledge that this is not what actually is the case. This is one of the main tenets of al-Ġazālī’s sceptical realism. Based on the third-person

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<sup>71</sup> On the notion of sceptical realism see further H. BEEBEE, *Hume on Causation*, London/New-York 2006, ch. 7.

<sup>72</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVII, p. 174,16–21, transl. MARMURA modified.

<sup>73</sup> See further Chalmers, *Conscious Mind*, pp. 94–99.

<sup>74</sup> AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut* XVII, pp. 176,19–177,5, transl. MARMURA modified.

observation of the matters of fact, we can only say that fire always burns as a matter of fact, but we cannot say that fire necessarily burns.<sup>75</sup> Still, there is a way to find the necessary causal connection between the actions, such as sitting and writing, and being alive. This way is introspection. By looking at ourselves, we know that the actions of a living being are associated with being alive and having capacity to act and not act (*qudra*). This capacity is part of our private mental world, according to al-Ġazālī's response. Thus, in the Discussion XVII, unlike in the Discussion XVIII, al-Ġazālī allows that introspection and our knowledge of our private mental world can deliver insights that go beyond the third-person observation of other people.

## 2.2. *Abū l-Barakāt*

Introspection plays a central role in Abū l-Barakāt's philosophy. Recent studies have shown that Abū l-Barakāt repeatedly alludes to phenomenal self-awareness in his refutation of the Avicennian-Aristotelian theory of corporeal faculties and in his argumentation in favour of 'unified direct realism,' i.e., the idea that all kinds of cognition involve a direct acquaintance between one and the same subject, 'I', and an external or internal object.<sup>76</sup> In this section, I will discuss which role introspection plays in Abū l-Barakāt's argumentation in favour of substance dualism.

Abū l-Barakāt's strategy of analysing the nature of the soul involves four different perspectives: introspection and the third-person observation on the one hand, and primary (*awwalī*) and inferential (*istidlālī*) knowledge on the other hand. Therefore, there are four ways we can know the soul:

- (1) primarily through introspection
- (2) primarily from the third-person view
- (3) inferentially through introspection
- (4) inferentially from the third-person view.

Abū l-Barakāt starts his analysis with the second way of knowing the soul, in a primary way but from the third-person view. This way of knowing the soul means that we check what we call "soul" (*nafs*) in our everyday language in terms of observable actions and states that we associate with this notion. From this perspective, the soul is explained as:

The power that inheres in the body and acts in it and through it. Whichever actions and movements at different times and in different directions occur from [the body], while [that power] is aware of them and knows and distinguishes between them, [those actions] are due

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. GRIFFEL 2009, pp. 172–173.

<sup>76</sup> S. PINES, "La conception de la conscience de soi chez Avicenne et chez Abu'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Poetics and Metaphysics," in: *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 21 (1954), pp. 21–98; J. KAUKUA, "Self, Agent, Soul: Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Critical Reception of Avicennian Psychology," in: J. KAUKUA and T. EKENBERG (eds.), *Subjectivity and Selfhood in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, Dordrecht 2016, pp. 75–89; F. BENEVICH, "Perceiving Things in Themselves: Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Critique of Representationalism," in: *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* (2020), pp. 229–264.

to [that power]. The perfection (*kamāl*) of the species occurs to [the body] through [that power] and it preserves [the body] in accordance with it.<sup>77</sup>

To sum up, the soul is that which oversees actions. This understanding of the soul applies to all kinds of souls, plant, animal, and human. To be clear, the soul is not that which *has* different powers or faculties, according to this interpretation. The soul *is* those powers. However, Abū l-Barakāt emphasises that this understanding of the soul cannot be its definition. Rather, it is a description (*rasm*) of the soul in accordance with the common denomination.<sup>78</sup> In the notions of Arabic logic, this means that the above description manages to capture the extension of the notion of the soul, but it mentions only extrinsic non-essential attributes of the soul, whereas a proper definition needs to include only essential notions.<sup>79</sup>

Abū l-Barakāt clearly sides with the Avicennian multidimensional analysis of the soul. According to Avicenna, if we define the soul in terms of the powers and actions that it performs through the body, that won't be a proper definition of the essence of the soul. It only captures the external attributes of the soul insofar as it stands in relation to the body.<sup>80</sup> Abū l-Barakāt follows Avicenna. He also distinguishes between two kinds of inquiries, first, into the essence of the soul, and second, in the soul in terms of its connection to the body.<sup>81</sup>

There is, however, a difference between Abū l-Barakāt and Avicenna. We saw above that Avicenna uses the third-person observation of the actions of the soul to have a primary proof for the existence of the soul. This is not what Abū l-Barakāt does. For him, the proof for the existence of the soul is obtained through another method, primary knowledge through introspection.

Abū l-Barakāt introduces introspection into his philosophy of mind as a response to the traditional Neoplatonic definition of the soul as the “incorporeal substance that moves the body.” In response, Abū l-Barakāt first says that, if anything at all, only the fact that the soul moves the body is immediately known to the people who commonly use the word “soul.” They do not know whether it is a substance and whether it is incorporeal or not.<sup>82</sup> To this, Abū l-Barakāt adds:

People only use words in their conversations if they correspond to what they mean by them. Nobody can mean something by a word without conceptualising it or understanding it in his mind. Now, everyone who says “my soul” (*nafsī*) and “your soul” in a conversation, refers with it to himself (*dātihī*) and his true nature (*ḥaqīqatihī*). For he says, “My soul was happy” and “Your soul was sad,” and he makes no difference between this and saying, “I was happy” and “You were sad.” Likewise, he says, “My soul knew” and “It did not know” in the same

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<sup>77</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, pp. 303,23–304,2.

<sup>78</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, p. 305,16–18.

<sup>79</sup> See further M. BONELLI, *Alessandro di Afrodisia e la Metafisica come scienza dimostrativa*, Napoli 2011, pp. 65–66.

<sup>80</sup> AVICENNA, *Šifā'*, *Nafs* V.1, p. 4,10–12. See further T. ALPINA, *Subject, Definition, Activity: Framing Avicenna's Science of the Soul*, Berlin 2021; ADAMSON AND BENEVICH, “The Thought Experimental Method”; cf. KAUKUA, “The Flying Man and the Masked Man,” which takes a slightly different approach.

<sup>81</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, p. 299,9–10. Note, however, that Abū l-Barakāt departs from Avicenna in terms of the organisation of the inquiry. He first speaks about different actions of the soul insofar as they are observable in the body as a part of natural philosophy, and then, in another book, “On the Soul,” he speaks about the essence of the soul as such.

<sup>82</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, p. 300,11–17.

sense as he says, “I knew” and “I did not know.” In fact, there is no difference for him between saying “my soul” and “my self” (*dātī*) and “I.”<sup>83</sup>

Abū l-Barakāt makes use of an important feature in Arabic language, the ambiguity of the words, *nafs* and *dāt*. *Nafs* can mean both “soul” and “self,” while *dāt* can mean both “self” and “essence” (which makes it particularly hard to translate this passage). In Abū l-Barakāt’s interpretation, whenever I say “my *nafs*” and “my *dāt*,” I refer to the same thing as when I just use the first-person pronoun ‘I.’ Abū l-Barakāt justifies this by saying that it is impossible to use words without meaning something by them. When I say “horse,” I do mean something by “horse,” whatever I conceive to be a horse. So, what do we usually mean when we say “my soul”? We mean ourselves, that to which we refer with the first-person pronoun.

Based on this, Abū l-Barakāt dismisses the traditional definition of the soul as “incorporeal substance which moves the body.” He says that we do know what we refer to as the soul without knowing whether it is a body or a substance etc.<sup>84</sup> Moreover:

The truth is that this is the primary meaning (*al-mafhūm al-awwal*) of this word – that is, ‘soul.’ Insofar as this meaning is concerned, the existence of [the soul] is self-evident (*bayyina*) to everyone who uses the notion. There is no single human being who would need an argument to establish the existence of his soul/himself.<sup>85</sup>

This is the first use of introspection in Abū l-Barakāt’s philosophy of mind. Introspection is the primary method to know about the existence of the soul. We do not need any argument, not even a quick third-person observation of the sort that Avicenna provides in the beginning of *On the Soul* I.1. We just have the immediate knowledge of our own existence. Abū l-Barakāt adds that it is the most self-evident knowledge to us, and that we extrapolate it to other humans: “Likewise, there is no need for argument to see that other people have a soul and a self, which is their concrete being (*huwiyya*) and that-ness (*anniyya*).”<sup>86</sup>

There are a couple of quick moves in this line of reasoning. For instance, one could wonder whether Abū l-Barakāt is a victim of what Quine calls “Plato’s beard.”<sup>87</sup> The fact that we use some notion, and we mean something by it, does not prove that it refers to something real in existence yet. So, Abū l-Barakāt’s argument must rather depend on his assertion that we do refer to ourselves whenever we use the notion of soul, and that this kind of self-awareness is permanent and immediate. Abū l-Barakāt develops this thought with the following argument:

A human’s knowledge of himself/his soul, which is his essence/self (*dāt*) and his concrete being (*huwiyya*), is prior to his knowledge of anything he knows. If you posited a human who would be devoid by himself of any kind of seen, heard or perceived object, his awareness of himself/his soul would still exist for him and be present to him, not hidden from him.

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<sup>83</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, p. 300,18–23.

<sup>84</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, p. 301,7–10.

<sup>85</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, p. 301,11–13.

<sup>86</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, p. 301,15–16.

<sup>87</sup> W.V. Quine, “On What There Is,” in W.V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Cambridge M.A. 1980, pp. 1–20.

Whenever a human performs an action, he is simultaneously aware of his soul and refers to it whenever he refers to [that action], insofar as he says “I did (*fa`altu*),” “I created,” “I knew,” “I did not know,” “I wanted” and “I did not want.” This [letter] *-t-* vocalised with *-u-* in the Arabic language refers in this word to his own essence/self (*dātīhi*). Based on this, he develops a way to refer to his knowledge of the essence of the one to whom he speaks by using a letter *-t-* vocalised with *-a-* [to describe the other person’s] actions. So, one says: “You did (*fa`alta*)” and “You created.”<sup>88</sup>

There are two lines of reasoning in this passage. The first is Abū l-Barakāt’s version of Avicenna’s Flying Man argument. One is constantly aware of himself even if one is unaware of any object of perception. Notice, however, that Abū l-Barakāt makes no use of the Flying Man to the effect of proving the existence of an immaterial soul. For Abū l-Barakāt, it only proves that we have a notion of our own souls that is prior to any other kind of cognition and that that notion does refer to something real. The second line of reasoning is once again linguistic. Abū l-Barakāt demonstrates that our common language usage reflects our immediate understanding of what we refer to when we say “I” and “you,” in Arabic, expressed through different endings of the verbs. All this indicates for Abū l-Barakāt that we have immediate knowledge about the existence of our own souls as well as the souls of others.

Abū l-Barakāt presents this kind of reference to us as that which we primarily mean by the word “soul” (*šarḥ al-ism bi-ḥasab al-ma`rifā al-ūla*).<sup>89</sup> In that respect, it plays a role similar to the aforementioned description (*rasm*) of the soul in terms of its actions. Abū l-Barakāt says that the description in terms of actions is tantamount to a nominal definition of the soul (*ḥadd bi-ḥasab al-ism*).<sup>90</sup> It is not entirely clear what is the relation between these two different “nominal” approaches to the notion of the soul. One difference, certainly, is that the introspective notion of the soul implies that the soul exists. When we say “my soul,” meaning “I,” we must refer to something really existent in the world, to avoid the Platonic Beard problem. On the contrary, Abū l-Barakāt never uses the third-person description of the soul in terms of its actions as an indication that souls exist (unlike Avicenna). Another difference is that the introspective notion of the soul refers to the essence of the soul, unlike the third-person notion of the soul that includes only the extrinsic attributes of the soul insofar as it is related to the body. In this respect, Abū l-Barakāt agrees with Avicenna (on Adamson’s and Benevich’s interpretation).

In any case, what is important for our analysis is that Abū l-Barakāt clearly says and emphasises several times that neither of these approaches says anything about the essence of the soul. The nominal description of the soul in terms of its actions is preliminary to an attempt to provide a real definition (*ḥadd bi-ḥasab al-dāt*) of the soul, which requires demonstration (*burhān*) and inquiry (*naẓar*).<sup>91</sup> Equally, our self-awareness provides no

<sup>88</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu`tabar*, vol. 2, p. 306,2–8.

<sup>89</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu`tabar*, vol. 2, p. 306,10.

<sup>90</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu`tabar*, vol. 2, p. 305,21–25, on the nominal definition in Abū l-Barakāt see further F. BENEVICH, “Meaning and Definition.”

<sup>91</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu`tabar*, vol. 2, pp. 22–23.

knowledge about *what* we are, only *that* we are.<sup>92</sup> Introspection is an imperfect kind of knowledge of ourselves:

You have already learned that our knowledge of human souls, which are their essences/selves and their true natures, is of two kinds: primary (*awwaliyya*) knowledge and inferential (*istidlāliyya*) knowledge. Primary knowledge is human knowledge of oneself. For as we said, every human has knowledge of himself prior to any knowledge about something else. [His knowledge of himself] is prior to, posterior to, and simultaneous with any kind of awareness or knowledge that he has of any existent thing. Still, this is a deficient kind of knowledge. [A human] only knows through it that [his soul] is something existent and is identical with him (*huwa huwa*). On the contrary, inferential knowledge is human's knowledge of the soul of someone else. One makes inferences about it based on his actions and states which exist in him in virtue of [his soul]. That kind of knowledge of his own soul and of the soul of someone else, which is based [on actions and states], is more perfect than his primary knowledge of himself.<sup>93</sup>

Abū l-Barakāt differentiates between two stages of knowing our souls. The first, primary and immediate way is introspection. It just helps us to know that we exist as well as know our identity. But if we want to learn what the nature of our souls is, we must move on to the third-person view. Only through the third-person analysis of observable actions and attributes we conclude whether the soul, e.g., is a substance and whether it is incorporeal or not. There must be a demonstration (*burhān*) based on the observable attributes that will determine the nature of the soul. But the method of introspection does not offer us that kind of demonstration.

We can clearly see that Abū l-Barakāt confirms his preference of the third-person methodology for a scientific inquiry into the nature of the soul when we look at the series of arguments that he discusses in this context.<sup>94</sup> His strategy is slightly convoluted. To sum up, Abū l-Barakāt first presents a series of physicalist theories, some of which are clearly reminiscent of *kalām* (355–356);<sup>95</sup> then he moves on to presenting a series of traditional arguments in favour of the immateriality of the human soul, based on the immateriality of the intellect (357–359); he dismisses all those arguments (359–364); he present his own arguments in favour of the immateriality of the soul as a whole (364–366); and finally he comes back to the previously refuted arguments to see whether they have a grain of truth if one applies them to the soul as a whole, instead of the intellect alone (366–368). I will focus on steps two, three, and four in what follows.

Abū l-Barakāt presents at least eleven different traditional arguments in favour of the immateriality of the soul based on the immateriality of the intellect. I cannot discuss each of them in detail. But in general, two things about those arguments are clear. First, most of them are identical to the arguments that we saw in al-Ġazālī's list above: arguments from aging

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<sup>92</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, p. 301,16–18, as has been already rightly pointed out by Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 115–116.

<sup>93</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, p. 364,8–14. Abū l-Barakāt's position seems to come close to Kaukua's ("The Flying Man and the Masked Man") interpretation of Avicenna.

<sup>94</sup> See *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, chs. 13–14, pp. 354–368.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. the doxographic accounts in IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, pp. 373–374; and FAḤR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliyya min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, ed. A. AL-Ḥ. AL-SAQQĀ, 9 vols, Beirut 1987, vol. 7, pp. 36–37.



and personal identity; from intelligibility of immaterial universals, their indivisibility and infinity; from intellectual consciousness and a lack thereof in sense-perception etc. Second, just like in al-Ġazālī, all these arguments are based on the third-person methodology. All of them ascribe a certain kind of activity or a feature to the intellect that cannot be ascribed to the corporeal faculties. Abū l-Barakāt's strategy usually is to reply that those activities can be ascribed to the corporeal faculties as well. For instance, his reply to the argument from consciousness is particularly interesting. Just to remind ourselves, the argument from consciousness states that the material perceivers do not have self-awareness, whereas the human intellect has self-awareness; therefore, the human intellect must be immaterial. In response, Abū l-Barakāt says that non-human animals, which do not have any immaterial intellect, also have self-awareness.<sup>96</sup> In general, Abū l-Barakāt explains that we can never exclude that other beings also have self-awareness:

A human knows neither the state of someone else of his kind nor of any other kind insofar as it concerns their knowledge and awareness of themselves. If he knows it about a human, who is like him, he does so either due to mere belief, or in virtue of an analogy to himself, or through the utterances and signs that the other uses to communicate with him in words. But if something cannot talk and fails to indicate through its speech and communication [whether it has self-awareness or not], then one does not truly know its state, on which basis one could infer whether [it has self-awareness] or not.<sup>97</sup>

Abū l-Barakāt acknowledges in this passage that self-awareness is part of the private mental world. Therefore, it is hard to know whether something other than we has it or not. In the case of other humans, we can just ask them, or we can extrapolate our own experience of ourselves. But in the case of other animals, or any other kinds of things, we cannot know for sure. Thus, Abū l-Barakāt denies the whole project of the argument from consciousness and self-awareness. As I explained in the previous section, the argument integrates self-awareness as part of a third-person argument. Now, Abū l-Barakāt argues that we cannot use private phenomenal experience as a part of a third-person argument, because we can never be sure about the phenomenal world of other beings.

Abū l-Barakāt's primary dissatisfaction with all the traditional arguments is that they are designed to prove the immateriality of the intellect and not of the soul as a whole. This is part of his general strategy of denying any distinction between different faculties of the soul, which has been already discussed in the scholarship.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, Abū l-Barakāt's own argument is designed to prove the immateriality of the soul as one single entity. The argument is simple and somewhat naive. Abū l-Barakāt says that we perceive and imagine objects that are much bigger than our own bodies. They cannot "fit" into them. Therefore, our souls must be immaterial in order that those objects of perception fit.<sup>99</sup> This is the same argument that Abū l-Barakāt constantly uses in his denial of corporeal faculties and while

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<sup>96</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, p. 363,3–4.

<sup>97</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, p. 363,4–7. A similar argument appears on pp. 152–153. All this is part of Abū l-Barakāt's general view that everything in the world has self-awareness. I am discussing this issue in my forthcoming paper "Suhrawardī's Panpsychism and Its Origins."

<sup>98</sup> PINES, "La conception de la conscience de soi"; KAUUKUA, "Self, Agent, Soul."

<sup>99</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu'tabar*, vol. 2, pp. 364,20–366,10.

establishing his unified direct realism.<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, Abū l-Barakāt ascribes this very same argument to Plato when he first introduces it.<sup>101</sup> In any case, what is important for our purposes is that this argument is clearly a third-person argument. It derives the nature of the soul from the activities that we ascribe to it.

We have seen so far that Abū l-Barakāt prefers the third-person methodology in establishing substance dualism. Having said this, there is some evidence for what I labelled above as (3): inferential knowledge through introspection. Right after saying that introspection provides us only with primary knowledge of our souls, Abū l-Barakāt says:

If a human slightly advances in his knowledge, by and by, he will know based on a theoretical proof (*dalīl al-naẓar*) one item of knowledge [about his soul] after another. He [will know] the first once he sees that his body [becomes] small or big, weak, or fat but he remains one and the same (*huwa huwa*) in either case. So, he will know that his soul is distinct from his body that he sees. Furthermore, an organ may be cut off from him, but he remains one and the same. So, he will know that the cut-off organ is not a part of his concrete being (*huwiyyatihi*) and his essence/self (*dātīhi*), of which he is aware.<sup>102</sup>

This argument is clearly based on introspection, and it is designed to prove the immateriality of the soul. One infers from the continuous awareness of oneself, despite any changes in their body, that the object of self-awareness is distinct from the body. This is not just primary knowledge anymore. Abū l-Barakāt clearly labels it as knowledge based on inquiry (*naẓar*), since it involves experimentation and observation. So, how does it square with the above statement that introspection only delivers primary knowledge of the existence of the soul? Unfortunately, Abū l-Barakāt does not explain. He leaves the issue at this, just repeats that any knowledge beyond knowing about our thatness (*anniyya*) and concrete being (*huwiyya*) must be based on demonstration and refers to the subsequent discussion of the third-person proofs.<sup>103</sup> As we are about to see, later philosophers took a different approach. They picked out this last argument from the introspective personal identity as *the* argument for the immateriality of the soul.

### 2.3 *Al-Rāzī*

Having discussed kalām, al-Ġazālī, and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baġdādī, we are finally ready to return to the author with whom I started this paper, Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

Being a systematic thinker, al-Rāzī suggests three main ways of determining what the human being is:

- (1) a human just is the whole body, that is the corporeal composite (*binya*)
- (2) a human is something corporeal residing inside the human body

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<sup>100</sup> See further BENEVICH, “Perceiving Things in Themselves.”

<sup>101</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, p. 367,6.

<sup>102</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, p. 306,11–15.

<sup>103</sup> ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, p. 306,17–18.

(3) a human is an incorporeal substance.<sup>104</sup>

Al-Rāzī seems to accept each of these three positions at least in some of his works.<sup>105</sup> For instance, in his *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*, al-Rāzī appears to accept the kalām view that humans are identical with their corporeal composites.<sup>106</sup> In the *Arba ‘īn*, *Muḥaṣṣal*, and *Ma ‘ālim*, al-Rāzī says that the traditional kalām view is the weakest, and seems to accept instead the second view that the human is something corporeal inside the visible organic structure.<sup>107</sup> Finally, in his *Mabāḥiṭ* and *Maṭālib*, al-Rāzī appears to agree with the position of the *falāsifa* that the human soul is an incorporeal substance.<sup>108</sup>

Al-Rāzī provides a series of arguments in favour of each of the three positions. The same arguments reappear from one treatise to another, sometimes changing their form, sometimes changing their dialectical application. Al-Rāzī manages to achieve different results in different treatises through these changes, without adding any new substantial arguments. The *Maṭālib* is the culmination of this dialectical exercise. The total number of arguments discussed in its section dedicated to substance dualism and physicalism reaches almost fifty. I cannot go into the details of all these arguments since one could (and should) write a monograph about them. Instead, in what follows, I want to focus on the main characteristics of al-Rāzī’s reasoning about the nature of human beings and their souls throughout his different treatises with a special attention to the question of the third-person view and introspection.

There is no doubt that introspection becomes the preferred method in al-Rāzī’s analysis. Possibly following Abū l-Barakāt, al-Rāzī starts his analysis by pointing out that what we refer to as ‘I’ is self-evident and does not require any proof of its existence. Yet we need an inquiry into *what* the referent of the ‘I’ is.<sup>109</sup> We need a demonstration as to whether a negative attribute of not being space-occupying applies to the referent of ‘I’.<sup>110</sup> Yet unlike Abū l-Barakāt, al-Rāzī does not reduce his usage of introspection to establishing the existence of the referent of ‘I’. For al-Rāzī, introspection is *the* basis of three most important arguments for him: the Flying Man argument; the personal identity argument; and the unity of

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<sup>104</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 35,8–9; FAḤR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, *al-Arba ‘īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. A. AL-Ḥ. AL-SAQQĀ, 2 vols, Cairo 1986, vol. 2, p. 18. Cf. previous taxonomies in ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, *Mu‘tabar*, vol. 2, pp. 355,10–356,6 and IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, pp. 373,12–374,3.

<sup>105</sup> On the nature and consistency of al-Rāzī’s works see, F. GRIFFEL, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam*, Oxford 2021.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Rāzī dismisses all arguments in favour of (3), does not discuss (2) and does not reject the argument in favour of (1); see FAḤR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, ed. S. ‘A. FŪDA, 4 vols, Beirut 2015, vol. 4, pp. 48–80.

<sup>107</sup> Al-Rāzī rejects (1), dismisses all arguments in favour of (3), but does not dismiss (2); see AL-RĀZĪ, *Arba ‘īn*, vol. 2, pp. n18–31; FAḤR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-muta‘aḥḥirīn min al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-ḥukamā’ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Ḥ. ATAY, Cairo 1991, pp. 223–225; *Ma ‘ālim*, ed. as *As‘ila Naḡm al-Dīn al-Kātibī ‘an al-Ma ‘ālim li-Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī ma ‘a ta ‘ālīq ‘Izz al-Dawla b. Kammūna* by S. SCHMIDTKE and R. POURJAVADI, Tehran 2007, pp. 107–109. M. MARMURA, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Critique of an Avicennan Tanbīh,” in: B. MOJSISCH and O. PLUTA (eds.) *Historia philosophiae medii aevi. Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia 1991, pp. 630–631 suggests that this view is *the* doctrine of al-Rāzī, for which I do not see sufficient evidence.

<sup>108</sup> In both treatises al-Rāzī denies the traditional arguments in favour of (3) but accepts his own arguments in its favour; see *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, pp. 359–392 and *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 35–127.

<sup>109</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 39,9–11; cf. FAḤR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, *Mulaḥḥaṣ*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, ms. or. oct. 623., fol. 234v19–21.

<sup>110</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 41,16–18.

perception argument.<sup>111</sup> Al-Rāzī consistently calls these three arguments “strong” and those that one should rely on, unlike the list of the traditional third-person arguments, which he consistently rejects.<sup>112</sup>

The Flying Man is formulated by al-Rāzī as follows:

What each of us refers to as ‘I’ may be known while he is unaware of any observable and inner parts [of his body]. That which is known is distinct from that which is unknown. Therefore, the soul must be distinct from any of these observable and inner parts. The first point can be shown by the fact that when a human is very focused, he may still say “I thought,” “I saw,” and “I heard,” even if he is unaware of his face, his heart, his brain, and his other organs while he is saying it. This shows what we mentioned. The second point, that is, that the known is distinct from that which escapes our awareness, is self-evident.<sup>113</sup>

This is not literally identical to Avicenna’s Flying Man argument (there is no thought experiment here), but the main idea remains the same. We abandon any kind of observation of the outer world, including our own body, and notice that there still be a proper phenomenal object of our private mental world, which we call ‘I’. In his *Šarḥ al-Išārāt*, al-Rāzī explicitly says that this is the main simple idea of the Flying Man argument and complains that Avicenna overcomplicated it.<sup>114</sup> Al-Rāzī never rejects his own version of the Flying Man argument, so far as I know.<sup>115</sup>

The second main argument is based on the preservation of personal identity across time:

The parts of this body are subject to change, whereas whatever each of us refers to as ‘I’ is not subject to change. So, it follows that this body is not identical to the referent of ‘I’.<sup>116</sup>

Al-Rāzī supports personal identity across time with further arguments.<sup>117</sup> First, I know necessarily (*bi-l-ḍarūra*) that I am the same person that I was twenty years ago. Second, if I were a different person, I would not have that knowledge that I acquired twenty years ago. Finally, if the person twenty years ago would not be me, then I would not know the past states (*bi-aḥwālihi al-māḍiyya*) of that person. But I do know them, therefore I am the same person.

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<sup>111</sup> Al-Rāzī provides these arguments against the kalām position (1) in *Ma‘ālim, Arba‘īn*, and *Muḥaṣṣal*, while in *Mabāḥiṭ* and *Maṭālib* they are supposed to support (3). This way al-Rāzī manages to accept these arguments consistently while coming to different overall conclusions.

<sup>112</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 101,3; FAḤR al-DĪN al-RĀZĪ, *al-Mabāḥiṭ al-mašriqiyya fī ‘ilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabī‘iyyāt*, ed. M. AL-M. AL-BAĠDĀDĪ, 2 vols, Beirut 1990, vol. 2, p. 378,19.

<sup>113</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 105,3–11; cf. *Ma‘ālim*, p. 107,3–6; *Muḥaṣṣal*, p. 224,1–2; *Arba‘īn*, vol. 2, 24,7–10; *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, p. 388,13–14; *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*, vol. 4, p. 59,3–5; *Kitāb al-naḥs wa-l-rūḥ wa-šarḥ qūwāhumā*, ed. M. MAS‘ŪMĪ, Islamabad 1968, pp. 34–37 (with a defence of the Flying Man); p. 40,4–11.

<sup>114</sup> FAḤR al-DĪN al-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ al-Išārāt*, ed. ‘A. R. NAĠĀFZĀDA, 2 vols, Tehran 2005, vol. 2, p. 209,8–10.

<sup>115</sup> Note that M. Z. TIRYAKI, “The Flightless Man: Self-Awareness in Fakhr al-Din al-Razi,” in: *Nazariyat* 6.1 (2020), pp. 1–39 argues that al-Rāzī is ready to accept the Flying Man only for proving the immateriality of the self, not of the soul. Unfortunately, Tiryaki does not provide any compelling evidence for the distinction between the self and the soul in al-Rāzī.

<sup>116</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 101,4–6; cf. *Ma‘ālim*, p. 107,6–11; *Muḥaṣṣal*, p. 223,11–12; *Arba‘īn*, vol. 2, pp. 18,13–24,6; *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, pp. 387,19–388,10 (in *Mabāḥiṭ*, it is put together with the Flying Man reasoning).

<sup>117</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 102,12–103,7.

Once again, the first-person view plays a crucial role in this argument. How do I know that I am the same person that existed twenty years ago? I can only know it through the observation of my private mental world and finding it to be continuous with the mental world of the man twenty years ago. This first-person approach is radically different from the argument suggested by the proponents of the identity of the soul with body. According to them, in al-Rāzī's report, the only way to learn about the identity of a person across time is by the third-person observation of the identity of his body.<sup>118</sup> Al-Rāzī explicitly gives preference to the introspective way of establishing personal identity across time by saying that our knowledge of other people is subject to unjustified beliefs and confusion, whereas our knowledge of ourselves is self-evident and cannot go wrong.<sup>119</sup> Elsewhere, al-Rāzī adds that nothing would prevent God from creating a human looking just like me, but it won't be me.<sup>120</sup> Finally, in his *Mulahḥaṣ*, al-Rāzī explicitly distinguishes between the first-person and the third person views: "That which each of us indicates by saying 'I' is different from that which each of us indicates by saying 'he'."<sup>121</sup> Al-Rāzī argues that, against the common conception, the third-person observation is an unreliable way to identify people. When I see a person that looks just like Zayd, I cannot be sure whether it is Zayd himself or not. According to al-Rāzī, the third-person observation provides us with access to the external attributes of the person alone, which it can share with others (*al-qadar al-muštarak*) not the person himself as such (*min haytu huwa huwa*). The only way for the person to know himself and to identify himself across time is through introspection.

The issue of the preservation of personal identity across time was known to kalām long before al-Rāzī. The typical solution to the problem was to allude to some "fundamental elements" (*ağzā' aṣliyya*) which remain unchanged throughout the whole life of the human being. We can find this solution in the Mu'tazilite sources and al-Ġazālī.<sup>122</sup> Al-Rāzī himself adheres to this solution to the problem of personal identity across time in at least two of his treatises.<sup>123</sup> However, in other treatises, al-Rāzī denies this solution. His main argument there is that there is no reason why some parts of our bodies would persist while others dissolve. After all, they all share the same corporeal nature, and it is common to whatever is corporeal to be subject to change and corruption. Even God Himself would not be able to explain why He made some parts of our body subject to corruption while others not. Therefore, it must be something essentially non-corporeal that persists over time.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>118</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, p. 390,1–5; *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 46,8–20; cf. IBN MATTAWAYH, *Mağmū'*, vol. 2, pp. 247,21–248,2. Abū l-Barakāt distinguishes between the first-person and third-person knowledge of a human being as well, according to Benevich, "Meaning and Definition," p. 99.

<sup>119</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Šarḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, vol. 1, pp. 71,24–72,2.

<sup>120</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, p. 391,2–5.

<sup>121</sup> FAḤR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ, *Manṭiq al-Mulahḥaṣ*, ed. A. QARĀMALKĪ and A. AŞGARĪNİZĀD, Tehran 2003, p. 32,7–8.

<sup>122</sup> IBN AL-MALĀHIMĪ, *Tuḥfa*, p. 166,22; IBN MATTAWAYH, *Taḍkira*, vol. 2, p. 376,11–12; AL-ĠAZĀLĪ, *Tahāfut*, 197,7–10. See further HEEMSKERK, "'Abd al-Jabbār on Body, Soul and Resurrection."

<sup>123</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, vol. 4, p. 75,8–10; *Mulahḥaṣ*, fol. 234r9–11. In the *Arba'īn*, vol. 2, p. 27,1–9, the theory is ascribed to the *muḥaqqiqīn min al-mutakallimīn*, which might indicate a positive stance towards it.

<sup>124</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 103,13–104,2; cf. *Kitāb al-naḥs*, pp. 38,6–40,3. Note the inconsistency between al-Rāzī's treatises. In the referred passage, al-Rāzī denies the arguments which he accepts in the *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, vol. 4, pp. 75,11–76,7 as well as the position that the soul is identical to a corporeal luminous (*nūrānī*) substance, which he seems to accept in the *Ma'ālim*, 108.20–21. Elsewhere, this position is ascribed to Plutarch

The third main argument discussed by al-Rāzī is the unity of perception.<sup>125</sup> The argument basically states that the subject of all kinds of perceptions (both of universals and of material particulars) and of actions must be one and the same.<sup>126</sup> There are two ways to go from here. One way (possibly going back to the early kalām-scholar al-Nazzām) is from the third-person view. Al-Rāzī says that we cannot find any organ that could be responsible for all these kinds of perceptions and actions. Therefore, the subject of perception needs to be distinct from our organic body.<sup>127</sup> However, this way is problematic. The unity of perception by itself does not involve substance dualism. The unity of perception was the stumbling block in the debate between the Mu‘tazilites and the Aš‘arites, and the Mu‘tazilites perfectly managed to uphold a theory of the unity of perception while remaining physicalists.<sup>128</sup> We will see further that al-Rāzī himself provides an argument on behalf of physicalists, which states that all kinds of perceptions and actions belong to the body. To avoid this, al-Rāzī introduces introspection into the unity of perception argument. He argues that if all kinds of perceptions and actions belonged to our body or something inside our body, whenever we said: “I felt” or “I heard,” we would refer to our body or a part of our body, say, brain. However, we are perfectly capable of conceiving of “I felt” and “I heard” while having no idea about anything in our body. Therefore, the referent of ‘I’, the subject of all kinds of perception and actions, must be distinct from the body or anything inside it.<sup>129</sup> Once again, having our own mental world independent from any kind of outer observations is crucial for this argument. If there were no way to conceive of ourselves and our mental states without the body, al-Rāzī would never be able to rule out that the unified subject of all kinds of perceptions is some specific organ in our body.

Generally, al-Rāzī is not very enthusiastic about the traditional third-person arguments. He follows in al-Ġazālī and Abū l-Barakāt’s footsteps by providing long lists of third-person arguments in favour of substance dualism and refuting all of them (most of those arguments and counter-arguments are just borrowed from al-Ġazālī’s and Abū l-Barakāt’s lists).<sup>130</sup> For instance, the refutation of Avicenna’s affinity argument from indivisibility of the

(*Arba‘īn*, vol. 2, p. 24,13) and equally denied (p. 25,13–14). It might be that al-Rāzī distances himself from this argument in the *Maṭālib* since he introduces it by saying: “the *falāsifa* refute [...]” (p. 104,11).

<sup>125</sup> The unity of experience is already an issue in Avicenna: see further KAUUKUA, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 64–75.

<sup>126</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Ma‘ālim*, pp. 107,11–108,3; *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, p. 388,20–22; *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 113–116. Al-Rāzī inherits the issue of the unified subject of all kinds of perception from Abū l-Barakāt; see further BENEVICH, “Perceiving Things in Themselves,” 261–262.

<sup>127</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 117,6–7; *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, p. 389,1–6; *Ma‘ālim*, p. 108,3–5; *Kitāb al-naḥs*, pp. 27–33. Cf. Nazzām’s argument in J. VAN ESS, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, vol. 6. Berlin/New York 1995, p. 116 (no. 138).

<sup>128</sup> IBN MATTAWAYH, *Maġmū‘*, vol. 2, pp. 245,12–246,7; IBN AL-MALĀHIMĪ, *Tuḥfa*, p. 162,20–22; see further SHIHADDEH, “Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology.”

<sup>129</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 117,9–23; *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, p. 389,11–19.

<sup>130</sup> For a discussion of these arguments, see further J. JANSSENS, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Soul: A Critical Approach to Ibn Sīnā,” in: *The Muslim World* 102 (2012), pp. 562–579 and M. F. ATTAR, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Human Soul: A Study of the Psychology Section of al-Mabāḥiṭ al-mašriqiyya fī ‘ilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabī‘iyyāt*, Unpublished MA Thesis at McGill University, Montreal 2014. Note that the argument from self-awareness, which al-Rāzī refers to Avicenna’s *Mubāḥaṭāt* (*Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, pp. 366–367), is also a third-person argument based on the *act* of self-awareness, not the *content* of self-awareness, just like al-Ġazālī’s argument (5).

objects of intellection is one of al-Rāzī favourite topics.<sup>131</sup> Even Abū l-Barakāt's new third-person argument from the size of the objects of perception and imagination, which Abū l-Barakāt claimed to have inherited from Plato, gets rejected as well, ironically based on Abū l-Barakāt's own argumentation that perception is a relation, not the inherence of the object of perception in the perceiver (hence, the problem of size of the perceived does not arise).<sup>132</sup>

Unlike Abū l-Barakāt and al-Ġazālī, al-Rāzī also goes through a list of arguments in favour of the traditional kalām identification of humans with their bodies. Most of these arguments do indeed look like the traditional third-person arguments of kalām. For instance, al-Rāzī refers to the argument based on natural language usage, saying that whenever we are asked what is a human, we reply by pointing to a specific corporeal composition (*al-binya al-mahṣūsa*).<sup>133</sup> Al-Rāzī also knows about the argument from the intuitive ascription of moral responsibility to human bodies, discussed in the first section of this paper.<sup>134</sup>

One of the main arguments that al-Rāzī provides on behalf of those who identify humans with their bodies does not have a direct correspondence in the Mu'tazilite treatises that we discussed above.<sup>135</sup> Still, it remains truly in the third-person spirit of kalām. Al-Rāzī argues that it is evident to any observer that our bodies are the subject of sense-perception, perceiving pain and pleasure etc. To know this, one just needs to put their hand into the fire. Apart from that, al-Rāzī also argues that our body is by implication the subject of the perception of universal essences: material particulars, which our body perceives, are composed of universal essences.<sup>136</sup> Therefore whoever perceives material particulars, perceives universal essences as well. Finally, our body is also the subject of all our actions, since our actions depend on whatever we perceive, and we have already established that the latter happens through the body. Thus, our body is the subject of all kinds of perceptions and actions. But the human being is the one that we describe as the subject of all those kinds of actions. Thus, the human being just is the body.

In addition to these purely third-person arguments, al-Rāzī develops a series of arguments on behalf of the physicalists that are based on introspection. Here is one of them:

1. Our knowledge of the attributes of our souls/selves is self-evident.
2. Therefore, our knowledge of ourselves must be self-evident.
3. The only self-evident thing is our body (the existence of the immaterial soul is not self-evident).
4. Therefore, our soul/self is identical with our body.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>131</sup> E.g. AL-RĀZĪ, *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, pp. 360–366; *Arba 'in*, vol. 2, pp. 28–31; *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 57–68; *Ma 'ālim*, p. 109,5–6.

<sup>132</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 86,20–89,12; *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, pp. 384,14–385,21; on Abū l-Barakāt's refutation of the inherence theory of perception, see BENEVICH, "Perceiving Things in Themselves," 236–239.

<sup>133</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 56,5–7.

<sup>134</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 56,8–14.

<sup>135</sup> The following reconstruction is based on AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 40,12–45,3; *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, vol. 4, pp. 79,10–80,2; *Muḥaṣṣal*, pp. 225,4–226,1; *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol. 2, p. 389,21–25.

<sup>136</sup> Al-Rāzī works here with the Avicennian ways of speaking of essences as constituent parts of material individuals.

<sup>137</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 43,16–45,6.

This argument clearly is al-Rāzī's own version of 'Abd al-Ġabbār's argument that I discussed in the first section of this paper. The core idea is that the direct observability of our actions implies direct access to the subject of those actions. But the only self-evident thing that we have is our body. We know about the existence of the immaterial soul only through complicated philosophical proofs. Therefore, the self-evident subject of all those actions must be our body.

Interestingly, al-Rāzī's variant of 'Abd al-Ġabbār's argument does make use of introspection into the private mental world. Al-Rāzī says: "I necessarily know that I observed, I heard, I said ..."<sup>138</sup> Al-Rāzī's argument obviously treats those actions as the objects of first-person phenomenal awareness. In another version of the argument, al-Rāzī completely omits any mention of actions ascribed to ourselves and just states that "each of us knows his specific self, which is distinct from anyone else, in a necessary way," unlike the immaterial soul which one does not know in a necessary way.<sup>139</sup> In other words, al-Rāzī formulates 'Abd al-Ġabbār's argument in a way that makes it look precisely like Vasalou's interpretation of that argument. We move from the necessity of self-awareness and the immediate first-person phenomenal experience of our actions and passions, which we find through introspection, to the conclusion that the subject of all phenomenal mental states must be necessarily self-evident as well, with our bodies being the only candidate able to satisfy this condition.

The move from introspection to the body becomes even more prominent in another argument that al-Rāzī suggests on behalf of the physicalists:

1. I refer to my soul/self whenever I say: "I saw," "I tasted," "I heard," "I went to the marketplace" etc.
2. All those actions obviously belong to the corporeal composite (*binya*).
3. Therefore, my soul/self is identical to the corporeal composite.<sup>140</sup>

This argument clearly starts with introspection. It starts with the observation that we ascribe all our actions to the immediate object of private self-awareness, whatever each of us calls "I." Al-Rāzī even uses the linguistic analysis that we saw before in Abū l-Barakāt's presentation of introspection to support it. He explains that the Arabic ending *-tu* in the first-person verbs must refer to ourselves, that is, to our souls.<sup>141</sup> To this, al-Rāzī's dialectical opponent objects that this might be a matter of linguistic convention. When we say "I came home," we mean "My body came home." Hence, whether my 'self' is an immaterial entity or not remains open. Al-Rāzī disagrees (on behalf of the physicalists). He says that everyone in his sound mind who says "I came home" means that *he himself*, that is the object of his private self-awareness, is the one who came home.<sup>142</sup> So, given that the action of coming home obviously belongs to my body, I must conclude that I am just identical to my body.

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<sup>138</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 44.4–5.

<sup>139</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Mulaḥḥaṣ*, fol. 234v5–7.

<sup>140</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, pp. 47,6–48,9 and 45,7–46,6 (representing more or less the same kind of argument).

<sup>141</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 47,13–14.

<sup>142</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Maṭālib*, vol. 7, p. 45,19–23.



However, as Vasalou rightly observed, the transition from the introspection of our inner selves to our bodies is problematic. Al-Rāzī thinks so as well. In his response to the argument, he goes back to Abū l-Barakāt’s point. The self-evidence of our knowledge of ourselves (and of all those actions that we ascribe to ourselves with the first-person pronouns and forms of verbs) only indicates the *existence* of our souls. We know that there must be a subject of “I came home.” But this says nothing about *what* this subject is, whether it is material or immaterial.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the core of the argument must be in the second, observational, premise that those actions obviously belong to our bodies. But this is far from obvious. As al-Rāzī replies to the third-person unity of perception argument quoted above (the one that claims that all perception, intellection, and action belongs to the body), we can still argue that the body is just the place where for instance perception of taste happens, while the real perceiver is the immaterial soul, the subject of the first-person reference.<sup>144</sup> In other words, we should distinguish between the phenomenal experience of our actions and their externally observable correlates. The phenomenal feeling of perception, with which al-Rāzī’s version of ‘Abd al-Ġabbār’s arguments starts, may still belong to the immaterial soul, whereas the physical process of perception happens in the organ of perception. The same should apply to “I came home.” It may mean “My immaterial soul came home by using my body.” Thus, it is impossible to prove the materiality of the soul based on the introspection arguments.

To sum up, al-Rāzī’s discussion of substance dualism and physicalism shows clear tendencies in the direction of introspection, away from the third-person view. His three main preferred arguments against the physicalism of kalām are all based on introspection. Moreover, his own interpretation of the reasoning of kalām sometimes tends in the direction of introspection, although al-Rāzī agrees that introspection does not make that reasoning any stronger. In any case, al-Rāzī is largely sceptical of any kind of third-person reasoning, whether it is in support of substance dualism or physicalism.

### *Conclusion*

In this paper, I have described the fate of two main methods in Arabic-Islamic philosophy of mind, the first-person and the third-person views. The third-person view is a method fully based on observable actions, attribute, and behaviours. We find that humans see, talk, feel pain, conceive of intelligibles, and so on, and we try to find out whether all these actions and attributes can be attributed to human bodies, or we need to postulate an immaterial entity beyond their bodies, a suitable subject of all those actions and observations. Alternatively, we can start from ourselves. We look at ourselves and we ask: “What is that thing to which I refer as myself? Can I conceive of it without thinking of anything outer? Can I attribute mental states to it while obliterating the idea of my body and its sense-organs?” This first-person methodology is called “introspection.”

<sup>143</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Mulaḥḥaṣ*, fol. 234v19–21.

<sup>144</sup> AL-RĀZĪ, *Mabāḥiṭ*, vol.2, p. 390,20–25. This should be part of al-Rāzī’s general agreement with Abū l-Barakāt that the subject of all kinds of perception is the self, not the organs.

I have argued that the third-person view was the main method that the traditional scholars of kalām apply in their inquiry into the nature of human beings. That may very well explain by itself why physicalism is the dominant doctrine in their philosophy of mind. However, after kalām meets Avicennism in the eleventh century, the situation changes. Avicennist dualism contains both observational and introspective ways of analysing human nature. As I showed, most post-Avicennian authors reject the third-person elements of Avicennian philosophy of mind (the rejection of the affinity argument from intellection of indivisible universals being only the paradigm example). However, the Avicennian method of introspection has more success. After a preparation in al-Ġazālī and Abū l-Barakāt, it becomes the preferred method in philosophy of mind for al-Rāzī. Al-Rāzī believes that introspection is the best way to know whether there is something that we call “soul” and what it is.

To complete this picture, I would like to mention the most radical example of the use of introspection in post-Avicennian philosophy, al-Suhrawardī. Suhrawardī’s insistence on the importance of the notion of self-awareness has been well-established in the scholarship and does not require any further evidence.<sup>145</sup> It suffices to say that al-Suhrawardī based his whole metaphysics of illumination on the notion of self-awareness.<sup>146</sup> Speaking of our own topic for this paper, al-Suhrawardī clearly endorses substance dualism based on the acceptance of the Flying Man argument.<sup>147</sup> Likewise, for the argument from personal identity over time, al-Suhrawardī clearly endorses the same view as al-Rāzī. He agrees that the argument from introspection of personal identity is the strongest argument in favour of substance dualism and it replaces all problematic third-person arguments, such as the affinity argument from the intellection of indivisible universals.<sup>148</sup> With al-Suhrawardī, the method of introspection reaches its utmost success in the formative period of post-Avicennian philosophy. As the dominant reliance on the third-person view explains the physicalism of kalām, so the reliance on introspection may by itself explain the success of substance dualism in Suhrawardīan philosophy. However, whether the success of introspection was complete, or the later generations of Arabic philosophers turned back to third-person observation remains a question for further study.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> E.g., H. ZIAI, *Knowledge and Illumination*, Atlanta 1990, pp. 147–155; KAUKUA, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, 104–161.

<sup>146</sup> See e.g., ŠIHĀB AL-DĪN AL-SUHRAWARDĪ, *Ḥikmat al-išrāq*, ed. and transl. J. WALBRIDGE and H. ZIAI, Provo 199, pp. 79–83 (§§ 114–120).

<sup>147</sup> KAUKUA, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 106–113.

<sup>148</sup> ŠIHĀB AL-DĪN AL-SUHRAWARDĪ, *al-Mašāri’ wa-l-mutārāḥāt, al-Ṭabī’iyyāt*, ed. N. ḤABĪBĪ, Tehran 2015, p. 320,14.

<sup>149</sup> I am grateful to Peter Adamson, Guy Guldentops and the anonymous reviewers for their extremely helpful commentaries on the earlier drafts of this paper.