



## Self-Knowledge and Avicenna's Floating Man Thought Experiment

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### Abstract

Original Research



Avicenna's floating man thought experiment has been examined and criticized for over a thousand years from various philosophical perspectives. While traditional and modern criticisms exist, the latter primarily focus on the confusion between epistemology and ontology. The ontological dimensions have received significant attention, but the epistemological aspects remain underexplored. I propose a modern critique suggesting that if valid, the thought experiment may not support substance dualism. However, some modest versions could bolster modest dualism, which posits that mental properties are distinct from physical ones, without adhering to Cartesian concepts. I present seven versions of the thought experiment. The first differs from Avicenna's original and focuses on the individuation of self and body, but is vulnerable to modern critiques due to its conflation of ontological and epistemic aspects. The remaining six versions avoid this issue and do not assert that the mind is an immaterial substance. The second version examines epistemic differences between basic self-knowledge and knowledge of the body. The third addresses self-referential and self-verifying aspects of self-knowledge. The fourth explores modal properties, while the fifth highlights the self's necessary relationship to self-knowledge. The sixth emphasizes the environmental neutrality of basic self-knowledge, and the final version utilizes the self as a critical reasoner. I also support and revise these six versions with eleven general remarks.

### Keywords

axioms, intersubjective, validation, intuitive, knowledge-by-presence, Mullā Ṣadrā.

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## Introduction

Rationalists have tried to approach rational reflections about the self and self-knowledge. Whether we agree with rationalism or not, the main epistemic considerations are worth discussing. Rationalists typically try to gain knowledge of the mind and world through (mostly a priori) reasoning. Avicenna was a medieval example of such a view. I will discuss epistemological aspects of his floating man thought experiment and distinguish its defensible elements from its problematic ones.

### The Self and Self-Knowledge

Some entities, like humans, are intuitively persons and can have or be selves. They can be capable of being sentient, rational, and moral, because they are constitutively (or essentially) persons and would have or be selves. How can persons and selves be individuated? What are the fundamental features of selves that make them selves? What kind of properties can make the selves what they actually are? I think that self-knowledge, and epistemic and modal aspects of the notion or concept of *self*, will help us in clarifying the questions. I will clarify the objective conditions under which selves persist and are distinguished from one another. I hope our epistemic access to *self-knowledge* and the concept of *self* may yield results of substantial philosophical interest.

Contemporary philosophy of mind and epistemology has gradually turned to basic self-knowledge. Tyler Burge, for example, has written several articles about self and self-knowledge. They are highly intuitive and have the distinctive flavor of a rationalist position. He states: “The rationalist tradition, in its emphasis on the role of self-knowledge in rationality, and the role of understanding (not sensory observation) in self-knowledge, is the source of my view” (Burge, 1996, p. 78).

Such a *rationalist tradition* was well manifested in Avicenna’s epistemology. He, as a rationalist philosopher, has provided a novel *floating or flying man* thought experiment<sup>1</sup> in favor of the separation of the self and body. He has also offered some other arguments in defense of his substance dualism. Here, I will just focus on his floating man argument, because it is clearly relevant to self-knowledge. Avicenna states:

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1. I do not assume that Avicenna has presented the *floating man* merely as a reminder or pointer. I consider it a (correct or incorrect) argument or demonstration. Several philosophers in the past, such as Fakhr Razi and many others, have also considered it a serious argument.

Then, we say: one of us should believe/suppose himself so that he is created all at once and created completely and perfect, but his eyes are veiled from observing anything external, and he is created floating in the air or in a vacuum so that the resistance of the air does not hit him – any hit he would have to sense – and that his limbs are separated from each other so that they do not meet or touch each other. Then, he must reflect as to whether he affirms the existence of his self. He will not doubt in affirming that his self exists, but he will not thereby affirm any of his limbs, any of his internal organs, the heart or the brain, or any external thing. If it is said “temperament is what he is aware of”. Then the answer is: “temperament cannot be apprehended except by passion/passivity. And if there is a passivity, the temperament is different from the passive soul which apprehend the passivity.” Rather, he will affirm his self without affirming its length, breadth or depth. If it were possible for him in that state to imagine a hand or some other limb, he would not imagine it as part of his self or a condition in his self. You know that what is affirmed is different from what is not affirmed and what is confirmed is different from what is not confirmed. Hence the self whose existence he has affirmed is specific to him in that it is he himself, different from his body and limbs which he has not affirmed. Thus, he who takes heed has the means to take heed of the existence of the soul as something different from the body – indeed, as different from any body – and to know and be aware of it (Ibn Sīna, 1959, pp.15.17).

I can formulate his argument as follows:

1. In such an imaginary situation, the floating man knows that his self exists.
2. But in the situation, the floating man does not know that his body or any part of it exists.
3. His self is the object of his knowledge, while his body is not known to him.
4. The self has a property (the property of being the object of knowing), while the body does not possess such a property.
5. What is known is different from what is not known (or in other words, a known object is different from an unknown object).

Hence, the self or soul is not identical with the body or any part of the body.

Here, I do not discuss the modern criticism<sup>1</sup> that Avicenna has mixed two

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1. See, for some contemporary discussions: Pines, S. (1954). La Conception de la Conscience de Soi chez Avicenne et chez Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 21, 21–98; Marmura, M. (1986). Avicenna's 'flying man' in context. *Monist*, 69, 383–

different epistemological and ontological aspects. Many have claimed that the first and second premises are about epistemological matters (the man *knows* something and *does not know* something), but the conclusion is about an ontological matter. As a result, this would be a fallacy. We cannot apply Leibniz's principle (Identity of Indiscernibles and Indiscernibility of Identicals) in *intensional* contexts (in which there is a verb like *know*, *believe*, and so on). If I *know* that Burge is the author of *Individualism and the Mental* and I *do not know* that he is the author of *Origins of Objectivity*, I cannot conclude that the author of the paper *is not* the author of the book. The floating man knows that his self exists while he does not know that his body exists. But this cannot be a good reason for concluding that the self or soul would ontologically be distinct from the body.

Although many have claimed that his thought experiment (and the argument that is part of the thought experiment) can neither successfully reject mind-body materialism nor approve substance dualism, I will try to revise it in such a way that it can be insightful for understanding the self and self-knowledge. My new arguments, suggested by the floating man thought experiment, do not presuppose or establish any kind of substance dualism. However, they can support an epistemological framework for understanding self-knowledge and a new form of modest dualism.

## **The Floating Man and Basic Self-Knowledge**

### **The First Version (Individuation Condition Argument)**

I think that I can offer a new version of the floating man argument here:

1. In such an imaginary scenario, the floating man knows that his self exists.
2. In such an imaginary scenario, he does not perceive (see, touch, and so on) anything, including his body.
3. By 2, in order to know that he (or his self) exists, he does not perceive or does not need to perceive his self.

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396; Druart, A. (1988). The soul and body problem: Avicenna and Descartes. In A. T. Druart (Ed.), *Arabic philosophy and the west* (pp. 27-48). . Georgetown University Press; Hasse, D. (2000). *Avicenna's de anima in the Latin West*. Warburg Institute; Hasnawi, A. (1997). La conscience de soi chez Avicenne et Descartes. In J. Biard & R. Rashed (Eds.), *Descartes et le moyen age* (pp. 283-291). Vrin; Sorabji, R. (2006). *Self*. University of Chicago Press; Black, D. L. (2008). Avicenna on self-awareness and knowing that one knows. In S. Rahman, T. Street & H. Tahriri (Eds.), *The unity of science in the Arabic tradition* (pp. 63-87); Alwishah, A. (2013). Ibn Sīnā on floating man arguments. *Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, 9, 32-53; Kaukua, J. (2015). Self-awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and beyond. Cambridge University Press.

4. He does not perceive his body and does not know that his body exists.
5. His knowledge of his self is infallible.
6. Perception is essentially fallible.
7. If some knowledge is infallible and some perception is fallible, then knowledge and perception have different natures (something that is fallible is different from something that is not).
8. By 5, 6 & 7, his knowledge of his self and his perception of his body have different natures.
9. Although he cannot perceive anything, he can have and has a knowledge of his self (he can think of himself as a being different from others and know that he exists).
10. By 9, he can individuate his self.
11. Given that the floating man cannot perceive his body and lacks any other source of knowledge about his body, he cannot individuate it.
12. While he cannot perceive his body, he cannot individuate it.
13. His self and body have different individuation conditions.
14. When two entities, like *A* and *B*, have different individuation conditions, they cannot be identical.
15. Hence, his self and body would not be identical.

A materialist need not reject the first ten premises. The three final premises (11, 12 & 13) would probably be controversial. I think that a materialist can easily reject premise 11 in the following way: the mere fact that an entity (his body) cannot be perceivable to him does not entail that his body is not perceivable at all. The floating man cannot perceive his body. But some others can perceive it. Although in the imaginary situation, he cannot individuate his body, some others can. The individuation conditions of an entity cannot be determined merely by a single person's abilities or inabilities, much less by an isolated person like the floating man. Hence, 11 would not entail or support 12.

Let me suppose an Avicennian would like to support the first version of his thought experiment. Then, such an Avicennian could respond to the above objection. He could claim that we can easily change the original scenario. We can suppose that all persons in the world are floating men and women. Let me call the new scenario FME. Then, all humans would be incapable of perceiving their bodies. Suppose that nobody can see or touch his/her body. Even in such a terrible situation, everybody can know that his/her self exists. If there is no perception, bodies cannot be perceivable or knowable. But while there is no perception in the world, everybody can have knowledge of his/her self. In a situation where there is no perception at all, knowledge of self is possible, while

knowledge of the body is not possible. So the individuation conditions of bodies and selves must be different, and Avicenna can support the three final premises.

The FME scenario is gripping for me. It can be dialectically more powerful than the original scenario. But still, I think that the new version is vulnerable. I believe that a materialist can attack again. A materialist can accept that there could be no perception in the world, and also nobody could perceive their body. But he can say that the mere fact that nobody can know his/her body and everybody can know that his/her self exists does not entail that body and self are two distinct entities. We can suppose that all humans were floating men or women; even so, their self-knowledge does not give them sufficient clarity about the natures of their bodies and selves to justify them in believing that their selves are distinct from their bodies. What the floating men or women in FMS can or cannot know about their selves and their bodies is one issue, while the individuation condition of their bodies and selves is another issue. Hence, the first version would not be convincing and cannot help substance dualism.

### **The Second Version (Epistemic Right Argument)**

Here, I design and offer a second version of the floating man argument. This version may support modest dualism and would not help any sort of substance dualism. Modest dualism is the thesis that mental properties, states, and events are distinct from physical properties, states and events (Burge, 'Modest Dualism' in: *The Waning of Materialism*, ed. Koons & Bealer, 2010, Oxford, p. 249).

The second version would be such:

1. The floating man can know immediately that *his self exists*.
2. His basic self-knowledge in no way needs to be supported by empirical investigation or observation.
3. He has an epistemic right to have such a self-knowledge.
4. His epistemic right rests on the immediacy of 1 & 2.
5. His epistemic right does not depend on any sort of empirical or observational consideration.
6. He does not need to see or observe his body to be able to gain his basic self-knowledge.
7. Basic self-knowledge without any need for observation and empirical investigation is possible.
8. He cannot know that his body exists without appealing to empirical investigation or observation.
9. Knowledge of the body without empirical investigation or observation is not

possible.

10. He does not have an epistemic right to have knowledge of his body without empirical investigation or observation.
11. By 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10, while self-knowledge is possible and epistemically right in the absence of empirical investigation or observation, knowledge of the body is not possible or epistemically right.
12. Hence, basic knowledge of the self and knowledge of the body are epistemically different.

The conclusion of the second version would be modest. It merely shows that in order for body and self to be known and understood, they require different philosophical and scientific approaches. It does not establish that the body and self are two independent substances. However, this sort of epistemic and methodological dichotomy would be important in itself.

### The Third Version (Gap Argument)

In the case of floating man's knowledge (expressible as *I am thinking that I know that my self exists*), the subject matter of his knowledge or thought is necessarily related to the thought he thinks about. There cannot be any gap between his thought and its subject matter. So his thought would be necessarily self-referential and self-verifying. When the man is thinking about his knowledge of his *self*, the cognitive content that he is thinking about is self-referentially fixed by the thought itself. Because there is no gap between his thought and the subject matter of his thought, an error based on such a gap would not be possible. But knowledge of the body is constitutively perceptual. Consequently, there would necessarily be a gap between one's perceptual thoughts about one's own body and the subject matter (perceivable body).

I can offer such an argument:

1. The subject matter of the floating man's thought is his thought.
2. There is no gap between the thought and its subject matter.
3. His thought about his self is self-referential and self-verifying.
4. By 2 & 3, in his case, brute errors about his self are not possible.
5. He cannot perceive his body in this situation (supposition).
6. Knowledge of the body is necessarily perceptual.
7. By 5 & 6, he cannot have knowledge of his body.
8. There is necessarily a gap between perceptual knowledge and its subject matter (a perceivable entity in the world).

9. Even if he can perceive his body, his perceptual knowledge would not be self-referential and self-verifying.
10. By 3, 4, 8 & 9, his self-knowledge is substantially different from his perceptual knowledge of his body.
11. There are two kinds of epistemic access; his epistemic access to his self differs from his epistemic access to his body.

Hence, the self and body have different epistemic values.

As is clear, the third argument does not show that substance dualism is correct. But a materialist who is inclined to support any sort of identity relation between self and body should explain why there would be such epistemic differences. A modest dualist like Burge can easily and consistently accept the epistemic differences between the self and body. Modest dualism does not agree with any kind of identity between mental and physical properties. Thus, according to Burge, the two kinds of epistemic access will be easily acceptable.

#### **The Fourth Version (First-Person Perspective Argument)**

Consider these sentences:

1. The floating man is thinking that *he* knows that his self exists.
2. I (as a floating man) am thinking that *I* know that my self exists.

The second sentence informs us that there is a first-person character (expressible as *I*). The first-person character plays a fundamental role in the epistemic status of the relevant thought or self-knowledge. When I think from a first-person perspective where I know that my self exists, it is not possible that my *self* was not to be existent. It would not be possible that my knowledge of the existence of my self could be mistaken. When I know that I exist, I think necessarily about my self, not any other selves. There is no possibility of fakes, when I know that my self exists. But in the case of my perceptual knowledge of my body, it can be mistaken. I could simply see another body and think that it is my body.

I can offer the following a new version of the floating man argument:

1. When I (as a floating man) know that my self exists, the knowledge is necessarily accessible from my first-person perspective.
2. When I have self-knowledge from a first-person perspective, I cannot be mistaken about the existence of myself.
3. It is impossible that I mistakenly think that another self is myself.



4. Perceptual knowledge of bodies is not necessarily from a first-person perspective.
5. I can mistakenly think that another body is mine.
6. By 5, it is not impossible that I mistakenly think that another body is my body.
7. In the case of knowledge of the body, there is a possibility of fakes.
8. In the case of basic self-knowledge, there is no possibility of fakes.
9. Modal properties and values of the *self* and *body* are different.

Hence, there would have to be a crucial difference between the body and self.

The fourth version does not entail that Cartesian dualism is correct. But it can possibly show why a modest form of dualism will be needed. Modest philosophical claims are less vulnerable. Burge states: "For its justification, basic self-knowledge requires only that one thinks one's thoughts in the self-referential, self-ascriptive manner. It neither requires nor by itself yields a general account for the mental kinds that it specifies." (1988, p. 67) The fourth version does not purport to establish that the floating man's basic self-knowledge may yield a general account of the full nature of bodies and selves. It merely seeks to say that there are some modal differences between the *self* and the *body*. The version may be limited in its ontological implications. It is nonetheless epistemically important. It can clearly highlight the difference between first-person, non-empirical self-knowledge and third-person, empirical knowledge of the body.

The difference would tell us something substantial concerning our intuitions about one of the immediate origins of the epistemic status of *floating-man*-like thoughts. Such *floating-man*-like thoughts are self-evident and self-referential, and the floating man does not need to have any justifying argument. The key to the epistemic status of his thought seems to reside in its immediate first-person character.

### The Fifth Version (Necessity Argument)

Is it possible that floating man thinks that his self does not exist? Suppose that he may think so. Can such a thought be epistemically warranted? It cannot, of course, be warranted in an a priori manner. It is self-contradictory. The same assertion that "he thinks that his self does not exist" establishes that his self exists. If floating man did not exist, he could not think that his self does not exist. He thinks that his self does not exist, so he has to be existent.

Based on the floating man argument, I can offer another version:

1. If I were a floating man and thought that 'I know that my self exists,' my

self would exist.

2. When I think, I must exist.
3. When I exist, my self exists.
4. By 2 & 3, when I would be a floating man and thought that 'I know that my self does not exist,' my self exists.
5. Whether I think that 'I know that my self exists,' or I think that 'I know that my self does not exist,' in both cases, my self does exist.
6. By 5, it is logically impossible for the floating man to know that his self does not exist.
7. When one thinks about one's self, one's self is necessarily existent.
8. By 7, if floating man's self does not exist, he cannot think that he knows that his self exists.
9. By 8, if floating man's self did not exist, he could not think that he knows that his self does not exist (the non-existent cannot think).
10. By 6, 8 & 9, there is a necessary relation between the existence of self and self-knowledge.
11. The existence of an immaterial, bodiless self is logically possible; that is, it does not entail any logical contradiction.
12. By 12, it is logically possible that, though he does not have a body, he thinks that he has a body.
13. It is impossible for someone not to have a self and at the same time think that he has a self.
14. Contrary to 11, there is no necessary relation between the existence of the body and knowledge of the body. Hence, the self and body are different in terms of a necessary/contingent relation to the relevant knowledge.

The necessity argument makes use of broad, well-established metaphysical notions. If premises 12 and 13 can be reasonably acceptable, the argument may help substance dualism. But if the two premises are to be rejected, we should revise the argument in such a way that it can be helpful at least for modest dualists.

### **The Sixth Version (Environmental Neutrality Argument)**

Suppose that the floating man can be switched between different environments unawares. In any environment, no matter how different, he would be epistemically warranted to think that he knows that his self exists. His thought would be self-evidently and self-referentially true in any physical and social environment. His basic self-knowledge is environmentally neutral. Let me ask Avicenna where the environmentally neutral warrant is derived from? He would

probably answer: From the fact that the self or soul is immaterial and independent of the environment. But Burge will answer that:

I think that the relevant entitlement derives not from the reliability of some causal-perceptual relation between cognition and its object. It has two other sources. One is the role of the relevant judgments in critical reasoning. The other is a constitutive relation between the judgments and their subject matter—or between the judgments about one's thoughts and the judgments' being true. All of us, even sceptics among us, recognize a practice of critical reasoning... As a critical reasoner, one not only reason. One recognizes reasons as reasons... Clearly, this requires a second-order ability to think about thought contents or propositions, and rational relations among them. (1996, p. 73)

As is clear, Burge is not trying to support an ontologically and metaphysically strong doctrine here. He starts with a commonly acceptable phenomenon for both camps, that is, critical reasoning. He is reasonably inclined to think that selves are *critical reasoners* (2013, p.180). He does not presuppose or support the radical idea that selves are immaterial substances. The floating man's higher-order thought (expressible as *I am thinking that*) must be essentially connected to his first-order knowledge (expressible as *I know that my self exists*). If the essential connection can be eliminable, critical reasoning would not occur. But the existence of critical reasoning is undeniable. Accepting it, as a common practice, does not entail any materialist or immaterialist thesis. So, Burge's response would be more interesting than Avicenna's dualistic answer.

Now, I can provide a new version of the floating man argument:

1. The floating man knows that his self exists.
2. When he is switched between different environments, he can still have his basic self-knowledge.
3. His basic self-knowledge is warranted in any environment.
4. Floating-man-like self-knowledge is environmentally neutral.
5. The environment fundamentally affects perception.
6. Contrary to 2, when one is switched between different environments, one's perceptual knowledge of one's body will not be capable of surviving such environmental switches.
7. By 5 & 6, perceptual knowledge of the body is not environmentally neutral.

Hence, Floating-man-like self-knowledge differs from knowledge of the body in terms of environmental effects.

### **The Seventh Version (Blindness Argument)**

Imagine that there is a possible world in which nobody can know or perceive his/her body. Everybody would be unable to see or touch bodies. In such a possible world, no one can know that one's self has a body. There would be a fundamental gap between the knowledge of bodies and bodies. There cannot be any essential and non-accidental connection between people's thoughts about bodies and bodies. Every instance of thoughts about bodies would be accidentally true, if it can be true at all. In such a possible world, critical reasoning may occur. While people in the possible world are not reasonably familiar with their bodies, they may have critical judgments, evaluations, doubts, and thoughts. At the same time that there is no knowledge of bodies, there can be critical reasoning and reasoners.

But consider the converse situation. Imagine that there is a possible world in which nobody can know that his/her self exists. Suppose that there is no essential and non-accidental connection between people's thoughts about their selves and selves. Contrary to the previous possible world, in this new possible world, critical reasoning may not occur. If there can be a fundamental gap between the knowledge of selves and selves, people may not have critical judgments, evaluations, doubts, and thoughts. To be a critical reasoner, one must be reasonable in the essential aspect of their thoughts. Being a self and knowing the self are essential aspects. The nature of the self is not separable from the nature of critical reasoning and the reasoner.

Again, I can construct an argument:

1. If there can be a gap between the floating man's body and his knowledge of his body, he can still be a critical reasoner.
2. If there can be a gap between the floating man's self and his knowledge of his self, he cannot still be a critical reasoner.
3. The floating man is a critical reasoner.
4. By 2 & 3, there can be no gap between the floating man's self and his knowledge of his self.

Hence, there is an essential and non-accidental connection between the self and knowledge of the self, while there is no such connection between the body and knowledge of the body.

The blindness argument may challenge any simple observational model that seeks to compare the floating man's self-knowledge with observational-perceptual knowledge of the body. Although knowledge of the body does depend for its entitlement on sensory experience, self-knowledge does not.

## General Remarks

Here, I try to concentrate on general or common points that can probably be useful for understanding the seven arguments.

1. When the floating man is thinking that he knows that his self exists, he may think that there is no other body, self, or person. He may still be reasonably warranted in his thought about the non-existence of other bodies, selves, and people. Imagine that there is a possible world in which there is only a single person, that is, the floating man. I would call it the *Single World*. In the *Single World*, there is no body and self other than those of the floating man. In such a possible world, he would not be warranted in believing that his self does not exist. As a critical reasoner, he can doubt whether there is any other self. But he cannot reasonably doubt whether his self exists. He can also reasonably doubt whether or not he has a body. Imagine a possible world in which there is no body. Let me call it the *Bodiless World*. In the *Bodiless World*, he will be epistemically entitled to think that his body does not exist. But as a critical reasoner, he may not be properly warranted in believing that his self does not exist.
2. I have mentioned some ramifications of the new versions of the floating man argument. There may be some other considerable ramifications. The versions may shed light on some other issues. Suppose that the floating man thinks that his self exists now. The present-ness of this self-knowledge will invite further exploration. I do not discuss it here, but it may contribute to a better understanding of some important problems in the philosophy of time. Or suppose that the floating man thinks that his self can make decisions. For example, he can choose different mental options: he can decide to concentrate on an issue or not. His intentional, non-physical, and mental actions may help us in explaining the nature of free will and action.
3. If the seven arguments or at least some of them can be successful, they will explain why the floating man's thought constitutes genuine knowledge. If his basic, non-empirical, and self-evident thought about the existence of his self cannot constitute perfectly genuine knowledge, no thought would be capable of doing so. If his thought cannot constitute genuine knowledge, a radically skeptical scenario would occur. If it can be possible that I do not exist and at the same time I can think that I exist, no thought can be reliable. I believe that the notion of basic self-knowledge is the core notion of knowledge, without which it could not be. So the seven arguments, or at least some of them, may be useful for the systematic evaluation of some sorts of skepticism. While a skeptic denies the seven arguments, he makes use of critical reasoning. So he would be a critical reasoner. And he himself can be a good instance of a floating man.

4. When the floating man thinks that his self exists, he may rely on his memory. Suppose that he assumes that he knows that his self exists now, but in fact, he is remembering that his self did exist in the past. Is it possible that he mistakenly confuses the past and present situations? Suppose that he does not exist now, but he has been existent some years ago. Is it possible? No, of course not. If he remembers that his self existed in the past, by the very memory his self must exist now. The existence of memory is not compatible with the non-existence of self. If they both can be present at the very same time, there would be a logical contradiction. A non-existent self cannot remember anything. But if a bodiless mind can be logically possible, the existence of memory can be compatible with the non-existence of the body. Then, a bodiless self can remember that it has had a body in the past, while it has no body now. Some materialists, of course, would be inclined to claim that a bodiless mind is logically impossible. Type-identity theorists may assume that an immaterial mind is contradictory. But the burden of proof is on them to say why we should accept that identity-relation is the most reasonable relation between body and mind.
5. Non-human animals cannot have floating-man-like thoughts and knowledge. The first-person concept would be a fundamental character in such self-knowledge. And if non-human animals lack such a concept, they cannot be considered in any of these seven arguments. Burge has pointed out:

It is empirically clear that higher non-human animals have propositional attitudes. They therefore have concepts. I believe that all higher animals have a concept of pain. A primary use of this concept is to recognize when they are in pain. We share such self-knowledge with higher animals. Yet we seem to have types of self-knowledge that are more distinctively ours. One distinctive aspect of our self-knowledge concerns our first-person concept... Higher animals commonly believe that they are in pain when they are. But I think that they lack a first-person concept. (2013, p. 108)<sup>1</sup>

6. If a non-human animal can think about itself as an *agent*, *self*, *I*, *person*, and if it can also reason as reason and may have higher-level conceptual abilities, then we can offer and defend *floating-animal* arguments. Non-human animals may be reasoners, but it is hard to accept that they are critical

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1. I Thank Burge for several emails/comments, including this one: "I did write this sort of thing several times in the past, but I think it is a mistake. It is not empirically clear whether higher non-human animals have propositional attitudes. I now think it an open empirical issue—one that is quite difficult to resolve. So, I don't know (and I think no one knows) whether higher animals have beliefs about their pains. I do think that only humans have full I concepts and knowledge of their propositional attitudes. I think that there is good empirical reason to believe *that*."

reasoners. Although many think that it seems extremely doubtful that non-human animals can have such higher-level abilities, we should be open to the possibility. Empirical investigations would be crucial here.

7. So long as the floating man is a self, he can be conscious of the existence of his self. But it is not true that so long as floating man is a body, he can be conscious of the existence of his body. He may be a body without recognizing the existence of his body. For example, he may suffer terribly from a rare disorder and cannot know he has a body.
8. Also, since bodies are observable, other people who may observe his body better and maybe more authoritatively than he himself. But nobody may have the first-person, non-observational, and self-evident authority that he has about the existence of his self.
9. The floating man cannot be a very young child or a very old man in certain stages of dementia. An acceptable instance of the floating man should be someone who actually has a self, not merely in the future or past. To be a floating man and capable of basic self-knowledge, one should have very substantial abilities that not all humans can actually have. A newborn baby can be a floating man, but in the future, when he will not be a newborn baby anymore. Having the *first-person* concept is necessary to be a self and a floating man.
10. The infallibility of the floating man's thought would be clearer when we compare it with his perceptual thoughts. If he thinks that he has a hand, the thought would be essentially fallible. He may lack a hand and think that he has it. His thoughts about his bodily parts are commonly as such. But his thinking that he knows he has a self is essentially infallible. A Gettier-like situation can occur about his body or a bodily part. He may see another one's hand and come to the conclusion that he has a hand. His belief (I have a hand) would be accidentally true. But when he is thinking that his self exists, the self cannot be another's self. So a Gettier-like situation cannot occur about his self and self-knowledge.
11. As Burge states: "Perhaps persons develop into having or being selves... persons would not have or be selves during all times when they, the persons, exist" (2013, p. 143), an entity can be a body or person and not yet a self. The floating man scenario may show the starting point for being a self. When someone can have a first-person concept and critical reasoning, he or she would also be a self. There is a conceptually obvious and immediate relation between self-knowledge and the existence of the self. But there is no such relation between knowledge of the body and the existence of the self. To be a living body or organism, one does not need to have the *body* concept. But to be a self or an instance of floating man, one needs to have

the *first-person* concept and higher-order conceptual abilities.

12. The floating man's body or bodily states are not propositional and representational. But his self-knowledge is propositional and representational. So his self-knowledge cannot be identical with his body or bodily states. And since self-knowledge is constitutive to being or having a self, his self will also not be identical with his body or bodily states.
13. Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, following the same line of thought as Ibn Sina, in his *Tajrid*, emphasizes the distinction/separation between the soul and the body in terms of the distinction between the objects of knowledge and ignorance (*al-gaflah*). Allamah Hilli also rightly points out in his commentary on *Tajrid* that one of the reasons for this non-identity or separation between the soul and body could be that sometimes a person experiences a state of being unaware of his body (all the external and internal parts of the body as well as the whole body) and at the same time perceives himself (2005, p.266-267). I think, regardless of 1) whether we consider the mind to be a substance (completely independent from the body) or not, and regardless of 2) whether experiences of the type of floating man are specific to a hypothetical scenario in Ibn Sina's thought experiment, or 3) occur in common experiences such as the dream state or 4) in very rare situations, such as spiritual, out-of-body experiences (*khal'* and *tajrid* states), in any case, reflections on the thought experiment and on such experiences can well open a novel perspective towards the fascinating and distinctive realm of the mind.

I hope the seven arguments and these eleven remarks can show how a new rationalistic conception based on our epistemic and modal understanding of self-knowledge may contribute to a better understanding of the metaphysics of the self.

#### ▣ Conflict of Interests

- ▣ The author declares no competing interests..



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