



ULUSLARARASI İBN SÎNÂ SEMPOZYUMU Bildiriler

INTERNATIONAL IBN SINA SYMPOSIUM

Papers

II



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İBN SÎNÂ PSİKOLOJİSİ
Ibn Sînâ's Psychology

Avicenna on the Human Self-Consciousness

İnsânî Benlik Bilinci Üzerine İbn Sînâ'ın Görüşleri

Dr. Pirooz Fatoorchi*

Abstract

In recent years, philosophers have shown a rapidly increasing interest in the problem of consciousness and it is arguably the central issue in current interdisciplinary discussions about the mind. Any convincing theory of consciousness has to account for the perplexing aspects of human self-consciousness. This paper deals with İbn Sînâ's view on the human self-consciousness with special reference to his well-known "Flying Man" thought experiment. In a brief comparative discussion, we will consider some of the parallels between İbn Sînâ's account of "consciousness of consciousness" and the contemporary "higher-order" theories of consciousness. An important point of divergence between İbn Sînâ's line of argument and Descartes' method over the problem of self-consciousness will be examined, as well. Further, Thomas Nagel's famous view on the subjective character of conscious experience will be mentioned and compared with the implications of İbn Sînâ's dictum that "our self-consciousness is identical to our existence".

Keywords: Self-consciousness; "Flying Man" thought experiment; Subjectivity; Higher-order theories of consciousness; Descartes; Thomas Nagel; John Searle.

Consciousness is at once the most obvious feature of our mental life and the most mysterious. There is perhaps no other thing we know more intimately and directly than our conscious experience. The philosopher John Searle, sees no difficulty in giving a general idea of 'consciousness' by saying that "consciousness refers to those states of sentience and awareness that typically begin when we awake from a dreamless sleep and continue until we go to sleep again, or fall into a coma or die or otherwise become 'unconscious'".¹

Meanwhile, consciousness is perceived by many to pose the most baffling problems and to be a great puzzling theoretical challenge of our time. In this regard, Thomas Metzinger, a philosopher of mind asserts:

Today, the problem of consciousness - perhaps together with the question of the origin of the universe - marks the very limit of human striving for understanding. ... In this case, meeting the

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