



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT

Farouk Jabre Center for Arabic
and Islamic Science and Philosophy

MONTHLY SEMINAR

AVICENNA'S FLYING MAN IN EINSTEIN'S ELEVATOR WHAT DOES THE FLYING MAN KNOW?

BY

MOUSA MOHAMMADIAN, PhD

Avicenna's Flying Man Thought Experiment (FMTE) imagines a person suddenly coming into existence in midair, without any sensory input or memories. The Flying Man (FM) is said to be aware of something but unaware of his body. What exactly is FM aware of? Relying on Avicenna's distinction between essence and existence, we challenge the claim that FM is aware of the essence of their self, and defend the idea that FM is aware only of the existence of his self. Then we address the claim that this interpretation makes FMTE a fallacy. Drawing on Einstein's distinction between the inside observer versus the outside observer in his elevator thought experiment, we argue that FMTE is a sound argument in Avicenna's philosophical framework.

Mousa Mohammadian is an Assistant Professor in the department of Philosophy at AUB. He has been an IVC Fellow at the Institute Vienna Circle, University of Vienna, and a Visiting Fellow at the Center for Philosophy of Science, University of Pittsburgh. He has published in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, *Synthese*, *Metascience*, and the *European Journal for Philosophy of Science*.

**WEDNESDAY,
FEB 5, 2025
6:00PM**

Farouk Jabre Center
Conference Room,
Lee Observatory,
lower level (backyard entrance)

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