



THE MAGICIAN'S TRICKS PART 2: THE FLYING MAN & THE FALLING MAN

The Philosophy

This is a slightly different session in that we are asking the children to consider an argument directly, and it is a continuation of the first Magician's Tricks stories. It is important that the first story is run so that the children are prepared for this argument.

To find out more about Avicenna you can hear podcast on BBC radio In Our Time and Philosophy Bites. It would also be useful to read up about Descartes 'method of doubt', 'dualism' and 'cogito ergo sum'.

STIMULUS

Avi was a magician and a friend of Naseem. Naseem told him all about the story with Sa'id. This gave Avi an idea. He wondered what Sa'id could have known without any senses. 'If Sa'id couldn't hear,' thought Avi, 'or smell or taste or touch or see, then what would he know?'

Then he thought, 'I know, I can cast a similar spell on myself so that I lose all my senses and then I'll know exactly what it's like to have no senses.' Avi was just about to cast the spell - he had even started to say the first few words - when he suddenly had a terrifying thought: without his senses he wouldn't be able to turn himself back! He suddenly stopped muttering the magic words. He went to the mirror to check that he still had all the parts of his body. Luckily he did.

Then he thought of a better plan to try to find out. He would ask Naseem to cast a spell on him so that he would levitate up into the air and then stay there in one spot. Then Naseem would cast another spell to make him lose all his senses just as Sa'id had. He would ask Naseem to leave him like that for half an hour or so at which point Naseem would cast another spell to restore his senses and lower him safely to the ground again. Then he could tell Naseem exactly what it was like to have no senses.

When he told Naseem of his plan, Naseem asked him: 'What do you think it will be like, Avi?' Avi thought about it then he said, 'I think that I will know just one thing, but I will know it for certain.' Naseem said, 'What do you think you will know, Avi, when you have no sense of smell, no sight, no hearing, no touch or taste?'

Avi looked at him and said, 'I think I will know that I exist, because, surely, I would know that I exist even if I don't have any of my senses. You don't need eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, or fingers to know that you are there!'

Task Question:

- ✓ Is Avi right – would you know that you are there even if you had none of your senses?

EXTENSION FOR OLDER PUPILS (YEAR 6 UPWARDS):

'I suppose not. But so what? What's the point of doing all this?' Asked Naseem. That was a good question. Avi hadn't stopped to think about what the point was. What would it prove if he did get Naseem to cast the spells on him?'

Avi thought about this all night and eventually he went back to Naseem and said, 'I think I know what the point is now.'

'What?' Asked Naseem.

'I think it would prove that I am not my body,' proclaimed Avi, 'and that means that I have an immortal soul and maybe one day I may have a different body after this body has died. That's what I think it proves.'

Naseem looked very puzzled and was stunned into silence by Avi's words.

Task Question:

- ✓ Is Avi right – would it prove that he has a soul that carries on when his body is dead?

Carry on here whether or not you do the extension

The next day Naseem and Avi met in a secret place near some trees. Avi took his position in a clearing for the experiment to begin. Naseem took out his spell book and opened it up to the levitation spell, held it up before him with one hand and began to read. He muttered the magical words whilst holding out his other hand in front of him wiggling his fingers in the direction of Avi. Avi began to feel light and then his feet left the ground as he found himself rise up into the air. Up he went. When he was as high up as the tallest tree Naseem started to direct him sideways towards the tallest tree and he hooked Avi's belt on to one of the branches.

'What are you doing?' Shouted Avi from the top of the tree. Naseem had been gambling again and he had no money left, so he needed to find some in order to win it back.

Naseem shouted up to him, 'I will just borrow your money until I have won it all back. I promise that I will return when I've done it. Then I shall return all your money and I'll give you some extra for the loan. See you tomorrow, Avi!'

'Come back!' Shouted Avi. 'We've got to finish the experiment. Come back!'

But Naseem was gone, flying away as quickly as he could.

Avi hung there for a whole week, as Naseem kept losing his games. After a week, however, the belt snapped and Avi fell to the ground with a big bump. He was very hungry.