
Chapter 4 Revision

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Hi Michael,

I've now gone through chapter carefully, and while I think it's been improved a lot since the first draft, I still have some concerns—many of which I had raised late summer, although in their current form some of them can probably be resolved with structural changes and clarifications. I've included extensive marginal comments—if there are highlights or underlines without any sticky notes attached, these are just phrases or sentences that were infelicitous or missing something in their formulation.

1. First let me raise a general question about the purpose of this chapter. Overall your emphasis here seems to be on the simple fact **that** physiology is central to emotions. But that seems a rather obvious point in itself, one shared by all ancient and medieval philosophers. **As a philosophical question, then, the main question is the extent to which emotions are cognitive, how deterministic the physiology is, etc.** As a medievalist or historian of medicine, one might be interested in the efforts to explain the physiology, e.g., the medical analysis of melancholy. But most of your attention is focused on the fact that the emotions are seated in the vital spirit, that they have an influence on character traits, etc. The new material from the medical texts consists in just a few passages that don't really seem to say much that isn't already in the philosophical texts. So I do think you need to clarify exactly what the medical texts contribute. Oftentimes it seems to me like you are trying to find some special, missing insights in the medical texts that just aren't there. Just as one might expect, the emotions are phenomena that a physician might be interested in—but the physician doesn't really tell us anything new about their **nature**.
2. Another central question that puzzled me as I was reading the chapter was the **exact** nature of your interpretation of the physiology of emotions. You did clarify this in the conclusion, but it's something that you need to lay out very clearly at the beginning of the chapter. As I understand your reading, there are some physiological states that are **essential to** the emotions, and **others that follow from them**, or are perhaps their necessary concomitants. **Maybe the distinction seems obvious to you, but it needs to be spelled out and tied to specific Avicennian texts.** I think this problem underlies many of my other questions and concerns.
3. I am still not clear why you continue to frame Avicenna's accounts of the physiology of the emotions as efforts to explain their **material cause**, absent Avicenna's use of that framing himself. All you have really done to respond to my earlier objection is include some footnotes where you admit Avicenna doesn't use this framing, and then claim, in effect, that this is what he is or might or should be doing. Your retaining of this framing is part of what led to my general puzzlement about the physiology of Avicennian emotions as you understand them: on the one hand, if the account of the physiology of the emotions is a case of giving their **material cause**, then that physiology has to be part of the essence of what an emotion is. Material causes on Avicenna's view are **intrinsic**, they are parts of the nature of their effects (roughly mapping on to the genus). But then most of the texts you discuss regarding the physiology of the emotions address their physical **effects**, and on Avicenna's view agents are **extrinsic** causes distinct from their effects. Now I suppose that if the emotions have a material component then they can have material effects/consequences—but in your discussions of those effects you take such pains to emphasize that they are not themselves emotions that **I was unclear what you think is the physical makeup of an emotion as distinct from its physiological effects.**

- As I noted in my marginal comments, in the cases where you are discussing passages that use the “follow upon” language, you have decided to adopt **supervenience** language. But I don’t think this is accurate or helpful. Do you really want to say an emotion just **supervenes** on some state of the vital spirit? I am not clear how something can **supervene** on either its agent or its material **cause**—unless the situation is an ontologically idiosyncratic one, like Averroes’s early Alexandrian view of the material intellect.

4. Regarding the **vital spirit**: you followed up on some of my suggestions for scholarship on this point, but many of the revisions still seem puzzling to me. In particular I remain unconvinced by your insistence that the vital spirit is primarily “vital” rather than “animal,” and yet you admit that there is no vital spirit in plants! (I was not endorsing the Tawara view, by the way, only pointing out that if you are going to discuss this topic you need to take it into account). So this still needs clarification.

- Perhaps more importantly, however, the way you responded to my objections regarding the “vital spirit” vs. the “vital spirit in the heart” is quite odd. You now agree that the vital spirit is not unique to the emotions, and that Avicenna’s emphasis is on the emotions issuing from the **cardiac** vital spirit. But then you frame much of your discussion as an explanation why someone should **not** hold your earlier view, as if that were the natural way to read these texts! That’s not how to respond to an objection: you can certainly explain the general role of the vital spirit and then indicate what is peculiar to the way the vs works in emotions—but that shouldn’t involve assuming the reader is likely to think the vital spirit is just about emotions. And once this is granted, then **it’s hard to see why you suggest it is odd for Avicenna to focus on the emotions in CD: It’s not a treatise on animal spirits, it’s a treatise on the heart, and the emotions are properly cardiac phenomena.**
- So my suggestion is that you **discuss the general function of the vital spirit independently, in an introductory section.** This is a topic that doesn’t belong in the exposition of the CD text itself, and there is really no justification for presenting Avicenna as in some way being unclear about the general place of the vs in explaining many **different** animate operations.

Those are my major concerns about the overall framing of the chapter as a discussion of the physiology of emotions. There are a few other points I should also highlight:

5. The section you entitle “**response**” and **background doesn’t seem to fit into any overall plan.** I agree that you need to acknowledge ancient discussions of the physiology of emotions, but it would seem to make more sense to include this in the introductory setup of the chapter.
6. While you have relegated the James comparisons to footnotes, I still don’t see why they are apposite. If this were a standard view then it might be an important point of contrast, but why is it significant that Avicenna doesn’t uphold what are essentially fringe views even now? **Since James isn’t even a truly contemporary author any longer, it just seems gratuitous.**
7. The discussion of emotions and ethics still needs refinement and a more systematic treatment, and **I am not sure it really belongs in a chapter on physiology,** since that leads you to overplay the link between physiology and character on the basis of scant textual evidence. You continue to imply that, at least at first blush, the texts you discuss would lead most readers to think Avicenna holds you can reform character by treating the body, but in fact he really doesn’t think that at all! But there really isn’t any basis for such a reading. And you don’t develop any new account of the ethical ramifications of the physiology of emotions—I suggested in my earlier comments that if you really think this is an important issue, you would need to look at examples of exactly what the physician does when he treats, e.g., melancholy. As it is, you still seem to be treating what we would call personality traits as if they were character traits—e.g., a cheerful disposition, as far as I can tell, is neither virtuous nor vicious in itself, and melancholy is a disease, not a vice.
8. Closely connected to the ethical issues is the place of your treatment of the *Rhetoric*. It’s **not really clear to me why it belongs in the chapter on physiology.** The connection seems to be via the issue of ethics and the emotions, which I’ve just noted also seems a bit out of place in this context. But since you are including a translation from the *Rhetoric* in your thesis, **it would seem to deserve more attention.** I was also somewhat surprised that you didn’t take up the obvious point that *ethos* and *pathos* are themselves treated as forms of persuasion by Aristotle and his Arabic followers. That seems to be what many of the texts you cite are talking about. They don’t really seem designed to

explain **how** you can change someone's emotions and judgment by changing his or her physical states.

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