Introduction: Avicenna on Emotion

Word Count: 8,338

The growing interest in affective psychology among historians and philosophers alike is understandable: few things affect our quality of life, or lack thereof, more than emotions. Yet little has been written about how such topics were dealt with in Classical Islamic lands. One of the barriers to this is that many of the relevant texts remain untranslated. This dissertation, which includes a full translation of Avicenna's section on emotion in his *Healing: Rhetoric*, addresses that lacuna by offering the first detailed explication of Avicenna's theory of emotions. Avicenna (Ibn Sīna, d. 1098 CE) is known to have influenced the course of psychology in the Muslim East and the Latin West. Over the course of four chapters, I examine his accounts of animal and human emotions, their physiology, and their relation to voluntary action and moral dispositions. I show that Avicenna, despite not having a single treatise explicitly dedicated to emotions, has a nuanced affective psychology that can be seen by considering his corpus collectively.

1. The variety of discussions of emotions in Avicenna's corpus

In this dissertation I provide an account of the nature of emotions from the point of view Avicenna's philosophical psychology. In the next section I will provide a sketch of that view, to be unpacked in the chapters that follow. But to begin, let us go over Avicenna's works in which we find discussions of emotions, which fall into roughly four categories:

- Philosophical psychology
- Medical/biological texts
- *Healing: Categories*
- Works related to rhetoric and poetics

Avicenna's texts on philosophical psychology contain the most relevant material, particularly in Avicenna's various summative works on the nature of the soul. These texts are primarily relevant for their discussions of the motive faculty, of which emotions are acts, and the cognitive faculties, which lead to emotions. Avicenna's first philosophical treatise, *Compendium on the Soul* (c. 999 CE)[1], contains discussions of all these faculties, but in far less detail than his later works. He divides the motive faculty into two branches, the concupiscible and the irascible, which exist because animals—unlike plants—need a way to seek out things that are useful, and drive away things that are harmful.[2] He says that in non-rational animals, the motive faculty is the "end [al-ghāya]" with respect to the cognitive faculties, since the cognitive faculties exist in order to provide information that leads to motion, whereas in rational animals the motive faculty exists to carry out the will of the rational faculties.[3]

1 For dating, see Gutas (2014), 165.
2 Avicenna, Compendium (1875), 352.
3 Avicenna, Compendium (1875), 353.

Far more detail is provided in Avicenna's magnum opus on psychology, *Healing: Psychology* (c. 1020-1027). As a whole, the *Healing* is organized into four parts, beginning with logic, then physics, mathematics, and finally metaphysics. *Psychology* is the sixth work in the physics division. It is preceded in the physics division of the *Healing* by various works on the elements, matter, change, and followed by books focused on plants and animals.[4] Psychology itself is organized into five books:

Book 1: The nature of the soul in general
Book 2: The vegetative faculties and the external senses, excluding vision
Book 3: Vision
Book 4: The internal senses and the motive faculty
Book 5: The rational faculties

The motive faculty is discussed in 4.4, the final section of the fourth book. Avicenna's concerns in 4.4, as with the rest of *Psychology*, are broadly modeled on those in Aristotle's *De Anima*, with some additions, as will be noted throughout the chapters in this dissertation. For example, 4.4 in turn can be broken down into roughly the following sections (this is an approximation, as Avicenna's text does not contain further divisions):

4.4a A discussion of the various branches of the motive faculty found in animals, including, but not limited to, concupiscible and irascible appetite.

4.4b A discussion of other psychological states, such as sleeping and waking, health and sickness, modeled on some concerns from *Parva Naturalia*.[5]

4.4c A discussion of the unique abilities found in the "prophetic" state of the motive faculties, such as the ability to affect motion at a distance.

It is thus the first part of chapter 4 (labelled 4.4a), in which the most important, guiding texts for this dissertation are found. For most of the topics to be discussed in what follows, there is corresponding discussion in Avicenna's slightly later *Salvation: Psychology*. But the latter is rarely referenced in this dissertation, because at for these topics *Salvation: Psychology* is essentially an abridgment of *Healing: Psychology.*

Three other philosophical psychology texts will be important for this topic. These are distinct from the preceding in that they are not as tightly tied to the organization of the Aristotelian sciences. On the one hand, we have the appendix to the physics section of Avicenna's late *Remarks and Admonitions* (c. 1030-1034). *Remarks* as a whole is organized according to the Aristotelian sciences, but the appendix to the physics section contains discussions of a variety of topics related to the motive faculty that are not discussed elsewhere. There is also the *Marginal Glosses* (c. 1029), a record of Avicenna's thought process as he read the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *De Anima.* It is thought to have been originally written by Avicenna in the margins of his copy of Aristotle, hence the title. Finally, there is his early *Treatise on Love* (from a similar period as the *Compendium*). In the *Treatise*, Avicenna broadly discusses various beings' inborn

4 Gutas (2014), 105.
5 This is discussed more in chapter 4.5.1.

love (i.e., their teleology, or what they tend towards), from rocks on up to God. Of particular interest for our purposes is his characterizations of the aims of the motive faculties, and how they relate to the goals of other faculties. These three texts will all be used throughout the dissertation to provide insight into emotions as part of Avicenna's philosophical psychology, but it is the *Healing: Psychology* 4.4 which makes most clear Avicenna's priorities and mature way of thinking about emotions.

As for Avicenna's writings that relate to the physiology of the emotions, these include primarily *Healing: Psychology* 5.8, the *Canon of Medicine*, and *Cardiac Drugs*. That Avicenna thought there was an overlap in the concerns of philosophical psychology and medicine/biology can be seen in the fact that the final chapter of *Healing: Psychology*, 5.8, provides an overview of physiology that Avicenna deems relevant to the study of the soul. Yet most of what is in fact relevant for our purposes is found in the latter two texts just mentioned.

The *Canon* is Avicenna's magnum opus on the medical practice, and contains specific etiology for certain emotional disorders (like melancholy), along with advice for how to treat them. *Cardiac Drugs* is a work focused on the medical conditions related to the heart. As will be seen, Avicenna believes that the seat of emotions is the vital spirit that is in the heart, and much of the *Cardiac Drugs* is taken up with discussing what accounts for certain emotional dispositions, and how emotions affect the body.

These texts will be introduced further at the beginning of chapter four, but one thing to note for now is that they will be consulted primarily for how they relate to philosophical psychology. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to investigate the specifics of Avicenna's medical recommendations. Rather, chapter four will be taken up with explaining what philosophical issues Avicenna thinks are best illumined by attending to physiology. For example, we might wonder what it is that causes one person to have an emotion, and another not to, when they both evaluate some situation as horrific. In some cases, the answer might simply boil down to their temperaments.

The final texts that need to be mentioned in the context of emotions are three texts from the first, logical part of the *Healing*, namely, the *Categories*, *Poetics*, and *Rhetoric*. All of these texts have something to say about the nature of emotions, or specific emotions, and I present a translation of the section on emotions from *Healing: Rhetoric* in chapter five. Yet they are not as relevant to getting a handle on Avicenna's systematic view of emotions as the previously mentioned texts. Thus, although they will be referenced occasionally in the chapters that follow, I will examine what they contribute to the topic of emotions here in this introduction, after an overview of emotions from the point of view of Avicenna's philosophical psychology.

2. Emotions in Avicenna's philosophical psychology

In chapter one of this dissertation I argue that Avicenna’s main account of animal emotions (in his *Healing: Psychology* 4.4) shows that they are construed as inclinations (*nazzāʿāt/inbiʿāthāt*) in response to positive or negative object-evaluations. The notion of inclination is intentionally broader than terms used by Avicenna’s predecessors (Gr. *orexis*, Ar. *shawq*), because Avicenna wants to articulate a range of affective states of which animals are capable beyond Aristotelian concupiscible and irascible appetite. Concupiscible and irascible appetite relate to pleasures and pains appreciable by the external senses, but animals also incline

towards things like freedom, companionship, and aesthetic experience. Further, animals experience varieties of pleasure, which Avicenna regards as an inclination, insofar as it inclines us to keep going in some activity.

In chapter two I argue that Avicenna's account of uniquely human emotions (in *Psychology* 5.1 and his *Treatise on Love*) is highly integrated with his account of animal emotion. Animal emotions are acts of the motive faculty, and are localized in the heart and vital spirits, the organs most responsible for action-readiness. Uniquely human emotions involve actualizations of this same hardware, but their cognitive causes differ in being more complex. For example, shame is fundamentally an act of the shared animal motive faculty, but is caused by a cognition related to social norms of which non-human animals are not capable. Avicenna articulates a standard account of how reason can be said to govern animal emotions (i.e., using self-control to be less angry), but he also attends in detail to emotions that seem to have no parallel in animals, such as wonder, anxiety, shame, and future-oriented fear and desire.

But, of course, to incline on account of some evaluation is not the same thing as to act, so a question naturally arises—most clearly in his *Healing: Metaphysics* 4.2—as to how emotions relate to voluntary action. In chapter three, I argue that Avicenna makes a distinction between inclination-to-act (which is what an emotion is) and resolution-to-act (which leads directly to voluntary motion). Both inclination and resolution are acts of the animal motive faculty, but they have differing cognitive causes. Inclinations (i.e., emotions) are caused by simple evaluations of objects, while resolutions are caused by reaching the conclusion of a practical syllogism. Humans arrive at the conclusion of a practical syllogism through deliberation, whereas Avicenna says that animals arrive at something analogous through a more instinctual process.

In chapter four I flesh out the aspects of physiology that are relevant to Avicenna's philosophy of emotion. That is, in Avicenna's *Healing: Psychology*, two issues arise which Avicenna thinks actually best illuminated by considering physiology. On the one hand, we might sometimes wonder why the same evaluative judgment sometimes causes an emotion, sometimes not, and, when it does, why the emotion varies in strength. For example, two people evaluate a situation as dangerous, yet one person cowers, and the other is brave. If we stipulate that the judgment in these cases is the same, the best explanation for their different responses has to do with their temperamental dispositions. A second issue related to physiology that arises is that our understanding of what an emotion itself precisely is will be determined partially by what sort of physical changes we think are constitutive of an emotion, and which are merely the emotion's effects. For Avicenna, the changes underlying an occurent emotion are actually quite narrow in scope (basically limited to changes in the heart, and the vital spirit in the heart), whereas other changes we often associate with emotions (like going pale from fear) would be considered effects. In chapter four I touch on the issue of how a medical doctor might diagnose and treat emotional disorders, but I do not delve deeply into that issue, as I am primarily concerned with emotions from the point of view of philosophical psychology.

Such are the key philosophical issues Avicenna deals with in relation to emotions. In chapter five I present an annotated translation of the section on emotions from Avicenna's *Healing: Rhetoric*, as well as from his shorter *Compilation*. In the remainder of this introduction, I present some context and analysis of those texts, along with emotions as treated in *Healing: Poetics* and *Healing: Categories.* Again, the reason for presenting an overview of these texts here is that their contributions do not fit neatly into the concerns raised by Avicenna's key texts in philosophical psychology, as described above, and as will be unpacked further in chapters 1-4.

3. Emotions in Avicenna's *Categories*

Avicenna's *Healing*: *Categories* [*Al-maqūlāt*] addresses the same issues as Aristotle's *Categories*, with a key difference between the two texts being Avicenna's extra attention to the category of quality [*kayfiyya*]. A full two books of Avicenna's seven-book *Categories* are dedicated to quality, taking up about a quarter of the total page count. Another difference is that Avicenna takes more care to clearly define the boundaries between each of the four species of quality. *Healing*: *Categories* is relevant to our purposes here because Avicenna uses emotions as an illustration of conditions [*aḥwāl*], which are one of the two sub-types of the first species of quality. The four species of quality will be discussed shortly, but here is the quote that places emotions squarely in this conceptual territory:

> As for "condition," that which is named by this type [of quality] is that which easily passes away […] As for health and sickness, if they come and go quickly, they are of this type. And other types of conditions include: anger [*al-ḥarad*], shyness [*al-ḥajal*], sadness [*al-ghamm*], pity [*al-hamm*], opinion, and belief that is not fixed.[6]

As can be seen, emotions are not the only things that can be conditions, so what we learn about conditions is meant to apply to more phenomena than just emotions. Nevertheless, the discussions of emotions as states in *Categories* gives us some further insight into the sort of things emotions are, and puts them in the context of other mental phenomena. That is, it is explicitly said that that emotions are passing and transitory, as distinct from things like virtues and faculties.

Fundamentally, the category "quality" (of which "conditions" are a species) is meant to answer the question "how," but it is possible to mistakenly answer this question about something in ways that pick out features that properly belong to another category.[7] For example, in response to a question about "how" something exists, we might say "six feet tall," but this would actually be a way of quantifying it. After dealing with this and similar confusions, Avicenna defines quality as an answer to "how" in a more restricted sense, saying "Let us determine now that quality is any trait [*hayʾah*] fixed [*qārrah*] in its subject which does not necessitate or demand [the subject's] being measured [*taqdīrihi*]."[8] One part of this definition tells us what a quality *is*, the other part tells us what it is *not*. On the affirmative side, *hayʾah* is a very general term for accidental form, so by saying that a quality is a "fixed" *hayʾah*, this means that quality is any accidental form that is inhering in a substance. That is, a quality tells us something about how a substance is constituted, not just some circumstance or relation that it is in. So hardness is a quality, but being a brother is not. By way of negation, Avicenna distinguishes qualities from anything that involves measurement; in essence, this distinguishes a quality from a quantity. So, again, hardness is a quality, but being six feet tall is not. This is just to prevent the erroneous answer to the question "how" mentioned earlier. So emotions, like all qualities, are accidental forms, really present in their subjects, for some amount of time. To be more specific than that, we need to turn to the explanation of the particular species of quality under which emotions fall.

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6 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 182.
7 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.1, 167.
8 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.1, 171.

Of the four species of quality, emotions fall under the first, which encompasses those qualities that exist "because of the soul," and these are divided into states [*malakāt*] and conditions [*aḥwāl*].[9] Avicenna argues that there is not actually a generic name for these two types of the first species of quality, since they are only distinguished in an accidental way—with respect to their stability—as we will see.

The second species of quality is circumscribes psychological faculties, includeing psychological capacities and lacks of capacities (Avicenna does not distinguish between the terms "faculty" and "capacity" in any explicit way). The first species of qualities, he says, is dependent on the second species.[10] For example, you have to have the irascible appetite (second species of quality) in order to have an instance of anger (first species of quality).

The third species of quality encompasses passive qualities and passions [*al-kayfiyyāt al-infiʿāliyya wal-infiʿālāt*], which are qualities like colors and textures. The terminology for the third species might seem surprising, since Avicenna elsewhere refers to emotions as *infiʿālāt*, and now this is the term being used for a distinct species of quality that does *not* include emotion. But, as Avicenna points out later in this chapter of the *Categories*, *infiʿālāt* is used equivocally sometimes between emotions and non-emotional passions, and this is okay, as long as we know what we are talking about.[11] In this case, Avicenna wants to make the point that this third species of quality includes passions that do not exist on account of the soul, yet which have a relation to one another similar that which has been described to exist between the states and conditions, in the first species of quality.[12] For example, picking up on one of Avicenna's examples, the liver can briefly take on something like a yellow hue, or, if the passion solidifies, take on the stable affective quality yellow (which, incidentally, would not bode well for its owner). This is similar to the distinction in terms of stability we will see between psychological states and conditions, but this third category is for non-psychological fixed and transitory states.

The fourth species of quality is "figure [*shakl*]." Avicenna reserves discussion of figure for a separate book of the *Categories*, book 6, since he views it as less intertwined with the prior three.

Emotions being placed in the first species of quality shows us that emotions transitory, as opposed to states, though both are caused by psychological faculties. States, Avicenna writes, are those qualities that exist on account of the soul which are "fixed in nature in such a way as that they will not cease, or at least that their ceasing is difficult, and in general not easy," whereas conditions are the sort of quality that exists on account of the soul and which is "not fixed, but which is liable to cease, which easily goes away […]."[13] Avicenna's examples for states and dispositions are as follows:[14]

Examples of States	**Examples of Conditions**
Virtues and vices	Emotions
Firm grasp of a scientific truth	Unfixed belief
Healthy or sick body	Passing sickness

9 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 181.
10 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 185.
11 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.6, 200.
12 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.5, 191-192.
13 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 181.
14 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 182.

Avicenna describes the stable states on the left as corresponding to the transitory conditions on the right. A sickness is the sort of thing that, if it sticks around long enough, leads to an overall unhealthy body. An unfixed belief is something that, if it is verified and dwelt on long enough, becomes firmly grasped. Since we know that both states and conditions depend on psychological faculties, it is clear that that Avicenna is providing examples that depend on motive faculties (concupiscible appetite, etc), cognitive faculties and vegetative faculties, respectively.

Having the same sort of emotions over and over can eventually lead to the cultivation of a virtue (which, in turn, makes it easier to have the corresponding emotion)[15]. Avicenna makes the general point as follows:

> Everything that is an acquired state [*malaka muktasabah*] was previously a condition. That is, that trait [*al-hayʾah*] was previously a state, and then it solidified. [On the other hand] it is not the case that every condition was previously state, eventually becoming undone into a condition.[16]

An emotion is not the same thing as a virtue, nor is a belief the same thing as a scientific habit of mind, nor a sickness the same as an unhealthy body. Rather, states and conditions are causally related to one another. The mechanism by which this change occurs is left vague: a condition becomes a state if the condition is "repeatedly exercised [*tamarrana ʿalāhi*]";[17] the state of being an angry person is acquired "through the doing [*istiʿmāl*] of many acts [*afaʿāl*] of anger".[18] How exactly instances of sadness lead to a person becoming depressed is a specific question about which Avicenna has little to say, even in his physiological works. But we know that one way of developing virtues and vices is by allowing yourself to experience certain emotions over and over again.

The only distinction between a state and a condition—at least from the point of view of the *Categories*—is their fixedness. When he first distinguishes the two varieties of the first species of quality, Avicenna emphasizes that the distinction between them is only accidental:

> The distinction [*iftirāq*] between condition and state is not a difference of two species under a genus, for the division [*al-infiṣāl*] between them is merely through the state of the relationship to change and the time of change, and this is an accidental difference [*infiṣāl bi-aʿarād*], not through a division internal to the nature of the thing.[19]

Following this quote, to show how something can change in terms of accidental features while still remaining "one thing," Avicenna gives the example of a boy becoming a man. As the boy

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15 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 182: "And we mean by virtues [al-faḍāʾil] not the determinate actions, but rather the psychological traits [al-hayʿāt al-nafsāniyyah] from which come the determinate actions in an easy manner, as if by nature, without the need for deliberation [ruʾyah] or renewed choice [ikhtiyār mustaʾnif]. And they are such that if the contrary of those actions were desired, it would be burdensome for the ones trying to do that, and it was be difficult for them, and they would need to exert effort. And this [sort of thing] is like the character trait [khulq] of justice, or modesty. And the vices [al-radhāʾil] also, which are the contraries [of the virtues] are states. So licentiousness is a character trait that makes acting modesty with respect to self-control difficult, for one is pained by carrying it [modest acts] out, while carrying out the acts of profligacy are easy for such a one. For in itself a character trait easily yielding to one action has difficulty with another. And these are states."

16 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 182.

17 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 181.

18 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.6, 200.

19 Avicenna, Healing: Categories (1959), 5.3, 181.

grows to become a man, certain accidental features change, but he is fundamentally the same. Now, it is unclear how far to take this analogy. We may agree that the emotion of bravery, repeated often enough, leads to the virtue of courage, but it hardly seems that the only thing distinguishing a disposition towards an emotion (virtue) from the emotion itself, is the fixedness. The courageous person is not just someone who is courageous all the time. What Avicenna must mean, then, is that, from the point of view of the *Categories*, the only metaphysical difference between emotions and virtues is their fixedness. They are both qualities that inhere in subjects, on account of psychological faculties, distinguished with respect to their fixedness. Surely other differences exist, but none that are relevant to the project of categorizing substances and accidents.

Looking at the *Categories*, then, helps us distinguish three psychological phenomena related to emotional experience: 1) emotions themselves, which are conditions. Emotions are caused by 2) psychological faculties, and can lead to 3) fixed states, such as virtues.

4. Emotions in Avicenna's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*

Avicenna's *Healing: Poetics* and *Rhetoric* follows Aristotle's project of trying to articulate the goals of poetic and rhetorical modes of speech, and how to achieve those goals. As has been shown by Deborah Black, the Classical Arabic philosophers were presented with translations of the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* grouped with the other texts of the Aristotelian logical corpus (the *Organon*). Thus, a large of their work on these topics sought to make sense of how poetical and rhetorical speech related to the broader goals of logic.[20]

Avicenna's way of making sense of how the poetic and rhetorical arts fit in with the standard branches of logic depending primarily on holding that all branches of logic sought something under the genus of acquiescence [*idhʿān*]. Standard logical modes, like deduction, lead to a type of acquiescence called assent [*tadṣīq*]. *Poetics*, on the other hand, leads to a kind of acquiescence better called "imaginative" acquiescence.[21] This idea in *Poetics* is relevant to a study on the nature of emotions because, as will be discussed in chapter two,[22] imaginative acquiescence is a type of emotional reaction, wherein one is moved emotionally by the speech, positively or negatively, as the speech dictates. For example, a poem about a landscape could be said to have the goal of convincing you that the landscape is beautiful. To the extent that you feel the sorts of things about the landscape as a result of the poem that you would normally feel towards a beautiful landscape (e.g., peace, wonder, joy), the poem has succeeding in convincing you.

As for the discipline of rhetoric, Avicenna says that the goal of rhetoric is a type of acquiescence called "persuasion [*iqnāʿ*]."[23] Persuasion, in turn, is not a emotion, but rather an opinion [*ẓann*], wherein one believes something is true, but simultaneously is consciously aware that their view could be false.[24] For example, a great rhetorician might stir you up so that you cheer for their political agenda at a rally, while you temporarily ignore that nagging thought that you have not actually thought all their ideas through, or fully considered the other side. Emotions enter into the discussion of rhetoric because one of the tools a rhetorician has to move someone

20 Black (1990) 34.
21 Will be discussed more in chapter 2, but see Black (1990) 182.
22 See chapter 2, section 3.1.
23 This explanation of rhetoric taken from Avicenna's early *Compilation: Rhetoric* (2013), 139.
24 *Compilation: Rhetoric* (2013), 139. Discussed at Black (1990) 108-111.

towards persuasion is emotional manipulation. So a difference between poetics and rhetoric is that the acquiescence involved in poetics *is itself* a kind of emotional response, whereas in rhetoric emotions are a *tool* to move the audience to rhetoric's particular type of acquiescence.

Chapter 5 of this dissertation consists of a translation of the section from *Healing: Rhetoric* where Avicenna discusses particular emotions in detail (3.1-5). I incorporate this text and others from *Healing: Rhetoric* at numerous points throughout the chapters of the dissertation that follow.[25] But I will here provide some context and analysis of the translated text as a whole, more directly.

4.1 The structure of Avicenna' discussion of emotions in the *Healing: Rhetoric*

The *Healing: Rhetoric* is composed of four books that treat roughly the same topics as Aristotle does in the three books of his *Rhetoric*. Whereas Avicenna is obviously innovative in the structure of his psychological and medical texts, book 3 of his *Healing: Rhetoric* follows the model of Aristotle's book 2 quite closely in terms of its goals, and the emotions he chooses to focus on. This is not to say Avicenna simply regurgitates Aristotle. There are many new examples, elaborations, and brief philosophical analyses that make it clear Avicenna is reflectively assimilating Aristotle's text.[26] Avicenna's creativity in the *Rhetoric* is especially clear when put alongside his earlier, shorter, less innovative *Natural Dispositions and Affections of the Soul* [*Al-akhlāq wa-l-infi'ālāt an-nafsāniyya*]. That text, which appears to originally have been part of the larger *Compilation*, is essentially just a concise summary of book 2 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.[27] For comparison, I have also included an English translation of *Natural Dispositions and Affections of the Soul* in chapter 5, following the translation of *Healing: Rhetoric* 3.1-5.

The stated goal of discussing individual emotions in Avicenna's *Rhetoric* is, as in Aristotle's text, to equip the rhetorician to be able to persuade their audience effectively. This is clear from the opening line of book 3, when Avicenna says that he will now "discuss the types of rhetorical speech by which one gradually manipulates [*yastadriju bi-hā*] judges and listeners."[28] The judges and listeners in this context are most directly legal judges and jurors, as shown by the ensuing introductory paragraphs, which contain descriptions of how judges or jurors who are well-disposed towards a defendant might decide on a lighter sentence for the defendant, while being

25 The main points at which *Healing: Rhetoric* is discussed in the chapters of this dissertation are as follows: Chapter 1.3.1, on the distinction between different types of pleasures; 2.3, on the nature of fear; 2.5, on different types of goods; 3.4.2, on the rational and non-rational cognitive bases for emotions; 4.4.4, on the Rhetoric's approach to character traits; 4.5.5, on the effect of emotions on judgment.

26 In the chapter 5 translation, these sections have been noted in the footnotes with the phrase "No parallel in Aristotle's text," along with a brief description of the difference.

Some of these differences seem to provide a rare glimpse into Avicenna as a social commentator. For example, when giving examples of the causes of anger, he says the public doesn't understand the concerns of scholars, so they consider them to be worthless and floundering in their work, which in turn makes the scholars angry (132.5).

Again, when discussing those who have come into recent, unexpected material success, he says that they are prone to love god and trust in providence. With apparent tongue in cheek, he says that their outlook makes sense, since they have been lucky without hard work (163.10). The criticism seems to be directed at those who who claim to trust in providence, when in reality they would want nothing to do with religion if they had not been so lucky in their lives.

27 *Natural Dispositions* is presented in Avicenna (1954), along with a French translation.

28 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 129.

ill-disposed toward a defendant will have the opposite effect. In 3.5, Avicenna follows his discussion of individual emotions with a description of character types—young, old, rich, wealthy—and the emotions each type is disposed to experience. In Aristotle's text, the relation between these two sections is not explicit, but Avicenna concludes his discussion of both by tying them together, saying, "it is necessary that the rhetorician knows about the types that pick out the emotions [*al-infiʿālāt*] and character traits [*al-akhlāq*]."[29] By knowing what certain emotions dispose people towards (3.1-4), and what emotions different types of people are *already* disposed towards (3.5), the rhetorician can skillfully manage their audience. Yet despite the practical framing of these sections, Avicenna rarely draws our attention back to these stated goals in the body of the text, which is simply focused on analyzing of the nature of particular emotions and character types.

As for the emotions themselves discussed in *Healing: Rhetoric* 3.1-4, Avicenna (like Aristotle) mostly groups emotions in clusters of contraries (e.g., shame and shamelessness). The following table captures the emotions dealt with, in order. I include the terms used for an emotion's valence in the right hand column, which I will discuss below. An "x" in the left-hand column shows that these emotions are presented as a cluster of contraries. Sometimes the pair includes more than one emotion on one side of the contrary:

29 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 164.

Contraries /groupings	**English Term**	**Arabic Term**	**Location in Arabic Text**	**Valence**
x	Anger	*al-ghaḍab*	130	*adhā* [pain], *ladhdha*[30] [pleasure]
	Calmness	*futūr al-ghaḍab*[31]	133	
x	Friendliness	*ṣadāqa*	135	*irtiyāḥ* [elation]
	Enmity	*ʿadāwa*	137	
	Hatred	*baghḍa*	137	
x	Fear	*khawf*	138	*ikhtilāṭ* [agitation], *ḥuzn* [sadness]
	Courage/Boldness	*shajāʿa*	139	
x	[Proper] Embarrassment	*istiḥyāʾ*	139	*ikhtilāṭ* [agitation], *ḥuzn* [sadness]
	[Proper] Shame	*khajl*	142	*ikhtilāṭ* [agitation], *ḥuzn* [sadness]
	Shamelessness	*al-waqāḥa*	145	
x	Gratefulness of kindness	*shukr al-minna*	145	n/a, focus on the deed of kindness
	Lack-of-gratefulness	No specific name given	146	
x	Pity/empathy	*hamm/ihtimām*	147	*adhā* [pain]
	Indignation	*jazaʿ*	150	*ḥuzn* [sadness]
	Envy	*ḥasad*	150	*adhā* [pain], *ḥuzn* [sadness], *ghamm* [depression]
x[32]	Joy [at different kinds of successes and failures]	*faraḥ*	151	
	Vengeance	*naqma*	151	
	Zeal/desire to emulate	*ḥamiyya*	154	*adhā* [pain]
	Zeal	*ghayra*	155	

The bulk of Avicenna's analysis of each emotion on this list is taken up with a discussion of three aspects of the emotion: 1) the sort of states that dispose a person to that emotion, 2) the triggering cause for that emotion, and 3) the object of that emotion. This programme is never explicitly laid out by Avicenna, but it is plain to see that he is following in Aristotle's footsteps, who does lay things out explicitly:

> It is necessary that we proceed and examine each [emotion] in the threefold manner. As for how this will be done, I say that it will follow the pattern of what we'll do concerning anger, showing [1] the state--which one and what it is like [*kayf wa bi-ayya ḥāl*]—such that, if someone [is in it] they are disposed towards anger, and

30 The mention of anger involving a kind of pleasure technically occurs a bit earlier in the Rhetoric, at Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 130.
31 In the earlier *Natural Dispositions and Affections of the Soul* Avicenna refers to calmness as *sukūn al-nafs.* See Avicenna, Natural Dispositions (1954) 24.1.
32 The structure of the grouping at the end, beginning with joy, is presented not as a cluster of contraries, but merely as a group of closely related emotions, with subtle differences

> [2] on account of what [*mimmā*] it is typical for [a particular occurrence of anger] anger to occur, and [3] towards whom/what [*ʿlā man*] [anger is directed].[33]

We can illustrate these points with anger. A triggering cause of anger is an insult, a slight, or an offense. One is more likely to be angered by such a triggering cause if they feel entitled to respect, or perhaps if they live a generally luxurious life. Their anger, once it arises, will be directed at the person who they perceive to have insulted them.[34] This is not a comprehensive analysis of anger, of course, and Avicenna's text includes many more examples. One thing worth noting is the need to distinguish a triggering cause from an object. In typical cases, we might think that the cause of anger would be the same as its object (e.g., so-and-so caused me to be angry, and I'm angry at so-and-so). But although neither Avicenna nor Aristotle dwell on the point, it does seem worth making this distinction, because sometimes these two aspects could be construed as much less related. For example, you could be angry because of something that happened at work (the trigger), and then unfairly this out on a friend (who becomes the object of your anger). Despite Aristotle's good intentions with the above schema, in practice neither Avicenna nor Aristotle unpack all of the three aspects in a clearly identifiable way for every emotion. This is perhaps why Avicenna does not even make a point of repeating that he is going address every emotion in this threefold way. This is also why it is not feasible here to undertake an analysis of each emotion under those three headings: despite the careful overall organization presented in the chart above, the individual discussions of emotions are too full of unsystematically presented specifics and examples to be amenable to much general analysis.

4.2 Insights about the nature of emotion from the *Healing: Rhetoric*

While we cannot get into a discussion of each individual emotion, there are three main insights we can draw about the nature of emotions from *Healing: Rhetoric* 3.1-5 as a whole.

1) Emotions have an effect on cognition.
2) Emotions have a positive or negative hedonic quality.
3) Emotions are distinguished from one another primarily by their objects.

The first two points should not be be surprising to readers of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which early on in the Arabic text defines emotions as follows:

> The passions [*al-ʾālām*[35]] are those things which, when the one judging is changed [*yataghayyar*] by them, their judgments differ [*yakhtalif*], and pleasure [*al-ladhdha*] and pain [*al-adhā*] are necessarily involved in their occurrence [*yalzamuhā*].[36]

In this definition, pleasure and pain are closely linked to core emotional experience, whereas changes in judgment come about *as a result* of having an emotion. The verb used to describe the place of valence in emotions is somewhat ambiguous (*yalzamuhā*), such that it could be taken to mean either that emotions are defined as pains and pleasures, or that emotions have pains and

33 83.13-17 in the Arabic, see Aristotle, *Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica* (1982). cf. 1378a in the Greek.
34 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 130-131.
35 Interestingly, Avicenna never uses the term *al-ʾālām* to refer to emotions.
36 Aristotle, *Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica* (1982) 83.

pleasures as effects. But the issue seems settled in the actual definitions of emotions which follow in Aristotle's text, since emotions are consistently defined as pleasures or pains, plus some judgment, in fairly straightforward identity statements (e.g., "anger is a pain"). So the impression Aristotle's text gives is fairly clear, and Avicenna generally follows suit, as we will see.

Like Aristotle, Avicenna provides a general definition of what an emotion is towards the start of 3.1. This definition includes mention of the effect of emotions on cognition, but leaves off any mention of pleasure and pain:

> The emotions [*al-infiʿālāt*] […] are states [*aḥwāl*] through which one's judgment differs [*yakhtalif*], through a difference [brought about by] the transformation [*takayyuf*] of the judger [when they are in that emotional state].[37]

The Arabic in this definition is compact to the point of being enigmatic, but it seems best to interpret it as approximating Aristotle's definition, given its context. That is, the definition occurs at the beginning of a discussion designed to help the rhetorician bring about emotions in the judge and jury suited to garnering sympathy for their defendant, or stoking animosity towards the accused. That this change in judgment is the result of undergoing an emotion helps explain why Avicenna described this as a kind of "subtle manipulation":[38] to convict someone of a crime merely because you are angry at them leaves plenty of room for error, since your anger can be stirred up by causes that have nothing to do with their guilt. If you become envious towards someone, you might be more likely to inflict the harm of a harsh sentence on them, however unjustified that might be. The mechanics of this transformation which brings about a change in judgment are not discussed in detail, but I discuss what might be meant here later on in chapter 4, section 5.

As mentioned, Avicenna's general definition of emotions leaves off any mention of pleasure and pain. Nonetheless, pleasure and pain are just as central throughout his particular discussions of emotions as they are for Aristotle. Avicenna describes some emotions with terms that connote positive-valence, such as pleasure [*ladhdhah*], joy [*faraḥ*], and elation [*irtiyāḥ*], while others are described in terms of negative-valence, such as pain [*ʾadhā*], agitation [*ikhtilāṭ*], or sadness [*ghamm/ḥuzn*] (see chart above). These feelings are sometimes stated without qualification, but other times they are qualified, as in a "psychological pain" or a "pain of the soul," which is just meant to distinguish this sort of pleasure or pain from physical pain and pleasure. As examples of how valence is worked into the definitions of particular emotions, we can take anger, fear and embarrassment/shame:

> As for anger, it is a psychological pain [*adhā nafsāniyyah*] owing to [*li*] a desire [*shawq*] on the part of the person for bringing about a punishment that they see as appropriate because of the thought of a slight or scorn to him, from the one toward whom he is angry. […][39]

> And as for fear, it is a pain [*ḥuzn*] and agitation [*ikhtilāṭ*] of the soul, on account of [*li*] imagining an expected, debilitating evil either reaching [the level of] corruption, or not approaching it. […][40]

37 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 130.
38 See above, fn. 28.
39 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 130.
40 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 138.

> Embarrassment and shame are a pain [*ḥuzn*] and an agitation [*ikhtilāṭ*] because of some evil deed by which the person becomes blameworthy, whether its occurrence preceded, or is present, or is expected.[41]

Rather than seeming extraneous or tacked on to emotional experience, these definitions make the positive or negative feeling central to the emotion, with the cognitive and (sometimes) appetitive components filling out the picture. Given the prominent role cognition and appetite have in emotional experience in *Psychology*, it seems unlikely that valence is meant to be taken in any sense as *more* central, so it is best to see *Rhetoric* and *Psychology* as emphasizing different essential elements of emotional experience.

These different aspects of emotional experience are never explicitly fused together by Avicenna, but it is possible to see how they might be. On the one hand, as will be discussed in chapter 1, section 5, some emotions are positive completion states, and obviously such emotions (like joy, or sociability) include some positive hedonic quality. On the other hand, there is a tradition, going back to Plato, of thinking about appetite as painful.[42] Normally hunger is an example of a painful appetite, but the point seems to generalize to higher level inclinations as well. We desire something because we lack it, and awareness of a lack typically involves some kind of discomfort. One place this is mirrored in Avicenna's other writings is in *Psychology* 4.4, when Avicenna says that certain appetites are caused when we "suffer the loss" of a pleasure.[43] So emotions are complex psychological phenomena, which involve appetites, some sort of pleasure or pain, or both,[44] and a cognition.[45]

As for the third point, that emotions are distinguished from one another primarily by their objects, this is apparent from how Avicenna approaches each particular definition. As mentioned earlier, emotions are most fundamentally acts of the motive faculty. But the motive faculty is non-cognitive, and by that very fact it is difficult to describe states solely from the point of view of the motive faculty. We can see the importance of the associated cognition for distinguishing emotions by looking at the following example, in which Avicenna distinguishes envy from vengeance and wrath:

> And there are two kinds of sadness [*ḥuzn*]: a sadness which occurs on account of the good state of one who deserves it, for the sake of the goodness of the state, and this is envy. And there is a sadness that occurs on account of the good state of one who does not deserve it, because he does not deserve it, and this is vengeance or wrath. And these two are contraries.[46]

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41 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 142.

42 See Wolfsdorf (2015).

43 Avicenna, Healing: Psychology (1959) 195.

44 Avicenna says that anger can be pleasurable, since it involves the idea of overcoming. See Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 101.

45 One might object to the conclusion that emotions all have some sort of valence by pointing out that not every emotion in the Rhetoric has pleasure or pain as part of its definition (see chart above in this section). To this I would say that Aristotle also does not include valence in all of his particular definitions, despite having explicitly built it into the generic definition at the outset. It seems that both Avicenna and Aristotle, in their respective works on the rhetoric, focus on the issues they take to be most important or illuminating about each emotion, not worrying about being utterly systematic and comprehensive. So just because Avicenna does not explicitly define some emotion as a having a valence component does not mean there is none: Aristotle sets a precedent for valence being an essential component to what an emotion is, and Avicenna never contradicts this, instead following suit in almost every particular case.

46 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 151.

Here, as is typical in the *Rhetoric*, appetite is not even mentioned. Moreover, one is not able to tell, just by inspecting the valence component, what sort of emotion is occurring. Envy and vengeance/wrath are both kinds of sadness, distinguishable only by the sort of evaluation to which they are a response: envy sees someone else's good state simply as good, while the wrathful or indignant person sees it as good and recognizes that the person in the good state does not deserve it. Avicenna makes a similar point shortly before this, distinguishing envy, which he calls a kind of sadness [*ghamm*] over the fact that *someone else* has a good, from the sadness [*ghamm*] that *you* do not have a good. The latter, he says, is not envy, but something "very close to being necessary," since it is perfectly natural be be sad that you do not have something which someone else easily acquires.[47] The distinction seems to be between being sad simply that someone else has a good, which is envy, and being sad that you lack a good, which is natural. As we will see again mirrored in our discussion of *Healing: Psychology* in chapter 1, emotions are fundamentally motive states, but to talk about and define particular emotions, we need to reference their associated cognitions.[48]

4.3 Character traits in the *Healing: Rhetoric*

Turning to *Healing: Rhetoric* 3.5, Avicenna shifts from talking about individual emotions, to the sorts of emotions towards which particular types of people are disposed. At the beginning of 3.5, Avicenna says that he will discuss people the emotions people tend towards, "according to ages, according to strengths [*ḥudūd*],[49] and according to souls."[50] What he in fact goes on to discuss are the following groups, in order: the young, the old, those in the prime of their life, those of noble lineage, and the wealthy. So it seems that "strengths" and "souls" enter into the discussion not as categories of people, but as way of talking about categories of people. For example, it is said of the old that "their anger is sharp [*ḥadīd*] [yet] weak,"[51] and of the young that they are optimistic and prone to believing others because of their hot temperament.[52] In general he is focused on the psychological attributes of the different categories he discusses. In chapter four of this dissertation, the dispositions discussed in *Rhetoric* 3.5 will be placed in context with more physiological approaches to emotional dispositions.

Stepping back, we can see how differently emotions are treated in *Healing: Rhetoric*, as compared to the texts on philosophical psychology. Avicenna does not contradict his fundamental point that emotions are primarily acts of the motive faculty, but his focus is elsewhere in the *Rhetoric*: on emotions as pleasures or pains, and on the dispositional states, triggering causes, and objects of particular emotions. It seems most likely that this shift in focus is because he is following the programme of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which in turn is attempting to provide concrete advice to the rhetorician.

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47 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 151.
48 See chapter 1, section 4.
49 This translation seems appropriate, especially given that he later goes on to use a related term, "sharp [ḥadīd] (160.10)," to describe the anger of the old.
50 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 156.
51 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 160.10.
52 Avicenna, Healing: Rhetoric (1954) 157.

5. Conclusion

Avicenna's primary way of analyzing emotions (found in his works on philosophical psychology) is as acts of various branches of the animal motive faculty. He is noteworthy for the variety of types of emotions he thinks animals are capable of, as well as for pointing to the unique aspects of human emotional life. Moreover, his account of human emotions remains grounded in the same framework as his account of animal emotions. Both sorts of emotions are acts of various branches of the shared animal motive faculty, caused by different types of evaluations.

In terms of their function, all these emotions are fundamentally inclinations of the animal soul, inclining the subject towards objects and ends. Emotions thus don't directly cause us to do things—action requires another cognition (a practical judgment) and another act of the motive faculty (resolution). Of course, not every evaluation leads to the typical inclination, this being partially dependent on physiological and psychological dispositions.

Outside of this primary analysis, Avicenna clarifies in *Healing: Categories* that emotions are passing states, as distinct from stable states like virtues and vices. Likewise, in his *Healing: Rhetoric*, we see that emotions can also be described in terms of their valence (i.e., as painful or pleasurable), and that attending to their associated cognitions is the best way of distinguishing individual emotions from one another.

Together, all these sources add up to a fairly comprehensive, creative approach to emotions—one that builds on and clarifies core aspects of the Aristotelian tradition of psychology, then expands it to make sense of more varied realities of emotional experience.