Dear Michael,

This was a slow read but a fun one! You have done major work to sort through the nitty gritty of Avicenna’s approach to emotions. I found chapter 3 especially significant, with the 4 stages leading up to voluntary movement. You deal subtly and clearly with the way Avicenna’s systematic approach combines with an occasional casualness in his language use.

My main suggestion is to add a short introduction, in which you 1) identify the main takeaways – both things that have been misunderstood or overlooked AND a short account of **what is most significant** **about Avicenna’s theory of emotion overall for philosophy**. What is unique or insightful about his approach? 2) provide a full chart of Avicenna’s classification of the faculties relevant to voluntary motion. I’m thinking something like this, even if he can be a bit flexible for example in his use of shawq or other terms.

Motive principles (mabādīʾ muḥarrika)

Cognitive Motive principles

Evaluative

imaginative

cognitive

Judgement

estimation

practical intellect

Motive faculties

efficient = means of movement

resolution (is this to be included here?)

inclining

appetite (shawq) = object brings pleasure to the external senses

concupiscent

irascible

imaginative = object brings pleasure to internal senses

rational

theoretical = attain the truth

practical = “the good”

You might even consider putting chapter 3 first, since it clarifies the structure of all the processes leading to action, while Chapters 1-2 deal specifically with the motive faculties within that larger structure.

Generally, but especially in Chapter 1, you need to give us the answer up front – here is what you think the Avicennan system really is – before you delve into the maybes and maybe-nots of how to interpret his not perfectly aligned passages.

I found the position of irascible to be mysterious, since domination seems to me to satisfy an inner need, not an external sense – but it sounds like Avicenna doesn’t say enough on the topic to allow you to clarify. This also raised other questions for me: social life and social status were tantalizingly present but not ever addressed (probably not addressed by Avicenna?). It seems obvious to me that most emotion is very much based in interpersonal interaction, which in Avicenna’s day was typically construed in very hierarchical terms. But the presence of other people is quite distant here, and limited to basic things like caring for offspring. It’s odd since we saw his Rhetoric gives a quite detailed if conventional classification of interaction types that is clearly sensitive to social status.

I wonder whether the zoomed-in level of detail in Avicenna’s account of the sequential stages leading up to action, compared to Aristotle’s quick gloss-over, is in some vague way a response to the intense disputes in kalam about whether “capacity” and (I think) “will” come before or simultaneous with action? This gets framed as a timing question in kalam even though obviously it’s really about deeper things.