

SIMO KNUUTTILA

MEDIEVAL THEORIES OF THE PASSIONS OF THE SOUL

Studies on the emotions became popular in the analytically oriented philosophy of mind in the 1980's. They have been accompanied by a great number of works on emotions in ancient philosophy, since it was realized that many central questions had already been treated in classical texts.¹ There has not been a similar boom in studies of emotions in medieval philosophy, though this is also a topic of considerable philosophical interest. My aim is to sketch some features of ancient theories and their impact on twelfth-century thought through theological, medical and philosophical literature, then to analyze the theory of the emotions in Avicenna's faculty psychology, which to a great extent dominated thirteenth-century philosophical psychology, third, to describe the influential new taxonomies of the emotions which were introduced in the thirteenth century and to comment on some problems which were associated with these and, fourth, to mention some new themes in early fourteenth-century discussions of the emotions. I mainly use the term 'emotion', since the Greek term '*pathos*' and the Latin term '*passio*' do not suggest extreme emotions as the word 'passion' nowadays might do.

EMOTIONS IN ANCIENT AND EARLY MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

In his *Philebus* Plato argued that physical pain as a feeling is primarily in the soul, though it is caused by a physical state or condition and directed to it. The bodily pain is thus an unpleasant awareness of something in one's body, and the bodily pleasure is a corresponding pleasant awareness (33d-e, 43a-c). In realizing that bodily pleasures and pains are forms of perception, Plato came to think that they are certain modes of self-disclosure, pleasant or unpleasant ways of being aware of oneself. He then applied his theory of the bodily pleasures and pains to the emotions. These also involve pleasant and

unpleasant feelings and are associated with another type of self-awareness. The emotions in which Plato is interested involve a pleasant or unpleasant awareness of oneself in relation to friends and enemies in various situations — in the tragedies and comedies of life, as Plato puts it (47d-50d).²

Plato's sketchy remarks in the *Philebus* form the first attempt to present a compositional cognitive theory of the emotions. Aristotle developed it in a much more detailed manner in his *Rhetoric* (1.10-11, 2.1-11). Aristotle argues that pleasures and distresses other than the bodily ones are caused by changes in one's image of oneself in various situations. Such feelings are then treated as components of occurrent emotions. Aristotle's analysis of various emotions in the *Rhetoric* involves the same elements as are mentioned in his other works. There are three basic components in an occurrent emotion. (1) The cognitive element is the unpremeditated evaluation which states that something positive or negative is happening to the subject or to someone else in a way that is relevant to the subject. (2) The affective element is the pleasant or unpleasant awareness of one's new state or position in the situation which is grasped by the emotional judgement. The affection is associated with physical reactions, though emotional feelings are not primarily perceptions about these but, as Aristotle says, about ourselves. (3) The dynamic element is the spontaneous behavioral suggestion toward action which is typical of the emotion in question.³

Aristotle learned the idea of the compositional analysis from Plato, but their general attitudes to emotions were very different. In Plato's view the emotional reactions, which are not based on rational deliberation, entail misguided evaluations of contingent things and bind the soul to earthly things in a way which disturbs the higher activities of the reasoning part. Emotions should be kept in strict control by continuously re-evaluating and often rejecting their behavioral suggestions. Plato has a very high opinion of the philosophical love of truth and eternal things. It is presented as a sublimated form of sexual love in the *Phaedrus*, but elsewhere it is strictly separated from the standard emotions which exist in the lower parts of the soul.

Aristotle did not share Plato's detached attitude to life. He thought that a considerable part of the good human life consists in participating in the various activities of civilized society and consequently in a complicated system of emotions, which one should learn to feel in an appropriate manner (*Eth. Nic.* 2.6). Since Aristotle regarded the edification of emotional dispositions as a central task of education, he considered it worthwhile to analyze the

cognitive structures and motivating functions of emotions both at a general level and at the level of particular types of them.

Plato and Aristotle took it for granted that it is not possible to get rid of emotions. The human soul is divided into three parts, the reasoning (*logistikón*), the spirited (*thumoeides*, Lat. *irascibilis*) and the appetitive (*epithumêtikon*, Lat. *concupiscibilis*), of which the spirited and the appetitive give rise to emotional reactions and guide judgements accordingly.⁴ The Stoics endorsed the unity of the rational soul and consequently believed that one can learn to live without emotions, which they treated as self-regarding and action initiating evaluative judgements. In fact they considered emotions as harmful mistaken judgements based on the childish habit of regarding oneself as the center of things. People should follow cosmic reason and see themselves as singular moments in the rational structure of the universe. The edification of reason and rational habits (*eupatheiai*) and the extirpation of spontaneous emotions (*apatheia*) are the basic constituents of a good life. The way to this end is through cognitive therapy. Human beings are rational animals and can become convinced of the truth of the Stoic world view which, when interiorized, makes the emotions disappear.⁵

In answering the criticism that *apatheia* is impossible the Stoics developed the doctrine of the so-called first motions. This was meant to explain why there can be something similar to emotional affections even in Stoic philosophers. At the beginning of the second book of his treatise *On Anger*, Seneca says that certain appearances can induce an affective thought which is accompanied by bodily changes. This first motion of the soul is involuntary. Seneca calls it a preparation for emotion because it suggests an emotional interpretation of the situation: I am harmed and I should exact retribution. The transient presence of this thought in the mind is not an emotion since assent to it is also needed. (Cf. the quotation from Epictetus found in the *Attic Nights* of Aulus Gellius, 19.1.17-18.) This Stoic theory of the first motions (pre-passions) proved to be very influential.

The Stoics divided emotions into four main types: pleasure (*hêdonê*) and pain (*lupê*), which relate to the present, and desire (*epithumia*) and fear (*phobos*), which relate to the future. Pleasure and desire were directed to something thought to be good and pain and fear to bad things. This systematization was very influential in ancient and medieval times and was often used also by authors who did not accept other parts of Stoic theory. It is still popular. It can be presented as follows:

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