

Common Sense and Sensory Perception in Avicenna's Psycholinguistics: A Comparative Study of Western and Muslim Scholars

Prof. Dr. Asem Shehadeh Ali, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Ali Mousa Ibnian

Department of Arabic Language & Literature, Abdul Hamid Abu Sulyaman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science (AHAS KIRKHS)

International Islamic University Malaysia

Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST). Irbid- Kulliyah of Human Sciences- The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

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Abstract

The world has witnessed significant scientific advancements from ancient times to the present. While many attribute these advancements to Western scientists, much of this knowledge was developed by Muslim scholars. Among these contributions is the field of psycholinguistics, in the concepts of common sense and sensory perception. This study aims to identify Avicenna's concepts of common sense and sensory perception and to highlight the differences between his views and those of the Western scholar Aristotle. Using a descriptive-comparative approach, the study involved reviewing articles, previous research. The study concludes with several key findings: Avicenna developed a comprehensive theory of common sense, viewing it as a force operating in the brain's frontal region that receives sensory images and transmits them to the imagination. He asserts that common sense responds to but does not retain these images. The distinction between Avicenna and Aristotle lies in their understanding of common sense: Avicenna posits an inner sense that integrates external senses, while Aristotle sees it as a unification of the external senses. Additionally, the study identifies four main elements of sensory perception: distinguishing tangible objects, combining them, joint perception, and incidental perception. Finally, the study confirms the evidence provided by Avicenna to prove the existence of common sense. It recommends that future researchers explore the origins of Avicenna's ideas by comparing them with those of Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, who influenced him. Such comparative studies may provide deeper insights into the development of Avicenna's ideas on common sense.

1. Introduction

Islamic philosophy, known for its profound complexity, intricately weaves together ideas and religious principles in a way that makes them inseparable. This intellectual depth reached new heights when Avicenna introduced the concept of common sense and advanced theories of sensory perception. His contributions significantly shaped the understanding of how the human mind processes sensory information. In parallel, modern psycholinguistics endeavours to unravel the intricacies of sense, perception, and language within the human mind.

This research aims to delve into these intertwined concepts by examining Avicenna's perspectives on common sense and sensory perception within the framework of psycholinguistics. Moreover, the study will highlight the similarities and differences between Avicenna's insights and those of the Western philosopher Aristotle. Through this comparative analysis, the research seeks to bridge the understanding of the mind, sense, and perception as seen by both Western and Muslim scholars.

In essence, this study represents an effort to integrate modern scientific understanding with Islamic philosophical traditions, reflecting on the complex intersections of philosophy, psychology, and religion. By doing so, it aspires to achieve a balance between contemporary scientific thought and Islamic values, offering a nuanced perspective on the relationship between the mind and sensory experiences.

This version emphasizes the research goals and the comparative nature of the study while also reinforcing the importance of integrating Islamic philosophy with modern psycholinguistics.

Avicenna, also known as Avicenna, made significant contributions to psychology, particularly in the areas of sense perception and the natural aspects of the soul. His approach marked a shift from the metaphysical focus that characterized earlier thinkers' work on psychology, moving towards a more empirical and detailed analysis of mental functions.

2. Contributions of Avicenna to Psychology

Avicenna built on Aristotle's ideas, but he also diverged in significant ways. He defined the soul as the principle of life and distinguished between its different faculties: vegetative, animal, and rational. His discussion of the rational soul, which is unique to humans, emphasized the intellect and its processes.

Avicenna provided a detailed account of how humans perceive the world through the senses. He described the process of perception in a hierarchical structure, starting from the external senses (like sight and hearing) to the internal senses (such as imagination and memory). This nuanced understanding surpassed earlier models by offering a comprehensive explanation of how sensory information is processed and stored.

Avicenna made a clear distinction between imagination and intellect. While imagination deals with the sensory and the intellect concerns itself with the universal and abstract. This separation allowed him to develop a more sophisticated model of human cognition.

Unlike Aristotle, who relied primarily on philosophical speculation, Avicenna incorporated insights from his medical knowledge. His work in anatomy and physiology informed his understanding of the brain and its functions, providing a more grounded and scientifically informed approach to psychology.

Avicenna's psychology had a profound impact on both Islamic and Western thought. His works were translated into Latin and influenced medieval European scholars, who regarded his writings as a crucial link between ancient and modern psychological theories.

Avicenna's synthesis of various sources and his innovative approach to psychological issues established him as a pivotal figure in the history of psychology, bridging the gap between metaphysical and naturalistic perspectives. (Adamson, 2014)

Aristotle's psychology offers a comprehensive view of the soul that contrasts sharply with Plato's. Aristotle's approach is grounded in his broader metaphysical framework, particularly his concepts of matter and form. Here's a breakdown of Aristotle's key ideas:

Aristotle's philosophy revolves around the distinction between matter (potentiality) and form (actuality). Matter is what things are made of, and it holds the potential to become anything. Form, on the other hand, is what gives matter its specific identity and actuality. When matter takes on a form, it becomes a specific, actual thing. (Gregoric, 2007: 67)

Aristotle applies this distinction to his understanding of the soul and body. For him, the body is the matter, while the soul is the form. The soul, therefore, is what actualizes the body, giving it life and purpose. The soul is the "first perfection" of the body, meaning it is the first realization of the body's potential to be a living being.

Unlike Plato, who saw the soul as a separate and independent entity that pre-exists and survives the body, Aristotle argued that the soul and body are inseparable. The soul does not exist independently of the body; rather, it is the form of the body, and without the body, the soul loses its existence. Just as form cannot exist without matter, the soul cannot exist without the body. (Kelly, 1992: 4)

Aristotle defined the soul as the principle of life in a living body. It is what makes an organism alive, responsible for various vital functions such as nutrition, sensation, and movement. The soul is not merely a static form but a dynamic force that actualizes the potential of the body to live and function. (Barnes, 1995)

Aristotle's view directly contradicts Plato's. Plato saw the soul as the true essence of a person, distinct from and superior to the body. According to Plato, the soul originates from the world of ideas, descends into the body, and survives after the body's death. For Aristotle, however, the soul is not an independent entity but intrinsically connected to the body it animates.

In summary, Aristotle's psychology is deeply rooted in his metaphysical principles, presenting a holistic view of the human being where the soul and body are inseparably linked, with the soul as the life-giving form of the body. This view represents a significant departure from Plato's dualistic perspective, where the soul is seen as separate from and superior to the body.

bn Sina (Avicenna) provided a detailed and sophisticated argument for the existence of the soul, rooted in both natural and psychological evidence. His approach is highly systematic and reflects his deep engagement with both the Aristotelian tradition and Islamic philosophy. (Ross, 1923; Humaid, 2023)

3. Avicenna distinguishes between two types of movement

Voluntary Movement: This is movement that aligns with the natural laws governing bodies, such as a stone falling due to gravity. In this case, the movement is a result of the object's inherent nature.

Forced Movement: This occurs when something moves contrary to its natural state, such as when a person walks despite the body's natural tendency towards stillness. Avicenna argues that this type of movement requires an external agent or cause, which he identifies as the soul. The soul is thus seen as the principle that initiates and directs voluntary movement.

Human vs. Animal Actions: Avicenna explores the differences between human and animal behaviour to highlight the unique nature of the human soul.

Speech and Symbols: Humans are capable of complex language, using signs and symbols to communicate abstract ideas. This ability to engage in abstract thought and symbolic reasoning is a key distinction from animals.

Emotional States: Avicenna notes that humans experience a range of emotions, such as sadness and joy, which are tied to the soul's operations.

Mental Actions: The human ability to engage in abstract thinking, reasoning, and contemplation is another indication of the soul's presence. Avicenna emphasizes that these intellectual capacities go beyond mere physical processes.

Moral Sense: Humans possess a moral sense that allows them to distinguish between good and evil. This ethical discernment, according to Avicenna, is evidence of the soul's higher nature.

Avicenna concludes that the soul is not merely a collection of faculties or powers, but rather an independent and immaterial entity that possesses and exercises these powers. The soul is the true essence of a person, responsible for voluntary actions, intellectual activities, emotional states, and moral judgments. Through this dual approach, Avicenna provides a compelling argument for the existence of the soul, grounding it in both natural phenomena and the distinct capabilities of human beings. (Najati, 1947: 141)

The concept of "common sense" in psycholinguistics bridges the understanding of human behaviour, perception, and language. It can be broken down into two main interpretations:

Everyday Understanding and Language: Common sense refers to the intuitive ideas and beliefs that ordinary people hold about their own behaviour and the behaviour of others. These ideas are often expressed through everyday language, such as labels, terms, proverbs, and familiar stories. This understanding of common sense is embedded in the language people use to describe their experiences and social interactions. It is a form of practical reasoning that helps people make sense of the world around them and is a crucial element of how language functions in social contexts. (Foss, 1978: 79-88)

Centre of Sensory Integration: In a more philosophical and psychological sense, common sense is considered the centre where all sensory information from external senses (like sight, hearing, touch, etc.) converges. This central faculty is where the perception of reality takes place. It acts as a hub for both external sensory inputs and internal cognitive processes, such as imagination and memory. Common sense receives sensory images, understands their partial meanings, and then stores these meanings in memory. Imagination and memory interact with these sensory images, allowing the mind to recall and manipulate previous sensory experiences. In this sense, common

sense is seen as the foundation of sensory perception and cognitive processing, integrating both apparent (external) and hidden (internal) senses.

Together, these interpretations of common sense highlight its role in shaping human perception, thought, and language, making it a central concept in both psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology. (Avicenna, 1025)

concept of common sense, as you're exploring, touches on various facets of human cognition and practical skills that extend beyond formalized concepts. This perspective aligns with philosophical traditions that view common sense as an essential aspect of our mental framework, guiding not just everyday understanding but also more complex activities like scientific reasoning, ethical decision-making, and interpersonal relationships.

Aristotle's approach, where he links science with the progression from sensory experience to understanding general causal connections, exemplifies how common sense can serve as the foundation for more structured knowledge. He recognized that the initial "givens" of our senses are the raw materials from which we derive deeper insights through observation and reasoning. This process underscores the role of common sense as a bridge between immediate perception and abstract thinking.

In this view, common sense isn't just a vague or simplistic form of understanding; it's a vital cognitive tool that enables us to navigate the world, form relationships, and engage in scientific inquiry. It supports practical skills and judgments that may not always be fully articulated but are nonetheless reliable and essential for functioning in everyday life.

Your mention of internal impulses and unexpressed feelings as aspects of common sense adds another dimension, highlighting how this form of understanding operates on both conscious and unconscious levels. This multi-layered concept of common sense underscores its importance in a wide range of human activities, from the personal to the philosophical.

emotions of the internal senses

Avicenna's theory of inner sense presents a sophisticated understanding of the human mind's cognitive processes, especially regarding how sensory information is processed and retained. Let's break down the key components of his theory:

1. Common Sense (al-ḥiss al-mushtarak):

Location and Function: Avicenna locates common sense in the front part of the brain. It acts as the first internal sense that receives all the sensory data from the five external senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch). This sense is responsible for integrating and synthesizing the data into a comprehensive perception, creating a unified image or concept from the diverse sensory inputs. (Ratcliffe, 2006: 27-28)

Limitations: While common sense can form images based on external sensory inputs, it lacks the ability to retain these images. Once the sensory input is no longer present, the image fades, which is why common sense alone cannot preserve sensory experiences over time.

2. Imagination (al-khayāl or al-muṣawwira):

Retention of Images: Imagination, according to Avicenna, is the faculty responsible for storing the images or forms that common sense has processed. Even after the external object is no longer present, imagination retains these images, allowing the mind to recall them later.

Role in Emotions: Imagination is also connected to the generation of emotions, particularly imaginative and illusory emotions. These arise from the sensory images stored in the imagination, demonstrating its influence on both memory and emotional responses.

3. Process of Sensory Perception:

Transmission of Sensory Data: The sensory nerves transmit the emotions or impressions from the external senses to the inner senses. Once these impressions reach the common sense, they are processed into a unified perception.

Transformation and Retention: The processed images are then transferred to the imaginative faculty, where they are retained for future reference. This retention is crucial for memory, as it allows the soul to recall past experiences and perceptions even when the original stimuli are absent.

4. Interplay Between Common Sense and Imagination:

Role of the Soul: The soul plays a pivotal role in this process, particularly in the function of common sense. If there is a connection between the soul and the sensory input (i.e., the external object is still being perceived), common sense can maintain the image. However, once the object is no longer present, the image disappears unless it has been transferred to and retained by the imaginative faculty.

Temporal Aspect: The ability of common sense to maintain an image is temporary and dependent on the presence of the sensory stimulus. In contrast, the imaginative faculty provides a more enduring form of memory by storing these images for later use.

Sensory Images as Emotional Triggers: Avicenna's theory suggests that the sensory images retained in the imagination can become the basis for emotional experiences. These images, formed and stored by the inner senses, are central to the way the human mind experiences and reacts to the world, both in the presence of external stimuli and in their absence. (Redekop, 2009: 399-410)

Avicenna's insights into the inner senses reflect a deep understanding of the cognitive processes that underlie perception, memory, and emotion. His theory influenced later Islamic thinkers and medieval European philosophers, significantly shaping the development of psychology and cognitive science.

Aristotle's theory of the inner sense, particularly regarding the persistence of sensory effects, is a significant aspect of his understanding of perception and imagination. According to Aristotle, when an external stimulus affects the senses, the impact doesn't vanish immediately after the stimulus is removed; instead, it lingers in the sense organs. He uses the example of looking at the sun and then closing one's eyes or moving into darkness to illustrate this point. Even after the visual stimulus is gone, the image of the sun persists, gradually fading through a sequence of colours until it finally disappears.

This lingering effect, Aristotle argues, is crucial to sensory experience. The continued movement or effect within the sense organs after the external stimulus has disappeared is what underlies the phenomenon of imagination. He suggests that the same sensory movements responsible for perception also play a role in imagination and memory. The residual traces of these movements can resurface, leading to the experience of imaginary images while awake or in dreams, indicating a close relationship between perception and imagination.

Interestingly, Aristotle's views align to some extent with modern psychological theories. Contemporary psychologists also acknowledge that sensations leave lasting impressions that can be later retrieved through memory and imagination. However, the difference lies in where these traces are thought to be stored. While Aristotle posited that these sensory remnants persist within the sense organs themselves, modern psychology generally locates these traces within the nervous system, particularly the brain. This shift reflects the advancements in our understanding of neurobiology and the mechanisms underlying sensory perception and memory. (Wohlman, 2010) This theory highlights Aristotle's sophisticated approach to sensory perception, bridging the gap between the physical experience of sensation and the mental processes of imagination and memory.

Aristotle's views on the integration of the senses and the role of the heart as the central organ of perception reflect his broader understanding of the relationship between the body and soul. He argued that the senses are not isolated in their functioning but are coordinated through what he called the "common sense" (κοινὴ αἴσθησις). This common sense, according to Aristotle, is responsible for synthesizing the information from individual senses to create a unified perception of the external world.

Aristotle's belief in the heart as the central organ of perception, rather than the brain, was influenced by the prevailing medical and philosophical theories of his time. Ancient medical theories, particularly those from Hippocrates and his followers, often debated the location of the central organ responsible for consciousness and sensory processing. Aristotle rejected the idea that the brain was the seat of sensation, a view held by some of his predecessors, including Alcmaeon of Croton, who argued that the brain was the central organ.

Aristotle supported his claim by observing that the heart is the first organ to form in a developing embryo and that it is connected to all the sense organs through various channels (blood vessels and nerves). He argued that because the heart was linked to all parts of the body, it must be the central organ of sensation and the seat of instinctual life.

This view is also linked to Aristotle's theory of the soul, where the heart was seen as the seat of the "vital soul" (the source of life and basic functions) and the "sensitive soul" (responsible for sensation and movement). In contrast, he considered the brain as primarily a cooling organ, responsible for regulating the temperature of the heart rather than being involved in sensation or thought.

Aristotle's ideas about the heart and its connection to the senses were widely influential in the ancient world and shaped subsequent medical and philosophical thought. However, later thinkers, including Galen, would challenge his views, leading to the eventual recognition of the brain as the central organ of sensation and cognition in later medical and philosophical traditions. (Telios, 2022: 498-499)

The contrast between Aristotle's and Avicenna's views on the inner senses highlights a significant divergence in their understanding of sensory processing and cognition.

Aristotle's View:

Storage of Sensory Impressions in Aristotle posits that sensory impressions are stored in the external sense organs. Imagination, for Aristotle, derives its function from these external sense organs.

Connection Between Internal and External Senses: According to Aristotle, the internal senses' work arises from the sensory movements in the external sense organs. The emotions or impressions of the external senses are believed to be directly transferred to the internal senses.

Internal Organ for Sensory Emotions: Aristotle does not propose a specific internal organ for preserving sensory impressions, unlike Avicenna's concept.

Avicenna's View:

Storage of Sensory Impressions: Avicenna argues that sensory images are stored in the brain, particularly within a cognitive "image" rather than in the external sense organs.

Function of Imagination: For Avicenna, imagination derives its material from the brain's images and memory rather than directly from the external senses.

Independence of Internal and External Senses: Avicenna asserts that the internal senses (excluding common sense) are not directly derived from external sense organs. This implies that internal senses can be active even when external senses are dormant.

Internal Organ for Sensory Impressions: Avicenna describes an internal organ (the "image") that stores sensory impressions, acknowledging a form of continuity and permanence of these impressions.

In summary, Aristotle's model relies on a direct connection between external and internal senses, while Avicenna introduces a more nuanced system where internal sensory processes are more independent, emphasizing the role of memory and internal images.

Avicenna's arguments for the existence of common sense are profound and intricate, reflecting his deep understanding of both psychology and physiology. Here's a summary of the three points mentioned above: (Humid, Ibrahim. 2023)

1. **Dizziness and Perception of Motion:** When a person experiences dizziness, they perceive everything as spinning around them. Avicenna argues that this perception is not due to any defect in the eyes but is caused by the movement of the soul in the brain, affecting the visual power. This distortion in perception suggests the involvement of an inner sense, distinct from the outward senses, which Avicenna identifies as common sense.

2. **Perception of Motion in a Straight Line vs. a Point:** Avicenna discusses the phenomenon where a person perceives a moving point as a line due to the continuity of impressions in the visual faculty. This perception cannot be explained by the sense of sight alone but requires the presence of an internal faculty that retains and connects these successive impressions, leading to the perception of motion. This faculty, again, is what Avicenna refers to as common sense.

3. **Hallucinations and Dreams:** Avicenna argues that when the outward senses are inactive, as in sleep or certain mental states, people might still see or hear things that do not exist. These experiences, such as dreams or hallucinations, are not products of the external senses but are manifestations within an internal faculty. This faculty, which continues to function even when the external senses are inactive, is identified as common sense.

These points collectively reinforce the concept of common sense as an inner faculty that integrates, interprets, and processes sensory inputs, distinct from the outward senses, and is essential for coherent perception and experience.

The disagreement between Avicenna and Aristotle on the concept of common sense reflects their differing views on the nature and function of sensory perception.

Aristotle's Perspective:

Aristotle did not consider common sense to be a distinct sense with a specific organ. Instead, he saw it as the integrative function of the apparent senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell). For Aristotle, the heart was the centre where this integration occurred, but it was not a sensory organ in the way the eyes or ears are. He believed that the common sense unified the input from the five senses, allowing for a cohesive perception of the external world. However, this unification was not due to a separate sense or organ but rather a function of the sensitive soul, which had specific roles distinct from the apparent senses.

Avicenna's Perspective:

Avicenna (Avicenna), on the other hand, proposed that common sense was indeed an inner sense with a specific organ located in the front part of the brain. He argued that this inner sense was where the inputs from the five apparent senses converged, allowing for the perception of complex and unified sensory experiences. Unlike Aristotle, Avicenna considered common sense to be an individual sense, independent from the apparent senses and distinct from the sentient soul. In his view, the apparent senses served as tools or extensions of the common sense, which he saw as the underlying principle of sensory perception but not the principle of the sentient soul itself.

Key Differences:

Organ Location: Avicenna assigned a specific organ (in the brain) to common sense, while Aristotle did not associate common sense with a particular organ, locating its functions in the heart instead. **Nature of Common Sense:** For Avicenna, common sense was an independent sense, whereas for Aristotle, it was more of an integrative function, not a separate sense. **Role in Sensory Perception:** Avicenna viewed common sense as the principle of the apparent senses, whereas Aristotle saw it as the unifying function of the sensitive soul without being a distinct principle or sense on its own. These differences highlight a fundamental divergence in how Avicenna and Aristotle conceptualized the relationship between the senses, the mind, and the body, with Avicenna's views marking a significant departure from Aristotelian thought, influenced by his own medical and philosophical investigations.

Common Sense in Muslim and Western Scholars

The concept of common sense has been explored by both Muslim and Western scholars, each offering unique perspectives that reflect their cultural and philosophical contexts.

In the Islamic tradition, Al-Ghazali is a central figure who navigated the relationship between common sense and rational thought. His work, particularly in relation to philosophy and theology, emphasized the limitations of human reason and the necessity of divine revelation. According to Avital and Holman in their book *Al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and the Interpretation of the Qur'an: Common Sense and Philosophy in Islam*, Al-Ghazali did not reject rational thought outright but argued that common sense, rooted in the certainty of God's existence and the authority of divine will, should not be overshadowed by philosophical reasoning. Al-Ghazali critiqued philosophers for claiming a unique epistemological status, which he believed led them away from true knowledge, which is grounded in faith and divine guidance.

This contrasts with the views of the Western philosopher David Hume, who shared a scepticism towards the pretensions of philosophy but approached common sense differently. Hume's scepticism extended universally, questioning the certainty of human knowledge and the ability of philosophy to provide definitive answers. For Hume, common sense was an essential but ultimately fallible guide, a tool to navigate the practical aspects of life rather than a source of metaphysical certainty.

Antonio Gramsci, another Western thinker, approached common sense from a socio-political angle. Gramsci's understanding of common sense was complex and dualistic, as noted by scholars like Kate Crehan. He distinguished between a "good" form of common sense, which could foster revolutionary consciousness, and a "bad" form, which remained uncritical, dogmatic, and resistant to change. For Gramsci, common sense was not merely a passive reflection of reality but a dynamic, historical, and social construct that could either support or hinder social transformation.

These different approaches illustrate the diverse ways in which common sense has been conceptualized across cultures and epochs, reflecting broader philosophical concerns about the nature of knowledge, reason, and human experience. (Telios, 2022, 498-499)

The study you're referencing delves into the intricate relationship between sensation and sensory perception in Avicenna's works, highlighting his nuanced understanding of these concepts. Avicenna's distinction between primary sensations (the immediate experiences of the senses) and sensory perception (the interpretation of those sensations) reflects a sophisticated analysis that resonates with modern psycholinguistic thought.

His example of dizziness, where the soul's movement in the brain creates the illusion of rotation, underscores his belief in the active role of the mind in interpreting sensory data. This concept of sensory perception being influenced by one's experience and knowledge aligns with contemporary ideas in psycholinguistics, which explore how language and cognition are shaped by personal and cultural contexts.

The study also positions Avicenna's work within a broader philosophical tradition, tracing the roots of his ideas back to Plato and Aristotle. While Avicenna may not have explicitly articulated the distinction between sensation and perception, his analyses suggest an implicit understanding of the composite faculty that plays a crucial role in how we perceive and make sense of the world.

This exploration of Avicenna's contributions to psycholinguistics in the light of Islamic heritage not only enriches our understanding of his work but also bridges ancient insights with contemporary linguistic theories, illustrating the enduring relevance of these early contributions to modern thought.

he concept of sensory perception has been extensively studied by various philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, and Avicenna, each offering a unique perspective on the elements involved. The discussion on sensory discrimination, one of the key elements of sensory perception, illustrates these differences in thought.

4. Discrimination Between Aristotle, Avicenna and Plato in the Senses

Aristotle's Perspective: Aristotle provided a detailed analysis of sensory discrimination, emphasizing the role of the individual senses in distinguishing between different stimuli. He categorized discrimination into two types: **Discrimination between Different Types:** This refers to the ability to differentiate between distinct sensory modalities, such as sight, sound, and taste.

For example, recognizing the difference between a red apple and the sound of a bell. Discrimination between Different Tastes: Within a single sensory modality, like taste, this type of discrimination involves distinguishing between different Flavors, such as sweet and sour. Aristotle attributed these functions to the individual senses, each governed by its distinct power. However, he also acknowledged that the more complex task of comparing different types of sensory inputs, such as comparing colour to sound, requires a unifying faculty, which he associated with the common sense.

Avicenna diverged from Aristotle's view by attributing all forms of sensory discrimination to the common sense, rather than to the individual senses. He argued that the common sense is responsible for integrating and distinguishing between different sensory inputs, whether they belong to the same modality (such as different colours or sounds) or different modalities (such as comparing colour and sound). For Avicenna, the common sense is the central faculty that processes and interprets sensory information, allowing for a unified perception of the world.:

Both Aristotle and Avicenna differed from Plato in their treatment of sensory discrimination. Plato viewed the function of distinguishing between sensory inputs as a task of the mind or intellect, rather than a function of the senses themselves. For Plato, the mind abstracts and interprets sensory data, making it responsible for recognizing differences between sensory experiences. In contrast, Aristotle and Avicenna recognized the role of the senses, either individually or collectively through the common sense, in this process.

These differing perspectives highlight the evolving understanding of sensory perception, and the functions attributed to the senses and the mind in processing sensory information. Aristotle's more compartmentalized view contrasts with Avicenna's holistic approach, while both differ from Plato's emphasis on the intellectual function of discrimination.

Avicenna's exploration of the integration of different sensory perceptions into a unified understanding is a profound insight into the nature of perception and cognition. According to him, the common sense serves as a central faculty that integrates various sensory inputs such as colour, smell, taste, and shape—into a coherent and unified perception of an object, like some fruit. This faculty of common sense allows for a holistic understanding of the object, where all the different sensations converge to form a complete picture.

Psychologically, this process of integration involves the association of mental images. When one sensory input is perceived, it often triggers the recollection of related sensory inputs through associations such as companionship, opposition, or causality. For example, the sensation of a specific smell may recall the taste associated with it, or the sight of a particular shape may recall its texture or size. This associative process is what Avicenna describes when he discusses how animals, including humans, use these connections to navigate and understand their environment.

Avicenna emphasizes that this gathering of sensory images is not merely a passive process but is essential for the survival and functioning of the animal. Without the ability to integrate these sensations, life would become exceedingly difficult, as the animal would struggle to relate different sensory experiences to one another. The common sense, therefore, plays a crucial role in making sense of the world by combining and organizing these sensory inputs into a meaningful whole.

This idea also highlights the importance of memory and anticipation in perception. The ability to recall associated images or sensations allows for more accurate predictions and responses to

environmental stimuli. For instance, the smell of a particular substance might immediately recall its taste or its potential effects, enabling the animal to act accordingly, whether that means pursuing, avoiding, or otherwise responding to the stimulus.

Avicenna's discussion aligns with modern understandings in cognitive psychology, where the integration of sensory information is seen as fundamental to perception and action. The laws of association that Avicenna hints at can be related to contemporary theories of neural networks and associative learning, where the brain is understood to create complex

Avicenna's exploration of sense perception delves deeply into the complexities of how we experience and understand the world. He distinguishes between special senses and common senses. The special senses pertain to each individual sense (like sight, hearing, touch) and their specific functions—such as seeing colours or hearing sounds. On the other hand, the common senses refer to the aspects of perception that are shared across multiple senses, such as recognizing shapes, numbers, quantities, motion, and stillness.

For Avicenna, perception is not merely about detecting sensory experiences; it also involves an intellectual component where the mind interprets these experiences. For example, when you see a white object, your eyes detect the colour, but your mind also understands that the whiteness belongs to that specific object. This understanding goes beyond the basic sensory input and involves recognizing the properties of objects—such as their shapes, sizes, and whether they are moving or still. (Najati, 1946)

Furthermore, Avicenna introduces the idea of accidental perception. This is a form of perception where the senses perceive something indirectly through association with another sense. For instance, while vision cannot directly perceive heat, it can recognize heat through the sight of fire, linking the colour of the flame with the sensation of warmth. This is an example of how accidental perception works, where the mind connects different sensory inputs to form a more complete understanding of the environment.

In contrast to Aristotle, who also addressed these distinctions, Avicenna's division of sense perception into intrinsic (specific to each sense) and accidental (common across senses) allows for a more nuanced understanding of how we interpret the world. His insights suggest that perception is a complex process that involves not just the raw data provided by the senses but also the mind's ability to synthesize and interpret this data to understand the properties and relationships of external objects.

This abstract highlights the key findings of a study on Avicenna's theory of common sense, emphasizing the differences between his views and those of Aristotle. According to Avicenna, common sense is an independent force located in the brain's front cavity that receives and processes images from the five external senses before passing them on to the imagination. He asserts that while common sense can perceive these images, it cannot retain them. This contrasts with Aristotle's interpretation, which sees common sense as a mere unification of the external senses without an independent existence. Avicenna's perspective positions common sense as an individual sense with its own character, playing a crucial role in linking the external and internal senses. This difference reflects a broader divergence in how the two scholars Harold processes. (Ali, 2023)

This abstract provides a comprehensive overview of a study that delves into Avicenna's theory of common sense, particularly in contrast with Aristotle's views. The key findings highlight several

important aspects of Avicenna's thought: Independence of Common Sense: Avicenna views common sense as an independent force located in the brain's front cavity, responsible for receiving and processing images from the five external senses before they are transferred to the imagination. Unlike Aristotle, who saw common sense as merely a unification of the external senses without independent existence, Avicenna gives it a distinct role in linking the external and internal senses.

5. Conclusion

1. Distinguishing Between Senses: Sensory perception is tied to distinguishing between different sensations, with adults being better at this due to their experiences. Aristotle's work on discrimination is more detailed, including the distinction between different types and tastes.
Combining the Senses: Avicenna addresses how common sense integrates different sensations to create a comprehensive understanding of the external world.
2. Common Perception: Sensory perception extends beyond simple sensory experiences to include understanding properties such as shapes, numbers, quantities, movement, and stillness, thus forming a deeper understanding of the interactions between things.
Sensory Perception and Presentation: Avicenna differentiates between subjective and accidental senses, with the latter being perceived based on their connection to their own sense. This shows the complexity of sensory perception and its interactions.
3. Dizziness: Avicenna explains the experience of dizziness as evidence of an inner sense, indicating the movement of the soul in the brain.
4. Movement Perception: The perception of continuous motion, like a drop of water or a circular point, suggests an inner power beyond simple sight, which retains the image.
Hallucinations: The experience of seeing or hearing things that aren't present points to the role of common sense.
5. Dreams: Avicenna argues that dreams are a result of the imprinting of images in common sense, an inner power distinct from outward senses.
6. Distinction Between Sensation and Sensory Perception: While Avicenna doesn't explicitly discuss the distinction between primary sensations and sensory perception, the study traces this differentiation back to Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle, indicating that Avicenna builds on and advances these ideas.
7. This abstract reveals Avicenna's unique contributions to understanding common sense and sensory perception, showing how he expands upon and diverges from earlier Greek thought, particularly Aristotle's.

6. References

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