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LOVE AND EMOTIONAL FIT: WHAT DOES CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY TELL US ABOUT UNFITTING EMOTIONS?[1]

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There are many things to say about the role of the emotions in the moral life, and moral philosophers have been saying them for a long time. For example, Aristotle treats the training of the emotions as an aspect of moral development such that the sign of a virtuous person is his taking pleasure in the good and being pained by the bad.[2] The pre-Christian discussion of morality and the emotions in Aristotle and other philosophers is quite sophisticated. In more recent moral philosophy there has been quite a lot of attention given to the discovery by Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson of a distinction between the fittingness of an emotion and the propriety of the same.[3] Meanwhile, there is also a sophisticated discussion of the emotions in Christian theology stretching back at least as far as Augustine. There has been even more attention to the relevance of Christian theology to the emotions; much has been said in particular about the role of the emotions in the practice of Christianity. Although it seems that never so far has this discussion met the one initiated by D'Arms and Jacobson, the twain *should* meet all the same. It appears that no one has yet explained what Christian theology tells us about the importance—or, more properly, the lack thereof—of emotional fit for the emotions involved in Christian love. I aim to explain it here—or at least to make a beginning of explaining it.

But first a short digression on emotional theory is necessary. To begin with, I must explain emotional fit. Emotions are not empty feelings. They convey information about a situation. My anger at Sudan's treatment of its people conveys some information: that Sudan's

behavior is morally atrocious. Information conveyed by an emotion, like information conveyed by a perception, may sometimes be inaccurate—and that is what the topic of emotional fit is all about. If I reflect on my emotions, I may put the terms of their construals into words, forming propositions such as 'Sudan's government has committed injustices.' The evaluative content of an emotion may or may not fit the situation it evaluates, depending on whether or not the information conveyed is accurate. Emotional fit is present when an emotion's content is accurate. If it is true that Sudan's government has committed atrocities, then my emotion fits the situation it construes in virtue of construing it accurately.

That there is such a thing as emotional fit, and that emotions have content which describes a situation, is an understanding of the emotions arising from cognitivism in the theory of emotions. Cognitivism is one party (and, I take it, the correct party) to a grand dispute in philosophy over the nature of the emotions. According to one theory, emotions are merely feelings; this theory of the emotions is associated with the 1800s thinkers William James and Carl Lange. Opposed to this view is cognitivism, the theory that emotions involve thoughts, judgments, or perceptions of reality; they construe or portray reality.[4] In an extreme version (that of the ancient Stoics), emotions are simply judgments; in other versions emotions may be taken to be perceptions, or at least *like* perceptions in that they convey information about a situation, or to consist of our felt responses to our perceptions. I myself adhere to the version of cognitivism touted by Robert Roberts, which seems to me correctly to account for both the cognitive and the non-cognitive aspects of the emotions. Roberts holds that emotions are concern-based construals. We have deep concerns—things we care about. An emotion is what happens when we see the world in a way shaped by our concerns. For example, I love my wife, and that love is a concern; when I become aware of something (perhaps her smile), in a way

shaped by that concern, my awareness is an emotion (perhaps happiness). As construals—something rather like perceptions—emotions have content. At the same time, they are not merely conveyors of content; they are also things which are *felt*, for they are largely passive responses to a situation based on what we *care* about, not only on what we *think*.[5] In all versions of cognitivism, of course, an *un*fitting emotion is one with some inaccurate content.

One additional aspect of cognitivism may call for a brief explanation. Generally speaking, *voluntarism* is the theory that will and choice are fundamental—that we have an ability to freely choose or to will what we do. Now voluntarism in the emotions sometimes accompanies cognitivism. A strong theory of voluntarism might say that will is absolute, that we have complete control over what we choose to believe and, accordingly, that we have complete control over how we choose to evaluate a situation—and thus over our emotions. A weaker voluntarism might only posit that we have partial control over what we feel; for example, since emotions have content, a rational belief formed in response to evidence may lead to a more fitting emotion. Some of our control, on a weak voluntarism, might be indirect; perhaps I have very little control over what I will feel *today* if someone treats me disrespectfully, but I may be able to modify my emotional habits over time, learning to respond with less anger in the future. Emotions are neither reducible to their content nor in all cases wholly and directly responsive to our judgments and perceptions; but we have some ability to choose what we feel. (As will likely become plain later on to the attentive reader, it seems to me that Roberts' view fits nicely with a weak voluntarism.)

It is not my intention to defend Roberts' or any other account of the cognitive character of emotions. May it suffice to say that I am persuaded of Roberts' view myself, but aim to explore an aspect of cognitivism in general, and of Roberts' account in particular, which has not

yet been adequately understood. That aspect is the role of *un*fitting emotions in the virtue of love, theologically understood. Having fitting emotions and *not* having *un*fitting emotions is a desideratum for the emotional life, analogous to the desideratum for the intellectual life that we have true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. But it is not the *only* desideratum. D'Arms and Jacobson have argued that emotional fit is not the only desideratum when it comes to the emotions. In what follows I shall show that they are correct, or at least that they are correct given their or Roberts' version of cognitivism, and I shall build on their insights. The requirements of Christian love may overrule emotional fit, for love looks to the good of the beloved and seeks to build up the beloved into what she ought to be. Kierkegaard helps to show that this requires some emotions which view the beloved according to the terms of this holy teleology, and not according to her present state; many of these emotions will be unfitting, but at the same time they may bring about better fit.

Now this is an important consequence of Christian theology for emotional cognitivism, which has, as far as I can see, gone unnoticed until now. Moreover, it helps to refute not only the error of any view which would overemphasize the importance of emotional fit, but also the view that our emotions should always express our own assessments of a situation—or of a person. Sometimes it is simply more important that our emotions be involved in the *healing* of the situation—or of the person; and sometimes emotional fit can get in the way of healing. Perhaps most importantly, this analysis shows that there is a largely unexplored connection between Christian theology and moral philosophy—the requirements of Christian love *vis-à-vis* emotional fit.

In summary, I shall show that the emotional life has four features. First, *Feature A*: Several desiderata in addition to fit should regulate our emotional lives. Second, *Feature B*: The

fittingness of our emotions should at times be subordinated to these other desiderata. I shall show in Section I that Features A and B are present in the emotional life. In Section II I shall present *Feature C*: Some emotions have an effect on their own fittingness. In particular, a loving relationship at times includes unfitting emotions, but the very emotions involved in love bring about a better fit with their object. This I shall explain in Section III, where I shall also present one of its consequences, *Feature D*: We should cultivate a disposition to loving emotions that are occasionally unfitting yet help to bring about better fit.[6] This final feature is suggested in particular by Christian theology, as Kierkegaard helps to show. In Section IV I shall consider how a Christian might cultivate unfitting emotions which are both healing and restorative of fit.

I

EMOTIONAL FIT AND OTHER DESIDERATA FOR THE EMOTIONS

Emotional fit is neither the only desideratum nor always an overriding desideratum for the emotions. According to D'Arms and Jacobson, we can evaluate an emotion either by its correctness, asking if it accurately portrays its object, or by examining its propriety, asking whether it is *right* to have the emotion. To conflate these ways of evaluation is to commit what they dub 'the moralistic fallacy,' confusing the fittingness of an emotion with its propriety.[7] We commit the moralistic fallacy by assuming either that an emotion's immorality guarantees its unfittingness or that its morality guarantees its fittingness.[8]

Let's look at two examples, beginning with a case inspired by Aristotle. Virtue is a mean between two extremes; if I incline towards one extreme I should carry myself towards the opposite extreme and so end up close to the middle.[9] I should actually *try* to have a *vice*, but a vice opposite of my own! Now courage is a mean between cowardice and rashness. Having a tendency to feel overconfident is a symptom of rashness, but it is good for a cowardly person to

be a little overconfident so as to cultivate courage. Confidence construes a challenging situation as manageable; *over*confidence construes it as less challenging than it really is—or one's abilities to overcome it as greater than they really are. Overconfidence is an unfitting emotion; its construal does not match the situation it construes. But since it is good, all things considered, for a coward trying to become braver to be overconfident, this unfitting emotion is proper. To reason from its propriety and conclude that it fits is therefore an instance of the moralistic fallacy.

D'Arms and Jacobson suggest a second case: Your elderly mother is mentally ill, and so demanding that taking care of her is a challenge you don't think you can meet. To protect your family and your mother, 'you decide to put her in a nursing home. You're convinced this is the right thing to do, though you know you'll feel guilty for doing it.'[10] (Of course, this only works in versions of cognitivism, such as those of D'Arms and Jacobson as well as Roberts, where an emotion's content can conflict with a considered judgment.) Roberts emphasizes the relational role emotions play in this case; your relationship with your mother is partially constituted by your emotions towards her.[11] If you don't feel guilty for putting her in the nursing home you will deeply offend her. Guilt communicates that you still care for your mother, helping to maintain a relationship with her. Thus, on Roberts' assessment, it is morally permissible to have guilt—even if guilt is unfitting in this case.[12]

A salient feature of these cases, Feature A, is that an unfitting emotion is appropriate; fit is not the only desideratum for our emotions. Some situations also have Feature B, that unfitting emotions are better, all things considered, than fitting emotions; other desiderata can take precedence over fit. While it goes without saying that the first feature is present wherever the second is present, not every situation with Feature A shares Feature B. Sometimes there is

something to say for an unfitting emotion, but not enough to overrule fit. Taking a cue from Patrick Fitzgerald,[13] unfitting gratitude to an abusive parent may have some benefit (say, for the curbing of inordinate anger), yet still not be best if the victim finds that gratitude to her parent causes a self-effacing servility. No doubt there are borderline cases in which it is not clear whether fitting or unfitting emotions are most appropriate. But many situations share both features. If your mother either will not or cannot realize you still love her unless you feel guilty about the nursing home,[14] then it is better, all things considered, to communicate love to her by feeling a little guilty. A cowardly soldier may fear that the coming battle is probably the end of him, and he may be correct; even so it is better to feel confident of his chances, and if necessary *over*confident, so as to work up the pluck to fight with honor.[15]

II

HOW EMOTIONS CAN AFFECT THEIR OWN FITTINGNESS

Some situations display Features A and B, but also Feature C: That an emotion can affect its own fittingness, increasing the degree of fit. In this section, I shall show that this is the case, and I shall comment on some of the salient aspects of this sort of situation.

A case originating from William James[16] was originally given for its relevance to rational beliefs, but the implications for fitting emotions are equally salient. While hiking in the mountains in the dead of winter I become lost. I will freeze to death if I don't make it down the mountain by nightfall. As twilight sets in, I come across a crevasse, ten or so feet wide and too deep to see the bottom, standing between me and a path to safety. My only hope is to jump the crevasse. But I have never jumped so far. Now I could simply obey my epistemic duty to have justified beliefs, and the corresponding duty to have fitting emotions. I could reason that I am most likely doomed, resign myself to this fate, and stoically leap into oblivion. I could panic by

giving in to the emotions that seem to have the closest fit to my desperate situation, fear and anxiety. But it is best to jump, doing whatever I can to make the jump succeed! Perhaps for some people in such circumstances, given the particulars of their own psyches, it would be sufficient merely to believe that there is hope, and to have the corresponding emotion. For others, it may be helpful or even necessary to believe the improbable proposition that one can make the jump, or to *feel* an overconfidence which is unfitting. If necessary I should feel confident, even *over*confident, so as to have a better chance of overcoming the challenge. James says, 'I have no evidence of my ability to perform it successfully; but hope and confidence in myself make me sure I shall not miss my aim, and nerve my feet to execute what without those subjective emotions would perhaps have been impossible.'

Three features of this situation are salient. First, Feature A: Emotional fit is not the only desideratum for the emotional life. Second, Feature B: It is appropriate to have an emotion whose accurate fit is at best highly improbable. When I am poised above the abyss the need to make a good jump may overrule the desideratum of fit; perhaps only a brazen overconfidence—such as a feeling that I can do this easily—can save me.[17] But the conflict between emotional fit and the need to bring about my survival is neither absolute nor irresolvable, for consider Feature C: *The emotion itself partly determines its own fittingness*. A higher degree of confidence gives me an increased chance of success; if I succeed, my confidence will turn out not to have been so misplaced after all. The presence of confidence makes confidence that much more fitting.

Feature C of the emotional life can only be present when the object of an emotion is somehow affected by the emotion itself. The object of confidence is my ability to make the jump, an ability affected *by my confidence*. The emotion is, or effects, an integral part of the very situation it evaluates, making it possible for the emotion itself to bring about a closer fit.

Features A and B will generally be present in cases having this third feature. If an emotion's fittingness is in part a function of the emotion itself, having fitting emotions is neither the first nor the only thing to consider. It is difficult to weigh fit against other desiderata because a degree of fit coheres with the presence of other desiderata. Fit cannot be weighed independently. Some degree of the weight of its own importance will come down on the side of other desiderata, subtracting from the weight of fit against the other desiderata. The respective weight of those other desiderata rightly takes the fore.

These facets of the emotional life parallel the facets James argues are present in the intellectual life—both here and in his most famous talk, 'The Will to Believe.' We cannot consider emotional fit to be the only desideratum for the emotional life any more than we can consider justified belief to be the only desideratum for the intellectual life. When we evaluate beliefs and emotions we must also consider their practical effects. Moreover, it is possible for these effects to have a bearing on the truth of the very belief, or the fittingness of the very emotion, which caused them. One of the great contributions to philosophy of Pragmatists such as James has always been the insight that we humans interact with the world we experience in ways which may affect the fit between that world and our own evaluations of it. D'Arms and Jacobson, so far as I can tell, do not notice this aspect of the emotions, but they do invite a Pragmatic analysis when they mention a thinker with whom James also dealt, Pascal. D'Arms and Jacobson:

> In this respect, the fittingness of an emotion is like the truth of a belief. But, as Pascal's wager demonstrates (whether or not you accept his theistic conclusion), the evidence does not always settle what to believe. So there is a relatively circumscribed set of evidential considerations counting in favor of the claim that a belief is true or an emotion

fitting, and these are members of a potentially much wider set of considerations bearing on the question of whether the attitude is *rational*: whether it is what to feel or believe, all things considered.[18]

That an emotion can have a bearing on its own fit suggests that an initially unfitting emotion may become fitting before all is said and done. Arguably this is just what happens in this case; when I first arrive on the scene, the odds of my survival are dismal, and confidence does not fit the situation very well; but after I take a moment to steel myself for the challenge ahead, confidence is much more fitting. (It may be objected that confidence was always fitting; I always had the ability to make the jump; it just lay dormant and needed confidence to stir it up. I confess to finding this case ambiguous, but later I shall consider clearer cases of emotions which are at first unfitting but become fitting through interacting with their objects.)

Of course, Feature C is not present in every case displaying the first two features. If my doctor advises lower blood pressure, gratitude to a deceased person who once hurt me may be beneficial to my health. Here the different reasons for the emotion are not connected; the potential benefits of gratitude may supersede fit, but gratitude cannot bring about a better fit between itself and the world; it cannot change the past. Nevertheless, emotions often interact with the situations they construe, and situations sharing all three features constitute a significant part of the moral life, at least according to Christian theology. This I shall now show with the help of Søren Kierkegaard.

III

THE RESTORATION OF EMOTIONAL FIT THROUGH LOVE

Our relationships are constituted in part by loving emotions. Not that love itself is an emotion; in a good marriage, love is a commitment that holds firm even when emotions

sometimes get in the way! But love has a lot to do with emotion. It often begins with emotions that develop into a commitment; it also expresses itself through emotions. Roberts proposes that love is an attachment to the beloved issuing in a variety of emotions construing the beloved as being of great value to me, such as admiration for her successes and sorrow on her behalf when she suffers.[19] Recall that in Roberts' view emotions are construals based on concerns. Love is, or at least involves, a deep concern for someone. The emotions involved are the ones issuing from that concern as it applies to various situations, and the propositions derivable from the emotions likewise correspond: for example, 'Someone of great value to me has done well' for *pride*, 'Someone of great value to me has harmed me' for *hurt*, and so on.

Four themes in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* are relevant to the weight of emotional fit against other desiderata in these loving emotions.[20] Not all of the emotions love inspires are fitting. Some unfitting emotions are not only desirable but help to bring about better fit, and we should cultivate a disposition to the loving emotions that do just this.

To begin with, Kierkegaard makes a compelling practical argument for believing the best of people. Everyone has a mixture of good and bad qualities. Ideally we would affirm all the good and condemn all the bad. But we are not in an ideal position; we cannot be aware of all that is in people. One common strategy is to believe the worst or else nothing at all, so as not to be deceived. But believing the worst of someone who deserves better is at least as bad as believing the best of someone who deserves worse. While some prefer not to believe good of 'even the best of persons, because it is still possible that he is a deceiver,' nonetheless 'the reverse also holds true, that you can credit even the worst person with the good, because it is still possible that his badness is an appearance.'[21] All else being equal, if we love those who may not deserve it we have as much chance of being right as we do if we don't love. Indeed, *not* all else

is equal: Failing to affirm someone's goodness is a graver error than accidentally condemning his badness, for affirming the goodness is an act of love, and in the choice between 'mistrust or love,'[22] love is our moral duty.

Applied to emotions, the argument is this: Having perfectly fitting emotions is impossible, but by having emotions that affirm goodness in people we shall gain the more important thing, to have loved those who deserved it. Kierkegaard counsels us that it is better to err on the side of love, better to err by evaluating people charitably. Features A and B are on display; some unfitting emotions are good, and to be preferred over fitting ones. Say I am approached by a homeless person; he tells me the sad story of his life and asks for money. While I cannot be sure of his story, it is only loving to react with compassion.[23] It should be my working policy to respond affirmatively to ambiguous cases—in deed, thought, and feeling. In *deed*, for, while I may now and then be conned, I will avoid the graver mistake of failing to help those who deserve it. In *thought*, for, while I may now and then have false beliefs that a person is better than he is, I will avoid the graver mistake of not believing that a person is as good as he is. In *feeling*, for, while I may now and then have emotions that construe someone as being better than he is, I will avoid the graver mistake of failing to love by not having emotions that construe someone as being as good as he is.

Second, love looks to the end. It looks to the beloved's potential, seeing her as the person she may become. It is based on her *future*, not her *present*, merit. Kierkegaard expresses this by saying that love takes on the function of the other theological virtues, faith and hope: 'love is in truth able to take upon itself faith's and hope's work . . . .'[24] When 'love believes all things,'[25] it believes that the beloved can and will become who she is meant to be. Love sees the beloved through the eyes of faith as the person she will become, and is motivated by hope that she will

realize her potential. A man should become more gentle and caring with his wife after a few decades of marriage; but a good wife will love him from the very beginning as if he were already that person. Love does not ignore present circumstances, but it does look to the future in its evaluations.

Third, and finally, love seeks to realize the good it sees in the beloved. It builds him up, for 'building up is love's most characteristic specification.'[26] Buoyed by faith and hope, love construes the beloved as the person he can become and spurs him towards becoming it. In particular, love makes a person better by making him more loving—for the best kind of person is a loving person. When I love someone I see him as if he were already a loving person; as a result of my love he becomes more loving: '*The one who loves presupposes that love is in the other person's heart and by this very presupposition builds up love in him* . . . .'[27] To return to marriage, a loving wife will love her new husband as the loving creature he may become. She will applaud his successes and forgive his failures, so encouraging him to become a better husband.

This is Feature C of the emotional life; love inspires unfitting emotions, but it changes the beloved and makes those emotions fit better in the end. Love's emotions interact with the beloved. They are one of love's vehicles for accomplishing that change. The wife's emotions will generally be fitting when she responds to her husband's successes with appreciation or gratitude; when she forgives his failures, her emotions will sometimes be unfitting. They will construe him as a loving man, when in reality he is only *becoming* a loving man. Yet it takes both fitting and unfitting emotions to encourage him to be better. Suppose he makes a mistake, and she forgives him and continues loving him as if he had never made the mistake, perhaps having admiration for him despite the fact that his blunder does not warrant it. But suppose also

that her husband is encouraged to respond to her loving attitude by cleaning up his act, perhaps by resolving to be a better husband to her. After that, she has a little more to admire! In this case admiration helps to accomplish its own fit.[28]

In some cases, perhaps the emotion of hope will do the trick: It is enough to see the beloved as one who *might* be made better. When this is the case, emotional fit is in no conflict with love. But when it is more loving to see the beloved in the way Kierkegaard describes, *in the present* but according to the terms of what might *in the future* be, then the requirements of love overrule emotional fit. The *love* itself (which is not an emotion) is *always* fitting, but sometimes the emotions it requires will *not* be fitting emotions.

We might well wonder whether it is the emotions *themselves* that bring about better fit, or whether the emotions are simply a part of love, but not the part that brings about better fit; perhaps the behavior love motivates brings about better fit, but the emotions do not. However, to separate emotions from behavior would be to misunderstand the holistic nature of love. The emotions are inseparable from the behavior. How precisely to describe their relationship is difficult, and falls outside the scope of this article; perhaps some emotions *are* behaviors, or perhaps some emotions are *expressed* through behaviors, or perhaps some emotions merely *motivate* behaviors. Regardless, the emotions themselves, directly or indirectly, effect, or aid in effecting, the change that brings about better fit.

Thus, love covers a large and important class of cases in which emotions interact with their objects. In the case of love we should cultivate a disposition for having unfitting emotions.[29] This is, finally, Feature D of the emotional life: Love is a disposition to see the beloved in a positive light through my emotions, which, at times, is the same as seeing her in

unfitting ways. But my love helps her become a better person; my unfitting emotions carry with them the potential of bringing about better fit.

IV

CULTIVATING HEALING EMOTIONS

That pagan philosophers such as Aristotle reflected on morality and the emotions is well and good, and from a Christian perspective this tradition of reflection may be taken to serve as a propaedeutic for religion. However, Christian theology adds something unique to our understanding of the role of the emotions in the moral life. According to Christian theology, Christ's work is to reconcile sinners to God through his sacrificial death on the cross, and Paul says that his apostolic calling is to join in this work of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Christian theology adds a similar requirement for the role of emotions in the moral life. Moreover, this has a bearing on emotional fit. Christians ought even in their emotional lives to be involved in the reconciling of the world to God—a requirement sometimes overruling emotional fit yet ultimately restorative of the same. Sometimes the bigger problem with unfitting emotions is not that they fail correctly to construe reality, but that reality fails to measure up to the loving construal of the emotions! In these cases it is important to have edifying emotions, those which help to heal the realities with which they are concerned.

So *how* might someone committed to imitating Christ through love of others go about having the emotions that help to heal creation even when they may occasionally be unfitting? Below are a few suggestions inspired by Roberts. In *Spiritual Emotions: a Psychology of Christian Virtues*, Roberts suggests strategies for cultivating Christian compassion.[30] The strategies rely on three things: the cultivation of compassionate *passion* or concern, the doing of compassionate *acts*, and attitudes of *mind* that are set on the Holy Spirit. Passion, actions, and

mindsets: Perhaps strategies focused on these are also good for the growth of the emotions of Christian love that lack fit yet are proper and which heal their objects.

First, I would suggest that a Christian should learn to seek a *passion* for the healing of those we love. It is not enough simply to love people as they are, nor to treat them as we might be inclined to treat them if they were fully sanctified. It is necessary to love them in ways that accomplish their transition from the former state to the latter (and one should bear in mind that oneself is undergoing the same transition).

How should one seek this passion? There are many ways. These might include the reading of books that teach this sort of thing and the having of friends who already have this passion. More important than these, as with all other aspects of spiritual maturity which a Christian seeks, is prayer for the God who according to Christian theology heals our souls through His Holy Spirit to cultivate this passion.

Second, a Christian should *act* in ways that heal. C. S. Lewis' point in *Mere Christianity*[31] that the first step towards becoming Christlike is to pretend to be like Him, not in hypocrisy but in imitation, holds good here. Character is formed, as Aristotle tells us, from habits, and habits from acts. One aspect of this process of moral growth is the shaping of our emotions by our repeated acts. So also the character of one whose emotions are healing, and the emotions themselves, may be shaped by acts that heal. So, I suggest, a Christian should look for opportunities to act in ways that speed the transition in people from how-they-are-now to how-they-should-be. For example, a disobedient child should not simply be punished for the sin he is committing now, nor simply treated as one who is free of that sin; he should be disciplined in some way which aims at the goal that he be free of that sin and which pushes him towards that freedom.

Third, a Christian should have a *mind* set on that healing. As Roberts says, a Christian should practice the 'intentional use of the gospel as a visualizing framework;' I should 'remind myself that Christ died for that man as he did for me.'[32] Christians should become accustomed to thinking of people as objects of that love of Christ, and fit to receive the same love from them. For them, also, Christ suffered and died, as unrighteous sinners (Romans 5:6); yet this is the love that can make them righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21)—ones in whom Christ Himself lives (Galatians 2:20). A Christian should learn to *consider* in these terms each person she encounters, that she might be able also to *love* them as such people. She should be mindful of these matters, reminding herself of them as often as necessary.

V

CONCLUSION

In the premodern discussion emotions are often considered as a response to moral reality, a response which must be trained to respond accurately to the good and the bad. This is one obvious way in which the emotions become important in morality. But Christian theology suggests that there is more to the role of emotions in the moral life than this; the emotions also need to help *make the bad good*.

Aristotle timelessly observes that ethics rarely admits of crystal clarity.[33] Having fitting emotions is desirable, but it sometimes conflicts with other desiderata, including the cultivation of virtue, inspiration to good action, the cultivation of healthy relationships, and a loving disposition towards others. Navigating between competing desiderata takes prudence. In some cases these other desiderata are to be preferred. But not all complications in ethics are intractable; to the contrary, other desiderata for the emotional life may interact with emotional fit in such a way that the conflict between them is limited, conditional, or only temporary. In

particular, when we love one another we will be disposed towards favorable emotions that are occasionally unfitting; but love itself affects the beloved in such a way as to increase the likelihood that those emotions will become more fitting. Love, Kierkegaard shows, may begin with unfitting emotions which construe the unlovely as lovely. But this is part of how it *makes* the unlovely lovely. It is no accident that the Christian tradition calls love a *theological* virtue, for this is exactly what Christianity teaches the love of God does for the Church. The conflict between emotional fit and other desiderata is a consequence of the fact that we live in an imperfect world. Christian theology suggests that the love of one's neighbor will help bring about a world in which these desiderata never compete.

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[1] I am grateful to Robert Roberts, the Baylor University Philosophy Department graduate colloquium, and a blind reviewer for *Heythrop Journal* for help and insights regarding earlier versions of this article.

[2] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, II.3, 1104b.

[3] The important articles from D'Arms and Jacobson on the emotions include the following: Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, 'The Moralistic Fallacy: On the "Appropriateness" of Emotions,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61.1 (July 2000), pp. 65-90; Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, 'Expressivism, Morality, and the Emotions,' *Ethics* 104.4 (1994), pp. 739-65; Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson, 'Sentiment and Value,' *Ethics* 110.4 (July 2000), pp. 722-48; and Justin D'Arms, 'Two Arguments for Sentimentalism,' *Philosophical Issues* 15.1 (2005), pp. 1-21.

[4] For an introduction to cognitivism, I suggest John Deigh, 'Cognitivism in the Theory of Emotions,' *Ethics* 104.4 (July 1994), pp. 824-54.

[5] For a more thorough account of the Roberts' view, and of the propositions derivable from the emotions, see Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.3.a and 3.13.b, especially p. 204 and p. 279. Roberts applies his account of the emotions to Christian virtues in *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), and to ethics more broadly in *Emotions in the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[6] There are other claims made by D'Arms and Jacobson which I do not accept, in particular their sentimentalist theory of the role of emotions in morality and their notion that the appropriateness of an emotion has no bearing whatsoever on its fit.

[7] D'Arms and Jacobson, 'The Moralistic Fallacy,' pp. 65-90.

[8] D'Arms and Jacobson emphasize the former much more than the latter, explaining that 'an emotion can be fitting despite being wrong to feel . . .' ('Moralistic Fallacy,' p. 65). In this article I emphasize the latter, explaining that an emotion can be *un*fitting despite being *right* to feel.

[9] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* II.9, 1109b.

[10] D'Arms and Jacobson, 'Expressivism, Morality, and the Emotions,' p. 743.

[11] Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, chapter 7, especially pp. 140-4.

[12] Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, pp. 138-40.

[13] Patrick Fitzgerald, 'Gratitude and Justice,' *Ethics* 109.1 (October 1998), pp. 140-4.

[14] Another necessary condition for guilt being the most appropriate thing to feel is that either there is no chance of faking guilt, or that deception would be worse than having an unfitting emotion.

[15] This example may not convince a pacifist, but similar cases are available; perhaps, for example, a rugby player trying to overcome a fear of tackling may be aided by feeling a little overconfidence on the field.

[16] William James, 'The Sentiment of Rationality' in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (first published Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897; republished New York: Dover, 1956), pp. 96-7. I present the case with slight modifications that do not affect the salient features. (By the way, I do not endorse the non-cognitivist theory of emotions presented in James' *Principles of Psychology*. My appeal to this example from James is independent of that theory.)

[17] In other words, the need for good deeds justifies an unfitting emotion. On the role of emotions in supporting good actions, see Roberts, *Emotions in the Moral Life*, chapter 6.

[18] 'The Moralistic Fallacy,' p. 72.

[19] Roberts, *Emotions*, 3.15.

[20] Kierkegaard is promoting a love for all human beings, but he is also promoting a renewal of the love involved in close personal relationships such as friendship and marriage. We will look at examples from both a general love for all and a specific love for the people closest to me.

[21] Søren Kierkegaard *Works of Love*, trans. and ed. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong. Vol. XVI, *Kierkegaard's Writings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 228.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Prudential concerns are relevant, of course. It would be good to confirm his story if I can. Money may not be the answer—it may be best to connect him with the ministry of a nearby church, for example, or to buy a hot meal rather than simply giving money. If I help *this* person I may be less capable of helping someone else. And so on.

[24] Kierkegaard, *Works*, p. 225.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., p. 216.

[27] Ibid.; italics in original.

[28] It is not sufficient for accomplishing its own fit, since her husband still has to respond to her encouragement constructively. The wife's admiration simply increases the likelihood of its own fit by encouraging her husband to be a better man.

[29] Keep in mind that we are talking about emotions that construe *a person's character* in a certain way. Character lasts a long time. But emotions that construe in a loving manner short-lived things such as the *actions* of a person will not have Feature C. For example, say a husband does something insensitive, rude, or just plain stupid; one of his wife's emotions may lovingly construe her husband's actions. Suppose this emotion contributes to his moral betterment, and some time later when he does something right her emotions again construe the event positively, but this time with better fit. These two emotions have different objects, so Feature C is not present. Instead we have what we might call *Feature E*: One loving, unfitting emotion makes *another* loving emotion, occurring at a later time, fitting.

[30] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, pp. 195-8.

[31] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1952), Book 4, chapter 7.

[32] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 198.

[33] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, I.3, 1094b.