Emotions and Religious Experience

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Emotions and Religious Experience

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STL Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these preliminary remarks is to introduce the themes and questions that I will be investigating in the course of this study and to contextualize this exploration within the broader framework of theological aesthetics. To this end, I begin with a brief scenario. Jane goes to her monthly spiritual direction meeting and describes her prayer to her director. The director listens attentively as Jane describes the scene she prayed with, in this case the crucifixion. She describes the three men nailed to wooden crosses with painstaking precision, leaving out none of the gory details. She talks about a group of women off to one side who are mourning while a riotous crowd gives free expression to their bloodlust. After Jane has finished her account, the director asks, "So, how did that make you feel?" This is not an uncommon question for directors to start with. Perhaps Jane responds, "Sad, I guess." The word "sad" does not tell the director very much. He is left wondering whether Jane feels remorse, despair, simply a pang of regret, or even compassion or empathy. Perhaps Jane herself is not immediately aware of the texture of the sadness she was feeling. If the director thinks that Jane's experience of sadness is significant to her prayer—and since he asked the question, he probably does—he will try to deepen Jane's understanding of her sadness with further questions.

There are many reasons why the director might think that Jane's emotional engagement with the scene is important. I will focus on two of the principal reasons. Firstly, the director may assume that emotional engagement is indicative of existential engagement. That is to say, emotional engagement seems to acknowledge not only that crucifixion happened or that this event has important soteriological implications, but that the crucifixion somehow touches Jane in a way that is relevant to her. Secondly, the director might assume that the emotion that Jane experiences in her prayer is part of the revelatory process by which God makes God's self known

to Jane in the context of prayer. Although Jane's sadness may not be a direct indication of who God is for her, it may still serve a revelatory function in the sense that it clarifies who Jane is in relation to the God who is the focus of her prayer. That is to say, emotion may be a reflection of how the person praying views herself in relation to God because emotion is a subjective evaluation on a certain state of affairs. For instance, if Jane asserts that seeing Jesus in distress makes her sad, Jane is evaluating her experience of the horrid state of affairs present in her meditation as sad.

This thesis will examine the two assumptions concerning emotion that I attributed to the spiritual director in the above scenario. The twofold question that will be explored in this investigation is: Is emotional engagement indicative of existential engagement and are the emotions felt themselves revelatory? Perhaps not all prayer requires emotional engagement; the gesture of signing oneself with holy water when entering a church, for example, may not carry an emotional charge in every instance. On the other hand, at times religious experience may overwhelm a person with emotion, as when a Eucharistic minister holds hands in prayer with a hospice patient or when a retreatant meditates on the resurrection using her imagination. Taking these two latter examples into account, we might ask: Are emotions part of the prayer itself or are they extraneous to it, an added extra? Going further, we might consider whether these emotions are so rich in meaning that they are themselves a form of prayer. In other words, if we plumb the depths of these emotions, do we find God revealing God's self in them?

But the problem of figuring out what emotions are and how they might be interpreted in the context of religious experience is no easy task. Neuroscience gives raw data concerning the different parts of the brain involved in the production of emotions. However, this raw data explains very little until it is structured by a philosophical and psychological frameworks that

relate the data to the actual experience of emotions. And then there is the problem of communicating emotions: Can a person communicate her emotions in a way that another person can understand them or, stronger still, actually experience them? Asked another way: Are emotions communicable? The challenge of this thesis, then, is to develop model for understanding emotions that can answer these questions and that can be applied to religious experience.

Current research being done in the field of philosophical aesthetics provides promising models for exploring the questions in the above paragraphs. Because these models deal specifically with the artistic process and not with religious experience as such, I will consider whether these models might be applicable to religious experience. Since varying kinds of religious experience may involve different factors related to their emotional content, I will limit the discussion of religious experience to imaginative prayer of the kind seen in Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Although the findings will have implications for a broader spectrum of religious experience than the kind presented in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius's model provides an enticing starting point. Ignatius requires the person praying (in this case, the retreatant) to use his imagination in prayer, oftentimes for the purpose of evoking a specific emotional response in the retreatant. As will be shown, the imaginative process of the retreatant resembles that of the artist in significant ways, thus providing a compelling analogy for the religious experience of the retreatant. Demonstrating the appropriateness of this analogy is part of the work of this thesis.

This thesis relies on an analogy between religious experience and a philosophical analysis of the artistic process and thus offers a kind of theological aesthetics. Richard Viladesau gives a brief summary of the areas of interest to both philosophers and theologians of aesthetics:

	Philosophical Aesthetics	Theological Aesthetics
1.	The general study of sensation and imagination and/or of “feeling” in the wider sense of nonconceptual or nondiscursive (but nevertheless “intellectual”) knowledge.	A theological account of human knowledge on the level of feeling and imagination ("aesthetics" in the sense of Schiller and Kant). The treatment of God and imagination involves the question of metaphor and analogy mentioned briefly above: how can the transcendent God be thought by a human mind that is tied to sensation? A related area is the theology of revelation and its relation to symbolic consciousness […]
2.	The study of beauty and/or of “taste.”	A theology of beauty. This will reflect on the nature of the beautiful in relationship to God and to the “transcendental”; the way in which beauty is a quality of revelation; and the place of "beauty" as a criterion of theological judgment.
3.	The study of art in general and/or of the fine arts in particular.	A theological reflection on art and on the individual arts. This reflection will attempt to understand how the arts can communicate concerning the divine; how they can mediate revelation and conversion; and what formal similarities they show to the practice of theology. [1]

[1] Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Kindle Locations 158-161, 430-431.

The schemas are similar in that they present aesthetics as the study of 1) feelings and imagination, 2) beauty, and 3) works of art. Of course, not every researcher in theological and philosophical aesthetics has concerned herself with each of these points, but generally aesthetics involves at least one and usually a combination of these areas of research. While I will use works of art (the third point) to illustrate the aesthetic theory I will be developing, this investigation will only address the first point in detail. However, in the first section I will offer a lengthy counterargument to Viladesau's assumption that the emotions experienced in imaginative scenarios are non-conceptual or non-discursive.

At the risk of over simplifying, discussions in theological aesthetics generally fall into two categories: those that have a concept of beauty (point 2 in Viladesau's schema) as their starting point and those that do not. The former camp has been dominant in Christian theological aesthetics and includes many of the Church Fathers, the Scholastic tradition, as well as more recent authors such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Gerardus van der Leeuw, and Richard Viladesau. And this would seem to be the natural course to take since even scripture makes mention of the relationship between God and beauty. The Wisdom of Solomon states:

> For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works […]
> If through delight in the beauty of these things people assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. (Wisdom 12:1, 3, *NRSV*)

In another place the author says of Wisdom, "She is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars" (7:29) and "I loved her and sought her from my youth; I desired to take her for my bride, and became enamored of her beauty" (8:2). These scriptural accounts coupled with the Platonic and Neo-Platonic doctrine of the forms, especially as it is elaborated on in Plato's *Symposium* and in Plotinus' *Enneads*, provided rich material for early Christian

thinkers contemplating the relationship between God and beauty. For example, in his *Confessions* Augustine calls God, "my supremely good Father, beauty of all things beautiful."[2] In his most memorable statement on the identification of God and the Beautiful he states:

> Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.[3]

When Christian authors identify God with beauty, list beauty as one of God's attributes, or see in God the source of beauty, their purpose is usually to identify God's attractiveness. Drawing on Thomas Aquinas, Viladesau writes:

> The beautiful differs from the transcendental "the true" in that "truth" designates simply the correspondence of the intellect with reality (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*). Beauty, on the other hand, designates this correspondence *qua delectabilis*: that is, insofar as it produces satisfaction or pleasure. That is, beauty is truth considered under the aspect of its lovability or desirability: it is the goodness of the dynamism of the intellect (*bonum tendentiae intellectivae*).[4]

Much good scholarship has been done on the relationship between God and beauty in the Christian tradition. I mention this relationship here in order to draw a contrast to this current project. This thesis is more interested in the experience of the mundane emotions of everyday life than in pleasures that serve as echoes of the divine. In this present study of religious emotion, I will be concentrating on an emotion, namely sorrow, that is more likely to repel and frighten than to attract. Instead of ascending the staircase of beautiful things to divine beauty, I

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[2] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 41.
[3] Ibid., 201.
[4] Viladesau, 2116-2119.

will dive into the pool of an emotion that is, at least on the surface, not beautiful at all in order to demonstrate how this painful emotion might also be considered revelatory. The shift of focus from the pleasurable to the sorrowful likewise requires a shift in methodology from the one employed by previous authors.

The methodology of this paper consists of what Karl Rahner calls an "existential deepening" whereas the more common way of doing theological aesthetics is better described as a spiritual ascent. These two ways of doing theological aesthetics are, of course, two sides of the same coin; both have God as the object of their investigation. The main difference between the two is while the traditional approach focuses on the pleasure of the promised union of minds and wills with a God who attracts human beings with pleasure, the approach proposed in this thesis focuses on the feeling of pain that accompanies a person's sense that she has not yet attained the object of her desire.

The methodology I will be developing here makes use of several different tools that are specific to this purpose. Firstly, this thesis requires a psychological and philosophical framework for thinking about emotions that takes seriously the existential import of these emotions. Secondly, this thesis needs a theology of emotions that can explain how even painful emotions may tell us something about God, even if only indirectly. Thirdly, this project necessitates a model for showing how the emotional content of religious experience is an intelligible form of revelation, i.e., information that a person can at least somewhat understand and communicate to others. These three methodological tools correspond to the three sections of the thesis.

Finally, I should say a word about the specific emotion with which I will illustrate these methodological tools. Although the aesthetic theory I am developing should be equally

applicable to any emotion associated with imaginative religious experience, I have chosen sorrow—or sadness—from the host of other options for several reasons.[5] Firstly, sorrow is usually experienced as a painful emotion. By considering sorrow as opposed to joy, for example, we will be in a better position to explore how the less pleasurable side of religious experience may nevertheless be meaningful. Secondly, sorrow is an umbrella concept for a diversity of emotional experiences. As an aversive emotion, sorrow ranges in intensity from despair—i.e., when someone regrets the very fact of his existence—to slight and momentary pangs of remorse. Most experiences of sorrow fall in between the extremes on this spectrum of intensity: regret, melancholy, heartache, etc. On the other hand, sorrow may in some instances act as an emotion that attracts the person to the object of its intentionality, as is the case with compassion. Depending on whether sorrow is expressed as an attractive or an aversive emotion, and depending on sorrow's place within a spectrum of intensity, each shade of sorrow has its own particular meaning and oftentimes its own name. For this reason, sorrow is a particularly rich example of the principles I will be elaborating. Thirdly, three of these shades of sorrow, namely contrition, grief, and compassion have played an integral role in the Christian understanding of the religious experience. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius goes so far as to require retreatants to petition God for these three emotions as graces. While the primary goal of this paper is to develop a methodology for thinking about emotions in imaginative religious experience, the parallel discussion of sorrow will yield its own fruit.

[5] Throughout the thesis, I use "sadness" and "sorrow" as well as their derivatives interchangeably. These two words refer to the same emotion but are often used in slightly different contexts. Whereas "sadness" is the word that people often use in everyday speech, "sorrow" has a more formal feel.

CHAPTER ONE: EMOTIONS IN NEUROSCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY

Emotions are something that nearly every human being experiences and yet when, through ordinary observation, we attempt to pinpoint exactly what they are, how they work, and how they can be managed, we find it difficult to come up with a coherent model. The reason why the nature of emotions often remains opaque when we attempt to subject them to ordinary observation is twofold. On the one hand, ordinary observation suggests that something about emotions is outside of our control. Many people cannot help but experience sadness when they see animals suffering or joy when they look into the face of a newborn infant. Emotions, then, on one level seem to be things that happen to us and not things that we consciously make happen. On the other hand, ordinary observation also suggests that we can exercise conscious control over how we experience and express emotions. For example, a person who seems naturally inclined to rage might get over that condition through therapy, coaching, or supportive relationships. In short, while oftentimes emotions initially seem to come over us without our consciously summoning them, they are not wholly outside of our control.

In this chapter I will explore a theory of emotions that accounts for both sides of the emotional equation described above. This theory will be based on contemporary research in the neuroscience and psychology of emotions. Although ordinary observation tells us a great deal about emotions, neuroscience and psychology have come closer to offering a resolution to the seemingly paradoxical impression that ordinary observation leaves us with, namely that emotions are both something that happen to us and something under our control. That being said, neuroscientists and psychologists do not always agree on the resolution to this paradox. In these fields, researchers who believe that emotions are basically outside of our control tend to construe

emotions as physiological responses to the environment that are rooted in our evolutionary past. William James, the father of American psychology, offers the classic formulation of this view:

> My theory, on the contrary, is that *the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion*. Common-sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect, that the one mental state is not immediately induced by the other, that the bodily manifestations must first be interposed between, and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may be.[6]

Researchers from the opposing camp construe emotions as cognitive evaluations of something in the environment and thus argue that emotions are something that we do, and not something that happens to us. These two opposing views each contribute to a proper understanding of emotions since each represents one of the principal aspects of emotion. That is to say, emotions always involve a physiological response and emotions are in fact cognitive evaluations of something in the environment. In this chapter I will explore a theory of emotions that accounts for both of these principal aspects of emotion.

The outline of the theory of emotions that I develop in this chapter comes from the work of philosopher Jenefer Robinson, who develops her theory of emotions as a propaedeutic to her aesthetic theory, which forms the foundation for the third chapter of this thesis. Robinson proposes a model for viewing emotions that takes into account both their physiological and their cognitive aspects. After reviewing her theory, I will devote the remainder of the chapter to unpacking her understanding of "emotional memory"—a concept that attempts to account for the seemingly uncontrollable aspect of emotions—in light of research that Robinson does not consider. Emotional memory, I will argue, is the key to understanding how emotions work and

[6] William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), 449-450. Throughout this thesis, all emphases marked by italics in citations are original.

why they are existentially important. However, emotional memory is also the most opaque aspect of emotional experiences, since this kind of memory is not necessarily accessible to consciousness. Given the complexity of the human brain, researchers often concede that any conclusions drawn from the neuroscience of emotions must necessarily remain provisional.[7] This is particularly the case in regards to emotional memory. In other words, while current research offers promising insights into how emotional memory functions, this is still an expanding area of exploration.

What is at stake in this discussion of emotional memory? If emotions are primarily physiological responses programmed by evolution, as the passage cited above from William James suggests, then it seems to follow that a significant portion of human experience would fall outside of the jurisdiction of human freedom. Of course many of our physiological functions operate independently of free choice: sweating when it is hot, shivering when it is cold, etc. Why should emotions be any different? As will become clear, emotions are part of what determines our existential engagement with the world; they influence what we study, how we choose a career, who we form relationships with, and most importantly how we find meaning in life. A great deal, then, depends on whether emotions fall under the domain of human freedom. Although this chapter presents research based on a physicalist understanding of emotion—i.e., emotions as neural processes—the trajectory of this thesis is ultimately theological. Do emotions have a role to play in our relationship with God? If so, are emotions free, or are they biologically determined? The investigation in this chapter into neural bases of emotions will lay the foundation for these later considerations.

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[7] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), xxii; Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2017), 290-291.

Robinson: Emotions as Processes

An emotion, Robinson explains, is a process by which a person interacts with her internal environment (i.e., thoughts) or external environment (i.e., objects of perception).[8] Emotions, then, are responses to something and these responses unfold in a series of stages. On the level of consciousness, the emotional process happens in two stages: firstly, an "affective appraisal" triggers the autonomic nervous system and produces a physiological response; secondly, "cognitive monitoring" modifies the affective appraisal.[9] When Robinson speaks of "affective appraisal," she means the part of emotions that we actually feel in our bodies: the change in blood pressure, energy level, etc. Cognitive processing, as the name suggests, is the way that we rationally determine whether the affective appraisal is an appropriate reaction to a given situation. Robinson explains her theory with an example from Patricia Greenspan:

> Greenspan says that she herself has a 'somewhat phobic fear of skidding, ever since a car accident in a blizzard.' On a later occasion when travelling with someone who is driving slowly and safely along an empty road, a slight skid caused her to 'gasp audibly for a second out of fear.' Greenspan says that she 'felt for a second as though danger were at hand' but did not act as she would have if she *believed* or judged that she was in danger.[10]

For Robinson's purposes, Greenspan's example illustrates an instance in which someone appraises danger from the environment based on an emotional memory. She subsequently cognitively monitors the actual situation at hand and ascertains that there is no danger.[11] Robinson's theory of emotions as processes, then, boils down to this: a stored emotional memory

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[8] Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 113.
[9] Ibid., 59.
[10] Ibid., 22. See also Patricia Greenspan, *Emotions and Reasons* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 17-19. Greenspan uses this example to illustrate the propositional content of seemingly automatic emotion reactions. Robinson, by contrast, is using the example to show that initial emotional reactions can be explained without recourse to propositional content.
[11] Robinson, 71.

automatically—that is, independently of conscious awareness—reacts to a stimulus from the environment by producing physiological responses of which the person is aware and which are later evaluated by cognitive monitoring.

This chapter focuses on the role of emotional memory, which, since it initially operates below the level of consciousness, is the most opaque component of Robinson's schema. Robinson draws on the work of three psychologists to formulate a preliminary hypothesis for what emotional memory is. She starts with an idea from Joseph LeDoux that there are two distinct kinds of memory systems, namely the declarative and the emotional, which are mediated by different parts of the brain, the temporal lobe system and the amygdala respectively.[12] Secondly, she incorporates Robert Zajonc's notion that emotional memory is stored with motor memory.[13] That is to say, emotional memory is directly linked with physiological responses, which explains why emotions appear to be automatic responses and not under conscious control. Thirdly, she adopts Antonio Damasio's research concerning the learned bodily stimuli that are part of normal emotional functioning, meaning the body senses what is good and bad for its wellbeing before it has a chance to cognitively asses a situation.[14] For example, a person touching a very hot piece of metal, such as pot with boiling liquid, automatically retracts his hand, without first thinking, "Wow! This is really hot and I am afraid of causing damage to my hand. I should remove my hand to avoid further damage." These three lines of research form the foundation for Robinson's contention that emotional memory is directly connected to physiological responses and that this kind of memory functions independently of cognitive

[12] Ibid. See also Joseph LeDoux, "Memory and the Brain," *Scientific American* 270, no. 6 (1994): 50-57.
[13] Robinson, 72. See also Robert Zajonc and Hazel Markus, "Affect and Cognition: The Hard Interface," in *Emotion, Cognition, and Behavior*, eds. Carroll E Izard, Jerome Kagan, and Robert B. Zajonc (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 73-102.
[14] Robinson, 74. See also Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 216-217, 221.

evaluations. Robinson's conclusion, then, is that a person's body may emotionally appraise a situation through physiological changes before a person consciously takes stock of the situation.

Critique of Robinson: The Cognitive Content of Emotional Memories

The theory of emotional memory that Robinson develops is, at least on the surface, intuitively correct. Emotions often seem to happen to a person without the person being conscious of what is causing them. I began this exploration into the nature of emotions with Robinson's analysis because herschema is a helpful one and because it is a concise and well researched articulation of one strain of emotion theory. However, as I will explain below, Robinson's concept of emotional memory is inadequate for describing another aspect of emotions, namely that all emotions are cognitive evaluations of something in the environment.

Let us return to Greenspan's example to evaluate how this process plays out. Greenspan has a seemingly automatic physiological response when a car skids. If Robinson is correct, a previous skid that led to a car accident has created an emotional memory—let's call it "fear"—that connects certain bodily sensations with the activity of skidding. It is only after Greenspan's affective appraisal that she can cognitively monitor the situation and determine that she is not in danger. Clearly Robinson is correct to point to the existence of emotional memories that influence physiological changes before the agent is conscious of danger.

On the other hand, Greenspan's initial affective appraisal in fact seems to have cognitive-evaluative content, even if she is not immediately aware of this content. There is nothing in the skidding of a car that is inherently frightening. As will be shown later in this section, no

emotional response, however natural it feels, is inherent.[15] It is possible that the other passengers may not have been startled in the least by the skidding of the car. Some may have even enjoyed it. Greenspan, on the other hand, initially perceives a fear-response in her body because of a previous incident that involved skidding and an accident. Greenspan's emotional memory of skidding is linked with fear. Thus, the physiological reactions that Greenspan experiences are in fact provoked by cognitive evaluations (i.e., skidding is dangerous, I am afraid of skidding, this skidding will result in pain, etc.) that are in turn triggered by the actual instance of skidding that she is recounting. Although Greenspan might experience her reaction to skidding as a motor reflex and she does not consciously recall a painful memory, her memory does in fact have propositional, evaluative content that was somehow conditioned before the instance of skidding that she recounts. This is precisely the point that Greenspan is arguing for and the point that Robinson calls into question.[16] Robinson, *contra* Greenspan, is correct to point out that emotion does not consist solely in an evaluation; rather, it requires some sort of physiological response: "it is the physiological change that puts the 'emotionality' into emotions."[17] But Robinson goes further and is intent on not using the term "cognition" in regard to emotional memory.[18]

The above analysis shows how Robinson's hypothesis concerning emotional memory does not pair well with the experience of emotions. But does neuroscience support my critique?

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[15] It is important to distinguish responses programmed by evolution from emotions proper. For example, a flight-response to danger is not the same thing as fear. For example, it may very well be that any human being that is confronted with a large, growling animal with bared teeth and threatening claws would instinctively run. Fear, on the other hand, is an evaluation that involves certain concepts. For instance, a person confronting such an animal is afraid for his life. "Life" here is a concept that the person endows with value.

[16] See Greenspan, 14-17.

[17] Robinson, 36.

[18] See, for example, Ibid., 45.

To answer this question I return to her three major sources: LeDoux, Zajonc, and Damasio. LeDoux's research has focused mainly on fear and anxiety. He writes of emotional memory:

> The distinction between declarative memory and emotional memory is an important one. W. J. Jacobs of the University of British Columbia and Lynn Nadel of the University of Arizona have argued that we are unable to remember traumatic events that take place early in life because the hippocampus has not yet matured to the point of forming consciously accessible memories. The emotional memory system, which may develop earlier, clearly forms and stores its unconscious memories of the events. And for this reason, the trauma may affect mental and behavioral functions later in life, albeit through processes that remain inaccessible.[19]

The purpose of LeDoux's article, as Robinson correctly asserts, is to distinguish between declarative and emotional memory. Experientially, the difference between the two is that people consciously access declarative memory but they are not conscious of emotional memory, at least not initially. It seems as though Robinson mistakes the distinction between conscious-unconscious for cognitive-physiological whereas LeDoux, as he writes in another place, argues: "Emotions, in short, result from the cognitive interpretation of situations."[20] For LeDoux, emotions are necessarily conscious experiences because emotions are interpretations of something, but the cause of this emotion is not necessarily conscious. For example, it is possible to be sad and to not know why; but there is a reason for the sadness. In short, some emotional memories can be consciously recalled and others cannot.

In response to Zajonc's work, LeDoux notes that Zajonc's experiments "provided incontrovertible evidence that affective reactions could take place in the absence of conscious awareness of the stimuli."[21] However, it is not altogether clear that Zajonc was able to provide evidence that these affective reactions were void of cognition. As Tone Roald puts it:

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[19] LeDoux, "Memory and the Brain," 57.
[20] Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 48.
[21] Ibid., 54.

"unconscious cognition appears as a robust phenomenon and is frequently involved in affective phenomena, and, arguably, always in emotional ones."[22] Part of the problem with Robinson's interpretation of Zajonc's analysis has to do with a confusion of affect with emotion.[23] It must be admitted that affect and emotion do not have set definitions that all researchers agree to. I adopt the view that affect refers to the feelings of aversion or attraction that a person experiences when confronted with a particular stimulus. Most authors use either "affect" or "feeling" or both interchangeably to describe the same kind of phenomenon. Affect, and not emotion, is the sort of experience that Zajonc was studying. When we experience something as attractive, we say that we like it. And when we experience something as aversive, we say that we dislike it. But attraction and aversion, liking and disliking, are not themselves emotions. Emotions are much more specific than that. For example, although Greenspan clearly disliked the skidding of the car, she was also afraid. It is important to note, that Greenspan's affective aversion came from her fear and not the other way around. That is to say that the cognitively rich emotion of fear preceded the aversive affect.

The problem concerning the identification of affect with emotion surfaces again in Robinson's use of Damasio's work, who, it must be noted, does not see a disconnect between affect and cognition: "Contrary to traditional scientific opinion, feelings are just as cognitive as other percepts. They are the result of a most curious physiological arrangement that has turned the brain into the body's captive audience."[24] Affect, according to Damasio, then, is a kind of

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[22] Tone Roald, *Cognition in Emotion: An Investigation through Experiences with Art* (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 41.

[23] Robinson writes: "Psychologists tend to talk about "affect" and "cognition", rather than "emotion" and "judgement", but both philosophers and psychologists are talking about more or less the same thing" (38). LeDoux, Barrett, and more recently Damasio make a clear distinction between affect and emotion.

[24] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, xix.

felt knowledge that the brain picks up from the body. This knowledge, in turn, is connected to cognitive thought and emotion: "I see the essence of emotion as the collection of changes in body state that are induced in myriad organs by nerve cell terminals, under the control of a dedicated brain system, which is responding to the content of thoughts relative to a particular entity or event."[25]

In *Descartes' Error*, Damasio shows how people with lesions to particular parts of the prefrontal cortex have either subdued emotions or no emotions at all. This is because certain parts of the prefrontal cortex are responsible for producing affect. However, people with damage only to the prefrontal cortext may not seem to suffer any further cognitive impairment. In other words, they can do math, remember dates, etc., but they are incapable of assigning affective value to their cognitions. For example, a person with serious prefrontal damage may recognize her husband, but the encounter with him will arouse no affective attraction or aversion and consequently no emotion. The point of Damasio's analysis is that without affect, cognition does not work well, because it cannot assign value. He does not state that affect is non-cognitive, only that it is a particular kind of bodily cognition. Damasio writes, "The mind is embodied, in the full sense of the term, not just embrained,"[26] which is to say, the body transmits information to the brain and *vice versa*.

My critique of Robinson requires a slight reformulation of her theory of emotions as processes: Emotional Processes 1) start with a stored emotional memory that is triggered by something in the environment 2) and the emotional memory in turn stimulates a physiological response in the form of affect, 3) which is subsequently consciously perceived, and 4) which is monitored and reevaluated by an additional cognitive processes. I can envision several

[25] Ibid., 139.
[26] Ibid., 118.

reasonable objections to this way of viewing emotional processes, but I will focus on the most important of these objections, namely that which claims recourse to the so-called "basic emotions," the most prominent version of the physiological view of emotions that I briefly discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Broadly speaking, basic emotions are defined by certain neurological systems that are more or less the same for all human beings. Sadness, for example, is defined by the neurological system that causes certain physiological changes in the organism. Paul Ekman is perhaps the most notable of the current proponents of this way of viewing the neurological basis of emotions[27] and his research into the neuromuscular manifestations of emotions in the face has been widely influential.[28] Ekman's research suggests that it is possible to universally categorize emotions based on movements in the face.

Despite its popularity, the theory of basic emotions has had some prominent opponents. Philosopher and psychologist Robert Solomon, for example, calls this theory "a debilitating reductionism in emotion theory."[29] According to Solomon's model, emotions may be considered from five different perspectives: 1) behavioral, 2) physiological, 3) phenomenological, 4) cognitive, and 5) social.[30] Solomon argues that the theory of basic emotions misleadingly reduces emotions to their physiological aspect, thus depriving them of their existential significance. Psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett's recent book, *How Emotions are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*, draws on contemporary research in neuroscience to offer a more

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[27] See Paul Ekman, "All Emotions are Basic," in *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions,* eds. Paul Ekman and Richard Davidson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15-19.
[28] Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen, *Unmasking the Face: A Guide to Recognizing Emotions from Facial Clues* (Cambridge, MA: Malor Books, 2003).
[29] Robert Solomon, *Not Passion's Slave: Emotion and Choice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), Kindle Loc. 2074-2075. Chapter 8, "Back to Basics: On the Very Idea of 'Basic Emotions,'" provides a succinct history of the theory of basic emotion in the fields of psychology and philosophy and a fair analysis of this theory's weaknesses.
[30] Ibid., 2311-2313.

devastating critique of the theory of basic emotions. In short, she argues, "Despite tremendous time and investment, research has not revealed a consistent bodily fingerprint for even a single emotion."[31] The "bodily fingerprint" means both the neurological pathways and the facial musculature that Ekman claims to map.

Robinson herself does not fully commit to the theory of basic emotions, but her analysis of emotional processes proceeds on the assumption that basic emotions are at least partially responsible for initial physiological responses.[32] Robinson's implicit commitment to the theory of basic emotions seems to be another factor in her rejection of the cognitive-evaluative content of emotional memory. That being said, I wish to preserve her basic schema of emotions as processes, which (to my knowledge) is the most succinct rendering of the components of emotional response available.

Barrett and the Construction of Emotional Memory

Emotional memory is often unconscious and thus it is the most elusive component of Robinson's schema. On the other hand, the question as to whether emotional memory is cognitively structured or biologically determined is of the utmost importance, since the answer determines whether, at their root, emotions are cognitive or not. The answer also determines the extent to which human beings can ultimately exercise free control over their emotions. Lisa Feldman Barrett provides the most coherent and comprehensive analysis for how this mysterious function works and the best synthesis of the leading contributions to the neuroscience of emotions

[31] Barrett, 15.
[32] See, for example, Robinson, 69, where she conjectures as to the source of affective appraisals: "My own hunch is that currently the most promising approach is the basic emotion approach."

discussed above.[33] Furthermore, although Barrett approaches the construction of emotional memory differently from Robinson, her analysis provides support for Robinson's version of expression theory, which is the basis for the third section of this thesis.

Barrett's research on emotion is an attempt to debunk what she calls "the classical view of emotion."[34] The prevailing, although not unchallenged, view has been that there are locatable networks in the brain that define different emotions. As seen above, Robinson seems to implicitly adopt this view, according to which the neural networks responsible for emotions are supposedly the same in every normal human brain. However, we can readily observe that each person expresses emotion differently and that even a single person might experience the same emotion differently, depending on the circumstances. Furthermore, the physiological symptoms that are usually associated with anger might also be associated with other emotions, such as fear or sorrow. In response to the classical view of emotions and the theory of basic emotions, Barrett's contention is that each human being constructs his or her emotions. In other words, there is no such thing as "sorrow" existing apart from particular experiences that we classify as "sorrowful."

How do we construct emotions? Emotions do not occur in a vacuum, but within the context of a person's experience.[35] The brain has certain structures that allow it to collect, interpret and retain information, but information must come from the senses. As the brain collects data, it processes sensations from the environment in order to improve the efficiency of perception. "Efficiency" is the key concept here, since the brain is continually looking for ways

[33] It must be noted that Barrett does not use the term "emotional memory." Emotional memory is a concept that LeDoux develops in his earlier writings and one that Robinson adopts. I will, however, continue to refer to emotional memory in my discussion of Barrett's theory since it captures well Barrett's notion of "simulations," which will be discussed below.
[34] Barrett, xiii-xiv.
[35] Ibid., 26.

to promote the best interests of the organism while expending the least amount of energy. One of the ways the brain improves efficiency is by producing simulations, which are mental constructs that make sense of the multitude of bits of information coming through the senses.[36] Barrett uses the term "simulation" in a way similar to how traditional epistemology describes the product of the imagination. Simulations, like the products of imagination, are syntheses of various sense data that the person perceives as a whole. In the context of epistemology, imagination is not solely connected with fantasy; rather it represents the normal way in which a person makes sense of various sense data. I mention the similarity between imagination's products and simulations because aesthetic theories and Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, both of which will be addressed in the third section of this thesis, generally speak in terms of imagination, while neuroscientists often prefer to refer to the brain's ability to create simulations.

A couple of examples will help to clarify how simulations work. A person walks into a house and picks up the odor of baking bread. Based on previous experiences of baking, smelling, and eating bread, the person knows from the odor what she is smelling and she can visualize the bread as well as have an inkling of the pleasure that she will feel when she tastes the bread. In this way, Barrett claims, "Scientific evidence shows that what we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell are largely simulations of the world, not reactions to it."[37] This assertion is admittedly counterintuitive, but Barrett's claim can be illustrated with an example from the art world. When a person catches a first glimpse of a pointillist painting, the person will likely immediately recognize whatever subject the painter has depicted, usually a landscape or a scene

[36] Ibid., 27.
[37] Ibid.

from the park or the beach.[38] The reason that the viewer recognizes the scene is that the viewer is working from a simulation that has been developed from past perceptions of similar scenes. Upon closer inspection, however, the viewer will discover that the painting is nothing other than an intricate arrangement of colored dots. It is the viewer's brain that makes sense of the dots by referring them to previous simulations before the viewer recognizes that this is happening. The same phenomenon, Barrett claims, is present when a person becomes conscious of an emotion either in herself or in another person. For instance, when a person sees someone crying, she relates this sense perception to her concept of sorrow. This concept includes previous experiences she has had of sorrow: things she had read about sad people, difficult moments in her life, sorrowful moments in the lives of friends, etc. Whether or not this person simulates the sorrow of the crying person as intense or mild will depend in large measure on the viewer's concept of sorrow as it relates to the situation at hand. Even in the act of looking at a person crying, the observer is still working from a simulation. For example, the viewer assumes from past experience that the sorrow is uncomfortable, even if she has never before met the particular person who is crying and knows nothing of the crying person's circumstances.

The conclusion that follows is that we (or our brains), through concepts and simulations, construct the world we live in to a large extent, but not entirely. This ability to construct a world has its limitations; we cannot, for example, mistake a bronze statue for a piano sonata.[39] Barrett is not arguing that there is no objective world external to the subject and Barrett recognizes that the simulations a person projects can be inappropriate to a given state of affairs. Let us return to the two examples from the preceding paragraph. A person walking into a house catches the odor

[38] See, for example, Ibid., 25-26. The example from pointillism is my own, but it is in many respects similar to an example that Barrett uses in these pages.
[39] Ibid., 28.

of baking bread. She simulates a loaf in the oven, but the odor might be coming from a scented candle. Another person notices a person crying. The onlooker perceives the hysterical sobbing in terms of her simulation of sorrow, but someone crying might have just won the lottery. Simulations are the brain's best guess as to what is going on in the environment, but they are not infallible.

Compared with Robinson's conception of emotional memory, it must be admitted that Barrett's version of simulation theory seems counter-intuitive. For example, Barrett admits: "With concepts, your brain simulates so invisibly and automatically that vision, hearing, and your other senses seem like reflexes rather than constructions."[40] Emotions work in much the same way. As Barrett puts it: "Emotions are not reactions to the world. You are not a passive receiver of sensory input but an active constructor of your emotions […] With concepts, your brain makes meaning of sensation, and sometimes that meaning is an emotion."[41] In other words, emotions are interpretations or evaluations of certain sensations. This way of thinking about emotional memory as simulations that we construct over a long period of time seems to contradict how we actually experience initial emotional responses, namely as things that happen to us rather than as things that we, albeit often unconsciously, make happen. It seems to me that the intuitive understanding of emotional responses as principally physiological responses is what informs Robinson's and Ekman's research. As seen in the discussion of Greenspan's example above, however, an understanding of emotional memory as purely physiological does not account for the experiential data concerning how certain people have particular emotional responses to specific states of affairs, while others do not.

[40] Ibid., 29.
[41] Ibid., 31.

Barrett's critique of the intuitive view of emotional memory as a purely physiological response is more precise than the experiential argument that Greenspan developed. The discrepancy between the intuitive and non-intuitive views of emotional memory seems to come down to a proper understanding of the role affective responses. Affect, Barrett explains, can be recognized according to two characteristics. Firstly, the "valence" of the affect is either pleasant or unpleasant. I prefer to refer to the valence as attractive or aversive, since this terminology better situates the role that affect played in its evolutionary origins and it emphasizes how pleasant affect propels us while unpleasant affect repels us. Secondly, the "arousal" factor of the affect (or lack thereof) causes a person to be energized (or not).[42] When a person experiences affect in relation to something that she perceives, it is not the image that determines the affect; rather, it is the brain that characterizes the object of perception as pleasant/unpleasant and calming/agitating.[43] In other words, outside circumstances do not compel us feel a certain way; our brains do that. It is necessary to distinguish between affect and emotion, since affect is influenced by factors that are not inherently emotional such as sleep, exercise, nutrition, drugs, and hormones.[44] All of these factors may contribute to how we see the world.

Affective sensations are perceived through a process called "interoception," which is "your brain's representation of all sensations from your internal organs and tissues, the hormones in your blood, and your immune system."[45] In order to make sense of these perceptions, the brain relates them to current and past perceptions.[46] For example, a person observing a person crying may start to feel the bodily sensations that he had when mourning the loss of a loved one

[42] Ibid., 72.
[43] Ibid., 75.
[44] Ibid., 72.
[45] Ibid., 56.
[46] Ibid., 66-67.

(e.g., depletion of energy, queasiness, etc.). This person's brain is producing what Barrett calls "predictions."[47] That is, based on the sensory material before him and on past experiences, his brain is predicting the loss of a loved one and producing a feeling of unpleasantness, a feeling that his brain actually causes him to experience in the moment. Of course, whatever experience of mourning the brain is relating to the current experience of observing the crying person does not correspond to the viewer's current situation. The observer is not currently losing a loved one. In such instances, the brain realizes its error and efficiently corrects the prediction error.[48] This correction of prediction error corresponds to Robinson's conception of the cognitive appraisal of physiological responses. After the brain has corrected is error, it then causes the interoceptive network to produce affect that is more appropriate to the situation in which the person now finds himself. Why does the brain operate in this way? The interoceptive network seems to be an efficient means by which the brain increases the person's chances of survival because it allow the person to feel what is in her best interest before she has a chance to rationally analyze a situation.[49]

Emotions, for Barrett, are concepts that the brain assigns to certain experiences. Furthermore, emotional concepts are not only the private domain of a single individual. People develop emotional concepts beginning in early infancy when a parent assigns concepts such as "happy" or "sad" to an infant's behavioral patterns.[50] Language and culture likewise provide an important conceptual framework through which a person interprets affect arising from the

[47] Ibid., 58-59.
[48] Ibid., 62.
[49] Ibid., 71-72.
[50] Ibid., 100-101.

interoceptive network.[51] It is possible for a person to expand her repertoire of emotional concepts by learning new vocabulary and by experiencing a different culture.[52] Two possibilities that Barrett does not discuss in much detail, but that follows from her hypothesis, are that art and prayer might be additional ways that a person learns emotional concepts. Artists often attempt to make audiences experience certain emotions in relation to the scenarios and characters that they present. And sometimes this combination of stimulus and emotion are not what an audience might expect. For example, most people connect death with sorrow. However, when J.S. Bach (and his librettist) considered death in light of his religious convictions, he composed an effervescent bass aria, "Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod," which casts death as something to which a person can look forward. Audiences listening to this aria—and in fact to the whole Cantata BWV 82 as well to many other Bach arias about death—are invited to think of death in terms of an attractive affect, in this case in terms of the affect related to an emotional concept of joy. The joy that Bach evokes in his aria, however, is not like the joy that a person experiences at a party; rather, it is a specific kind of emotion connected to the idea of eventual release from worldly suffering. Furthermore, it is an emotion that is linked to religious faith. For many listeners, this kind of joy at the thought of one's own death may be an emotion that they have never experienced before.

Bach's evocation of joy in the aria mentioned above is, as Barrett would say, "granular." As Barrett explains: "'Happiness' and 'Sadness' are each populations of diverse instances.

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[51] Ibid., 103-104. Although Barrett claims that emotions are highly particular to the individual, she does recognize that emotional concepts are developed in a communal context. This allows for the effective sharing of emotions among individuals who have similar conceptual frameworks. For the expression theory of art, the possibility for sharing of emotion is essential. In this way, the aesthetic theory we are developing here avoids what Alejandro García-Rivera calls "aesthetic nominalism" in *A Wounded Innocence: Sketches for a Theology of Art* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 24-30.

[52] Barrett, 104.

Therefore, emotional intelligence (EI) is about getting your brain to construct the most useful instance of the most useful emotion concept in a given situation."[53] Again, my example from pointillism is instructive. Pointillist painters demonstrate that it is possible to think of our visual field in terms of grains of color. In breaking a visual scene down into miniscule dots of color, the artist offers insight into how complex visual perception really is, something that most people take for granted. Similarly to how a pointillist painter notices the tiny grains of color that make up a visual field, an emotionally intelligent person learns how to break an emotional experience down into all of its different parts. Learning emotional concepts is important in order for a person to be able to specify what he is actually feeling. In the same way, a person who works from a meager lexicon of emotional concepts does not easily perceive emotion in others.[54]

Emotional intelligence leads to what Barrett calls "granularity" in thinking about our emotions: "People who make highly granular experiences are emotion experts: they issue predictions and construct instances of emotion that are finely tailored to fit each specific situation."[55] Emotional granularity, then, means that a proper understanding of a given emotion must be fine grained, such as the joy in "Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod" or color in a pointillist painting. Bach's aria does not offer a coarse, general concept of joy; Bach was not, as far as we know, morbid, depressed, or suicidal. To appreciate the concept of joy that he expresses, it is necessary to enter into his religious framework and to think in the context of his musical idiom. It is this idea of the granularity of emotions that is perhaps the most important contribution that Barrett makes for the purposes of this thesis, since it adequately describes what emotions are:

[53] Ibid., 179.
[54] Ibid., 106.
[55] Ibid., 180.

highly specific and personal responses to a given state of affairs that involve felt sensations of either aversion or attraction.

If emotions are so highly particular, is it ever possible to experience another person's emotions? Barrett denies that it is possible for two people to experience exactly the same emotion, since emotional simulations are fed through personal experience, which no two people share. However, she maintains, "If you can get someone else to perceive your panting, sweaty state as fear, you influence their actions in a way that mere quick breaths and damp brows cannot achieve on their own. You can be an architect of other people's experiences."[56] The physiological manifestations of panting and sweating when coupled with the concept of fear give a good indication of the intensity of the emotion. The more precise the concept, the more likely it is that someone can communicate the meaning of the emotion. If a person desires to communicate an emotion that she is feeling, she must do so through the use of concepts. We can only communicate the cognitive content of emotions through words, gestures, or even unconsciously through physiological responses—e.g., when I see someone trembling and sweating, I interpret these physiological symptoms as anxiety or fear. Physiological responses generally cannot be shared—e.g., my brain does not necessarily register the other person's trembling and sweating by making me tremble and sweat—although the perception of physiological changes in another person may give us some indication as to the intensity and valence of another person's emotion. Bach's aria is again illuminative. The racing tempo and the coloratura of both the singer and the instrumentalists act somewhat analogously to physiological manifestations of an emotion. The musical traits are not in themselves joyful, since they are also characteristic of many baroque rage arias. The listener only knows that these

[56] Ibid., 139.

musical notes demonstrate an intensely positive kind of joy because of the text of the aria. In other words, Bach gives listeners the emotional concept necessary for interpreting the affectivity of the musical notes.

Emotions as Existential Engagement

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have attempted to provide a coherent model for thinking about emotions. I will now briefly revisit some of the themes already discussed in order to highlight the existential importance of emotions. My argument comes down to this: emotions reveal who a person is in relation to the things in his environment.

Firstly, emotions are existentially significant because they are reflections of a person's history. If Barrett is correct, every time a person identifies his feelings as "sorrow," for example, he is drawing on many past experiences of sorrow. Furthermore, he is drawing on cultural and societal conceptions of sorrow that have informed his personal concept. In this way, emotional memory is complex web of meaning that relates particular stimuli not only to an individual's personal history, but to his community and his cultural traditions.

Secondly, as was mentioned briefly in the discussion of Damasio's work, emotions are existentially important because they are motivating factors. Damasio showed that people with certain kinds of damage to the prefrontal cortex were not capable of feeling emotion, or capable only to a lesser degree. As Barrett explains, the brain damage described by Damasio actually inhibited his patients' ability to feel affect.[57] That is to say, they were incapable of sensing in their bodies the pleasure or displeasure, the attraction and aversion that usually accompany emotional concepts in normally functioning brains. The result was that making decisions was

[57] Ibid., 80.

either extremely difficult or downright impossible for these patients. In other words, the affective valence and arousal that accompanies emotional concepts enables people to make decisions because affect gives the person a sense of what attracts or repels her and how strongly.

Thirdly, Barrett claims that invisible neurological processes, upbringing, and cultural norms all influence emotional development. Nevertheless, there is room in her theory for freedom whereby it is possible to change one's emotional conceptual framework.[58] For this reason, she insists: "You are an architect of your experience."[59] Barrett offers a convincing model for understanding how emotional memory works and for how it might be reshaped. In this assessment she is in agreement with both LeDoux and Damasio.[60] The conscious, rational restructuring of unconscious emotional memory is a difficult task, but it is possible. To a large extent, we can choose who we are in relation to the things in our environment by tailoring our emotional responses to suit our interests. I highlight the importance of freedom at this juncture because the idea of freedom will play an important role in later considerations. In my view, the theory of basic emotions reduces emotions to pre-programmed reflexes that are universally recognizable. There seems to be little room for personal freedom in this model. The theories of Barrett, LeDoux, and Damasio open up a space for the cognitive appraisal and eventual restructuring of emotional memory.

Nevertheless, these researchers still reduce emotions to neurological processes programmed by experience, upbringing, societal influences, and eventually cognitive, rational appraisal. They do not inquire further in the nature of the person's freedom to choose which

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[58] Ibid., 154-155.
[59] Ibid., 155.
[60] See Joseph LeDoux, *Anxious: Using the Brain to Understand and Treat Fear and Anxiety* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 318; and Antonio Damasio, *The Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), Kindle Locations 4152-4153.

emotions she will exhibit in response to a given stimulus. The problem of emotional freedom is, perhaps, ultimately not the domain of neuroscience, but of philosophy and theology. I will consider one way of viewing the problem of emotional freedom in the next section. I believe the key to understanding emotional freedom lies in a model of emotional memory that takes into consideration its granular, cognitional nature.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that an emotion is a process that stems from the triggering of a cognitively rich emotional memory. Why is it important that emotional memory be cognitively rich? Thinking of emotional memory in these terms allows us to dissect this kind of memory into all its granular parts such as previous experiences that make up the memory, the affective responses related to the memory, and the cognitive appraisals that take into account the current situation. We can notice which stimuli trigger which emotional concepts as well as the affective valence and intensity that we associate with these emotional concepts. For the purposes of this thesis, the granularity of emotional memory is important for two reasons. Firstly, having a granular understanding of emotions allows us to exercise a certain degree of freedom over our emotions. Once we (or a therapist or spiritual director, for that matter) understand how a particular emotional memory is constructed, we can rearrange the various components of that memory in order to better suit our interests. We can, at least in some cases, determine our gut reactions. This idea becomes important when thinking about attraction and aversion in the spiritual life, the subject of the next chapter. Secondly, the granularity of emotional memory allows us to add emotional memories to our emotional repertoire. That is to say, we can learn new emotional concepts in order to approach a given stimulus in new ways. One way we do this

is by engaging with arts. Artists, as emotional experts, enable their audiences to experience new emotions and thus to emotionally respond to given situations in ways that they might not have before. I briefly illustrated this fact when considering a Bach aria and the pointillist tradition of painting. In the third chapter I will argue, furthermore, that Ignatius attempts to do something similar in the *Spiritual Exercises*. He held that by means of imaginative prayer a retreatant can develop new emotional concepts in response to things like sin and stories from the life of Christ. Although neither Rahner nor Ignatius were working from the physicalist perspective on emotions that I have developed in this chapter, this perspective nevertheless does much to explain the insights that they present in their respective methodologies.

CHAPTER TWO: EMOTIONS AND GRACE

The physicalist view of emotions presented in the preceding chapter offers a foundation for asking whether emotions play a role in at least some forms of religious experience. We now have a working definition of emotions as processes that involve emotional memory, affective response, and cognitive appraisals. All of the authors discussed in the previous chapters treat emotions as neurological processes that result from natural selection; that is, emotions are traits that help to ensure the organism's survival. Without denying the scientific presuppositions that informed the above study or calling into question the research that resulted from these presuppositions, this chapter will expand the inquiry into the ultimate aim of emotions considerably. In short, the question I am asking is: If the ultimate objective of human existence is not solely the survival of the organism, do emotions still play a role in attaining this ultimate objective?

In this chapter I will argue that the answer is yes. Emotions do indeed play a role in the human effort to reach our ultimate aim, which theologically speaking is God. While the neuroscientists and psychologists discussed above argue that human beings can exercise a certain degree of freedom in the reworking of their emotional concepts to better ensure survival, similar principles apply in the quest for God. Said another way, we can in fact rethink our emotional concepts so as to train our gut reactions to reflect attractive affect in relation to God. I will argue my case in three stages. Firstly, I will summarize Rahner's theological anthropology, which is at the same time a description of religious experience and a convincing model for considering how human beings relate to their final goal. Secondly, I will briefly examine the role of emotion in this theological anthropology. Thirdly, since Rahner only writes about emotion in very abstract

terms in his academic writings, I will look to his spiritual writings to provide a more concrete picture for how emotions work in religious experience. This third stage will introduce Barrett's concept of emotional granularity into Rahner's thought on religious experience, a subject that will be elaborated more fully in the third chapter.

I chose Rahner's theological anthropology as the foundation for the theological argument in this thesis because Rahner provides a model for thinking about how human experience—to be more precise, all human experience in so far as it is human—plays a role in religious experience. That is to say, Rahner's theological anthropology is heavily anthropocentric in that it is essentially Christocentric. As I will explain in greater detail in this chapter, Rahner understands Jesus Christ as the exemplar of our humanity. For this reason, when a person draws closer to what is most essential to his own humanity—i.e., when he accepts himself as he is—he likewise approaches the humanity of Christ, which is at the same time the manifestation of Christ's divinity. In other words, our pathway to God is the humanity of Christ and all human beings partake in Christ's humanity in so far as they are human.

Although Rahner himself did not write about the neuroscience of emotions, he intentionally left his theological-anthropological model open ended and flexible enough to allow for engagement with other areas of research such as philosophy, social science, psychology, and the natural sciences. The dialogue between the neuroscience of emotions and Rahner's anthropology that I offer toward the end of this chapter is an attempt to show how these two models for viewing the human person may be mutually informative.

Rahner's Theological Anthropology

Although Rahner wrote extensively on theological anthropology, the present investigation will focus on the First and Second Lectures from "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology (German 1960 / English 1966)." Rahner approaches the question of human existence from two poles simultaneously; at the one pole the divine mystery pours itself out in love and freedom and at the other pole the human spirit lovingly and freely reaches out in the act of transcendence. Theologically speaking, the point of encounter between the two poles is Christ, God's Word, God's self-communication in human flesh.

In response to a way of thinking about mysteries that is prominent in the Neo-Scholastic tradition, namely as bits of information veiled from human reason and accepted in faith, Rahner asks a bold question: What if "mystery" is what is always and everywhere really experienced and what if this one great mystery encompasses all other experiences?[61] Instead of thinking of mystery as a "defective mode of knowledge," Rahner encourages his readers to think of it as "the permanent presence of the inexpressible and nameless."[62] And human beings have access to this mystery, since transcendent spirit is part of the essential structure of their humanity. That is to say, by their very nature, human beings experience things outside of themselves. Rahner calls the experience of things other than the self "transcendence" and the faculty that makes this experience possible he calls "spirit": "Spirit is transcendence. Spirit grasps at the incomprehensible, in as much as it presses on beyond the actual object of comprehension to the anticipatory grasp of the absolute."[63] In other words, spirit is that part of us that is capable of leaving the narrow confines of the self and encountering a reality that is distinct from us.

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[61] Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations IV*, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 41.
[62] Ibid., 41-42.
[63] Ibid., 42.

Although the term "transcendence" is commonly used to connote a religious experience, according to the philosophical sense in which Rahner is using it the word simply means to experience something other than oneself. Transcendence enables the person to gain new knowledge, either about herself or about something else. And knowledge, Rahner states, is not so much about "seeing through" an object to its essential structures, as it is about "a possible openness to the mystery itself."[64] In the act of transcendence, the person realizes that the reality outside of herself is infinitely vast and that this infinite reality is the context in which the individual object of perception is recognizable, definable, and knowable.[65] In other words, the whole of being is opened up to spirit in every act of transcendence.[66]

Already here there are notable similarities and contrasts between Rahner's concepts of spirit, transcendence, and mystery and the physicalist perspective presented in the last chapter. For Barrett in particular, our experience of the world is to a large extent based on simulations drawn from previous experiences. She is not particularly interested in reality as such, but in reality as it presents itself to the brain. Does reality present itself to the brain as mystery? Based on what we have seen above, there are two ways of approaching this question. Firstly, there are some important similarities between Barrett's and Rahner's epistemologies. For example, Barrett insists that it is not possible to have another person's experiences nor is it possible to feel their emotions. Two people can look at the same man sobbing in the corner of a subway car and have varying experiences of the scene. That is to say, different perspectives generate differing insights into any given phenomenon. The reality of the things themselves are not something that

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[64] Karl Rahner, "The Hiddenness of God," in *Theological Investigations XVI*, trans. David Moreland (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 233.
[65] Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery," 42.
[66] Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994), 125.

we can entirely wrap our minds around, since our simulations of these things are to a large extent determined by the limitations of our previous experiences. Although the constructivist account leaves open the possibility of a real world that is knowable, it suggests that no aspect of our experience is completely knowable.

Secondly, LeDoux's research in particular points out that emotional memory may be unconscious. In other words, one of the viewers may think the scene of the man sobbing is funny and the other find it sad, and neither may know how they came to this evaluation. It must be noted, however, that Rahner is not using the term "mystery" to define what we cannot at this moment explain; rather, mystery is that part of our experience that can never be fully explained because it is beyond the capacity of the human mind to comprehend. Emotional memories, on the other hand, do have explanations, even if we cannot readily call them to consciousness. One reading of the physicalist model might suggest that mysterious emotions are reducible to a person's experiences and context. The better we understand our experiences and contexts, the better we understand who we are and why we respond to our environment in certain ways. It is at least theoretically possible for a person to untangle the complex web of meaning constituted by biological, personal, and social factors. Here Rahner and the physicalists would fundamentally disagree. For Rahner, the experience and context that ultimately constitute the human person is mystery. Mystery is to a certain extent intelligible, but never fully comprehensible. The divergence between the physicalist and transcendental approaches, however, is not hopeless. Scientists proceed on the conviction that more is always knowable. Rahner would agree with this assertion, but with the following caveat: reality itself, which is fundamentally constituted by mystery, is intelligible but incomprehensible. The following paragraphs will help to clarify this subtle distinction.

According to Rahner, since spirit always reaches beyond the self and acquires knowledge from the world, transcendence manifests itself as the "circumincession" of knowledge and love.[67] Here Rahner is relying on the Scholastic conceptions of intellect and will, according to which the intellect is the faculty that allows human beings to assimilate true knowledge from mere sense perceptions. Consequently, knowledge, as "comprehension and mastery, consists in the ordering of data in a horizon of understanding and system of coordinates which is evident to us as the object which we possess identically with ourselves."[68] Will, on the other hand, provides the impetus to the intellect to know the object of its perception. The two faculties presuppose each other, since without the intellect, the will would not know what it desires and without the will, the intellect would not desire to know. The primary movement of the will, consequently, is love, which is the movement of the person to unite himself with the object of desire. This brief excursus into Scholastic epistemology is the backdrop for Rahner's assertion that "knowledge, though prior to love and freedom, can only be realized in its *true* sense when and in so far as the subject is more than knowledge, when fact it is freely given in love."[69] Spirit's act of reaching out into the world is called "love," while spirit's intellectual grasping of an object is called "knowledge." But why is love more important than knowledge, if the goal of love is to assimilate the object of knowledge?

The answer to this question takes us to the heart of the problem that Rahner is addressing. It appears as though knowledge is more important than love, since the goal of spirit's transcendence is attained when the person understands the object of transcendence. For example, Susan is feeling listless and she comes to recognize that her physiological state is one

[67] Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery," 42.
[68] Rahner, "The Hiddenness of God," 236.
[69] Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery," 43.

of sorrow. In this case, it would seem that the goal of transcendence was achieved when Susan names her feeling "sorrow." Rahner, by contrast, would say that the goal of transcendence has not been achieved in the conceptual grasping of sorrow. Perhaps Susan has resolved a mysterious unknown when she is able to name her listlessness "sorrow," but the ultimate mystery of which both Susan and her sorrow are a part has not thereby been eliminated. Perhaps Susan chooses to be more introspective in regards to her sorrow and realizes that it is the anniversary of her mother's death. Susan's sorrow in this case is linked to her relationship with her mother. But even here, with the conceptual grasping of meaning of person's sorrow, mystery has not been eliminated, since the significance of the mother-daughter relationship is one of unfathomable depth; such relationships may be part of what constitutes Susan's understanding of herself. Rahner holds that it is not possible to completely understand (i.e., to comprehend) anything, not even the smallest, most insignificant object, without reference to infinite mystery:

> Thus all understanding of any reality whatsoever is in the last resort always a '*reductio in mysterium*', and any comprehension which is or seems to be devoid of the character of mystery, is only arrived at through the unspoken convention that this '*reductio in mysterium Dei*' should be excluded from the start.[70]

Susan's sorrow, therefore, is in direct relation to the mystery of who she is and that mystery is in turn only a part of mystery as a whole. Even the most mundane instances of transcendence must be viewed in terms of ultimate mystery. Since nothing can ever be completely understood insofar as everything is found in the context of mystery, love—as an endless reaching out to and desire for union with something not entirely graspable—is therefore more important to spirit's transcendence than knowledge. This must be the case if in every act of transcendence the intellect is confronted by a reality that far exceeds its capacity to assimilate. According to Rahner's understanding of mystery, if Susan were to continually reach beyond what she has

[70] Ibid., 62.

conceptually grasped of her sorrow, she would eventually come to the realization that at the bottom of this emotion is a nameless something. And that something is a God who exceeds all names.

Mystery, Rahner asserts, is relative to the knower and is not a property inherent to the thing known. God, for example, is not mysterious to God, but to our finite minds.[71] This assertion that God is *in se* intelligible is important if we are to consider God (or mystery) not as empty of content but as so excessive in content that our minds cannot possibly assimilate this content. Human knowledge and will, which constitute spirit in its transcendence, are oriented toward the object of infinite transcendence, namely God.[72] Rahner goes on to argue that "All conceptual expressions about God, necessary though they are, always stem from the unobjectivated experience of transcendence as such: the concept from the pre-conception, the name from the experience of the nameless."[73] That is to say, the names we assign to God must be grounded in our experience of the divine mystery that is the ultimate object of our transcendence. Yes, God is totally other, but the ineffable mystery is also immanently present to us as the object of our experience of transcendence. Yes, we can use names for God, but these names are not unrelated epithets that describe a plurality of mysteries. Rather, the names we use for God are grounded in the experience of transcendence and are placeholders, as it were, for a God who surpasses all names and remains indefinable in terms of human conceptual categories.

In general, people name the objects of their perceptions in order to differentiate one object from another: this is a book and not a chair. The names used for infinite mystery, however, do not work in this way. As Rahner writes:

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[71] Ibid., 48-49.
[72] Ibid., 49.
[73] Ibid., 50.

> The horizon cannot be comprised within the horizon, the whither of transcendence cannot really, as such, be brought within the range of transcendence itself to be distinguished from other things. The ultimate measure cannot itself be bounded by a still more distant limit. The infinite and immense which comprises and can comprise all things, because it exists only as infinite distance behind which there is nothing, and in relation to which it is indeed meaningless to talk of 'nothingness': such an all-embracing immensity cannot itself be encompassed.[74]

It must be remembered that when Rahner writes about mystery as the ultimate goal of transcendence, he also means that mystery is the precondition for transcendence. Mystery is infinite depth and the context in which we find ourselves, in which we know and love ourselves, and in which we know and love what is outside of ourselves. The mystery Rahner is talking about is not one object among others; mystery is context in which everything is. For this reason, names for God—even the name "God" itself—cannot be used to categorically define what God is.

The reason why mystery is ultimately nameless expresses the fact that infinite mystery is the measure by which all things are measured: "The Whither of transcendence is at no one's disposal, it is that which disposes of us silently and ceaselessly at the moment when we being to dispose of anything, when we make a judgment on something and then try to submit it to the *a priori* laws of our understanding."[75] To know something is to assimilate that thing to the intellect, to possess and to be capable of disposing of that thing according our will. Mystery, however, cannot be treated in this way, since it cannot be possessed by the intellect. That is why, for Rahner, love is superior to knowledge in religious experience, because spirit always reaches out in love to mystery without being able to possess it.

[74] Ibid., 51.
[75] Ibid., 52.

Rahner goes on to explain that "[mystery] bestows itself upon us by refusing itself, by keeping silence, by staying aloof."[76] We experience mystery as something that is present to us and yet inaccessible, as the silence in which words are spoken and understood. But how does mystery become intelligible to us? Rahner explains: "We are beings of receptive spirituality who stand in freedom before the free God of a possible revelation, which if it comes, happens in our history through the word."[77] That is, ineffable mystery is in itself hidden from our limited, human capacities. If mystery is to be experienced by human beings, the "silence" that constitutes our experience of mystery must be somehow intelligible; the "hiddenness" must also be nearness.

This is where the incarnation becomes a necessary bridge between ineffable mystery and human openness to this mystery:

> Jesus, the Man, not merely *was* at one time of decisive importance for our salvation, i.e. for the real finding of the absolute God, by his historical and now past acts of the Cross, etc., but—as the one who became man and has remained a creature—he is *now* and for all eternity the *permanent openness* of our finite being to the living God of infinite, eternal life; he is, therefore, even in his humanity the created reality for us which stands in the act of our religion in such a way that, without this act towards his humanity and through it (implicitly or explicitly), the basic religious act towards God could never reach its goal.[78]

In principle it is not possible to experience eternity in a moment or to express the infinite in the finite. We can think of the historical and the finite as containers that have only a certain capacity for receiving time or meaning. The eternal and the infinite would certainly exceed this capacity. This fact would seem to be a problem for human beings whose experience is necessarily conditioned by the historical and the finite. For this reason, God communicates God's self freely

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, 142.
[78] Karl Rahner, "The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for Our Relationship with God," in *Theological Investigations III*, trans. Karl-Heinz and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1967), 44.

and lovingly to human beings in the incarnation; that is, mystery bestows itself. To be more precise, Jesus's humanity is not merely a vessel into which God pours God's divinity; rather, Jesus's humanity is itself divinity bestowing itself in human fashion. The Word, which exists eternally with God is expressed in human nature, most clearly in the person of Jesus Christ, who is "permanent openness of our finite being to the living God," the bridge, as it were, from the finite to the infinite. At the same time, Jesus is God's bridge to humanity.

Jesus Christ, then, is the human possibility for knowing and loving the divine. That is not to say, however, that a person must explicitly know about the historical person of Jesus in order to have an encounter with mystery: "So the holy mystery is not something upon which man may 'also' stumble, if he is lucky and takes an interest in something else besides the definable objects within the horizon of his consciousness. Man always lives by the holy mystery, even where he is not conscious of it."[79] The ultimate goal of human transcendence is to be in immediate proximity to mystery, which is to know—without ever comprehending—and love God in the beatific vision.[80] In the beatific vision, Rahner claims, the intellect is set free to love mystery.[81] Christ, as God's intelligible Word, ensures this possibility.

Rahner's concept of mystery, therefore, finds a way of reconciling the limits of human existence with the infinite horizon of human experience. The following passage highlights the existential nature of the decision to view the world in terms of mystery or not:

> [The human being] knows better than anything else that the existential question facing him in knowledge is whether he loves the little island of his so-called knowledge better than the ocean of the infinite mystery; whether or not he will concede that the mystery alone is self-evident; whether he thinks that the little light with which he illuminates this

[79] Ibid., 54.
[80] Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery," 54.
[81] Rahner, "The Hiddenness of God," 238.

> island—we call it science—should be the eternal which shines on him for ever (which would be hell).[82]

Without a concept of mystery that encapsulates and makes possible every experience of transcendence, Rahner argues, we would be left with a depressing realization: all that there is to know is knowable. Knowledge would then be superior to love and knowledge, in turn, would always come up short, since we cannot possibly know everything there is to know. Rahner's concept of mystery provides an alternative lens through which the world might be viewed. That is to say, mystery ensures that every experience of transcendence is an experience of infinite depth and this depth can only be approached with love.

Rahner's theological anthropology and concept of mystery seem to depict human nature and human transcendence in a rosy light. Human beings are somehow always in immediacy to God, even in the most routine acts of daily life such as sipping tea or bumping against a stranger on the subway. The simple reality is, however, that most of us are not usually aware of mystery in our everyday acts of transcendence. We tend to focus on the alternative epistemological paradigm described above, where transcendence is nothing other than "the little island of so-called knowledge." Rahner is aware of this difficulty and he addresses it in greater detail in his spiritual writings. Before discussing these, however, it will be helpful to elaborate on how Rahner understands the existential choice for mystery.

Rahner on Emotions

The existential choice for mystery is of particular importance for this investigation, since Rahner sees this choice as one involving emotion. Although Rahner approaches emotion from a different angle than I did in the first chapter, his concept of emotion is not incompatible with the

[82] Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery," 57-58.

concept I have been working with. In his essay, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion (German 1975 / English 1979)," Rahner provides something of a definition of emotion:

> It could simply be asserted that emotion signifies everything in human consciousness, both individual and collective, which escapes the control, in practice even if not in principle, of rationality as we have defined it, in so far as rationality can be carried on in a finite, reasoned process of reflection and work through the contents of human consciousness.[83]

To be clear, Rahner is not saying that emotions are irrational; rather, they are not subject to the same rules as rationality.[84] Even though Rahner does not draw on the neuropsychology of emotion, recent findings seem to justify this assertion. As was seen in the discussion of emotional memory, it is not necessary for a person to be conscious of these kinds of memory, which are initially unconsciously presented to the brain. A person only knows about emotional memory from the physiological responses that it elicits. That is why emotions, at least in their initial stage, seem to operate independently of consciousness and reason.

The first chapter of this thesis showed that emotions are rational responses in that they make sense of a given stimulus in light of previous experiences of that stimulus. What was not discussed, however, is how emotions operate differently from reason. This fact can be illustrated with an example drawn from Barrett's research.[85] There is a currently a tragic phenomenon in the United States that involves white police officers shooting unarmed black males. Oftentimes, the officers claim that they saw the black male holding a gun, even though no gun was found on the scene. Are the officers lying? Barrett argues that there is another possibility. These white officers may be operating from simulations of black males that are connected with emotions such

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[83] Karl Rahner, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," in *Theological Investigations XVI*, trans. David Moreland (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 62.
[84] Ibid., 63.
[85] Lisa Feldman Barrett and Jolie Wormwood, "When a Gun Is Not a Gun," *New York Times* (New York, NY), April 19, 2015. See also Barrett 248, 250.

as fear and danger and their corresponding aversive affect. That is to say, when these officers see a black male, they see danger. And so, if the black male is holding an innocuous object—the most recent example was a cellphone—or if the man is pulling his hands out of pockets, it is possible that the brain predicts a gun, causing the officer to perceive a gun where none was present. Affective predictions reach the sensory neurons before we see what is actually before us sometimes causing us to perceive thing that are not there.[86] Are these officers acting rationally when they shoot? Yes and no. On the one hand, the officers' reactions make sense neurologically. The officers' gut reactions to the scene may in fact be to see a gun. It is not unreasonable to assume that racist stereotypes are wired into these officers' brains. That is how emotional memory works; it makes predictions based on previous experiences. On the other hand, the officers mentioned do act irrationally, because they act as if they were in danger, when in fact they were not. But the process of rationally appraising gut reactions happens subsequently to the gut reaction itself. This example raises a further question: Are the officers responsible for murdering innocent men? Were they free? In the heat of the moment, perhaps they were not free, since they were working from a gut reaction. However, we are responsible for our emotional memories in the sense that we are free to alter them. In other words, ultimately the officers were responsible for shooting, since they were responsible for their emotions. It is the issue of emotional freedom that is at the heart of Rahner's analysis of emotions and the issue to which I now turn.

In his essay Rahner focuses on the capacity of emotions to motivate action, and thus their freedom in regards to rationality: "No motivation, however rational it may and should be, can be sufficiently thought through (in the sense defined earlier) and justified, so that all emotional

[86] Lisa Feldman Barrett and W Kyle Simmons. "Interoceptive Predictions in the Brain." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 16, no. 7 (2015): 419-29.

factors are excluded."[87] Furthermore, "Rationality is primarily concerned with the effectiveness of means and not with the creative establishment of ends and their justification."[88] For Rahner, then, emotions are free in that they choose the person's ends. Here again, the contemporary neuropsychology of emotions only confirms Rahner's assessment. Above I treated Damasio's findings concerning motivation. Damage to the prefrontal cortex may inhibit or destroy a person's ability to feel affect, and thus a person's "ability to plan for the future, to conduct himself according to the social rules he previously had learned, and to decide on the course of action that ultimately would be most advantageous to his survival."[89] Damasio's research repeatedly confirmed that those patients with only prefrontal brain damage could in fact reason normally, but they were often incapable of making a decision that suited their interests, that is to say, their ends. All of this is to say, for both Rahner and Damasio, emotions are not reducible to reason.

Rahner, of course, is interested in emotions in so far as they choose the object of faith: "Faith is indeed in part determined by such emotions and is continually placed in question by the rational process of critical analysis made of these emotions."[90] This must be the case, since emotion chooses the object, the ultimate end. Rationality—or cognitive appraisal, as Robinson calls it—is responsible for sorting out the correct means for achieving that end and for determining whether that choice fits well with a person's other interests. Rahner goes further and considers the ultimate significance of freedom:

> The subject and object of freedom is constituted by the whole man acting with ultimate decision. Freedom means the capacity to act once and for all for oneself without being a

[87] Rahner, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," 63.
[88] Ibid., 64.
[89] Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 33.
[90] Ibid.

> mere point of intersection of influences which come from without and lose themselves in the impersonal web of objective causes which we call the world.[91]

The concept of freedom that Rahner develops here does not solely concern a person's ability to choose between this good and that good. Rather, as Rahner writes in another essay, the freedom of choice "is the possibility for the person to dispose himself."[92] Like mystery, which disposes itself in love and freedom, human beings can dispose of themselves in relation to other things. That is to say, freedom allows us to choose who we are in relation to other things as well as who it is we are becoming in relation to ourselves, other things, and God.

With this reflection Rahner comes to the point that was discussed at length above, namely human transcendence:

> One should add that a genuine and radical philosophy of freedom can and must demonstrate that the essential nature of freedom is only conceivable in and through the transcendent reference of the human spirit in knowledge and freedom to that being, or rather person, whom we call God.[93]

Freedom, then, is not only the human capacity to choose who we are; rather, in choosing who we are we choose the ultimate value, which is God. As Rahner writes in another place, "freedom is in the last analysis the possibility through and beyond the finite, of taking up a position towards God himself […] Freedom is self-achievement of the person, using a finite material, before the infinite God."[94] In other words, the human choice that ultimately defines who the person is—i.e., how she disposes herself *vis-à-vis* mystery—does not detract from the finiteness of human nature; rather, Rahner holds that human beings choose mystery by means of finite things. This idea of choosing the infinite through the finite will be illustrated below in the discussion of the

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[91] Ibid., 65.
[92] Karl Rahner, "The Dignity and Freedom of Man," in *Theological Investigations II*, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963), 246.
[93] Rahner "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," 66.
[94] Rahner, "The Dignity and Freedom of Man," 246-247.

everyday in Rahner's prayers. Self-achievement and self-acceptance, which happen in the context of finite human nature, therefore, are religious experience, something that Rahner makes clear in the following formulation of his theological anthropology: "If a man freely accepts himself as he is, even with regard to his own inner being whose basic constitution he inevitably has not fully grasped, then it is God he is accepting."[95]

This analysis of "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion" has been important for the current investigation in the sense that it clarifies what Rahner meant by "love" in "The Concept of Mystery" and what the tradition has generally called "will." Rahner does not explicitly equate emotion and love or emotion and will, but he certainly thinks of them as performing a similar function in regards to the ultimate goal of human existence. That is to say, both emotion and will exemplify the person's freedom to choose, even to the point of choosing his ultimate end. This exploration of Rahner's concept of emotion has also demonstrated that according to both the scientific and the transcendental approaches, the salient feature of emotions is that they are responsible for orienting us toward our ultimate objective—be it survival or God—in a way that is not solely reducible to reason, but that nevertheless takes rationality into account. As I progress through a discussion of concrete examples detailing what this choice might look like through the lens of Rahner's spiritual writings, I will continue to make reference to "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," since in his prayers, Rahner gives some glimpse as to how emotion plays a role in this process. Faith (*fides qua creditur*), for Rahner, is not a collection of rational propositions; rather, it is an acceptance of the fact that the rational and emotional dimensions of human existence point definitively toward God.[96]

[95] Rahner, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," 67.
[96] Ibid., 70.

Mystery in the Everyday

The concepts of mystery and emotion that Rahner elaborates may strike readers as somewhat detached from what most people experience in their daily lives. While Rahner sees all experience as a *reductio in mysterium*, in the daily grind of everyday life it seems more practical to focus on the concrete facticity of existence, or the "little island of so-called knowledge," as Rahner calls it. In his spiritual writings, Rahner is more comfortable writing about the cares and concerns of everyday life that seem to limit the possibilities of transcendent spirit to dull routine. The "little island of so-called knowledge" takes the form of the frustrations of the "everyday." Awe and wonder in the face of ineffable mystery become a prayer of exasperation: "Then why do I even begin to speak of You? Why do You torment me with Your Infinity, if I can never really measure it?"[97] In this section I will explore what Rahner means by the term "everyday" and it will become apparent how Rahner understood the everyday as infiltrating every aspect of lived reality. I will then consider how Rahner views the everyday as the existential point of encounter with the divine mystery.

Rahner's spiritual writings explore the dialectical between everydayness and mystery. He begins a talk on prayer entitled "Prayer in the Everyday" with the observations: "Prayer is exalted. It is a word out of the depths of the heart […] Then can such an action be the business of the everyday? Of the everyday with its monotony of constant sameness, of the everyday with its everyday gray mood, with the dullness of hearts that are tired and discouraged?"[98] What does everyday prayer look like? It might mean praying the rosary, grace before meals, making the sign of the cross when passing a church, genuflecting before a tabernacle, signing a letter with

[97] Karl Rahner, *Encounters with Silence*, trans. James Demske (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 4.
[98] Karl Rahner, *The Need and the Blessing of Prayer*, trans. Bruce Gillette (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 37.

"God bless," and so on.[99] Perhaps the person performing these everyday prayers ends up finding them to be nothing more than a lifeless and emotionless routine devoid of any existential significance.[100] Upon such a realization, the person may find it yet more difficult to pray in the everyday, since the expectation that prayer is an encounter with divine mystery makes prayer into a daunting task.[101] In the same way, Rahner expresses his exasperation at norms governing liturgical praxis, which far from elevating the soul, only bog it down in details.[102] In short, the actions by which a person attempts to sacralize her everyday life end up doing just the opposite by transforming sacred moments into dull routine.

In the end, however, the everyday is not a force that imposes itself on us from outside in the form of regulations and obligations. Rather, the everyday is something that we create:

> When I think of all the hours I have spent at Your holy altar, or reciting Your Church's official prayer in my Breviary, then it becomes clear to me that I myself am responsible for making my life so humdrum. It's not the affairs of the world that make my days dull and insignificant; I myself have dug the rut. Through my own attitude I can transform the holiest events in the grey tedium of dull routine. My days don't make *me* dull—it's the other way around.[103]

The picture of the world that Rahner paints in "The Concept of Mystery" is of a world in which everything is connected in the intricately woven web of mystery. That is to say, the presence of any object of our perception presumes a mystery of limitless depths. The experience of dullness that Rahner experiences when saying mass or praying the office—i.e., moments when he attempts to become aware of the proximity of holy mystery—therefore, do not describe the nature of reality, but a particular perspective on reality.

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[99] Ibid., 38. These are my own examples of everyday prayer based on the examples that Rahner gives from traditional German piety.
[100] Ibid., 39.
[101] Ibid., 39-40.
[102] Rahner, *Encounters with Silence*, 36-37.
[103] Ibid., 48.

Although in some places Rahner seems to describe the everyday in terms of the given-ness of human life, of the facticity of human limitation, he does not overlook the more sinister nature of everyday. In some sense, it is the everyday that keeps us from God. When in his spiritual writings Rahner describes sin, he tends not to speculate about the nature of sin in general. Rather, he points to concrete instances in which he or humanity in general falls short of the paradigm that he set out in "The Concept of Mystery," a paradigm for transcendent spirit that reaches out in freedom and love. For example, the following is an excerpt from one of his prayers:

> Look at my work. It is correct and bad, forced by the pressure of the everyday, seldom done out of faithful love for you. Hear my words: These words are seldom the result of self-forgetting goodness and love. Look down, O God: What you see is not a great sinner, only a small one. Only a sinner whose sins are small, stinted, and everyday. One whose will and heart, mind and strength are mediocre from every perspective, even in evil deeds.[104]

Similarly, a lecture given to priests on the importance of confession also focuses on sinful mediocrity: "Each time we must bring ourselves by prayer and contemplation to the appalling insight that of ourselves we are quite unable to break with what we really should repent of, the dreadful mediocrity that has become second nature to us."[105] The word that sums up the two excerpts above is "mediocrity," which is closely tied to Rahner's experience of the everyday. When we read this description of sin in light of his admission of experiencing dullness while celebrating mass, we see that the smallness, mediocrity, and everydayness that he perceives as the hallmarks of his sinfulness have their origin in the sinner himself. Sinfulness, at least in this

[104] Karl Rahner, *Gebete des Lebens*, ed. Albert Raffelt (Freiburg: Herder, 2012), 124. Author's translation.
[105] Karl Rahner, *Servants of the Lord*, trans. Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 202.

context, appears as an unwillingness on the part of the sinner to recognize, consciously or unconsciously, that he stands in immediate proximity to holy mystery.

Although smallness and mediocrity may seem to be pardonable offenses, Rahner understands them as severe limitations on his relationship with God and on his ability to relate to other human beings. In another prayer, Rahner complains of the people who come to him with their meaningless, everyday concerns.[106] In such situations Rahner asks himself: "[H]aven't I enough burdens of my own to bear? Isn't my heart weak and miserable enough with its own troubles, without adding to it the crushing woes of others?"[107] His complaint concerning such pastoral encounters basically boils down to this: people who approach him manifest only their smallness and mediocrity. Their words and concerns betray no inner depth. But isn't this precisely what he accuses himself of, of smallness and mediocrity? What good can come of such encounters between mediocrity and mediocrity, between human limitation and human limitation? How can grace operate in such a situation as he describes?

The point I have been exploring in the preceding few paragraphs is the insidious nature of the everyday. It affects our prayer, our relationship with ourselves, and our relationships with others. In what follows I will explore the other side of the everyday, namely the everyday as the point of contact with divine mystery, as the place where God speaks God's Word. Finding God in the everyday requires what Rahner calls "existential deepening," a delving into the everyday until mystery reveals itself even in the midst of the mundane.[108]

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[106] Rahner, *Encounters with Silence*, 62.
[107] Ibid., 64.
[108] Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Problem of the Gradual Ascent to Christian Perfection," in *Theological Investigation III*, trans. Karl-Heinz and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1967), 3-23.

For Rahner, it makes little sense to attempt to flee the everyday since the everyday is ultimately a byproduct of human finitude. Despite the negative connotations that smallness and mediocrity have for Rahner, human beings by nature are in fact small and mediocre in comparison with the holy mystery. In a certain sense, human existence is by necessity made up of the everyday.[109] Furthermore, Rahner writes: "We never succeed in compressing together into the narrow confines of our finiteness everything that appears good to us, good just because it is: life and wisdom, goodness and power, strength and tenderness."[110] That is to say, human beings cannot maximize a certain good in their lives without neglecting other goods. By our very nature we are limited in our capacities for self-realization and hence we are constitutionally mediocre, small, everyday.

I wish to return to the example above, namely to the pastoral encounter with another human being in her everydayness. Rahner frames these encounters with the image of a priest bringing the Eucharist to someone who is homebound:

> They try to make themselves and me forget why I have actually come, to bring You like the Blessed Sacrament into the inmost chamber of their hearts, where the eternal spark in them is sick unto death, where an altar to You should be erected, on which the candles of faith, hope, and love should be burning.[111]

Rahner imagines himself invited to the person's home, but he finds that his host prefers to live and entertain guests in the dingy basement of everyday mediocrity and smallness. The door to the basement is the only door that the host makes available to the guest. Rahner describes searching for another door, a door to access his host's existential depths. To his chagrin, he becomes aware that the host herself is unaware of any such door. Rahner concludes that only God knows the location of this door into the inner depths of the person, the depths where God is

[109] Rahner, *The Need and the Blessing of Prayer*, 45.
[110] Rahner, *Encounters with Silence*, 11.
[111] Ibid., 65.

already dwelling. If ministering in the midst of mediocrity requires entering into a person's existential depths where only God has access, then "when You will exercise Your mercy, then I am sure that You alone are the way I must go and the through which I must pass, in order to find the soul of my brother."[112] That is to say, in plumbing the depths of his own everyday existence the minister finds God, who in turn is the door to the inner life of the person to whom he is ministering.

Since everydayness is part-and-parcel of human existence, Rahner suggests that the only way to God is through one's own experience of everydayness:

> And therefore the route can only go right through the middle of the everyday, its need, and its obligation. Therefore the everyday cannot be overcome through flight but only by steadfastness and by a transformation. Therefore God must be sought and found *in* the world, therefore the everyday must become God's day, going out into the world must become going inward with God.[113]

The process of transformation that Rahner describes here is the "existential deepening" that defines the spiritual life. In short, Rahner is suggesting that the everyday serves as the disguise under which God approaches us.[114]

Rahner admits that moments of extraordinary closeness with God, moments where our hearts burn with homesickness and love for our eternal home, are infrequent in prayer.[115] He gives the impression that these extraordinary moments of prayer, while valuable, are not what define the life of the believer. He writes:

> And when God's hour and fervent, great prayer is over, how will it become more than an unfruitful festivity in our life, how will it be converted into the slow, patient work on inner man, into work which changes and transforms the somber life, the ordinariness of

[112] Ibid., 66.
[113] Rahner, *The Need and the Blessing of Prayer*, 45.
[114] Rahner, *Gebete des Lebens*, 117.
[115] Rahner, *The Need and the Blessing of Prayer*, 40.

> the everyday into indefatigable striving for that image that was shown to us for an instant in the lofty moments of charismatic prayer?[116]

The point of existential deepening, then, is not to fixate attention on extraordinary encounters with God, but to treasure these rare encounters amidst the daily grind of finding God in the "ordinariness of the everyday."

With the idea of a God who comes to us under the disguise of the everyday we have discovered a concrete example of Rahner's understanding of holy mystery's aloofness, distance, and silence as discussed "The Concept of Mystery." The everyday, which strikes us as impersonal and detached from deeper meaning, is the silence through which God speaks God's Word to us. But how is it possible to lovingly break through the silence in an effort to immerse oneself in mystery's intelligibility? Rahner begins a series of retreat talks with the following observation: "We too as christians, as priests, are bound, with mankind today, to bear, to suffer to the end the want of God, God's apparent remoteness, God's silence, his ineffable mystery, in order to be in any position to have a fraternal understanding for the people of our time."[117] He goes on to say:

> Be still for once. Don't try to think of so many complex and varied things. Give these deeper realities of the spirit a chance now to rise to the surface: silence, fear, the ineffable longing for truth, for love, for fellowship, for God. Face loneliness, fear, imminent death! Allow such ultimate, basic human experiences to come first. Don't go talking about them, making up theories about them, but simply endure these basic experiences. Then in fact something like a primitive awareness of God can emerge.[118]

The aspects of everyday life that people are often most eager to flee and the emotions that are characterized by aversive affect are precisely those points where the existential depths of human existence are unmasked and the places where God is most likely to be found. Why is this the

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[116] Ibid., 41.
[117] Karl Rahner, *The Priesthood*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 5.
[118] Ibid., 7-8.

case? When confronted with the divine mystery, we experience our own lack or, in the terms we have been using, our own mediocrity and smallness. Feelings of mediocrity and smallness, if correctly perceived, are evidence that goodness and fullness are things that we partake in, not things that we can create. In regards to the passage cited above, it is important to note that Rahner is talking about the person's desire for God. This experience of desiring, however, expresses itself in both aversive and attractive affect. On the aversive side, are the emotions of fear and loneliness. On the attractive side there is longing and love. Are both attractive and aversive affect, then, manifestations of grace? I will propose a possible answer to this question toward the end of this section.

Rahner goes yet further and claims that it is in the minute details of the everyday that human beings open themselves up to holy mystery. The seemingly insignificant choices we make on a daily basis are threads in the seamless fabric of person's life: "Each phase of our life is there sanctified and accepted, its possibilities confirmed, and referred to the later phase."[119] The keyword here is "accepted." In "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion" and in "The Concept of Mystery" the choice for or against God that Rahner describes is depicted as a radical choice, a choice between heaven and hell, between the little island of so-called knowledge and the great ocean of the divine mystery. While these dichotomies tell us something about the ultimate significance of the emotional choice for God, the practical working out of this reality is not always so grandiose as these dichotomies imply. Because divine mystery is all pervasive, even the mundane choices of everyday life constitute a choice for or against God. Passages such as the one just cited lead me to believe that, for Rahner, the acceptance of the divine mystery does not generally happen in a once-and-for-all decision to accept Jesus Christ as my personal

[119] Ibid., 88.

Lord and Savior. Rather, accepting God involves the gradual process of accepting myself as I truly am before God. As will be seen below, Rahner believes that such moments of religious fervor are to some extent possible, but they seem to build on an implicit decision for God that a person makes in the context of the everyday.

Jesus, as God's self-communication to human beings, shows us what accepting mystery in the context of the everyday looks like. In a retreat talk on the hidden life of Jesus (one of the meditations from Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*), Rahner envisions how Jesus's life before his public ministry must have been spent, if he were to grow into the exemplar of love and freedom that we see portrayed in the Gospels. The everyday of Jesus, he concludes, was probably unexceptional, but Jesus's choice to live his daily routine faithfully serves as an example for Christians:

> It is from this standpoint [i.e., from Jesus' hidden years] that we really begin to see what is happening in our normal, average, regular life. This seclusion—that is, normal, commonplace and often boring life—is the climate in which the hidden supernatural life of the christian is practiced; it is the way in which faith in the hidden God as the center of our life must be realised. From this standpoint too we understand what really matters in our hidden life: unsensational life, the life of obedience, of regularity, of simplicity, of a certain calmness and austerity, a certain continuity and solid planning. All this is a yardstick to test our achievement of a life of faith.[120]

There were certainly extraordinary moments in Jesus's life where Jesus's acceptance of the divine mystery is made explicit, for example during his passion. But these extraordinary moments of surrender were built upon a foundation that was laid in the mundane experiences of everyday life. In this sense, development in religious experience mirrors what we know about the development of character in general, namely that extraordinary acts of virtue are built on a lifetime of practicing virtue in more mundane tasks. As Rahner wrote in another work on the *Spiritual Exercises*:

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[120] Ibid., 96.

> That which is amazing and even confusing in the life of Jesus (and the reason why we do not notice it any more is that we are accustomed to ignore it) is that it remains completely within the framework of everyday living; we could even say that in him concrete human existence is found in its most basic and radical form. The first thing that we should learn from Jesus is to be real men! The courage to do this—to live from day to day under the threat of sickness and death, to be exposed to one's own superficiality [*Banalität*] and the superficiality of others, to be a member of the masses, and so forth—is not so easy.[121]

Rahner's conception of Jesus as the exemplar of humanity, even in its everydayness, sheds much light on the summary of Rahner's anthropology that I cited above: "If a man freely accepts himself as he is, even with regard to his own inner being whose basic constitution he inevitably has not fully grasped, then it is God he is accepting."[122] That is to say, when a human being accepts herself in her humanity, she is accepting Christ, the exemplar of humanity as such. Although Rahner's anthropology is sometimes viewed in purely philosophical terms, it is fact essentially Christocentric: insofar as the everyday is human, it is Christ-like.

Although the simple tasks of daily routine seem meaningless, they constitute, in a certain sense, a decision for or against God, a decision of eternal importance.[123] As Harvey Egan notes, Rahner held that the power of love and the working of the Holy Spirit transcends time and space.[124] In Rahner's words: "Jesus becomes, in this love of ours for him, the concrete Absolute, in whom the abstractness of norms, and the insignificance of the purely contingent individual,

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[121] Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Kenneth Baker (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2014), 121. The word that Baker translates as "superficiality" is *Banalität*, which is closer to the meaning of "mediocrity." See Karl Rahner, *Betrachtungen zum ignatianischen Exerzitienbuch* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1965), 124. I became aware of this passage from Harvey Egan's *Karl Rahner: Mystic of the Everyday* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 131.
[122] Rahner, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," 67.
[123] Karl Rahner, *Watch and Pray with Me*, trans. William Dych (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 13.
[124] Egan, 142.

are transcended and overcome."[125] Even in the context of the everyday, an act of love that freely assents to divine mystery is an instance where eternity takes expression in the everyday. Because Jesus lived his entire life as an act of love, as a decision for God, Jesus's life, through the working of the Holy Spirit, remains present to us in its eternal significance.[126]

Jesus, therefore, is not only an example for how Christians should live their everyday; rather, Jesus is the "permanent openness" of our finite everyday to infinite mystery and at the same time God's openness to us. The revelation that happens in Christ is the clearest expression of God's self-communication and at the same time it is the model *par excellence* of receptivity to revelation.[127] The historical event that encompasses the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus is not the only historical event in which God self-communicates; rather, through the working of the Holy Spirit the mystery the second person of the Trinity communicates in all of life's circumstances.[128] In the Gospel accounts of Jesus's life, especially of his passion, readers catch a glimpse of human rationality and emotion that are directed toward their ultimate end.[129] In the passion, the limits of human rationality are exposed as Jesus abandons himself entirely to mystery in an act of freedom and love. By the same reasoning, Jesus's resurrection is the vindication of the choice.[130] In short, Jesus's death and resurrection demonstrate that the acceptance of the unfathomable mystery means life, not death.

This brief review of Rahner's everyday Christology demonstrates that his Christology is the necessary corollary to his views on transcendence and its relation to mystery. Earlier in this

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[125] Karl Rahner, *The Love of Jesus and the Love of Neighbor*, trans. Robert Barr (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 23. I was made aware of this passage from Egan, 142.
[126] Rahner, *Watch and Pray with Me*, 13-14.
[127] Rahner, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," 68-69.
[128] Ibid., 69.
[129] Ibid., 70-71.
[130] Ibid., 70.

section I explored how, for Rahner, mystery is not the absence of meaning, but an excess of meaning that defies human comprehension. That is to say, a human being transcending her own experience is not taking a step into nothingness, but a step into fullness. We know this to be the case because in Jesus God definitively reveals God's self as the unsurpassable limit of human transcendence. Jesus, as God's Word, God's bridge to us, communicates who the mystery is in human language. Jesus, as human, as our bridge to God, shows the limitations of human language for expressing the ineffable and freely abandons himself to the mystery in the crucifixion. This self-abandonment, however, did not result in nothingness, but in life.

The death and resurrection of Jesus are certainly the clearest manifestation of who God is in human history, but it is not the only example from Jesus's historical life. With these insights in mind, I return to where I left off with Rahner's reflection on the hidden years of Jesus, since his considerations there are central to the current investigation. When Christians say that they are called to imitate Christ's free self-abandonment on the cross, they are not suggesting that they must be literally martyred for their faith. However, Rahner suggests, the same dynamic between transcendence and mystery that is clearly demonstrated in Jesus's crucifixion is part-and-parcel of the Christian life. Faith, as the act by which a person freely accepts the mystery, is the fulfillment of both rationality and emotion. Furthermore, as has been discussed at length, faith is primarily something that is lived out in the everyday. For this reason, Jesus's hidden years are also revelatory, since they show us how the divine mystery expresses itself in the ordinary mediocrity of everyday life and how humanity abandons itself to the divine mystery that communicates itself as everydayness. If we are to understand how the seemingly insignificant events from Jesus's early life are in fact revelatory, they must be viewed in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the event in which Jesus's divinity and humanity are most clearly manifest

in an act of total self-surrender. The same is true of the everyday life of Christians; when the everyday is seen in the light of Jesus's death and resurrection, the everyday becomes revelatory.

Rahner develops this idea in his talk "Prayers of Consecration." A prayer of consecration, Rahner explains, "goes directly from heart to heart. It is not the application of a mode of love, of a work in which, as in a resolution and a vow, love is supposed to grow and prove itself, rather it is the free streaming of love itself from person to person, from heart to heart."[131] In short, a prayer of consecration represents the emotional choice for God. It is a definitive act by which the believer attempts to emulate Christ, whose whole person was a free self-offering to divine mystery. As Rahner puts it, "Consecration […] is the serious, collected attempt of the moment of eternity in time as the act of love."[132] The act of consecration, then, is something like a microcosm of the entire spiritual life because it is a conscious and concerted attempt to emulate the humanity of Jesus.[133] To put it another way, a person who has consecrated her life to the divine mystery now lives out the same mystery as Christ lived. My impression is that Rahner views prayers of consecration as extraordinary examples of conforming oneself to the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. In other words, they are not stuff of everyday prayer, but one of the peak experiences in which a person views herself as in direct relation to the divine mystery. However, as was seen in the above considerations on "Prayer in the Everyday," the peak experiences are only one part of religious experience, and arguably not the most existentially important part. These peak experiences must still be somehow lived out in the context of the mundane everyday.

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[131] Rahner, *The Need and the Blessing of Prayer*, 61.
[132] Ibid., 71.
[133] Ibid., 72.

The dynamic of the existential decision that Rahner talks about in "Prayers of Consecration" and in the meditation on the hidden life of Jesus is best captured in Paul's "Christ-Hymn" in the Letter to the Philippians. A brief consideration at this hymn will assist in highlighting the point that I am developing here.[134]

> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
>
> who, though he was in the form of God,
> did not regard equality with God
> as something to be exploited,
> but emptied himself,
> taking the form of a slave,
> being born in human likeness.
>
> And being found in human form,
> he humbled himself
> and became obedient to the point of death—
> even death on a cross.
>
> Therefore God also highly exalted him
> and gave him the name that is above every name,
> so that at the name of Jesus
> every knee should bend,
> in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
> and every tongue should confess
> that Jesus Christ is Lord,
> to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Firstly and most importantly, Paul prefaces the Christ-Hymn with the command that the mind of Christ be in believers. The word that Paul uses for "let the same mind" is *phroneō*, which means "to exercise the mind, i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; by implication to be

[134] The exegesis that I offer here is strongly influence by the interpretation of *pneuma* in Paul as offered by Troels Engberg-Pedersen in *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) and Dale B. Martin in *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). These two authors contend that Paul believed that *pneuma* is a physical substance from God that gave believers the ability to think divine thoughts (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-16). From these authors, then, I adopt the connection between *pneuma* and cognition. They do not, however, connect this view to *phroneō* in the Christ-Hymn.

(mentally) disposed (more or less earnestly in a certain direction)."[135] I highlight the connotations of this verb, since they capture nicely the rational and emotional dimensions that Rahner attributes to the choice for God.

Rahner refers to the Christ-Hymn in connection with the Prologue to John's Gospel to explain how God's presence in the world is the "dynamism" that propels the world to God:

> This implies that God has not only created a world distinct from himself, which he encompasses and directs without being affected by it, but that he wishes to communicate himself with his divine splendor, to insinuate himself into the very heart of the world, as its innermost dynamism and definitive goal. Hence we confess that this penetration of God into the world has irrevocably happened in Jesus, with the result that Jesus, as one who was from the start of his existence definitively and irrevocably accepted, is the definitive, historically tangible self-promise of God to his world.[136]

The "innermost dynamism of the world," Rahner explains, is the Holy Spirit.[137] It is not unreasonable to assert, therefore, that for Rahner having the same *phroneō* as Christ—i.e., having the same rational/emotional orientation as Christ—means having the same Spirit as Christ. And for Rahner, this dynamic Spirit allows for that rational/emotional action by which a person makes the existential decision for God. Christ's yes is our yes because it is the same Spirit that surrenders itself to divine mystery. That is to say, the Spirit acting in Christ took the form of self-emptying, obedience to God, surrender to the cross, and resurrection. The same Spirit at work in Christ is, for Rahner, at work in all human beings. The main point is this: participation in Christ-like action is the work of the Spirit.

In conclusion, the Spirit conforms our minds and hearts, our rationality and emotions to Christ. And the Spirit does this in the context of the everyday. The emotion that Rahner is

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[135] *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: New American Standard Bible.* Updated ed. La Habra: Lockman Foundation, 1995. Accessed February 19, 2018. http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/strongs-exhaustive-concordance/.
[136] Karl Rahner, "Understanding Christmas," in *Theological Investigations XXIII*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 143.
[137] Ibid., 144.

principally interested in is love. Love, in his view, is the word that best describes our attraction and self-abandonment to mystery. As discussed in the first chapter, however, a proper view of emotion takes into account their granularity. Is it possible to develop a more granular understanding of the emotion that Rahner calls love? Yes and no. In the next section I will show how Rahner gives us the tools for thinking more granularly about emotions that attract us to God. On the other hand, Rahner himself does betray a granular understanding of emotion. Even in his spiritual writings, he only tends to allude to his emotions rather than to unpack them for his readers. For a more granular understanding of the emotions involved in religious experience, then, I will turn to other sources in the third chapter.

A Theological Theory of Emotions

How does Rahner give readers the tools for thinking granularly about emotions in religious experience? In this section I propose a synthesis of the material discussed up to this point. Since Rahner places all the emphasis on emotion's freedom, it makes sense to begin there and to consider how science views this freedom. Neurologically speaking, the emotional process begins with the triggering of an emotional memory. These memories are not under our conscious control; they spontaneously arise and make it seem as though we are the slaves and not the masters of our emotional experience. If we cannot choose how to react to a stimulus, then we cannot call emotions free. However, such an analysis would be a misinterpretation of the data. While a person cannot choose the emotional memory to correspond to the presenting stimulus in the moment of encountering a stimulus, emotional memories are not biologically determined. That is to say, emotional memories are constructed and they can be reconstructed. How does this restructuring process work?

The first stage of this neurological-theological synthesis involves returning to emotional memory. The brain remembers the stimulus, the bodily feelings, and the emotional concept together. This is what is meant by emotional memory, or as Barrett calls it, "simulation." These memories are not indelibly etched into the brain; rather, they change with recurring exposure to the triggering stimulus. Damasio puts it well:

> Some of those thoughts, as I noted earlier, are components of the emotion program, evoked as the emotion unfolds so that the cognitive context is in keeping with the emotion. Other thoughts, however, rather than being stereotypical components of the emotion program, are late cognitive reactions to the emotion under way. The images evoked by these reactions end up being a part of the feeling percept along with the representation of the object that caused the emotion in the first place, the cognitive component of the emotion program, and the perceptual readout of the body state.[138]

Emotions, as Damasio explains, are on a brain-body-loop, which is to say an emotion is a response to a something that the body perceives and processes. The brain then creates stimuli (i.e., felt sensations) as a response to the original stimulus in the environment that is present to perception.[139] While it may not be possible to inhibit the initial triggering of an emotional memory, once that memory is rationally perceived to be an inappropriate response to the stimulus, this awareness changes the emotional memory.

To illustrate how this works, I turn to the example of Rahner's meditation on the mediocrity of his everyday life. While Rahner's experience of his own mediocrity is clearly a partly emotional response to his everyday life, he never explicitly states which emotion he is experiencing. To get around this difficulty, I will assign an emotion to Rahner's experience. I do not claim that the emotion I assign actually fits with Rahner's experience, but the specific conceptual content of the emotion is not the point in these initial considerations. That being said, I assume that Rahner experiences something like contempt. I choose contempt because what he

[138] Damasio, *The Self Comes to Mind*, 1857-1862.
[139] Ibid., 409-416.

experiences is an aversive emotion, not quite on the level of horror but also not as benign as distaste. The point is that whatever Rahner is experiencing—I call it "contempt"—he is experiencing an aversive reaction to his mediocrity. That is to say, he rejects his mediocrity, as his prayers clearly indicate. The question is: Is Rahner's emotional rejection of his mediocrity an example of freedom? No and yes. In the first instance, Rahner probably automatically responds to his mediocrity with contempt. However, the whole thrust of Rahner's analysis is that is possible to experience mediocrity in another way. Once the person accepts that even her mediocrity is inseparably linked to mystery, it is possible to change the valence of the emotional memory. In other words, once Rahner cognitively appraises his emotional contempt of the mediocrity in light of mystery, the emotional memory in regard to mediocrity changes, either suddenly or gradually, from contempt to something more attractive.

While emotional memory is not initially under free and conscious control, ultimately it may represent a deeper level of the individual's freedom, a level that the physicalist model can only partially explain. This may be the case because emotional memory is a simulation that is a compilation of experiences from the person's history. As Barrett puts it: "Memories are not like a photograph—they are simulations, created by the same core networks that construct experiences and perceptions of emotion."[140] The simulation that constitutes emotional memory is the brain's best prediction for who the individual is in relation to the stimulus. And these simulations can be changed, as Barrett states: "If your brain operates by prediction and construction and rewires itself through experience, then it's no overstatement to say that if you change your current experiences today, you can change who you become tomorrow."[141] The process by which Rahner envisions the transformation of his aversive emotional response to

[140] Barrett, 237.
[141] Ibid., 174.

mediocrity to one of acceptance, therefore, is entirely plausible and the process can to a certain extent be illustrated through neuroscience.

Barrett claims that this kind of process is facilitated by an emotional expertise by which the person learns to think granularly about his emotional experience. This involves looking at an emotion in terms of its different parts (memory, stimulus, affect, physical symptoms, etc.):

> With practice, you can learn to deconstruct an affective feeling into its mere physical sensations, rather than letting those sensations be a filter through which you view the world. You can dissolve anxiety into a fast-beating heart. Once you can deconstruct into physical sensations, then you can recategorize them in some other way, using your rich set of concepts […] Recategorization is a tool of the emotion expert. The more concepts that you know and the more instances that you can construct, the more effectively you can recategorize in this manner to master your emotions and regulate your behavior.[142]

In some sense, Rahner was the kind of "emotion expert" that Barrett describes, since he is able to identify that he is the one who makes his everyday mediocre and not the other way around. That is to say, his simulation of his everydayness is bound up with mediocrity, which is in turn charged with aversive affect. He is also aware that it is possible to "recategorize" his simulation of the everyday in terms of acceptance. He goes even a step further and claims that it is possible to desire his everyday because it is the place where God meets him in the person of Jesus Christ. Whether Rahner was working out this process of recategorization intellectually or this process was something that he emotionally experienced is rather beside the point. In the end he provides a convincing account for the theoretical possibility for the recategorization of emotions that repel us from divine mystery.

For Rahner, the decision to freely accept, desire, and surrender oneself to divine mystery is the fundamental existential choice. It is not a willy-nilly decision that a person sometimes makes and sometimes does not; rather, it is a decision to adopt a worldview that is fundamentally

[142] Ibid., 188-189.

tied up with mystery. While prayers of consecration to this mystery are possible, these are extraordinary examples of the emotional choice for God. The emotional attraction that allows a person to surrender to God without comprehending the mystery, however, manifests itself even in humdrum everyday experience. This is why the meditation on the hidden life of Jesus is revelatory. When a person accepts, desires, and surrenders herself to mystery, the concept of mystery and the positive emotional charge that accompanies this concept become fused with all the other concepts that the brain produces. In such a case, mystery becomes a concept tied to every emotional memory. The gut reaction of a person who has internalized the concept of mystery in this way—Jesus might possibly be the only perfect example of this—would always reflect the attractive affect that one feels toward the divine mystery, regardless of the triggering stimulus from the environment. This is a reworking in terms of contemporary neuropsychology of Rahner's thesis concerning the meaning of emotion in regards to faith: the person always chooses mystery. If a person can restructure his emotional memory so that the attractive affect associated with mystery is connected with every stored simulation, then such a person would indeed perceive the everyday as enchanted with God's presence. Every gut reaction would reflect an attraction to mystery. As I will explain in the next section, it seems that Ignatius somehow intuited this and that this intuition inspired the entire program of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The above analysis shows how Ignatius's and Rahner's intuition might be reasonable in light of neuroscience. Whether any human being can practically speaking achieve that ideal (except, perhaps in the beatific vision), however, is another matter entirely. Rahner is nevertheless clear that human beings never operate outside of grace and thus it must be possible for human beings, through Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit, to approach the ideal.

A final question for this neurological-theological synthesis is: To what extent are emotions revelatory? The above analysis vaguely hints at an answer to this question, but greater precision is necessary. When a person discovers mystery in the depth of her experience and accepts, desires, and surrenders herself to that mystery, the emotion that propels the person into mystery can certainly be called grace, because it is by means of this emotion that God reveals God's self to the person. But what about the emotion that Rahner initially feels when confronted with own mediocrity? I labeled this an aversive emotion and called it contempt. On the one hand, this aversive emotion seems to draw Rahner away from an acceptance of mystery in the sense that Rahner rejects the everyday because he connects it with mediocrity. On the other hand, this aversive emotion is in a sense the beginning of his religious experience because it gives rise to the question: Is everydayness really mediocre? Is mediocrity all there is to human existence? Rahner shows that it is possible to separate his concepts of mediocrity and of everydayness. As Rahner writes in "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," it is possible to think about emotions in a rational manner.[143] What Rahner seems to be doing in his spiritual writings on the everyday is a process that Robinson referred to as "cognitive appraisal" of an emotion and that Rahner calls "rationality." The aversive affect that Rahner feels in response to his perception of the everyday causes him to stop and think about what it is that he is really rejecting. Seen from a different angle, it is possible that Rahner's aversion to his mediocrity is a sign that he desires to know more, to do more, to love more. According to this interpretation, perhaps Rahner's aversion to his mediocrity is the flipside of his attraction to the mystery that can complete his incompleteness. I will not go so far as to claim that all emotions are directly

[143] Rahner, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," 78.

revelatory of who God is, but Rahner continually points out that the incarnation ensures that whatever is most human, including emotions, ultimately points to the divine mystery.

Conclusion

We began our exploration with Rahner's theoretical elaborations on the concept of mystery. Here Rahner treats mystery as an ontological and epistemological principle that acts as a presupposition for how a person might view the world. Presuppositions are like emotional memories in that they are deep-seated concepts that (often unconsciously) inform how we perceive the world. We cannot prove that all knowledge presupposes an endless expanse of meaning that can only be understood as "mystery"; such a proof would betray the very nature of mystery. Rahner insists that mystery must be freely accepted. On the one hand, we can adopt the notion that being is reducible to the beings that I experience, that all there is to know is knowable. This option Rahner terms "hell": "But if You were not incomprehensible, You would be inferior to me, for my mind could grasp and assimilate You. You would belong to me, instead of I to You. And that would truly be hell, if I should belong only to myself."[144] When brought into conversation with Rahner's reflections on mediocrity, this passage clearly demonstrates the aversive emotional charge that Rahner experiences when thinking about the possibility that his own mediocrity might be all there is. According to this first model, love ends in knowledge and there is no greater point to human transcendence than to know. Although Rahner does not explicitly equate this first model with sin, there is reason to believe that Rahner does not see this model as entirely innocent; this first model betrays the divine mystery when it

[144] Rahner, *Encounters with Silence*, 7.

posits human knowledge as an absolute and makes this human knowledge the goal of human striving. [145]

On the other hand, we can view human transcendence as that which points to infinite mystery. According to this second model, love gives rise to knowledge, which in turn give rise to love. The affective charge in this instance is clearly one of attraction. Love is the ultimate point of human transcendence, since comprehensive knowledge, even of the most insignificant details of the everyday, is always beyond our grasp. As transcendent beings, everything we experience happens in the context of mystery.

In the discussion of Rahner's spiritual writings we saw that, practically speaking, people often live their lives according to the first model of being and knowing. This is evident in the way that we experiencing the everyday as a suffocating phenomenon. The everyday, as it is often experienced, is the tiny basement of our existence, the tiny island of so-called knowledge, in which we choose to hide ourselves. However, the mundaneness of everyday life can be transformed in light of the second model of being and knowing. Here the everyday becomes the door through which infinite mystery approaches us. In the everyday, God approaches the human being as mystery, silence, aloofness, and distance. Prayer, for Rahner, requires accepting the presence of God in the everyday. Faith allows the person to recognize the depth of mystery that reveals itself in seemingly mundane circumstances. Religious experience does not ultimately mean fleeing the tedium of the everyday, but reaching out to the everyday in love and freedom, allowing love for the mystery to take precedence over knowledge. But even feelings of aversion may be considered revelatory in the sense that they do not allow us to be satisfied with anything less than mystery itself.

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[145] Rahner, *The Priesthood*, 175.

In conclusion, it is possible to restructure emotional memory in regards to the facticity of everyday life. This happens, as Barrett argues, through learning to think granularly about the emotions involved. The recategorizing of these emotions is grace, since it is the Holy Spirit working in us who conforms our lives to the example of Christ, who lovingly abandoned himself to divine mystery. The Spirit is the precondition for the possibility of this process and at the same time for our freely chosen act of surrender. In this section I have considered emotions and religious experience mostly on the level of the affective responses of attraction and aversion. This was helpful for figuring out how emotions in general work in relation to mystery. What I have not spent much time considering is the role that particular emotions play in religious experience. In the next section I will delve into the granularity of a particular aversive emotion, namely sorrow. When we break down the love that Rahner describes as his attraction to God into all its granular parts, might it be possible that some expressions of sorrow are also veiled expressions of love?

CHAPTER 3: EMOTIONAL GRANULARITY AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Religious experience is recognition and acceptance of the divine mystery in the context of the everyday. As we encounter this mystery, the Spirit draws us to conform our minds to the mind of Christ, to exemplify Christ-like acceptance of and surrender to divine mystery. I have argued that this process implicitly involves a restructuring of emotional memory in regards to the everyday in relation to mystery. How is this possible practically speaking? I imagine three interrelated ways of carrying out the process elaborated above. Firstly, there is the normal way of reorganizing emotion memory by trial and error through cognitive processing. According to this model, a person would compare her emotional responses to everyday things and consider whether these responses rationally fit with her belief in God. Secondly, there is a therapeutic model whereby an expert in therapeutic practice as well as in spiritual practice can assist the person in unraveling her emotional responses in light of her religious beliefs. Sometimes spiritual direction operates in this way. Thirdly, there is the aesthetic model whereby a person attempts to become an expert at perceiving her own emotional responses to everyday situations in much the same way that an artist does, by painstakingly attempting to hone in on the exact color, valence, and intensity of an emotion that she expresses in response to a certain stimulus. This third model is the focus of the exploration I will be undertaking in this chapter.

The aesthetic model proposes an analogy between a certain kind of artistic process and the person searching for God in the everyday. The process whereby an artist comes to discover and communicate emotional granularity has been best described in terms of expression theory, which attempts to explain how it is possible for an artist to express particular emotions in such a way that an audience can understand the artist's emotions in all their individual particularity.

Although expression theory is principally concerned with the communication of emotional concepts, it also explains how artists understand their own emotions, since the principle by which a person understands his emotions—namely, emotional granularity—is also the principle that allows him to communicate his emotions to others.

In this chapter I am mainly concerned with how granular thinking helps the artist/retreatant to understand his own emotions. I will explain how this model works in three stages. Firstly, I will introduce the basic rudiments of expression theory. Secondly, I will illustrate how this theory works through a secular piece of art that has strong religious connotations. Thirdly, I will show how Ignatius's intuition about emotions in the *Spiritual Exercises* presupposes the same principles that underlie expression theory and that expression theory provides a helpful model for understanding why the *Spiritual Exercises* have been a successful tool for many seeking greater depth in religious experience.

Expression Theory

Robinson's version of expression theory is grounded in the aesthetic theory of R.G. Collingwood.[146] Drawing on recent finding in the neuroscience and psychology of emotions, she rejects one of Collingwood's central claims—namely that audiences can experience the exact emotion as the artist—while maintaining the basic structure of his methodology. Furthermore, Robinson adopts Bruce Vermazen's contention that an artwork expresses the emotions of the persona that the artist projects and not necessarily the emotions of the artist herself.[147] That is to say, the artist may be expressing the artist's own emotions or she may be expressing the

[146] See R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
[147] Bruce Vermazen, "Expression as Expression," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (1986): 196-224.

emotions of the persona that she invented. Here is the basic outline of Robinson's "New Romantic Theory of Expression" from the standpoint of the artist:

> If an artist expresses an emotion in a work of art, then
> 1. the work is evidence that a persona (which could but need not be the artist) is experiencing/has experienced this emotion;
> 2. the artist intentionally puts the evidence in the work and intends it to be perceived as evidence of the emotion in the persona;
> 3. the persona's emotion is perceptible in the character of the work;
> 4. the work articulates and individuates the persona's emotion; and
> 5. through the articulation and elucidation of the emotion in the work, both artist and audience can become clear about it and bring it to consciousness.[148]

For Robinson, one of the key contributions of expression theory is the recognition that the effectiveness of the communication of a given emotion depends on the artist's ability to point to that emotion's individual particularity or, as Barrett calls it, "granularity." Descriptors such as "sad," "happy," "sad," and "afraid" do not give substantial information about what kind of emotion a person is experiencing. Sorrow, as I explained in the introduction to the thesis, is a particularly good example for how an umbrella concept, "sorrow," can connote any number of emotions from despair to listlessness on the aversive side or compassion on the attractive side. It is the artist's duty, according to expression theory, to hone in on the exact emotional concept as well as to illustrate that concept's affective valence and intensity.

As stated in the first chapter, I understand the emotional process a bit differently from Robinson. However, the observations I made there only strengthen Robinson's version of expression theory. If, as I have argued, emotional memory has cognitive content, then initial cognitive evaluations must play an integral role in the process by which the artist understands and communicates a persona's emotions. The concept of emotional memory that I drew from LeDoux's and Barrett's research allows for a greater degree of freedom in the molding of

[148] Robinson, 270.

emotional memory. In other words, if the artist wishes to express an emotion in such a way that his audience will experience a similar emotion, the artist may be able in some way either to anticipate or to precondition the emotional memory of the audience.

To illustrate how Robinson's version of expression theory works, I will offer an interpretation of Käthe Kollwitz's 1938 *Pietà*. By applying Barrett's notion of granularity to Robinson's theory, I will show how the individuation of emotions happens already at the level of the cognitive evaluation that is implicit in emotional memory and not solely during later cognitive monitoring, as Robinson believes.[149] Kollwitz's statue is a good illustration of why Robinson's theory works well with Barrett's concept of granularity, since Kollwitz, as will become clear, relied on the emotional response of her audience in order to make an argument. Expression theory, at least according to Robinson's formulation, is not a theory of art, since not all artists attempt to express emotions in their work. For example, in my view, Canaletto and Mark Rothko were both proficient artists, but their works do not communicate emotional content. A person may experience emotions in response to their works, but these emotions are not the emotions that the artists (or their personas) attempted to communicate; fields of color and painstakingly rendered cityscapes are not emotional concepts. With Kollwitz, by contrast, an attentive observer knows what Kollwitz intended him to feel. Kollwitz's statue, then, is a good example of how and why expression theory works. Another reason why I chose Kollwitz's statue is that it communicates one of the shades of sorrow that will be discussed in my exploration of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

[149] Ibid., 288-289.

Kollwitz's 1938 Pietà

I begin with a brief review of relevant aspects of Kollwitz's biography. To test Robinson's idea that the emotions that the audience experiences are indeed similar to the emotions that the artist expresses, it is necessary to know the artist's background. Emotions, after all, are concepts that are rooted in an individual's personal experience.

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) was a German artist whose work, among other things, attempted a synthesis between two conflicting principles: the desire for revolutionary change and the horror of war. Her early work is a testament to her Marxist leanings and her concern for social change, although even here her optimism is tinged by a somber awareness of the nearness of death.[150] Kollwitz's son, Peter, volunteered to fight in the First World War and was killed in battle in 1914. Kollwitz's later work attempts to make sense of the mother-son relationship in light of a culture that demands heroic sacrifice for the sake of the *Vaterland*. In an insightful essay on the theme of motherhood in Kollwitz's work, Gisela Schirmer shows that Kollwitz's own artistic grappling with Peter's death led her to the view that a mother's response to war must be pacifism.[151]

I argue that in the *1938 Pietà* (see Appendix) Kollwitz attempts to condition the viewer's emotional memory in light of the artist's own experience of grappling with the loss of her son

[150] A telling example is Kollwitz's 1903 *Bauernkrieg*, in which the artist depicts a heroic woman rousing a hoard of peasants, led by children, to battle. As Otto Nagel, a family friend, remarked, Kollwitz depicted herself as the agitator in this print. See Otto Nagel, *Käthe Kollwitz*, trans. Stella Humphries (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1971), 33. At the same time that she produced *Bauernkrieg*, she also etched a lithograph of a *Pietà* in which she is seen crouching over the corpse of son, Peter, who was just a boy at the time. Interestingly, in this early stage of Kollwitz's career, the iconography of the *pietà* carries the connotation of sacrifice; that is, Kollwitz saw herself as sacrificing her child. This is an idea that she later abandons.

[151] Gisela Schirmer, "Geschichte in der Verantwortung der Mütter: Von der Opferideologie zum Pazifismus," in *Käthe Kollwitz: Das Bild der Frau*, ed. Jutta Hülsewig-Johnen (Bonn: Kerber Verlag, 2001), 119.

Peter. In some art forms, such as in literature and film, the artist can foster feelings of sympathy or revulsion toward a character so that when an emotionally expressive scene occurs, the audience's emotional memory regarding that character or situation is already colored. Jane Austen does this brilliantly in *Pride and Prejudice*. Like Elizabeth Bennett, the reader is predisposed to be disgusted by Mr. Darcy's arrogance and to be as indignant as Elizabeth is in response to his first proposal of marriage. After all, the reader witnessed Mr. Darcy condescendingly slight Elizabeth's good looks in her hearing. After Mr. Darcy's failed attempt at Elizabeth's hand, Austen restructures both Elizabeth's and the reader's emotional memory of Mr. Darcy by presenting Mr. Darcy's subsequent letter to Elizabeth, by describing the warmth of his sister and of his servants at his estate, and by detailing his discreet handling of the humiliating elopement of Elizabeth's sister. Because of this restructuring of the emotional memory, when Mr. Darcy proposes a second time, Elizabeth's flutter of gratitude is to some extent felt by the audience. This kind of preconditioning of emotional memory is more difficult to achieve in sculpture, since sculptures like Kollwitz's *Pietà* often only capture a single moment. When a visitor walks into the space where the *Pietà* is displayed, the artist will not have had the opportunity to precondition the viewer's emotional memory, unless the statue is in an exhibition that has been specifically designed by the artist. For this reason, the sculptor of a poignant bronze such as the *Pietà* must predict which emotional memories the figures are likely to trigger in an attentive and sensitive viewer.

What, then, is likely to be the viewer's pre-reflective, gut reaction to the statue? The sculpture is of an elderly woman whose bent frame envelopes the corpse of a young man. The woman seems to be almost concealing the corpse with her body in a gesture that is both intimate and private. The privacy is accentuated by the woman's right hand, which covers her nose and

mouth as it likewise screens the eyes of the corpse from the viewer's gaze. The intimacy is expressed by the mother's left hand, which supports the corpse's limp right hand. The woman is not aware of the viewer.

Before the viewer is able to cognitively assess the piece, her emotional memory of similar scenes of intimate and private anguish presumably predetermines to some extent the immediate, affective response that she has to the bronze. Whether or not this emotional memory is characterized as the dread of feeling helpless in the face of tragedy, as sorrowful compassion, or as revulsion at the sight of a corpse will depend on the viewer's past experiences. Based on the positioning of the figures, any one of these emotional memories would act as an appropriate initial cognitive evaluation of the piece. For example, if the depiction connects to the viewer's memory of cradling her own child, she may identify with the tenderness of the woman's embrace and she may experience despair at the loss of someone precious. One emotional memory that the bronze is unlikely to provoke is that of awe-filled wonder either for the woman or for the corpse of the young man; the privacy of the scene probably precludes such a response. It is, of course, possible that the statue leaves some viewers emotionally flat, that it stimulates neither emotional memory nor affective response. Many factors may contribute to this failure to be emotionally engaged: the viewer does not recognize what the scene is about, is worn out from contemplating too many artworks, or has no emotional memory connected to the image that Kollwitz presents in the bronze. On the other hand, in cases where emotional memory is engaged and a physiological response ensues, the viewer is in a better position to appreciate the meaning of the statue. The Kollwitz statue demonstrates the presupposition behind Robinson's expression

theory: experiencing emotions intended by the artist is the key to understanding at least some works of art.[152]

Considering the emotional process that I have been developing here, I propose the following interpretation of the bronze. Kollwitz intends the viewer to have an immediate emotional reaction to her work; in general, her art encourages gut reactions. Because the articulation of the scene is highly nuanced, the kinds of emotional memory that this piece triggers are likely to be limited. It is a scene of death, anguish, and mourning. Furthermore, the nature of the scene is intensely private and intimate. The viewer may feel herself to be an intruder on the woman's private grief. The initial affective appraisal will likely take all of these factors into consideration. The gut reaction, then, will not be sadness in general, but a kind of sadness that corresponds to emotional memories of heart-breaking loss. The appraisal of the very particular emotional responses appropriate to the depiction begins not with cognitive monitoring, but with the initial gut reaction triggered by the emotional memory. The affective appraisal is already cognitively complex, even though the viewer may experience this only vaguely through physiological responses.

The interpretation, which already began with the affective appraisal, continues by means of cognitive processing. My gut reaction to the manner of the mother's enveloping gesture leads me to believe that, unlike with some artworks that depict the same scene, the mother is having a private moment with her son, with neither heaven nor the viewer being invited into the action.[153]

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[152] Robinson, 289.

[153] For example of the scene where the viewer is invited in, see Michelangelo's *1499 Pietà*, housed in St. Peter's Basilica. The corpse's finely chiseled physique, I would argue, invites contemplation. For an example where the mother petitions heaven for answers, see El Greco's *1575 Pietà*. Again, the mother showcases the corpse's body for contemplation while directing her attention the sky.

She is not displaying her son for the contemplation of devout believers.[154] She is not asking the viewer to consider the effects of sin or the cost of redemption.[155] Unlike some depictions of this scene, this statue is not intent on encouraging spiritual edification.[156] Rather, the focus of the statue is the mother and her grief. In this way, Kollwitz divorces the image of the mother sorrowing over her fallen son from the ideas of a divine plan and exemplary behavior that are sometimes attached to representations of the *pietà*. When we consider that Kollwitz lost her son to heroic and, to Kollwitz's mind, false notions of sacrifice for the sake of his country and that she was currently witnessing the beginning of another World War, we might consider a political message in the piece as well: this statue is what war looks like from a mother's perspective. As this mother, probably a depiction of the artist herself, cradles her fallen son, nothing is further from her mind than his personal heroism or the glory of his political cause. In the end, the statue is a courageous response to the militaristic ethos of her time and a call to pacifism. Kollwitz has in effect subtly constructed an emotional argument for pacifism based on the viewer's gut reaction to a woman's profound and private grief. The subtleties of the argument are certainly not explained by the affective appraisal, which is only experienced as a reflex. Nevertheless, upon reflection, this reflex turns out to be a cognitively rich evaluation that is the key to unlocking Kollwitz's message.

Although Kollwitz did not intend her *Pietà* as a piece of sacred art, does the attentive viewer nevertheless have a religious experience when encountering the statue? Rahner writes:

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[154] In Antonio Corradini's *1724 Pietà* the mother's body serves to frame the corpse.
[155] Some *pietàs* go so far as to implicate the viewer in the tragedy. For example, one such statue (housed at St. Peter's Church in Rheinberg) from c. 1500 by an unknown German artist depicts the mother looking intensely at the viewer, as if asking, "Why would you do this to my son?"
[156] I contend that the statue itself clues the viewer into the fact it is not a religious depiction. Kollwitz affirmed this point in her journal entry for December 1939: Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher 1908-1943*, ed. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1999), 697.

> [A] case might be made for asserting that Goethe had developed his humanity to such a breadth and depth that, if he had started to love God, he would have done it with the whole fullness and intensity of his humanity, therefore in a much greater, wider, freer, more differentiated way than a nice pious saint.[157]

This blurring of the lines between secular-humanistic and religious values is hardly surprising given Rahner's anthropology: to know and to accept what is most human in oneself is to accept God. In the above citation, Rahner points to a distinction between religious and aesthetic experiences; they are not the same. However, he recognizes that artistic expertise can be a helpful tool for religious engagement because both aesthetic and religious experiences demand that we deeply engage our humanness. In the same way, I am not proposing that the contemplation of art is in itself religious experience; rather, I am working from the assumption that artistic expression can teach us something about how emotions sometimes work in the context of religious experience. It is in this light that I propose we think about Kollwitz's *Pietà*.

Kollwitz invites the viewer to contemplate her own grief over the loss of her son, a grief that she explicitly compares to the grief of Mary in the aftermath of the crucifixion. The grief that she expresses is an aversive emotion: aversion to the loss of someone precious, aversion to the honor of dying in battle, and aversion to war. This aversive emotion, however, is the flipside of powerful attractive emotions: maternal love, joy in the life of son, and a desire for peace. Are Kollwitz's emotions Christ-like? She certainly rejects the idea of a Father-God who demands the submissive self-surrender of his son and of his son's mother.[158] On the other hand, Kollwitz entirely abandoned herself to her love for her son, even though this sentiment brought her persecution at the hands of the Nazis who prohibited the public display of her art. In the end, it

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[157] Rahner, "Art Against the Horizon of Theology and Piety," in *Theological Investigations XXIII*, trans. Joseph Donceel and Hugh Riley (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 168.
[158] See Jayme M. Hennessy, "Kollwitz: The Beauty and Brutality of the *Pietà*," in *She Who Imagines: Feminist Theological Aesthetics*, ed. Laurie Cassidy and Maureen H. O'Connell, 37-51 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

seems that Kollwitz's devotion to her son is profoundly, if not explicitly, Christ-like in the sense that she lovingly abandons herself. In a way, the true victim in the statue is the mother.

To summarize, Kollwitz implicitly relied on the granularity of her emotional concept of grief when producing the *1938 Pietà*. As her diaries and artistic work both reveal, it took her decades to understand her emotional response to her son's death and to mold that emotional response into something that was useful to society as a whole. What the viewer sees is not this long process of the cognitive reworking of Kollwitz's emotion, but the finished product. Kollwitz had effectively tailored her grief into something that a viewer can understand. Yes, the emotion is still genuine, because it is an honest expression of her experience of loss. And yet, it is much more than that. Those who see the bronze may well have a similar experience of grief and as a result they may form a distrust toward the use of violence for achieving political ends. Artists are experts at getting audiences to experience granular emotions and sometimes at influencing the affective responses that audience have to real-life situations. Ignatius, like Kollwitz, understood that carefully conditioned emotions could be factors that motivate people to right action. In the remaining pages of this thesis I will explore how Ignatius wished to help the retreatant to condition his emotions using principles similar to those that Kollwtiz relied on to make her argument.

The Purpose of the Spiritual Exercises

By way of introduction, the *Spiritual Exercises* is a month-long retreat that is divided into four principal sections. Ignatius calls these sections "weeks," although he did not intend these weeks as seven-day divisions; rather, the weeks represent the four movements of the soul away from sin and toward God. Broadly speaking, each of weeks requires the retreatant to pray for a "grace."

Each grace in turn has an emotional component: First Week-sorrow for sin, Second Week-love for Christ, Third Week-sorrow at Christ's passion, Fourth Week-joy at Christ's resurrection.

In the opening lines of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius states the purpose of the retreat:

> By the term Spiritual Exercises we mean every method of examination of conscience, mediation, contemplation, vocal or mental prayer, and other spiritual activities, such as will be mentioned later. For, just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul.[159]

The purpose of the meditations, then, is to order the soul away from "disordered affections" and toward God by exercising the correctly ordered affections. As Michael Ivens writes in his commentary on the *Spiritual Exercises*: "'Affection', a key term in the language of the Exercises, refers to the many variants of love and desire, together with their antitheses, hate and fear […] The Exercises have to do with the *conversion* of affectivity."[160] The *Spiritual Exercises*, then, does not in the first place aim at intellectual conversion, but at an affective one.

The distinction between ordered and disordered affections can be explained in terms of Ignatius's theological anthropology, called the "Principle and Foundation":

> Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created. From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it.[161]

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[159] Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. George Ganss (St. Louis, MI: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), §2.
[160] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary: A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 1998), 2.
[161] Ignatius, §4.

Ordered affection, then, is an attraction to things that lead the person to God. Ignatius notes that both reason and will play a role in this process.[162] According to Ivens, Ignatius saw the intellect as a stimulus to producing correctly ordered affect:

> The process is based on the 'solid foundation' of a given piece of material; and in order to assimilate this material it is usually necessary to start with some degree of discursive reasoning. But from this beginning, the process moves from the level of reason to that of the affection, from the 'given' to the personal, from the complex to the simple.[163]

That is to say, in each exercise Ignatius proposes a scene or a story for the retreatant's contemplation. The retreatant must then reconstruct the scene in her imagination. This part of the process is entirely cognitive. It is the cognitive content in the scene that gives rise to the emotion. In this sense, starting a mediation is not unlike encountering a work of art. The artist does not present an emotion *per se* but a cognition that might give rise to emotion. For example, in order to experience grief upon viewing Kollwitz's *1938 Pietà*, the viewer must first realize that he is looking at a woman holding the corpse of her son. This initial cognitive recognition of the scene gives rise to the affective response.

The Role of Emotion in the Spiritual Exercises

A little clarification of the terminology is necessary at this point. Ignatius's use of the term "affections" does not exactly correspond to the theory of emotions that I developed in the first section. In fact, Ignatius only gives hints as to what affections are and how they operate. As Elena Carrera notes: "the subject of the emotions was not dealt with in a comprehensive manner by sixteenth-century devotional writers, for whom these were of interest only insofar as they

[162] Ibid., §3.
[163] Ivens, 3.

related to spiritual goals."[164] As I will explain in the following paragraphs, my impression is that Ignatius uses the terms "affect" and "affections" to denote either affect or emotion—as I have been using these terms—depending on context. Ignatius's main concern, as Carrera suggests, was that there was something in the human person, apart from intellect, that motivates the person by attraction and repulsion. In many ways, Ignatius intuited aspects of emotion that 21st-century neuroscience has confirmed.

One such intuition corresponds to the preconditioning of emotional memory. For instance, in the Directives for the First Week Ignatius suggests that the retreatant should call to mind the first prayer period of the day before falling asleep and immediately upon waking up:

> I will strive to feel shame for my many sins, by using examples, such as that of a knight who stands before his king and his whole court, shamed and humiliated because he has grievously offended him from whom he has received numerous gifts and favors. Similarly, in the second exercise I will imagine myself as a great sinner in chains; that is, as if I were being brought in chains to appear before the supreme and eternal Judge; taking as an example how chained prisoners, already deserving death, appear before their earthly judge. As I dress I will keep thoughts like these in mind, or others proper to the subject matter.[165]

The image of the disgraced knight is a helpful one for understanding how Ignatius understood emotions in relation to God and the emotion of sorrow in particular, as I will explain presently. In addition to priming affect by recalling meditations before bed and upon waking, Ignatius recommends not thinking joyful thoughts during the First Week and closing the shutters in order to deprive oneself of light.[166] All of these techniques act as means of suppressing the likelihood of arousing pleasant, attractive affect, or as Ivens, clarifies, they are means of suppressing the

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[164] Elena Carrera, "The Emotions in Sixteenth-Century Spanish Spirituality," *Journal of Religious History* 31, no. 3 (2007): 252. Carrera's article is a good resource for understanding how 16th-century spiritual writers might have viewed affect in light of early and medieval Christian thought on the roles of the passions and the affects of the will.
[165] Ignatius, §73-74.
[166] Ibid., §77-78.

attractive affect that is inappropriate to the material at hand.[167] In a similar way, parents sometimes punish their children for bad behavior by depriving them of something pleasant: inflicting isolation, not allowing dessert, banning videogames, etc. The parents' hope is presumably that the children will come to identify their naughty actions with aversive affect. Likewise, Ignatius wants retreatants to identify their sins with aversive affect. This is somewhat similar to the concept behind Pavlovian conditioning and extinction in psychology, whereby a subject learns to associate a neutral stimulus with a certain affective valence or an aversively conditioned stimulus with a more neutral valence—e.g., using exposure therapy to alter the affective valence connected with stimuli that cause a patient anxiety.[168] Ignatius, then, suggests penitential acts and imaginative scenarios as a way of reordering the retreatant's affect in relation to sin. In effect, he is encouraging the retreatant to restructure emotional memories in relation to sin so that these memories evoke aversive gut reactions, while memories regarding God evoke attractive ones.

A second of Ignatius's intuitions is his understanding of what I have been calling affect. Pleasure and displeasure, attraction and aversion, are in themselves neutral. This is true in both the neuroscience of emotions and in their role in religious experience. From the perspective of evolutionary biology, it is important that affect be ordered toward the things that are in the organism's interest and away from harmful things. The point of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to orient attraction and aversion to the retreatant's proper end, namely the salvation of her soul. Furthermore, Ignatius's exercises are meant not only to associate a stimulus to the proper affect, but also to encourage the intensity of this affect. For this reason, he instructs the retreatant to

[167] Ivens, 70.
[168] LeDoux, *Anxious*, 26-30.

pray for sorrow to the point of tears in some places[169] while in another place he encourages the retreatant "to be glad and to rejoice intensely."[170]

A third intuition concerns the nature of the imagination. In the first section I pointed out that simulation is contemporary way of describing the product of what has traditionally been called the imagination. Simulations are based on previous experiences. If I ask a person who has never encountered an apple to imagine an apple, I will have to somehow fit the concept of apple into his already existing conceptual categories. I could explain that apples are round, red, not dissimilar in texture and taste to pears, etc. In the second section I elaborated on how Rahner understands the revelation of divine mystery, a concept that surpasses all conceptual categories, in the similar fashion; thus the importance of the second person of the Trinity, God's Word spoken in a way that human beings can to some degree assimilate. Ignatius likewise understood his experience of God in terms of his cultural milieu. For example, in the above citation, Ignatius encourages the sinner to think of himself as a humiliated knight. Feudal imagery is everywhere present in the *Spiritual Exercises* because that was Ignatius's context. Of course, there is no particular reason to believe that the feudal system is a more apt way of describing the relationship between God and humanity than other forms of governance. Ignatius's intuition, however, was to explain his relationship to God in the conceptual categories at his disposal.

As a fourth intuition, Ignatius implicitly adopted a view called "emotional realism" in relation to imagined scenes.[171] How does Ignatius envision this process playing out? For Ignatius, the process of ordering affections involves the use of the three basic human faculties of

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[169] See, for example, Ignatius, §§55, 203.
[170] Ibid., §222.
[171] The term "emotional realism" comes from Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotions and Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 208-216. Gaut uses the term to argue that the emotions experienced when reading fiction are just as real as emotions experienced in response to sense perceptions. The same idea applies in the present context.

memory, reasoning, and will.[172] Ignatius seems to use "memories" to designate consciously accessible images, such as the "memory" of the sin of the angels in the first exercise, which I will discuss in greater detail below. The first chapter of this thesis explored how the memories that trigger affect may or may not be consciously accessible. How do these two uses of memory correspond to each other? Regarding the sins of the angels and of Adam and Eve, there is every reason to believe that Ignatius believed that 1) these were actual events and 2) they tell us about the origins of sin. As was seen with Barrett's contention that memories are simulations, it makes little difference whether the memories are of actual events or simply imagined events. In other words, both real and fictional memories act in the same way in relation to emotion. In this sense, it is not particularly important whether it is historical fact that the angels fell from grace or Adam and Eve ate the fruit; rather, the point is that the tradition has seen these two events as providing insight into the origins of sin and that these scenes evoke real emotions in the retreatant. As the retreatant "remembers" these two events, she is attempting to simulate the origins of sin and to associate this origin with aversive affect.

A fifth of Ignatius's intuitions has to do with the granularity of emotions. Although Ignatius only speaks in general terms about affective movements (consolation/desolation) and emotions (sorrow, love, joy), the material that he presents for contemplation in the individual exercises assists the retreatant in significantly refining these emotional categories. Sorrow is particularly interesting because it is the desired emotion in both the First and Third Weeks, despite the fact that the material in these weeks is thematically distinct. I will devote the remainder of this section to showing how Ignatius encourages retreatants to shape the granularity of their emotions before discussing how this granularity is revelatory.

[172] Ignatius, §3.

Sorrow in the First Week

In the First Week the retreatant asks for the grace of aversion to sin. In the first exercise Ignatius formulates the grace as follows:

> What I ask for should be in accordance with the subject matter. For example, in a contemplation on the resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy; in a contemplation on the Passion, I will ask for pain, tears, and suffering with Christ suffer. In the present meditation it will be to ask for shame and confusion about myself, when I see how many people have been damned for committing a single mortal sin, and how many times I have deserved eternal damnation for my many sins.[173]

The graces requested involve an emotional response to an aspect of the Christian faith. The subject of the first exercise is the first, second, and third sins: the sin of the angels, the sin of Adam and Eve, and the sin of any person who has gone to hell. After this imaginative recall, Ignatius instructs the retreatant: "Next I will use my intellect to ruminate about this in greater detail, and then move myself to deeper emotions by means of my will."[174] Ignatius, it seems, is encouraging the retreatant to reconstruct the emotional memory in relation to sin by having her cognitively adjust the valence and intensity of the affect related to the memory.

Once the emotional memory has been correctly ordered, the retreatant should experience the emotions of "shame and confusion." As was explained above, Ignatius uses the word "shame" to describe the emotion that a knight would feel after willfully offending his generous lord; and shame does have this connotation of unworthiness. However, today shame also has the connotation of worthlessness, which is conceptually distinct from unworthiness. A person who feels worthless directs his shame at himself and not at something he has done. Furthermore, shame is not necessarily connected with moral culpability in the contemporary context. People

[173] Ibid., §48.
[174] Ibid., §50.

experience shame because of their skin color, ethnicity, weight, etc. as well as in response to bullying and sexual violence. Although Ignatius is clear that he does not mean shame as a sense of self-loathing unconnected to moral guilt, it is nevertheless preferable to replace the word with a less ambivalent emotional concept. Ignatius certainly did not mean for the retreatant to feel the kind of shame that a person experiences because they perceive themselves as ugly. I prefer the formulation "intense sorrow," which Ignatius uses to describe the grace of the second exercise.[175] Since Ignatius is addressing the retreatant's relationship to sin, sorrow in this context has the connotation of contrition. This kind of sorrow is still an aversive emotion, but the aversion is directed toward sin and not toward the sinner herself. Furthermore, if I am to be true to Ignatius's meaning, I must add the aspect of unworthiness. But here unworthiness also has a particular connotation, as Ignatius's example of the unworthy knight clarifies; that is, the knight is unworthy in comparison with the beneficence of his lord. Concerning "shame and confusion," Ivens comments: "Both terms are relational, and together they represent a way of experiencing oneself before God's mercy. Hence the cause of 'shame and confusion' is not sin-awareness in itself, but the experience of the self-aware sinner in the presence of a God who is merciful and faithful."[176] In other words, the retreatant is to feel intense sorrow because God has been so generous with her and she has not responded in kind.

Such is the general outline of the cognitive content of the emotion that Ignatius is describing. The refined, granular cognitive content of the emotion will be particular to the retreatant and may depend on two principal factors: 1) the general outline of Ignatius's concept of sorrow and 2) the emotional concepts drawn from experience that the retreatant has at her disposal. The exercises themselves provide an imaginative framework for reworking the first

[175] Ibid., §55.
[176] Ivens, 49.

emotional-conceptual system in terms of the second. For example, retreatants will generally not think about contrition in terms of a knight who has abused his lord's generosity, but they may remember feeling badly about misusing the freedom their parents gave them when they were teenagers. Starting with this more personal experience of contrition, the retreatant may reconstruct their emotional concept to better fit the requirements of the exercise.

With this mind, let us briefly consider the First Point of the First Exercise, namely the sin of the angels: "I will call to memory the sin of the angels: How they were created in grace and then, not wanting to better themselves by using their freedom to reverence and obey their Creator and Lord, they fell into pride, were changed from grace to malice, and were hurled from heaven into hell."[177] It is not particularly important whether the sin of the angels—or the sin of Adam and Eve for that matter—are mythological accounts; Ignatius believes that these stories have something to say about the role that sin plays in the individual's relationship to God by reflecting on the cosmic and human consequences of sin. In both stories, we imagine creatures who have been richly gifted by the Creator and who somehow turn their hearts away from their graced existence. To use Rahner's image: both the wicked angels as well as Adam and Eve reject the ocean who is the God of mystery for the sake of the little island of the self. The movement that Ignatius describes is from grace to disgrace.

Instead of detailing how this contemplation might work itself out in the context of the retreat, I prefer to illustrate the emotional dynamic that Ignatius attempts to capture by referring to a literary example. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a 19th-century, non-religious parable that in many ways parallels the fall of the angels. Wilde describes Dorian as an innocent young man graced with beauty, geniality, and wealth. Under the influence of unsavory friends,

[177] Ignatius, §50.

Dorian comes to value his beauty over everything. As he admires a stunning portrait of himself, Dorian wishes that he maintain his beauty forever and that the portrait take on the signs of aging in his stead. This wish, which is miraculously granted, marks the end of Dorian's innocence. As the novel progresses, only Dorian himself and the reader witness the gradual transformation of the portrait as it takes on not only the signs of Dorian's aging, but also of his heartlessness, his cruelty, and his vice. The reader's emotional response to the story, of course, depends on the emotional concepts that she brings to the story. As Wilde engages her with his scintillating prose, she will likely find herself attracted to the young and innocent-looking Dorian even as she shrinks back in horror at his increasing viciousness. Wilde demands a granular emotional response from his readers, the subtleties of which can only be experienced through reading the novel.

I propose three possible interpretations of the emotion that Wilde wishes to evoke in the reader. According to the first interpretation, Wilde teaches the reader an emotion that contains both attractive and aversive affect—attraction to Dorian's innocence and beauty and aversion to his wickedness. The particular shade of sorrow that the reader experiences as she witnesses Dorian's demise longs for a return to the innocent Dorian, for his conversion. This kind of sorrow is the grace of the First Week. A second interpretation attributes to the reader the opposite emotional response in relation to Dorian's situation. Some may, and assuredly do, read the novel and wish that they themselves could live a libertine lifestyle and perpetrate the most heinous crimes without having to suffer the consequences. Such a reader would be repelled by Dorian's innocence and attracted by his vice. In a third interpretation, many readers are at the same attracted to and repelled both by Dorian's innocence and his vice. This may well have been the complex and confusing emotional response that Wilde intended, since Wilde depicts

Dorian's innocence as both beautiful and naïve and Dorian's moral turpitude as both glamorous and corrosive. In the same way, a retreatant considering the fall of the angels may find himself admiring the power and beauty of the angels, even in their fallen state. These are, after all, creatures of immense power that are capable of luring mortals with their attractiveness for the purpose of molding their wills.

By comparing the meditation on the fall of the angels with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, I am attempting to illustrate how complex the emotional response to this meditation might be. Presumably, a retreatant beginning the *Spiritual Exercises* will have some attraction to sin, just as everyone does. In this sense, the first reading that I offered of the novel is not wholly realistic. Neither is it likely that someone doing the *Spiritual Exercises* would completely identify with the second reading. The third reading is where most retreatants will find themselves. The grace of the First Week, then, is that the Holy Spirit recategorizes emotional memory to respond to sin according to the first interpretation of the novel. In this way, the sorrow of the First Week is a graced emotion—i.e., the work of God in the life the retreatant.

The Picture of Dorian Gray does not end happily for Dorian. By the end of the novel, the specter of his tarnished soul as represented in his now grotesque portrait is too much for Dorian to bear. He plunges a dagger into the portrait. Dorian's cry draws his servants into the room, where they discover the corpse of a deformed, old man. The reader is thus cautioned against being overly attracted to Dorian's narcissism. In a similar manner, the First Week recasts the glamor of sin as alienation from God. This reconditioning of emotional memory in relation to sin is the first movement of the soul in the *Spiritual Exercises*, as the Spirit orders the retreatant's affect in a way that is consistent with her religious commitments.

Emotional memories are not unalterable; we can and do adjust them in light of our interests and goals. From the physicalist's perspective, the main goal of the organism is survival. From Ignatius's perspective, the goal of human life is to praise, reverence, and serve God. Both Ignatius and the physicalists realize that the way that human beings orient their emotional memories to their ultimate goal is through reason. Reason, as Rahner puts it, justifies the means to the ends; reason is responsible for ordering things toward their proper ends. Thus, the various exercises that Ignatius proposes are not solely about arousing affective responses, but about rationally ordering those affective responses to accord with the retreatant's religious beliefs. The end result is the will—i.e., the faculty that chooses—is inclined to choose what is in the person's best interest. For Ignatius and Rahner, the person's best interest is God. Disordered affect and emotions make the choice for God less likely.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of using memory, reason, and will, as Ignatius proposes, implicitly relies on a concept of emotional granularity. It is not enough for the retreatant to shrug his shoulders and say, "It's sad that Adam and Eve ate that fruit." Ignatius demands the involvement of intense affect. Affect, however, responds to specific stimuli. For example, the reader of the *Picture of Dorian Gray* does not recoil at the idea of Dorian's self-centeredness in general; rather she is repulsed by the callousness of his specific actions. To understand why self-centeredness is ultimately an undesirable trait, the reader will need to examine her reaction to one or more of Dorian's actions, the callous dismissal of his fiancée or the murder of his friend Basil, for example. The reader will have to ask herself, "Why am I so repelled by Dorian's action? How does this action relate to my own experiences of friendship and betrayal?" In the same way, someone meditating on the fall of the angels will have to inquire as to why he finds the angels' sin so aversive. For this reason, Ignatius emphasizes: "For what fills and satisfies the

soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly."[178] Here Ignatius is talking about the kind of existential deepening that appears in Rahner's writings on religious experience. I would also argue that Ignatius's insistence that retreatants continually repeat exercises in order to dwell on the moments of greatest affective involvement is a psychological technique that assists in the reconditioning of emotional memory and in the process of existential deepening.[179] By continually re-engaging these moments of affective involvement, the retreatant focuses in on those moments of prayer where she existentially encounters God. Ivens writes of the use of repetition in the *Spiritual Exercises*: "The Ignatian prayer of repetition is to be understood in relation to two inseparable processes: the gradual assimilation of the given material, and the development of prayer towards the simple, receptive and personal quality of contemplation."[180] In other words, by entering back into the emotionally charged moments of the exercises, the retreatant develops more specific and more personal affective responses to the material. Ivens's comment points to the "receptive quality of the contemplation" and thus places the emphasis on God's action in the prayer. The retreatant is not simply working out an intellectual idea as a mathematician might work out a difficult equation. Nevertheless, on a neurological level the "assimilation of the given material" is in fact a cognitive reworking of emotional concepts.

Sorrow in the Third Week

The First Week mainly attempts to foster aversive affect in relation to sin. The sorrow for sin that I discussed above only implicitly involves an attractive element, since the entire movement

[178] Ibid., §2.
[179] Ibid., §62.
[180] Ivens, 58.

of the retreatant praying with the *Spiritual Exercises* is movement toward God; aversion to sin is only part of this larger movement. The Third Week, by contrast, brings the attractive affect of some kinds of sorrow into high relief. A comparison of the two formulations of the grace of the Third Week will prove instructive:

> Here it will be to ask for sorrow, regret, and confusion, because the Lord is going to his Passion for my sins.[181]

> Here it is what is proper for the Passion: sorrow with Christ in sorrow; a broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for me.[182]

The first formulation seems to resemble the grace of the First Week. The two graces are, however, quite distinct since the intentionality of the sorrow has to do with the subject matter treated in the exercises of their respective weeks. As Ivens puts it: "The present petition, however, even while returning to that of the First Week, at the same time subtly develops it, in that attention now centres more upon Christ for himself, and the sentiments are more those of friendship."[183] The second formulation of the grace of the Third Week is somewhat different, since it prescribes not sorrow for Christ, but sorrow with Christ. In this sense, the sorrow of the second formulation has the connotation of compassion. Instead of examining the different exercises of the Third Week, all of which call to memory the events of the passion, I will examine the grace of this week by continuing the above considerations of Kollwitz's *1938 Pietà*.

The interpretation of the bronze that I offered above corresponds more closely with the first formulation. I described the statue as a positive, emotional argument for pacifism based on a mother's grief. The flipside of this interpretation, of course, is that the statue offers a negative argument against war. I argued that the details of the statue clue the viewer into the specific

[181] Ignatius, §193.
[182] Ibid., §203.
[183] Ivens, 151.

shade of grief that Kollwitz wishes to communicate. The grief that the viewer actually experiences, however, is not Kollwitz's grief at the loss of her son, but the viewer's own grief. Unless the viewer has likewise lost a child in a manner similar to how Kollwitz lost her son, Peter, it is probable that viewer will be required to construct a new emotion based on his previous experiences. Through the positioning of the figures, Kollwitz provides the viewer with the resources for constructing this new emotion.

I argue that the *Spiritual Exercises* may be thought of as working on the same principles, namely the principles of expression theory. Most retreatants who pray with the material of the Third Week will not have had the experience of unjustly losing an intimate acquaintance to the death penalty. In other words, the retreatant's experience of the Third Week will have to be the imaginative reconstruction of a persona that the retreatant inserts into the scenes of the passion. There is no way to guarantee that these imaginative scenarios will correspond to the historical details of the Christ's passion, but, as was shown in the considerations on the sins of the angels and of Adam and Eve, emotional, and not historical, realism is the point of the kind of imaginative prayer that the *Spiritual Exercises* requires. As I argued above, emotional realism holds that emotions are real, regardless of whether they are triggered by perceptions or simulations. In other words, although the exercises of the Third Week involve imagined—or simulated—constructions of the events of Christ's passion, the emotions that the retreatant experiences as a result of the simulations are entirely real.

As was seen in the discussion of the Kollwitz statue, the simulated emotion of grief that the viewer experiences is based on the viewer's past experiences of grief. The same may be said of the retreatant considering Christ's passion. When considering these tragic events from Jesus's life, it is not unexpected that a retreatant will find herself experiencing emotions that she

associates with tragic events from her own life: e.g., the loss of a friend to cancer, the death of parent, the poverty in a slum she visited, etc. For Rahner, extraordinary religious experience is built upon everyday religious experience. The prime example of extraordinary religious experience is the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, since this is the moment where Jesus's humanity and divinity clearly manifest themselves as he surrenders himself completely to the divine mystery in an act of total trust and love. But this extraordinary expression of surrender did not come out of nowhere; in his early years, Jesus learned to surrender himself to the divine mystery in the context of the everyday. In the same way, the extraordinary religious experience of grief that results from meditating on Christ's passion is grounded in the retreatant's everyday experiences of grief. These everyday emotions are, to use Rahner's image, the door in the basement of the everyday that leads to the divine mystery.[184]

Kollwitz's bronze is particularly apt for demonstrating the first formulation of the grace of the Third Week because it poignantly captures grief that is not tempered by the hope of resurrection. I surmise that this was Ignatius's intention for the retreatant as well, since what he advises for the First Week holds true for the Third Week as well:

> I should not think about pleasant or joyful things, such as heavenly glory, the Resurrection, and so forth. For if we desire to experience pain, sorrow, and tears for our sins, any thought of happiness or joy will be an impediment. Instead, I should keep myself intent on experiencing sorrow and pain; and for this it is better to think about death and judgment.[185]

In other words, in order to experience the graced emotion that a particular week requires, Ignatius advises against thinking about things that evoke contrary emotions. This can be difficult to achieve when meditating on the passion, since every retreatant knows how the story ends,

[184] See Rahner, *Encounters with Silence*, 65-66, and above pp. 58-59.
[185] Ignatius, §78.

namely in the resurrection. Nevertheless, Ignatius is intent on having the retreatant experience the tragedy of the event, just as Kollwitz is intent on the viewer understanding her own loss.

Can the Kollwitz *1938 Pietà* also illustrate the second formulation of the grace of the Third Week? That is to say, can Kollwitz's grief be interpreted in terms of compassion? On the one hand, the statue is less about the son's sorrow than it is about the mother's. Furthermore, the mother is not inviting compassion; she appears as though she would rather be left alone to grieve. On the other hand, the argument that Kollwitz proposes in the statue is based on the assumption that the viewer will somehow identify with the mother's grief. In other words, the statue does not express the mother's compassion for her son, but it does invite the viewer to compassion with the mother, even if the mother herself is not interested in the viewer. As the viewer constructs his own emotion based on the expression of grief in the mother, he is also experiencing compassion.

Since no one can have another person's emotions, compassion is not so much about taking on another person's experiences of suffering as it is about reconstructing another person's emotional concepts in terms of one's own emotional concepts. Is it possible to reconstruct Jesus's emotional concepts at the time of his passion in light of the scant evidence that the Gospels offer readers? At Gethsemane, with his passion drawing near, Jesus says to his disciples in Matthew 26:38: "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." Here the Gospel writer identifies Jesus's emotional concept as grief, or extreme sorrow, as well as the intensity of this grief, namely even to the point of death. Furthermore, Luke 22:44 gives some indication of the intensity of Jesus's stress in the garden by describing his physiological response: "In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground." The condition that the Gospel writer describes may be

related to a condition known as "hematohidrosis," which is a rare, but not unheard of, medical condition whereby a person under intense stress sweats blood.[186]

Although the Gospel writers do provide a surprisingly granular description of Jesus's emotion at the time of his passion, even if this description is short, it is unlikely that most retreatants will have experienced stress to the point of sweating blood as Jesus does in Luke or even that they will have experienced the intensity of grief that the writer of Matthew describes. What, then, is the likelihood of the retreatant reconstructing this emotion? The answer to the question depends on the ability of the retreatant to access her own experiences of grief and, most probably, to amplify the intensity of this emotion. Firstly, the retreatant would have to identify the emotional concept, in this case grief, in her own emotional-conceptual framework. Secondly, the retreatant would have to imagine the intentionality of the grief, which corresponds to this emotion's cognitive content. What is Jesus grieving? Is it the loss of his own life? Is it the betrayal of Judas or of the people that he loves and who now want to kill him? Is it that his whole life and mission seem to be ending in failure? Thirdly, the retreatant would have to mirror the affective intensity of the grief, which in the case is "even to death," i.e., of the most extreme kind. My guess—and this is only conjecture—is that it is uncommon for retreatants to experience the intensity of grief that Jesus experiences at his passion. Grief is, after all, an aversive emotion, which means that it signals to both the body and the brain that the object of its intentionality is not in the person's best interest. Grief tells person that something is harmful and therefore should be avoided. Kollwitz's statue illustrates this well: the death of a son should be

[186] H. Jeranjani, Bhagyashri Jaju, M. Phiske, Nitin Lade, "Hematohidrosis—A Rare Clinical Phenomenon," *Indian Journal of Dermatology* vol. 53, no. 3 (2009): 290. http://link.galegroup.com. Accessed March 12, 2018.

avoided because it causes pain. For this reason, most people will experience psychological resistance to the kind of grief that Jesus experienced in his passion.

On the other hand, compassion is a form of sorrow that draws one person to another who is suffering. For example, when a loved one is experiencing a slow and painful death, it is not uncommon for a person to experience both grief and compassion. The grief is an aversion to the loved one's suffering whereas the compassion is an attraction to the loved one's suffering as a way of being close to the loved one. A person who experiences compassion wants to feel the pain of grief, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the relationship. Concretely speaking, this takes the form of spending long hours with the loved one, listening as he describes his symptoms, and performing tasks for the loved one that a person might not be normally inclined to do. All this is to say: the ability of the retreatant to mirror the intensity of Jesus's grief in his passion in large measure depends on her capacity for compassion.

My exploration of Rahner's take on the passion explains why mirroring the affective intensity of Jesus at this moment in the retreat might be considered desirable.[187] Taken together, the passion and the resurrection provide the clearest example of Jesus's humanity and divinity. In surrendering himself to divine mystery, Jesus shows what it means to be truly human. But this act of surrender entails the painful emotion of grief. At the same time, Jesus's love for divine mystery attracts him and makes his act of surrender possible. That is to say, Jesus's emotional choice for God at the same time involves the aversive emotion of grief. In this sense, then, Jesus's intense grief is revelatory of who God is. The closer that the retreatant can come to reconstructing the granularity of both Jesus's love for God and of Jesus's grief in his passion, the closer she will come to the mystery of who she is and of who God is.

[187] See, for example, my exploration of the prayer of consecration pp. 65-68.

Conclusion

The above analysis proposes an analogy between the artistic process and imaginative religious experience. That being said, it is only an analogy. I do not wish to suggest that those who read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and who contemplate Kollwitz's *1938 Pietà* are in fact experiencing the graces of the First and Third Weeks. Rather, I have used these as examples because Wilde and Kollwitz are experts on emotions. That is to say, they understand the granularity of emotional experiences and are able to communicate that granularity to a wider audience. They teach their audiences to recognize their attractive and aversive emotions and to associate these emotions with certain stimuli. Ignatius, I have argued, encourages this same process in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius's principal concern in the *Spiritual Exercises*, at least according to the interpretation presented above, is to order the retreatant's affections in such a way that the retreatant chooses God and rejects the things that are not of God. Ignatius's method involves calling to mind stories from the biblical tradition, understanding how these stories relate to the person's final end, and affectively charging these stories with correctly ordered emotions.

Although Ignatius was not thinking in terms of "emotional granularity," this is in fact the psychological concept that underlies his project. Sorrow in itself is neutral in regards to the person's final end. However, sorrow, when correctly ordered, can constitute religious experience. I chose to focus on sorrow for two reasons: it is a particularly difficult emotion because of its aversive affective charge and it expresses itself in highly nuanced ways that involve both attractive and aversive affect. It is far more comfortable for a person to dwell on her attraction to Christ in the Second Week and her joy at Christ's resurrection in the Fourth Week. While these more pleasant emotions are essential affective movements in the project of

the *Spiritual Exercises*, they are not the only movements. Ignatius understood that religious experience also entails sorrow at the loss of things that a person may be attached to and at the suffering of Jesus. In order for the retreatant to experience these graces, I have argued, she must understand the granularity of her emotional responses to the prescribed meditations. I have chosen to focus on three aspects of emotional granularity: intentionality, affective charge, and affective intensity. What is the retreatant sad about? Does the sorrow attract or repel? How intense is the sorrow? By paying attention to these three aspects of emotional granularity, the retreatant comes to appreciate how sorrow is revelatory.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the key to understanding emotional responses lies in a person's ability to think granularly about these responses. Once a person can dissect the various components of an emotional concept, she can readjust the parts to suit her interests and goals, whether the goal is survival or salvation. In specifying the psychological mechanisms that play into emotions in religious experience, my intention was not to dispel the mystery; rather, I have attempted to illustrate how our relationship to mystery might be thought of in terms of the attractive and aversive emotions that are part-and-parcel of our everyday experience. As Rahner argues, the choice for mystery is ultimately not reducible to our reasons for choosing; rather, the emotional attraction that we experience in relation to mystery is the work of the Holy Spirit. The attraction that we feel for God, then, is not something that we invent or create but is itself mystery. For both Rahner and Ignatius, the emotion that we feel in relation to God is not something that we force; it is something that we discover and nurture through cognitive reflection and meditation. The neurological and psychological functioning of emotions explains how this process of discovery and nurture happens on a human level. Furthermore, the *Spiritual Exercises* offers a methodology for developing emotional granularity in the retreatant. Ignatius believed that retreatants could use certain techniques for developing an awareness of how emotions work in religious experience. In light of Rahner's analysis, these techniques are not so much a supplement to grace, but examples of the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit drawing the person to God.

APPENDIX

Image Source: Walter Mason, “Käthe Kollwitz’s *Pietà*.” *The Plough Quarterly* no. 1, Summer 2017. https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/nonviolence/kathe-kollwitzs-pieta.

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