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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THINGS:
A THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF SORROW OVER ANTHROPOGENIC LOSS

Hannah M Malcolm

This thesis proposes that sorrow over anthropogenic loss can bear moral authority in both its experience and expression, and further that this sorrow is most fittingly expressed as prayer. I introduce a metaphysical account of sorrow as a morally charged condition which constitutes a critical correction to contemporary accounts of emotion. I apply this account to anthropogenic loss via a theological anthropology which presents humans as priests of creation. There are two motivations for this thesis: correcting a theological gap in treatments of feeling about anthropogenic loss and offering a constructive moral theological anthropology. These motivations are related. Anthropogenic loss is a particular context which nevertheless reveals fundamental truth about the vocation of the human.

Against the context of psycho-social research into 'feeling' prompted by climate change and ecological collapse, I investigate the definitional challenge presented by 'emotions' in this literature. I introduce the passion of sorrow via Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, late medieval readings of Christ's passion, and the Black theological tradition. These distinct traditions share an appreciation of sorrow in Christian moral formation, particularly when expressed as prayer. I then apply this account of sorrow to anthropogenic loss. In dialogue with Bruno Latour, I address the culturally conditioned nature of human feeling about the loss of non-human creatures, proposing that this is not a barrier to its moral role because creation consists of sign-making and sign-receiving agents. Our cultural creaturely identity does, however, require a governing narrative in which to interpret these signs and guide our response; the theological anthropologies of Maximus the Confessor and Jean-Louis Chrétien frame humans as priests of creation. Finally, I look to sign-making and sign-reception beyond the Church. Hannah Arendt's description of world-making as communicative action guides my claim that prayerful sorrow over anthropogenic loss is politically efficacious, and therefore belongs in public.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THINGS
A THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF SORROW OVER ANTHROPOGENIC LOSS

By

Hannah M Malcolm

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Durham University
Department of Theology and Religion

2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my primary supervisor, Rev'd Professor Simon Oliver. His unwavering support, generous critique, and timely encouragement have brought this project from its nascent stage as an emailed proposal to its completion and submission. I am also indebted to my second supervisor, Dr Carmody Grey, for her thoughtful and clear-sighted feedback. I am a far better writer and thinker because of their input.

I am grateful to the Archbishop's Research Council for funding my initial year of research and to the Northern Bridge Consortium for their financial and academic support over the remaining 3 years. Their funding made this project financially viable and served as a reminder that theological work which begins in the academy must in the end find a foothold in the Church and the world.

My research has developed in the care of several communities. Thanks are due to the community of Cranmer Hall, where my doctoral work was received as part and parcel of my formation for priesthood. My tutor Dr Nick Moore consistently affirmed my academic vocation, and I received healthy doses of encouragement and perspective from the various cohorts of the Wallis room, where most of the chapters were written. Rebecca Cottrell, Cecily and Shakeel Nurmahi, Jen and Isaac Lander-Frisby, Kate and Michael Eaton-Wells, Toby Everett, Lydia Padfield, and Sian Parker have all offered good humoured and faithful friendship. During the pandemic I was sustained by the virtual writing community offered me by Oana Marian. Throughout my pregnancy and final year of writing, Mim Skinner and Sam Slatcher were persistently cheerful and generous housemates and friends as I brought two very different projects to birth.

My parents have been unconditionally supportive as I have accumulated more and more years of education. They were the first to tell me about God's love for the world. Any worthwhile work I have done has sprung from that knowledge.

Among my many wise teachers over the last 12 years, I must especially mention Professor Rory Naismith, Rev'd Dr Michael Banner, Professor Chloe Starr, and Professor Jennifer Herdt.

Caleb Gordon, my husband and closest confidant, has spurred me on and rebutted my self-doubt at every turn. He is the most patient and attentive listener I know, and a consistently thoughtful editor.

Finally, my tiny daughter Evelyn's arrival provided the kind of hard biological deadline necessary to get this thesis finished. In many ways, it is written for her.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis offers a theological analysis of human feeling about climate change and ecological collapse. In its course, I propose that sorrow over anthropogenic loss is a passion which can be treated as morally authoritative, both in experience and in expression.[1] In characterising this sorrow as having the potential to bear moral authority, I am staking a theological anthropological position about the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation: our human creatureliness is such that disordered relationships can cause us sorrow, and in such cases our sorrow serves the revelatory purpose of arresting our attention and redirecting us toward the way things should be.

The impetus for this work comes from the growing number of reports of climate and ecological 'grief', 'anxiety', and 'trauma', and the related body of research which has sprung up out of a desire to describe, analyse, and even treat these phenomena. This research body remains, however, almost entirely psycho-social in its approach, having prompted very little sustained theological engagement thus far.[2] While theological readings of the relationships between human and non-human creatures have increased so much in the last decade that they now constitute their own field, offerings are still largely concerned with what might broadly be characterised as 'environmental ethics' or 'creation theology'.[3] I incorporate aspects of these approaches, but my account fits comfortably in neither description. It might more appropriately be described as a moral theological anthropology; I am claiming that the experience of sorrow over anthropogenic loss can have a role in guiding our understanding as to what it means to be a human creature, and that this experience can be expressed in *fitting* and *unfitting* ways, and ultimately arguing that its expression belongs in *prayer* and in *public*. I will have a great deal

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[1] I use 'anthropogenic loss' as shorthand for 'losses associated with climate change and ecological collapse' throughout the thesis. I explain this in more detail later in the introduction.

[2] Where theological accounts or resources currently exist, they usually take the form of liturgy. The charity Green Christian has launched *Borrowed Time*, which offers courses on 'sharing feelings about climate change' and 'learning to live in the Anthropocene'. Their resources include a dedicated page for 'rituals and laments'. Christian Climate Action (who engage in 'direct action and public witness for the climate') have a focused resource section for 'climate grief and anxiety', including a communal prayer for climate grief which frames grief as an expression of our collective need for forgiveness, and resources for running 'grief circles' which includes a liturgy for repentance and transformation. A key argument of this thesis is that the instinct to respond with corporate prayer is an entirely fitting one, and I seek to provide the theological framework to support and describe this form of expression. Borrowed Time, 'Rituals and Laments - Examples and Resources', Borrowed Time: A Green Christian Project, accessed 16 February 2023, https://borrowedtime.earth/rituals-and-laments-for-our-times/rituals-and-laments-examples-and-resources/; Christian Climate Action, 'Climate Grief and Anxiety', accessed 16 February 2023, https://christianclimateaction.org/resources/climate-grief-and-anxiety/.

[3] See for example Kiara A. Jorgenson and Alan G. Padgett, eds., *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2020).

more to say about sorrow expressed as prayer, but if I am to end in the public sphere, it is appropriate that this is also where I begin – with public discourse about human feeling at the end of the world as we know it.

1. CLIMATE GRIEF: A NEW FIELD OF ENQUIRY

When the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its sixth assessment report in 2022, it was the first time that the IPCC's Working Group II produced a summary of the impacts of climate change which included reference to adverse consequences for psychological well-being and mental health:

> Children and adolescents, particularly girls, elderly people, and people with existing mental, physical and medical challenges are particularly at risk. Mental health impacts are expected to arise from exposure to high temperatures, extreme weather events, displacement, malnutrition, conflict, climate-related economic and social losses, and anxiety and distress associated with worry about climate change (very high confidence).[4]

The report goes on to highlight the threats of anxiety, mental illness, and suicide for indigenous communities facing 'cultural and spiritual losses', the 'dispossession of land and culture', and the role of both acute events (storms, floods, extreme heat, etc) and chronic changes (drought, sea level rise, changing climate norms) in creating risks to mental health and wellbeing.[5] Such high-profile attention to this dimension of anthropogenic loss is relatively new. While sorrow over ecological loss has a longer pedigree (its articulation often associated with Aldo Leopold's writing in the 1940s), its popular use in mainstream western media has dramatically accelerated since the release of the IPCC's report in 2018.[6] A particular pattern to media reporting has also emerged over the last five years. Many of the news and opinion articles on climate and

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[4] G. Cissé et al., 'Health, Wellbeing, and the Changing Structure of Communities', in *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerablity*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1046.

[5] Cissé et al., 'Health, Wellbeing', 1055, 1077–78.

[6] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). More recent observations of grief, anxiety, and trauma associated with ecological loss and climate change pre-date the 2018 report; The American Psychological Association, for example, first established a task force on the interface between psychology and climate change in 2008 (Janet Swim et al., 'Psychology and Global Climate Change: Addressing a Multifaceted Phenomenon and Set of Challenges' (American Psychological Association, 2009). In 2017 the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States of America published an article which analysed increases in crop-damaging temperatures and their link to increases in suicide rates in India since 1980 (Tamma A. Carleton, 'Crop-Damaging Temperatures Increase Suicide Rates in India', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 33 (15 August 2017). This was reported in a few media outlets, but other than generating some mild controversy amongst statisticians, it failed to make headlines.

ecological grief devote considerable space to climate or psychology experts offering recommendations for coping with the feelings associated with anthropogenic loss or reflecting on whether these feelings prompt behaviour change. Just two months after the release of the IPCC's report, NBC news covered the 'growing emotional toll of climate change', highlighting that the release of the report had coincided with a year of extreme weather events across the United States.[7] The article turns to the approaches taken by the *Good Grief Network*, environmental campaigner Bill McKibben, and a 'climate psychiatrist' for coping advice, noting the relationship between 'sadness' and 'inaction'.[8]

A steady stream of similar articles emerged across a range of English-speaking media platforms over the next few years. In 2019, the *New York Times* published an article with the title 'Apocalypse Got You Down? Maybe This Will Help: Searching for a cure for my climate crisis grief'.[9] Reporter Cara Buckley describes her overwhelming angst over climate change and her experience of a therapeutic workshop which drew on Joanna Macy's 'Work that Reconnects'.[10] She also turns to several psychologists who have experience supporting patients struggling with 'eco-despair'. The same year, Vice.com published an article which claimed that '"Climate Despair" is making people give up on life', and the Guardian published an opinion piece with the headline 'I have felt hopelessness over climate change. Here is how we move past the immense grief'. Like Cara Buckley's reporting, both articles emphasised coping strategies available for those who might be experiencing a similar set of responses, and in particular the expression of 'grief'.[11]

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[7] Avichai Scher, '"Climate Grief": The Growing Emotional Toll of Climate Change', *NBC News*, 24 December 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/health/mental-health/climate-grief-growing-emotional-toll-climate-change-n946751.

[8] The Good Grief Network makes regular appearances in popular responses to the negative emotions brought about by climate change and ecological collapse. A non-profit organisation based largely in the United States, their 'ten steps to personal resilience and empowerment' programme aims to help people 'recognize, feel, and process their heavy emotions, so that these feelings may be transformed into meaningful action'. Good Grief Network, 'What Is GGN?', accessed 13 February 2023, https://www.goodgriefnetwork.org/about/#whatisggn. The reference to 'good' grief implies that 'bad' grief is a possibility, but this is not articulated on the website.

[9] Cara Buckley, 'Apocalypse Got You Down? Maybe This Will Help: Searching for a Cure for My Climate Crisis Grief', *The New York Times*, 15 November 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/15/sunday-review/depression-climate-change.html.

[10] Joanna Macy's work on 'active hope' draws on Buddhist philosophy and General Systems theory and is one of the most referenced resources for climate and ecological 'grief'. Her *Work That Reconnects* Network has facilitators on six continents. The Work That Reconnects, 'Joanna Macy, Root Teacher', Work That Reconnects Network, accessed 13 February 2023, https://workthatreconnects.org/spiral/about-joanna/.

[11] Mike Pearl, '"Climate Despair" Is Making People Give Up on Life', *Vice.Com*, 11 July 2019, https://www.vice.com/en/article/j5w374/climate-despair-is-making-people-give-up-on-life?; Rob Law, 'I Have Felt Hopelessness over Climate Change. Here Is How We Move Past the Immense Grief', *The Guardian*, 9 May 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/09/i-have-felt-hopelessness-over-climate-change-here-is-how-we-move-past-the-immense-grief.

As this field of concern has developed popular recognition, the range of media sources reporting a similar set of experiences has become more diverse. To give a sense of the spread: in the last 3 years, the BBC, British Vogue, and the Irish Sun have featured pieces on climate 'grief' and 'anxiety', all referencing it as a problem for 'mental health'.[12] The kinds of reporting have also diversified, focusing on specific examples of grief expression and support: context specific stories include accounts of a 'funeral' for the first glacier lost to climate change, climate anxiety therapy for students at a British university, the mental health impacts of the Australian bushfires, the weight of ecological grief for scientists, long-form accounts of loss from across the United States drawing from hundreds of interviews, and a documentary investigating the 'dilemma' of having a baby in a time of climate change.[13] As reporting on this range of responses has increased, critical analysis of the phenomenon and its expression has followed closely behind. The cultural dynamics of *feeling* about climate change – and whose feelings receive media coverage – has been a particular point of interest, though the assessments offered are diverse and at times seemingly contradictory; the Scientific American has reported on the 'unbearable whiteness' of climate anxiety and Vice Magazine has published

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[12] In 2019, BBC News reported on mothers struggling with eco-anxiety (BBC East Midlands, 'The Mums with Eco-Anxiety: "I Could Cry All the Time"', *BBC News*, 21 October 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-49836830). In 2020, BBC Future published an overview of 'climate grief' by 'eco-anxiety' expert Panu Pihkala as part of a 'Climate Emotions' series, framed as an introduction to 'how we mourn a changing planet'. The same year, Vogue UK published an article on how to cope with climate grief. In 2022 The Irish Sun reported on climate anxiety and preventing climate despair with the headline 'Snow Joke'. Panu Pihkala, 'Climate Grief: How We Mourn a Changing Planet', BBC Future, 3 April 2020, https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200402-climate-grief-mourning-loss-due-to-climate-change; Nylah Burton, '"Climate Grief" Explained and How To Cope With It', *British Vogue*, 10 October 2020, https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/climate-grief; Tadhg MacIntyre, 'SNOW JOKE: Climate Anxiety Is a Growing Problem - Here's What You Can Do to Ease Those Feelings of Despair', *The Irish Sun*, 23 November 2022, https://www.thesun.ie/news/9781717/climate-anxiety-growing-problem-despair-expert-psychologist/.

[13] Agence France-Presse, 'Iceland Holds Funeral for First Glacier Lost to Climate Change', *The Guardian*, 19 August 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/19/iceland-holds-funeral-for-first-glacier-lost-to-climate-change; BBC East Midlands, 'Derby Staff and Students given Climate Change Anxiety Therapy', *BBC News*, 23 January 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-51222924; Fiona Charlson, 'Grief, Frustration, Guilt: The Bushfires Show the Far-Reaching Mental Health Impacts of Climate Change', *The Guardian*, 16 January 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/17/grief-frustration-guilt-the-bushfires-show-the-far-reaching-mental-health-impacts-of-climate-change; Gaia Vince, 'How Scientists Are Coping with "Ecological Grief"', *The Observer*, 12 January 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/jan/12/how-scientists-are-coping-with-environmental-grief; Sarah Kerr et al., 'The Unseen Toll of a Warming World', *The New York Times*, 9 March 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/03/09/us/mental-health-climate-change.html; Britt Wray, 'Deciding to Have a Baby amid the Climate Crisis: Whatever You're Feeling, You're Not Alone', CBC Docs, 24 November 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/deciding-to-have-a-baby-amid-the-climate-crisis-whatever-you-re-feeling-you-re-not-alone-1.6662734. Science communicator Britt Wray is also the author of *Generation Dread,* which argues intense negative feelings over climate change play a vital role in prompting transformed behaviour via an exploration of her own journey to motherhood. Britt Wray, *Generation Dread: Finding Purpose in an Age of Climate Crisis* (Toronto: Knopf, 2022).

a piece on the disproportionate effects of climate grief for people of colour.[14] In the New Statesman, Rebecca Solnit described climate despair as a 'luxury' which only those with already easy lives can afford, noting that despair can be 'true as an emotion but false as an analysis'.[15] The close relationship between broader cultural narratives concerning human relationship to the non-human and the responses people give when confronted with such rapidly changing material conditions is attracting growing interest, both from those who might benefit from dismissing these forms of existential dread (i.e., reducing sorrow over loss to a romantic and therefore false sense of attachment) and from those who are keen to utilise or manage these feelings to bring about behaviour change.

For example: many of those engaging closely with climate change and loss emphasise the narratively driven nature of feeling. In an article for UNESCO's Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, science communicator Joe Duggan reflects on his research into how climate scientists say that they 'feel' about climate change. He both notes that feelings are shaped by environment and that these feelings might be better 'managed' to improve a population's behaviour:

> In understanding the emotional elements of social-ecological systems we can better implement management practices and build system resilience… If nature impacts how we feel and as a result we are more likely to act environmentally consciously, can we help people regulate their emotions and in turn encourage pro-environmental behaviour? Can treatment of climate fatigue and climate anxiety lead to increased resilience of social ecological systems and a more environmentally aware and active populous?[16]

Increased awareness of human feeling about climate change acting as both a barrier to action and as a transformative tool has also prompted a range of creative responses which seek to

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[14] Sarah Jaquette Ray, 'Climate Anxiety Is an Overwhelmingly White Phenomenon', *Scientific American*, 21 March 2021, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-unbearable-whiteness-of-climate-anxiety/; Nylah Burton, 'People of Colour Experience Climate Grief More Deeply Than White People', *Vice.Com*, 14 May 2020, https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7ggqx/people-of-colour-experience-climate-grief-more-deeply-than-white-people.

[15] Rebecca Solnit, 'Why Climate Despair Is a Luxury', *The New Statesman*, 19 October 2022, https://www.newstatesman.com/environment/2022/10/rebecca-solnit-climate-despair-luxury. Solnit is the co-founder of the 'Not Too Late' project, aiming to provide 'climate facts and encouragement' to 'assuage the sorrow and despair'. The project also notes the culturally shaped nature of human feeling: 'some of the challenging emotions we feel about the planet's future stem from commonly held frameworks about how change works, where power resides, and what possibility looks like'. Rebecca Solnit and Thelma Young-Lutunatabua, NotTooLateClimate.com, accessed 15 February 2023, https://www.nottoolateclimate.com/.

[16] Joe Duggan, 'How You Feel (about Climate Change and Nature) Matters', MGIEP UNESCO, accessed 15 February 2023, https://mgiep.unesco.org/article/how-you-feel-about-climate-change-and-nature-matters. I offer a close analysis of Duggan's project *Is This How You Feel* in chapter five.

shape our governing narratives.[17] Underlying this emphasis on narratively shaped feeling runs a conviction that communication about climate change – a task which has until recently fallen largely at the feet of climate scientists – has not produced the societal transformation required, resulting in a dynamic whereby some highly knowledgeable and/or highly vulnerable communities feel profound dread and sorrow over climate change, while others feel practically indifferent. And these two conditions are linked; for those who do feel sorrow, a great deal of it is tied to the growing awareness that wide-spread political consensus about the consequences of climate change has not led to concrete, lasting, and proportionate action.

These reports share a general recognition that we face a moral gap between acknowledging the real conditions with which we are faced (climate change and mass extinction are real and are caused by human activity) and being moved to act accordingly (this knowledge has changed the direction of our desires, and as such how we behave).[18] Identifying which responses to such knowledge might overcome this gap ought to be a highly urgent task. And yet even amongst those whose work is primarily concerned with climate and ecological 'grief', there remains plenty of reluctance in associating human feeling with moral agency. Consider, for example, the approach to climate grief taken by psychotherapist Andrew Bryant, the founder of the project *Climate and Mind*:

> There is no "right way" to grieve… (we should be) wary of talking about grief in terms of rigid, universal stages or tasks… having a fixed idea about how we *should* feel about particular loss can make it difficult to notice how we *actually* feel… No model can override your personal experience… (or) deny other, equally valid ways of conceiving of and working through loss.[19]

Bryant's description reflects standard therapeutic advice for those undergoing individual and clearly defined loss (i.e., the loss of a loved one). But is such an approach sufficient for

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[17] See Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* and *The Great Derangement*, the *Dark Mountain* Project's regular magazines, *Imagine 2200: Climate Fiction for Future Ancestors*, which hosts short stories from emerging writers, and the *Letters to the Earth* project which gathered letters and other creative responses to climate change and ecological collapse from around the world. Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019); Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); The Dark Mountain Project, 'The Dark Mountain Books', accessed 15 February 2023, https://dark-mountain.net/books/; Fix: Grist's Solutions Lab, 'Imagine 2200', Grist.org, accessed 3 January 2023, https://grist.org/fix/imagine-2200-climate-fiction-2022/; Anna Hope, Jo McIness, and Kay Michael, eds., *Letters to the Earth: Writing to a Planet in Crisis* (London: William Collins, 2019).
[18] I describe this as a *moral* gap rather than simply a practical one because the complexity of responding adequately to the problem does not make it any less a pressing moral concern.
[19] Andrew Bryant, 'What Is Climate Grief?', Climate And Mind, 25 August 2019, https://www.climateandmind.org/what-is-climate-grief.

responding to a sixth mass extinction event and a life-threatening increase in global average temperature? These are not temporary and private states from which we can recover; they are the product of a long-term collective moral failure, and our realisation of this failure (our *grief*) must therefore be brought into long-term collective view. It cannot be considered a personal concern, reducible to personal expression. It is the distinctively collective nature of this form of loss – and the kinds of moral, political, and spiritual demands it therefore makes – which drives the shape of this account.

2. A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

Before outlining the structure of my argument, I want to offer a brief note about the terms I employ. I refer to the consequences of climate change and ecological collapse as *anthropogenic loss*, and I refer to the feeling I am investigating as *sorrow*.[20] The term 'anthropogenic' refers to changes in the world generated by humans and is most frequently used in relation to environmental impact. This is intended as useful shorthand for a particular phenomenon, making explicit the *kinds* of losses which are my focus. I am not, for example, offering a general account of human feeling about the presence of death in the world, but examining a temporally bound phenomenon, wherein the actions of humans have initiated the end of the world *as we have known it*. The earth has certainly seen other instances of climate change and mass extinction, but this current collapse event is intimately tied *to* human history. It is certainly challenging to describe this phenomenon without appealing in some way to a 'normative' nature which is being threatened (and many accounts of climate and ecological 'grief' do indeed make such an appeal), even while knowing that the conditions humans have received are one narrow window in a much longer history of flux. And yet it remains true that there are indeed *conditions humans have received* which have established normative relations for the only window of the earth's history that we have known. It is also worth remembering that there are some normative conditions transcending our narrow window which we have also radically transformed, introducing triggers for loss which are genuinely *novel* – for example, the devastating effects of plastic pollution on the health of human and non-human creatures.

Describing this phenomenon as sorrow over anthropogenic loss has its limitations. While it is straightforward to identify human activity (and, more explicitly, human sin) as the cause of this

[20] I will go on to describe sorrow as a 'passion' rather than 'feeling', but for now the term 'feeling' provides a sufficient if vague umbrella word for the category of thing with which this thesis is concerned.

iteration of climate change and ecological collapse, the general category of 'human' does a disservice to the uneven distribution of both responsibility for this loss and its impact. There are many humans who have faithfully maintained fitting relationships with non-human creatures, who have not contributed to these losses, but are now nevertheless burdened by their consequences.[21] There are also many humans whose relationships to other creatures may be *unfitting*, but who lack sufficient power to collectively trigger a rise in global average temperature or an extinction event. References to 'anthropogenic' also risk implying that human activity in relation to non-human creatures is the work of agents in a passive and static 'natural' arena, rather than these losses being made up of complex relationships between both human and non-human agents.[22]

There are also potential pitfalls associated with focusing on sorrow. There are certainly other responses to anthropogenic loss which one could argue are fitting, or that even ought to be the focus (anger, courage, etc).[23] And there are – as I go on to demonstrate – plenty of expressions of 'sorrow' which are *unfitting*, and plenty of consequences associated with anthropogenic loss which *should not* provoke sorrow but do (for example, sorrow expressed as nihilism, or sorrow because one realises that one has to give up a highly polluting but luxurious lifestyle). Describing sorrow over anthropogenic loss also highlights the uneasy relationship between those experiencing sorrow over the damage they have wrought, or whose experience is a largely future-oriented dread, and those whose sorrow is rooted in contemporary encounters with loss and existential threat. But it is precisely these challenges which make sorrow over anthropogenic loss worthy of extended theological investigation; a thorough account of both

[21] The term 'creature' is sometimes popularly recognised as referring to non-human animals. I use 'creature' in the broadest possible sense; those things that exist whose source is *not* human manufacturing, including humans and those non-human things which are not animals, and even those which are not biologically alive. In the sense of having been *created,* humans, dandelions, and rivers all share a common creaturely identity. The significance of this identity is more thoroughly mapped out in chapters five and six.

[22] Similar observations have been made about the challenge of referring to this era of earth history as the 'Anthropocene'. Like 'anthropogenic', the term Anthropocene provides a useful summary word for the many ways human activity has fundamentally transformed the biosphere – global average temperature rise, the collapse in flora and fauna, the creation of new substances which have introduced novel pollutants in the atmosphere and in ecosystems, etc. But, like anthropogenic, its summary nature means that it remains a relatively blunt instrument for the nuances of power distribution, whether amongst humans, or amongst creatures in general. For an overview of this challenge, see E Johnson et al., 'After the Anthropocene: Politics and Geographic Enquiry for a New Epoch', *Progress in Human Geography* 38, no. 3 (2014): 439–56.

[23] See for example the theo-political analysis of 'rage' offered in A.M. Ranawana, *A Liberation for the Earth: Climate, Race and Cross* (London: SCM Press, 2022). One of the points that emerges over this thesis is the difficulty of teasing out these different responses – sorrow, anger, and courage are not necessarily experienced as discrete or mutually exclusive 'events'.

its meaning and its fitting expression is vitally important for understanding and shaping human conduct in the increasingly unstable days which lie ahead.

This thesis thus serves as an appeal to the Church – an appeal which is for a certain context, certainly, but is nevertheless rooted in fundamental claims about human nature. I draw on two key elements of the Christian tradition's anthropology to describe the Church's calling in a time of anthropogenic loss: the moral significance of the passion of sorrow and the role of the human as priest of creation. These two elements guide my claim that sorrowful prayer is the fitting expression of a priestly vocation we have failed to fulfil. However, as I also propose, given the *political* nature of anthropogenic loss, this fitting expression is not only for the worshipping life of the Church, but also necessarily offered *in public*. Our prayerful expression of sorrow must also be a political act.

3. SUMMARY

I have divided my approach into two roughly even parts. The first part offers a metaphysical account of sorrow as a morally authoritative condition and the second part offers a theological application of this condition to anthropogenic loss. In chapter one I provide an overview of the key themes dominating recent psycho-social research into the 'negative emotions' associated with anthropogenic loss. These are often referred to as climate or ecological 'grief', 'anxiety', 'mourning', and 'trauma', and so the descriptions of these responses tend to draw broadly on psychological and sociological categories which remain difficult to define. As my overview demonstrates, the struggle to provide consistent or precise definitions for these terms also results in a reluctance to engage with these 'emotions' as though they make any concrete moral demands; while many of the accounts agree that negative emotions associated with anthropogenic loss reflect a certain relational reality, they avoid explicit suggestions concerning their appropriate expression, or the response they might elicit.

In chapter two I further investigate the definitional challenge presented by the language of 'emotions' which dominates attempts to describe human feeling about anthropogenic loss. I review the recent history of emotion and affect language, and trace its emergence, diversification, and medicalisation. I also offer examples of 'emotion' and 'affect' language in theological anthropology to clarify my decision *not* to adopt these frameworks, but rather to work within the theological category of the 'passions'.

In chapter three I introduce the passion of sorrow in the western Christian tradition via the theological anthropologies of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas. I pay close attention to the moral concerns which govern their accounts of the passions in general and sorrow in particular, noting the relationship they draw between reason and passion and the ways that sin (or fallenness) and grace come to bear on both the experience of the passions and their expression. I query whether the passion of sorrow must always be understood as a *passive* experience, or whether its expression can also participate in the good. I also introduce the idea that sorrow can be a revelatory experience.

In chapter four I turn to theological interpretations of Christ's passions and how different Christian traditions have applied these interpretations to their accounts of the moral life, especially in treating sorrow as a form of revelation. I propose that a diversity of Christian traditions coalesce in treating prayer as the most fitting expression of sorrow. I devote significant attention to Augustine and Aquinas, demonstrating that their Christology and anthropology are intertwined in treating Christ's passions as morally exemplary. I note that the accounts offered by Augustine and Aquinas contain quite clear differentiation between sorrow and bodily suffering and raise the question of how Christ's *voluntary* sorrow can be exemplary for those who suffer involuntarily. These two points pose challenges for its application to sorrow over anthropogenic loss, which is often an involuntary response to suffering brought about by changes to material conditions. I therefore introduce two other Christian traditions whose accounts of Christ's sorrow address bodily and involuntary suffering in different ways: late medieval spirituality (via the Cistercian tradition and Margery Kempe) and the Black theological tradition (via Howard Thurman, James Cone, and their interpretations of the Spirituals).

In chapter five I turn from a general account of the passion of sorrow to the specific question of sorrow prompted by anthropogenic loss, and I demonstrate that an account of sorrow as bearing moral authority applies to the set of experiences with which this study is concerned. Noting that this sorrow is a new category for theological investigation which remains highly culturally conditioned, I introduce a nature-culture framework within which its revelatory quality can nevertheless be defended against dualistic divisions of the 'natural' from 'cultural'. I offer this justification via an account of creation as consisting of sign-making and sign-receiving creatures, proposing that this is a dynamic in which the passions participate. I propose

that human sign-making and sign-receiving (including the experience and expression of sorrow) is narratively governed, and so a significant concern for the moral expression of sorrow is the narrative out of which it emerges and which it perpetuates.

In chapter six I introduce a fitting theological narrative for the governance of sorrow over anthropogenic loss: the tradition of the priests of creation offers an anthropology which helps illuminate the moral import of human sorrow expressed as prayer. I primarily introduce this tradition via Maximus the Confessor and Jean-Louis Chrétien, but also turn to examples from the mystical tradition in Eastern Orthodoxy to demonstrate the ways a priestly vocation shapes human perception of and response to non-human creatures.

In chapter seven I close by asserting the relevance of this theological account for the expression of sorrow over anthropogenic loss beyond the life of the Church. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's interpretation of political speech as action and humans as world-making creatures, I emphasise the moral significance of this sorrow being expressed *in public*. In conversation with Arendt, I return to the key role of human speech in Jean-Louis Chrétien's theological anthropology to focus on the political efficacy of expressing sorrow over anthropogenic loss, especially when it is expressed as prayer. I frame this expression as a 'bearing witness' to which the Church is called.

CHAPTER ONE: A NEW FIELD

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present an overview of the psychological, sociological, and philosophical treatments of 'emotions' elicited by anthropogenic loss, with particular attention to descriptions of sadness, grief, and mourning, and how these are defined in relation to other key 'emotion' words employed in the literature. I analyse the common motivations given for this emerging area of research, the diverse and sometimes divergent reasoning as to why anthropogenic loss has prompted such a response, and the underlying narratives about human relationships with non-human creatures which guide these accounts. I begin by introducing the broad scope of the field and its initial emergence as a multi-disciplinary area of academic enquiry. I particularly note that a key motivator for the field's emergence is the perception that scientific communication has failed to prompt widespread acceptance as to the reality of climate breakdown and ecological collapse, and, relatedly, has been inadequate for prompting behaviour change. The field has responded with proposals for therapeutic coping techniques and alternative narratives about being human. Having offered a bird's eye view, I then focus on some of the key attempts to define or taxonomise the emotional range associated with anthropogenic loss to illustrate my reservations about the linguistic frames used in the field. Finally, I give an overview of a key debate in the literature which is particularly relevant to the approach I take: the 'natural' and 'cultural' elements of human responses to anthropogenic loss.

Many of the treatments in this review make astute observations about the significance of 'emotions' in both revealing and guiding human relationships with the non-human, and clearly articulate a shared frustration over failures in our collective communication about climate change and ecological crises. However, they tend towards two weaknesses. Firstly, inconsistently defined but heavily used psychological language creates a problem with defining *what exactly* it is that prompts these responses; what has been lost, and how should that loss be accounted for? Secondly, and relatedly, conflicting accounts of what these responses reveal about being human lead to conflicting proposals as to what anthropogenic loss might demand of us, with much of the literature asserting the need for transformed relationships (with each other, with the non-human) while being unwilling to assert what that transformation might look

like. I close the chapter by noting some of the consequences of these weaknesses and introducing some key aspects of the anthropology I offer by way of alternative.

2. BACKGROUND

Psychological and sociological research into the emotions associated with climate and environmental change is a relatively recent phenomenon, with its status as a distinctive field being little more than a decade old.[1] As such, a survey of the literature maps a series of fast-paced changes, particularly when it comes to the terms of reference and methodological approaches employed; no one set of definitions or approaches referenced here can necessarily represent the field. In 2008, the *American Psychological Association* (APA) created its first climate change 'task force', charged with examining the role of psychology in 'understanding and addressing global climate change, including efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change'.[2] The APA's subsequent policy document released in 2011 identified:

> a persistent resistance among many to accept the findings of climate change science due to a variety of psychological and social factors, ranging from not knowing or understanding the science and scientific review processes, to psychological threats that accompany accepting global climate change, to outright manipulation of science designed to undermine belief in both climate change and human's contribution to climate change [sic].[3]

The APA's early focus on psychological intervention remained largely concerned with providing techniques for improved communication to inspire 'acceptance' of climate science and as such behaviour change – though a special climate change issue of the APA's journal in 2011 included one article on 'psychological impacts' for 'mental health and well-being'.[4]

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[1] Panu Pihkala gives the following summary of the field's history: 'During the 2010s, there was growing research about the relationship between emotions and pro-environmental behavior… during the final years of the 2010s, eco-anxiety and climate anxiety became much-discussed topics in media… scholars started to extend the research on a broader range of emotions and mental states'. Panu Pihkala, 'Toward a Taxonomy of Climate Emotions', *Frontiers in Climate* 3, no. 738154 (January 2022): 2.

[2] American Psychological Association Task Force on the Interface Between Psychology and Global Climate Change, 'Psychology and Global Climate Change: Addressing a Multi-Faceted Phenomenon and Set of Challenges', American Psychological Association, 2010, https://www.apa.org/science/about/publications/climate-change.

[3] American Psychological Association, 'Resolution on Affirming Psychologists' Role in Addressing Global Climate Change', Council Policy Manual, 2011, https://www.apa.org/about/policy/climate-change.

[4] The article identifies psychological impacts via both 'localized and/or immediate consequences' and effects which are 'gradual, cumulative, and/or experienced only through media and social communication', summarised as 'acute and direct impacts', 'indirect and vicarious impacts', including 'intense emotions', and 'psychosocial impacts' from 'large-scale social and community effects' (265). As with similar literature emerging around this time, the authors emphasise that climate change 'is as much a psychological and social phenomenon as a matter of biodiversity and geophysics and has impacts beyond the biophysical' (266). Thomas Doherty and Susan

However, in 2017 the APA collaborated with *ecoAmerica* to produce a report entirely focused on 'mental health' and the changing climate, with an updated version of the report produced in 2021.[5] The new report maintains an interest in 'how people think about and respond to climate change' with information on 'how individuals and communities can… work for climate policies', but with an added emphasis on techniques to 'strengthen… resilience'.[6] The authors offer a series of case studies demonstrating the effects of climate change on well-being in the short and long term: post-traumatic stress disorder in the aftermath of severe weather or disaster events (particularly for displaced communities), stress, depression, and grief from destabilised environments (particularly via increased heat and drought, the loss of occupations and sense of control, and the loss of place-based identity and cultural practice), and climate anxiety (particularly for children and young people and for communities directly witnessing a changing climate, like communities in Tuvalu, Greenland, and amongst the Inuit in Canada).

The report also distinguishes between the impacts of disasters in a time of climate change and the kinds of distress and trauma which follow disasters perceived as having non-human origins:

> When disasters are experienced as entirely "accidental," healing from the injuries or losses is less arduous. With disasters due to human error, carelessness, or negligence, healing is dramatically encumbered by the knowledge that the disasters could have been averted. Natural disasters are *no longer experienced as entirely natural* anymore: their frequency and intensity is [sic] caused by the dangerous choices humans are making.[7]

Here, the threat of climate change to human well-being is especially associated with the perception that there has been a significant change in the relationship between humans (and the things humans produce) and non-human creatures, and that the detrimental impacts of this relational change have not prompted a corrective response but have rather been permitted.[8] The

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Clayton, 'The Psychological Impacts of Global Climate Change', *American Psychologist* 66, no. 4 (2011): 265–76.

[5] Susan Clayton et al., 'Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Inequities, Responses' (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica, 2021). The APA offer their own definition of 'mental health': 'a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, good behavioral adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life'. While they note that 'some emotional response to adversity is normal, and even negative emotions are a necessary part of a fulfilling life', they warn that climate change threatens the ability to 'make decisions without being hindered by extreme emotional responses' (16).

[6] Clayton et al., 'Mental Health', 4.

[7] Clayton et al., 'Mental Health', 32. Emphasis mine.

[8] The 2017 version of the report is even more explicit in describing the dysfunctional and distressing relationship between 'nature' and 'technology' which climate change represents for those who experience its impacts: clinical psychologist Thomas Doherty notes that 'because natural disasters may seem part of the natural order, and are considered to be beyond human control, they are relatively easier to cope with in psychological terms. These calamities tend to bring people together to help those impacted. Technological

recent APA reports represent a significant shift in how the relationship between psychology and climate change is described. The former foci of helping humans to better understand and act on the findings of climate change and preparing a discipline for a necessary (but still explicitly future) role in adaptation have been refined by a focus on therapeutic need in the present or imminent future and using psychoanalysis to better diagnose the dysfunctional relationship between humans and the non-human.[9]

As the field has emerged, data to support and inform its work has followed. But the type of language used for the phenomenon being described also depends on the intended survey participants. The 'emotion' words used to survey populations varies significantly, depending both on the researcher and on the year the survey took place. In April 2020, the *Yale Program on Climate Communication* published 'Climate Change in the American Mind', a survey of over a thousand American adults. Amongst the data concerning 'emotional responses' to 'global warming' the most frequent emotion words selected (in order of popularity) were 'interested', 'disgusted', 'hopeful', 'resilient', 'angry', 'outraged', and 'helpless', all of which came in at or above 40%. Over a third identified as feeling 'afraid' or 'anxious'. 'Sad' was not an option listed.[10] Two years later, a similar version of the same survey was conducted, with similar results – though 'sad' was added to the list of emotions available. This time, almost two thirds identified as 'interested', half identified as 'disgusted' or 'sad', and 'hopeful' had fallen by several percentage points, becoming the least popular response.[11] A global survey of the reactions of young people to climate change also took place at a similar time; in 2021, ten thousand children and young people aged between sixteen and twenty-five responded to questions concerning 'climate anxiety' and how they felt about adult (and especially

disasters, meanwhile, are typically caused by human accident or negligence and often involve long-term, mysterious risks. These disasters tend to divide communities over how to compensate those affected and hold accountable those who were responsible. Poorer areas tend to be at higher risk for these incidents, and community divisions often come down to privilege, class, and race. Climate change combines natural and technological elements'. Susan Clayton et al., 'Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance' (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica, 2017), 28.

[9] The APA now has IPCC observer organisation status and some psychologists were selected as authors for the Special Report on 1.5 degrees and for the main sixth assessment report. See Nadine Andrews and Paul Hoggett, 'Facing up to Ecological Crisis: A Psychosocial Perspective from Climate Psychology', in *Facing Up to Climate Reality: Honesty, Disaster and Hope*, ed. John Foster (London Publishing Partnership, 2019), 155–56.

[10] A Leiserowitz et al., 'Climate Change in the American Mind: April 2020', Yale Program on Climate Change Communication (New Haven, CT: Yale University and George Mason University, 2021), 13.

[11] A Leiserowitz et al., 'Climate Change in the American Mind: April 2022', Yale Program on Climate Change Communication (New Haven, CT: Yale University and George Mason University, 2022), 12.

governmental) responses to climate change.[12] More than 50% reported feeling sad (66.7%), anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty. 75% of respondents described the future as 'frightening', and the majority reported feelings of betrayal, abandonment, and confusion towards adult inaction. The survey noted that the young people who expressed a greater degree of worry and greater impact on their functioning were generally from countries in the Global South who more directly experienced the impacts of climate change – amongst those from the Global North, young people from Portugal (where wildfires have dramatically increased since 2017) reported the highest level of worry.[13]

Surveys concerned with the impact of climate change on the work of mental health professionals are also now emerging, and with a distinct linguistic frame. In 2023 the *Ecopsychology* journal published the results of a survey conducted with almost eight hundred mental health professionals, over 80% of whom thought that climate change would affect 'mental health'.[14] Over 60% reported that they had already observed these impacts in their patients, while almost half of the respondents said they had noted 'grief reactions' as a climate-related 'mental health outcome'.[15] A broad definition of 'mental health conditions' is used here (and in similar reports): 'psychological distress, grief reactions, depression, post-traumatic stress, interpersonal conflicts, drug or alcohol abuse, loss of identity, and suicidal ideation'.[16] While the authors do explicitly identify the terminological challenge of studying what they call the 'existential pathway' between climate change and mental health, they nevertheless rely heavily on framing generally used to describe conditions diagnosed by psychologists.

As I will go on to demonstrate, such surveys effectively confirm the warnings of psychologists and psychoanalysts going back well before the last decade, even if the need for 'ecopsychology' has only recently begun to take hold in public imagination. The first references to grief and mourning in relation to the nonhuman come, however, from ecologists, and it is their experiences which have provoked much of the subsequent psychological literature. I now turn to the interdisciplinary history of ecopsychology and the tensions in

[12] Ten countries were represented in the survey, with 1000 children and young people participating from each of the following: Australia, Brazil, Finland, France, India, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, the UK, and the U.S.
[13] Caroline Hickman et al., 'Climate Anxiety in Children and Young People and Their Beliefs about Government Responses to Climate Change: A Global Survey', *Lancet Plant Health* 5, no. 12 (December 2021): 863–73.
[14] Brendalynn O Hoppe et al., '"It's Hard to Give Hope Sometimes": Climate Change, Mental Health, and the Challenges for Mental Health Professionals', *Ecopsychology* 15, no. 1 (March 2023): 13–25.
[15] Hoppe et al., 'Hard to Give Hope', 13.
[16] Hoppe et al., 'Hard to Give Hope', 14.

purpose this has produced before assessing the taxonomic varieties found amongst its proponents. These taxonomies illustrate the challenge of holding together a variety of disciplines as one coherent field with common points of reference.

3. AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Phyllis Windle's 1992 article in the journal *BioScience* describes the 'ecology of grief': she opens by articulating a desire to mourn the demise of the dogwood tree while still feeling embarrassment that she has allowed so much 'attachment' to enter her work.[17] She opens with a quotation from naturalist Aldo Leopold, who reflected on the strange phenomenon of 'mourning' the loss of another species over forty years earlier.[18] Like Leopold, she associates the gift of ecological knowledge with the burden of knowing loss, and subsequently reflects on the grief feelings or phases which her work as an ecologist necessarily creates.[19] She closes by articulating the need for ecologists to grieve *well*, proposing that most 'contemporary mourning customs' are important for the initial weeks or months of grieving, but that this is insufficient for the kinds of ecological loss to come:

> ecologists are more likely to need support in a longer, continuing way. Environmental losses are intermittent, chronic, cumulative, and without obvious beginnings and endings… we may have to devise our own, unique customs… much needed by a society facing many kinds of transitions.[20]

Windle draws on psychological references concerning the nature of 'grief work' and 'grieving well' throughout the article, which is perhaps unsurprising given that she also trained as a hospital chaplain and grief counsellor. Her writing represents an emerging multidisciplinary field: interpreting human responses to the non-human, and as such incorporating psychological, sociological, ecological, and philosophical terminology, often with little explicit identification

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[17] Phyllis Windle, 'The Ecology of Grief', *BioScience* 42, no. 5 (May 1992): 363. She goes on to observe the gap between the 'love' ecology provokes in those who study it and the 'logic' which it is assumed should govern ecological science, quoting Martin Holdgate's 1990 observation that "In all strict logic, the loss of a species of bird on some small remote island matters little to the future of the world. Even the irreversible loss of soil and vegetation from some eroded African hillside is a small thing. Yet people grieve" (364).
[18] 'For one species to mourn the death of another is a new thing under the sun'. Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, 110.
[19] 'Ecologists are both blessed and cursed with seeing natural systems clearly. Thus, we see what is there and also know what is gone'. Windle, 'Ecology of Grief', 364.
[20] Windle, 'Ecology of Grief', 365. The difficulties climate and ecological scientists face in articulating the relationship between their research and their emotional lives is a consistent theme in the literature, and one I return to in more detail in chapter five. See for example Lesley Head and Theresa Harada, 'Keeping the Heart a Long Way from the Brain: The Emotional Labour of Climate Scientists', *Emotion, Space and Society* 24 (August 2017): 34–41.

as to where these transitions are taking place. The UK's Ecopsychology network, for example, was formally launched in 1997, with much of the early reflection in the field drawing on Joanna Macy's 'Despair and Empowerment' framework (which was itself designed as a response to the threat of nuclear holocaust).[21] Macy is not trained in psychology, but rather draws on her expertise in systems theory and Buddhism.

The field continues to lean heavily on the ideas or philosophical arguments of people working outside psychoanalysis or psychology. In 2008, the *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* published an article focused on 'climate change and the promotion of mental health and wellbeing', which mixes evidence concerning 'common patterns of psychosocial responses to disasters' across different cultures with quotations from Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*:

> "By the end of nature I do not mean the end of the world… When I say 'nature', I mean a certain set of human ideas about the world and our place in it"… The question that McKibben raises is how psychologically, emotionally and politically should we as human beings respond to this fundamental change in the relationship between the human species and the world we inhabit?[22]

Here, researchers whose work focuses on psychological and community health appeal to a philosophical claim made by one of the most influential figures in the environmental movement. ln raising the question of a changed relationship to the world, the concern being expressed moves beyond analysis of mental health concerns and into a proposal about what we now understand by being human, and how that needs to be revisited in light of novel conditions. Such a normative application is not unusual amongst the developers of ecopsychology. In 2012, a group of psychotherapists, counsellors, and analysts (mostly based in the UK, but with a few authors from the U.S. and the rest of the Europe) produced a collection called *Vital Signs: Psychological Responses to the Climate Crisis*. The introduction is not shy about anticipating the future role of the field as effectively helping to birth a new future for humanity:

> It may well be that the future role of ecopsychology will be to help people manage the pain and despair that will accompany "the end of the world", and to preserve some sort of hope. Not that the world will literally end – so far as we can see now; but our current human world, the world we grew up in, will cease to be viable… In all probability, however, something will survive; and the small fraction of humanity which is likely to be part of that "something" will need all the help it can get in staying sane, and in

[21] Mary-Jayne Rust and Nick Totton, eds., *Vital Signs: Psychological Responses to Ecological Crisis* (London: Karnac, 2012).
[22] Jessica G. Fritze et al., 'Hope, Despair and Transformation: Climate Change and the Promotion of Mental Health and Wellbeing', *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 2 (17 September 2008): 13.

> carrying forward the seeds of a sane culture, founded in ecological consciousness. Ecopsychology as it now exists may well be the beginnings of a theory and practice for such a future.[23]

The editors of the collection associate ecopsychology with revealing *truth*, or at least enabling its beneficiaries to perceive the world around them and relate to each other in ways which are not *insane*. What, then, do they think a 'sane culture' looks like? Some of the essays offer initial proposals. Bioscientist Viola Sampson argues that while 'the objective scientific analysis of earth's climatic systems' has played a vital role in raising the alarm about climate change, 'subjective knowing… based on our embodied experience' might emerge and provide the necessary navigation for the climate crisis that 'objective knowing' has not.[24] This subjective knowing incorporates (or is expressed in) 'bearing witness, grieving, and facing squarely the pain of our collective responsibility' in order to 'enter a new relationship, wise from the knowledge that shattered our earlier certainties'.[25] Despite the normative language concerning the need for a new way to live, how exactly this grief should be expressed (or how we would know when we had successfully entered a new relationship) remains difficult to describe, and some authors express an explicit reluctance to offer specific alternatives or moral prescriptions. Mary-Jane Rust's essay on 'Ecological Intimacy', for example, uses the writing of Aldo Leopold to describe how intimacy with 'nature' comes with the 'Great Joy of Joys' – encountering the world as filled with living subjects – and the 'Great Grief' of discovering what we have done to our home.[26] She proposes that 'marking the loss… is an important step towards making amends and rebuilding ecological community' as 'an expression of love'.[27] But she then moves on almost immediately to a critique of 'sustainability' practices as being like diet culture, where one seeks to be 'good' rather than 'bad', and proposes that a therapeutic approach offers an alternative to this unhelpful moralising:

> The carbon diet urges people to live the good green life, while rampant consumerism and life in the fast lane can easily become part of the naughty, exciting, sensual orgy of modernity. A therapeutic approach goes beyond these "good" and "bad" labels to explore the longings and fears that propel us into consuming too much…[28]

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[23] Rust and Totton, *Vital Signs*, xviii.
[24] Viola Sampson, 'The Darkening Quarter: An Embodied Exploration of a Changing Global Climate', in *Vital Signs: Psychological Responses to Ecological Crisis*, ed. Mary-Jayne Rust and Nick Totton (London: Karnac, 2012), 10.
[25] Sampson, 'Darkening Quarter', 12.
[26] Mary-Jayne Rust, 'Ecological Intimacy', in *Vital Signs: Psychological Responses to Ecological Crisis*, ed. Mary-Jayne Rust and Nick Totton (London: Karnac, 2012), 152.
[27] Rust, 'Ecological Intimacy', 155.
[28] Rust, 'Ecological Intimacy', 156.

Rust appears caught between an awareness that psychological distress over anthropogenic loss is rooted in a flawed anthropology with profound moral consequences (what modernity teaches us about ourselves causes overconsumption) and a conviction that psychology should not prescribe or denounce specific behaviours. Perhaps Rust does not intend to present therapy as mutually exclusive with making explicit recommendations for living under constraints appropriate to the limits of our biosphere (they certainly should not be), but her framing echoes a broader unwillingness in the field to directly name failure in moral terms, even while describing human responses rooted in moral assumptions (like betrayal, anger at injustice, guilt). Ecopsychology is littered with interdisciplinary descriptions of what it means to live well as a human, but these appeals take a variety of forms, and often stop short of making explicit behavioural recommendations. In the rest of this section, I introduce several further examples which illustrate this tension.

The recent *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic Perspectives* offers interdisciplinary essays on 'understanding human responses to climate change' as a distinct area of enquiry from 'understanding climate change', with the former being deemed 'just as important… if not more important'.[29] The 'responses' covered include denial, destructiveness, anxiety, and apathy. Essays also cover human dependency on the Earth, the issue of hope, and policy lessons that psychoanalysis could offer. Discussion of grief responses in the collection fall under 'apathy' and 'the work of feelings engagement'; an essay by psychotherapist Rosemary Randall on the 'psychodynamics of ecological debt' describes the process of 'coming to terms with indebtedness' as leaving people 'overwhelmed with sadness, frightened or disorientated' with some people describing 'the need to experience the sadness deeply in order to *come through it*'.[30] Randall does not make explicit which feelings or transformed behaviours ought to lie on the other side of processing the extent of one's destructive consumption. In 'The Myth of Apathy', climate psychologist Renee Lertzman applies the language of 'melancholia' to describe the relationship of people she interviewed who live in

[29] Sally Weintrobe, 'Introduction', in *Engaging with Clmate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Sally Weintrobe, The New Library of Psychoanalysis (Hove: Routledge, 2013), 1. Weintrobe is a psychoanalyst and fellow of the Institute of Psychoanalysis.

[30] Rosemary Randall, 'Great Expectations: The Psychodynamics of Ecological Debt', in *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Sally Weintrobe, The New Library of Psychoanalysis (Hove: Routledge, 2013), 92. Emphasis mine.

an 'ecologically troubled region' in an industrial area of the Great Lakes, Wisconsin.[31] Against the assumption that the residents are apathetic to the ecological cost of the industry which dominates their landscape, she diagnoses them with a 'social melancholia' which suppresses action or response to urgent issues. Rather than blaming a 'lack of affect or concern', she diagnoses 'a static set of relationships with the lost or damaged object: in this case a body of water or a way of life'.[32] She argues that fear, anxiety, and loss *both* contribute to *and* can challenge paralysis. She is interested in two key questions: the nature of loss (what is lost and what form does our response take) and the relationship between loss and capacities for reparation. In both essays, psychoanalysis takes on the task of diagnosing and providing a solution for a relational failure, whether a struggle to face an unjust gain from ecosystems (presented as debt) or to face the truth of the conditions in which one lives. In both, part of the solution presented involves the expression of sadness or mourning as an expression of truth.

Lertzman's broader body of work clarifies her use of 'melancholia' as a diagnosis of one community in Green Bay, Wisconsin; she adopts a psychoanalytic approach to understanding human relatedness to local environments and climate breakdown. Her book *Environmental Melancholia* proposes that a great deal of ecological inaction is the result of an arrested form of mourning, which she calls 'environmental melancholia', paralysing 'even those who care deeply about the well-being of ecosystems and future generations'.[33] Lertzman appeals to a Freudian framework (specifically *Mourning and Melancholia*) for interpreting mourning, melancholia, and anxiety. She draws on a longer body of literature in taking this approach; Harold Searles' 1972 article 'Unconscious processes in relation to the environmental crisis' proposes that humans are unable to respond to ecological crises due to an apathy rooted in unconscious feelings.[34] Searles employs the Freudian proposal that accessing our deep relationship with nature or the nonhuman stimulates anxiety regarding our origins (including childhood) – a feeling we overcome through separation: 'We equate the idealized world of our lost childhood with a non-polluted environment. We tend to erroneously assume that nothing can be done about the pollution of the present-day environment because… we cannot recapture

[31] Renee Lertzman, 'The Myth of Apathy: Psychoanalytic Explorations of Environmental Subjectivity', in *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, The New Library of Psychoanalysis (Hove: Routledge, 2013), 121.
[32] Lertzman, 'Myth of Apathy', 124.
[33] Renee Lertzman, *Environmental Melancholia: Psychoanalytic Dimensions of Engagement* (Hove: Routledge, 2015), xiii, 4.
[34] Harold F Searles, 'Unconscious Processes in Relation to the Environmental Crisis', *The Pyschoanalytic Review* 59, no. 3 (1972): 361–74.

the world of our childhood'.[35] While Lertzman seeks to complicate a prevailing assumption that negative emotional responses to environment (like anxiety and fear) necessarily lead to apathy and/or paralysis, she nevertheless introduces 'environmental melancholia', as inspired by Freud's work on 'unresolved mourning' and the melancholic condition – humans are 'frozen' due to a lack of acknowledgement over what has been lost.[36] Freud also makes several appearances in *Mourning Nature*, a multidisciplinary collection published in 2017. Like Lertzman, editor Ashlee Cunsolo utilises *Mourning and Melancholia*, describing the concept of mourning as a way of preserving the object of love by incorporating it into ourselves.[37] The collection both seeks to identify what takes place when people experience loss and grief in response to the 'more-than-human' and also argue for the usefulness and *moral responsibility* of grief as a tool to help us 'live better with others'.[38]

Cunsolo's research is largely sociological, based in her work recording 'ecological grief' with Inuit communities in Nunatsiavut, Canada. But she still relies on the diagnostic language of 'mental health' to present her findings. In describing 'ecological grief' as a 'mental health response', she and her co-researcher Neville Ellis propose that ecological grief is reported in three overlapping kinds of contexts: physical ecological loss, disrupted environmental knowledge and identity, and anticipated future losses. These contexts for grief are also associated with 'anxiety', 'guilt', 'mourning', and 'disorientation'.[39] In a more recent article utilising the same data set, Cunsolo et al transition to the broader descriptor 'mental wellness', which incorporates the categories 'mood' and 'emotion'.[40]

Lertzman and Cunsolo's use of Freud has also gone on to prompt readings of other ecological 'emotions'; see for example *Ecologies of Guilt in Environmental Rhetorics*, in which

[35] Searles, 'Unconscious Processes', 366.
[36] Lertzman, *Environmental Melancholia*, 5.
[37] Ashlee Cunsolo, 'Climate Change as the Work of Mourning', in *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*, ed. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019). Contributor John Charles Ryan also uses Freud, employing the problem of foregrounding human subjectivity in 'Freudian mourning' as a foil for his 'multispecies theory of environmental mourning'. John Charles Ryan, 'Where Have All the Boronia Gone? A Posthumanist Model of Environmental Mourning', in *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*, ed. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 121.
[38] Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman, 'Introduction: To Mourn beyond the Human', in *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*, ed. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 7.
[39] Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville R Ellis, 'Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response to Climate Change-Related Loss', *Nature Climate Change* 8 (April 2018): 275–81.
[40] Jaqueline Middleton et al., '"We're People of the Snow:" Weather, Climate Change, and Inuit Mental Wellness', *Social Science & Medicine* 262 (2020).

communication and media researcher Tim Jensen draws on Lertzman and other scholars of environmental 'grief' to propose that our experiences of guilt and grief are entangled, and that without an adequate expression of mourning for both, 'we risk feelings of ecological grief remaining individualised, unresolved, and unarticulated, resulting in a form of melancholia'.[41] Jensen's emphasis on the public or corporate significance of emotions prompted by climate and environmental change is another common concern across the literature – Andrews and Hogget's description of 'climate psychology' explicitly characterises the field's 'psycho-social perspective' as insisting that emotion 'is as much a public as a private phenomenon', with 'powerful collective feelings' both being provoked by and contributing to social change.[42] While I share the conviction that analysing human feeling about anthropogenic loss has a key role to play in understanding the causes and possible remedies for climate change and ecological collapse, the mixture of disciplines employed comes with the challenge of defining common frames of reference.[43] I turn now to focus on some of the different taxonomies emerging as an illustration of the challenges associated with this interdisciplinary approach.

4. TAXONOMY

As a psycho-social approach has emerged, so has the need for a shared vocabulary – an emerging taxonomy of environmental and climate 'emotions' applied in a broadly consistent manner. In this section I introduce two different approaches to this taxonomic challenge: applying old words to a new context or trying to find new words to describe a new relational dysfunction.

i. Old Words

In the first kind of approach, there are some common and predictable words which are usually used with the assumption that they don't require much explanation: grief, loss, sadness, shame, anger, fear, guilt, frustration, and despair.[44] A similar list appears in a recent narrative review

[41] Tim Jensen, *Ecologies of Guilt in Environmental Rhetorics*, Plagrave Studies in Media and Environmental Communication (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 123.
[42] Andrews and Hoggett, 'Facing up to Ecological Crisis', 158.
[43] This interdisciplinary approach is also sometimes a conscious decision made on the part of researchers – for example, Hoggett's edited collection on 'climate psychology' describes 'society's failure to respond to climate change' as a 'psycho-social phenomenon'. Paul Hoggett, ed., *Climate Psychology: On Indifference to Disaster*, Studies in the Psychosocial (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
[44] Sociologist Jo Hamilton offers this list as the 'emotional pool' forming across the literature. Jo Hamilton, 'Emotions, Reflexivity, and the Long Haul: What We Do About How We Feel About Climate Change', in *Climate Psychology: On Indifference to Disaster*, ed. Paul Hoggett (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 162.

of literature, though this time 'grief' is used as an umbrella term for a range of other emotions; Maria Ojala and Ashlee Cunsolo (et al) describe 'ecological grief' as taking many forms across cultures and places, including anger, frustration, fear, stress, distress, hopelessness, helplessness, and pre- and post-traumatic stress disorder.[45] While the authors describe the studies they collect as looking at 'subjective well-being', their list nevertheless places diagnostic terms alongside broader descriptors of human feeling, and they also employ the language of 'mental health' to describe the kind of 'emotional distress' that changes in environmental conditions can bring about.[46] Similarly, Doherty and Clayton's work on the 'psychological impacts' of climate change describes 'guilt, despair, and grief' as 'depressive emotions'.[47] A recent qualitative study on 'types' of eco-anxiety, guilt, and grief in a 'climate sensitive population' asserts that 'people develop different emotions about climate change such as depression, anxiety, and anger, which affect behavior and well-being differently'.[48]

In recognising the blurriness of the vocabulary employed, some researchers offer specific definitions of 'climate emotions'. Panu Pihkala offers his own detailed taxonomy of the 'affective dimension of climate change' covering 'phenomena which are called by different words in various disciplines, including feelings, emotions, affects, and moods'.[49] He defines climate emotions as 'affective phenomena… related to for example behavioral reactions… psychological well-being and health… and to moral issues'.[50] He acknowledges that part of the challenge for researching climate emotions is the 'plurality and complexity in emotion theory', with many studies including 'affective phenomena' which are 'not exactly emotions but can *include* many emotions, such as anxiety, depression, shock, and panic' (he refers to the 'strong' form of these as 'mental states').[51]

[45] Maria Ojala et al., 'Anxiety, Worry, and Grief in a Time of Environmental and Climate Crisis: A Narrative Review', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 46, no. 35–38 (October 2021): 40.
[46] Ojala et al., 'Anxiety, Worry, and Grief', 48, 45. It is difficult to ascertain how frequently the words used are those that subjects have self-selected, and how often they are the researcher's interpretation of reported experience – but it must be assumed that at least *some* of the terminology is interpretation, since the review refers to a wide range of geographic and linguistic contexts, including different countries in Europe, Indigenous people in rural Australia, Inuit and Alaska Native communities, farmers in India, and communities in Tuvalu, South Africa, and China.
[47] Doherty and Clayton, 'The Psychological Impacts of Global Climate Change', 269.
[48] Csilla Ágoston et al., 'Identifying Types of Eco-Anxiety, Eco-Guilt, Eco-Grief, and Eco-Coping in a Climate-Sensitive Population: A Qualitative Study', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 4 (February 2022): 2.
[49] Pihkala, 'Climate Emotions', 1.
[50] Pihkala, 'Climate Emotions', 1.
[51] Pihkala, 'Climate Emotions', 2, 5, 9.

Pihkala is not the first to propose a comprehensive taxonomy of emotions over anthropogenic loss. Helen Landmann's earlier taxonomy categorises them as 'self-condemning' (guilt, shame, embarrassment), 'other-condemning' (anger, disgust, contempt), 'self-praising (pride), 'other-praising' (elevation, admiration, awe, being moved, gratitude, love), 'other-suffering' (compassion, empathy, emotional contagion), 'threat-related (fear, anxiety, hopelessness), and 'hedonistic' (joy, pleasure, amusement).[52] But Pihkala notes that Landmann's taxonomy lacks both sadness/grief and hope. His alternative taxonomy of emotions is more complex and distinguishes 'emotions' from 'feelings', with several of his emotion categories also having a strong moral association: surprise-related emotions, threat-related emotions, sadness-related emotions, strong anxiety-related feelings, strong depression-related feelings, emotions related to guilt and shame, indignation-relation emotions, disgust-related emotions, anger-related emotions, envy-related emotions, feelings of hostility, and varied positive emotions.[53]

Other researchers have also attempted to offer explicit terminological definitions; Jo Hamilton's work on 'emotional reflexivity and climate change engagement' (that is, that emotional change affects one's ability to 'engage' with climate change) defines emotions as 'conscious feelings that can be named and have an object'.[54] Like Pihkala, she distinguishes emotions from affects, the latter of which she describes as 'bodily sensations, and conscious or subconscious feelings without a specific object'.[55] Whether explicitly acknowledged or not, Hamilton's taxonomy – like those offered by Landmann and Pihkala – contains clear connections between human feeling and moral injury or the possibility for moral transformation. Hamilton's research records the emotional reflexivity of participants in the *Carbon Literacy Project* and *The Work That Reconnects*, tracking expressions of grief and fear to demonstrate how 'the movement of turning toward and expressing these painful emotions enabled a changed relationship'.[56] While she frames participant emotions like grief, fear, anger, sorrow, and guilt as largely 'negative' or 'pessimistic' she also proposes that, when properly faced, they can be *useful* for bringing about renewed commitment to collective and individual action.[57] The utility of different climate emotions – which is another way of asking which ones

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[52] Helen Landmann, 'Emotions in the Context of Environmental Protection: Theoretical Considerations Concerning Emotion Types, Eliciting Processes and Affect Generalization', *Unweltpsychologie* 24 (2020): 61–73.
[53] Pihkala, 'Climate Emotions', 7–8.
[54] Jo Hamilton, '"Alchemizing Sorrow into Deep Determination": Emotional Reflexivity and Climate Change Engagement', *Frontiers in Climate* 4, no. 786631 (10 February 2022): 2.
[55] Hamilton, 'Emotional Reflexivity', 2.
[56] Hamilton, 'Emotional Reflexivity', 15.
[57] Hamilton, 'Emotional Reflexivity', 9–12.

are effective for encouraging a changed moral condition – is a persistent point of discussion across the literature.[58] A similar proposal concerning their role for 'engagement' emerges from research conducted with participants in *Carbon Conversations*, a 'psycho-social project' that aims to cover both practical ideas for carbon reduction and the emotional and social pressures which limit their take-up.[59]

Beyond broad taxonomic proposals, some analyses also offer terminological treatments of specific words. Pihkala, for example, has offered descriptions of 'climate anxiety' and 'hope', which he defines as 'future-oriented complex concept(s)', including different 'emotions, desires, and cognitive appraisals', experienced as either 'passive' or 'active'.[60] This is not, of course, a universally acknowledged definition – in *Hope and Grief in the Anthropocene*, Geographer Lesley Head treats 'hope' quite differently, 'decoupling it from the emotion of optimism' or the assumption of a future orientation:

> Hope savours the life and world we have, not the world as we wish it to be. If the relationship between grief and denial challenges us to acknowledge and bear negative emotions without become paralysed, the corollary is that we should not depend on positive emotions (e.g. optimism) to provide the basis for hope… (hope) is thus found in practices rather than particular emotions.[61]

For Head, 'hope' is misunderstood if it is associated with 'emotions' at all. She lends hope a distinctly moral expression (it is *practised*) though she resists offering a detailed account of what practices might constitute hope.

Sadness, grief, and mourning are also defined by various authors, though like 'hope' their use varies significantly across the literature. Ojala and Cunsolo's narrative review gives the following definition:

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[58] In their narrative review, Ojala and Cunsolo summarise the discussion as follows: 'Are emotional responses to climate change a constructive force that leads to much needed public engagement and action? Or, rather, are these emotions connected to feelings of helplessness and perhaps even psychological ill-being? How are these emotions distributed, and who may be most vulnerable to the adverse mental health impacts associated with them?' Ojala et al., 'Narrative Review', 37.

[59] Milena Büchs, Emma Hinton, and Graham Smith, '"It Helped Me Sort of Face the End of the World": The Role of Emotions for Third Sector Climate Change Engagement Initiatives', *Environmental Values* 24, no. 5 (October 2015): 621–40; Rosemary Randall and Andy Brown, 'About', Carbon Conversations, accessed 6 March 2023, http://www.carbonconversations.co.uk/p/about.html.

[60] Julia Sangervo, Kirsti M. Jylhä, and Panu Pihkala, 'Cliamte Anxiety: Conceptual Considerations, and Connections with Climate Hope and Action', *Global Environmental Change* 76, no. 102569 (September 2022): 2.

[61] Lesley Head, *Hope and Grief in the Anthropocene: Re-Conceptualisaing Human-Nature Relations* (London: Routledge, 2016), 24.

> Sadness is an emotion considered to be closely related to grief… grief is related to struggle, whereas sadness is more closely related to resignation… grief, like all other emotional phenomena, has a bodily component... grief can be an adaptive process but in worst case scenarios, can also lead to negative outcomes like persistent complex bereavement disorder and depression.[62]

Here, 'sadness' and 'grief' are treated as distinct emotions rather than interchangeable expressions of the same encounter with loss. It is difficult to know whether such a fine distinction also emerges in the ways people self-report their response to climate and environmental change; while some researchers do directly adapt their own taxonomies in response to comments made by research subjects, others 'translate' a subject's word into an existing terminological framework.[63] A wide range of interpretations of the same word can also be found in influential public facing communication about climate and environmental change: climate scientist Kate Marvel calls 'grief' the opposite of 'hope' (it is not clear why she proposes this framing) and climate writer Mary Heglar employs the 'five stages of grief' framework to incorporate denial, bargaining, depression, and anger into a description for grief responses to climate change.[64]

Definitions for 'mourning' and the 'work' it denotes also vary; as already noted, several researchers draw on Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* as an interpretive frame for distinguishing grief responses which lead to transformation and those which lead to stasis or resignation. Political interpretations of mourning are also employed; mourning as a political and transformative force is a consistent undercurrent in the essay collection *Mourning Nature*, either implicitly covering similar themes to Jaques Derrida and Judith Butler or explicitly naming their works as dialogue partners. Cunsolo and Landman highlight Butler's concept of 'mournable' bodies – those we choose to mourn can both reveal and be used to establish relational ties, which can in turn 'furnish a sense of political community' and 'ethical responsibility'.[65] Derrida's understanding of the 'work' of mourning is explored in dialogue

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[62] Ojala et al., 'Narrative Review', 38.

[63] For example, sociologist Jo Hamilton uses the word 'sorrow' in the title of her article because she directly quotes a workshop participant. But the word 'sorrow' – and its distinct connotations – are not incorporated into her analysis on climate grief. Hamilton, 'Emotional Reflexivity'.

[64] Kate Marvel, 'We Need Courage, Not Hope, to Face Climate Change', *On Being*, 1 March 2018, https://onbeing.org/blog/kate-marvel-we-need-courage-not-hope-to-face-climate-change/; Mary Annaise Heglar, 'The Big Lie We're Told about Climate Change Is That It's Our Own Fault', *Vox*, 27 November 2018, https://www.vox.com/first-person/2018/10/11/17963772/climate-change-global-warming-natural-disasters.

[65] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 22. I return to Judith Butler's work in chapter seven.

with Butler and named as an important point of departure for the collection as a whole; Helen Whale and Franklin Ginn use Derrida's work on debt and mourning to interpret grief over the loss of house sparrows in Cockney London.[66] These examples concerning the utility of different mappable emotions associated with anthropogenic loss tend to rely on existing emotion language/theory which is then applied to a novel context. The divergent theories underpinning their approaches have led to diverse and considerably cross-purpose descriptions. But a quite different approach to providing a taxonomy has also emerged from those who emphasise the descriptive challenge of the distinctive relationship between the human and non-human, thus proposing that *new* words are needed. I turn now to this second approach.

ii. New Words

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's *Topophilia* is an early example of offering creative linguistic interpretations of 'the affective bond between people and place or setting'.[67] Tuan proposes the new word *topophilia* to denote an aesthetic appreciation of a 'view', an intense sense of 'beauty', a tactile delight in the feel of air, water, earth, and more permanent feelings toward a place as home, the locus of memories, and livelihood.[68] Philosopher Glenn Albrecht's more recent *Earth Emotions* cites Tuan's term for the positive feeling of *love* of place as inspiring him to name the 'negative emotions' emerging from *loss* of place.[69] Albrecht's writing on emotional responses to environments (which he calls 'earth emotions') has been most influential in his creation of the word 'solastalgia' – coined to describe a form of 'place based emotional distress in a sentient creature'.[70] He has since proposed a series of other words to cover the range of ways humans relate to non-human creatures, which he outlines in *Earth Emotions*:

> At the core of our problems are human emotions that I call our Earth emotions. Our negative Earth emotions are awakened as responses when the particular objects of our love – our home, our place, our sumbioregion, our continent, and our Earth – are being violated. Negative Earth emotions flow from the realization that the mutually

[66] Cunsolo and Landman, 'Introduction: To Mourn beyond the Human', 8–13; Helen Whale and Franklin Ginn, 'In the Absence of Sparrows', in *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*, ed. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 106.
[67] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, Morningside Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 4.
[68] Tuan, *Topophilia*, 93.
[69] Glenn Albrecht, *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 27. Yi-Fu Tuan is also referenced in Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis's psychological study comparing the experiences of Inuit in Nunatsiavut and farmers in the Australian Wheatbelt. Cunsolo and Ellis, 'Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response'.
[70] Albrecht, *Earth Emotions*, 47.

> beneficial, symbiotic bonds between people and places are being broken by forces beyond their control, while positive Earth emotions flow when the relationship is strong and beautiful.[71]

These new words include 'tierratrauma' (provoked by bearing direct witness to an acute environmental change) and 'ecoparalysis' (feeling that there are no problem-solving choices available). Specifically inspired by residents of a coal mining region of New South Wales, Albrecht relies on the idea that we have now deviated from a 'normal' or previously existing relationship between human and non-human creatures: a relationship breakdown leading to *both* negative earth emotions *and* emotional death.[72] He employs a 'fall from Eden' reading of our trajectory, identifying these 'negative emotions' as 'an indicator, or symptom, that we have got Earth relationships badly wrong! Somehow, humans, who evolved within the matrix of life, freely enjoying the best emotional experiences the Earth has to offer, have socially evolved out of that matrix into an extremely dark emotional space'.[73] To give one example of how Albrecht applies this normative interpretive frame: for Albrecht, apathy towards anthropogenic loss is more than morally questionable indifference. He references Richard Louv's proposal that children increasingly suffer from a 'nature deficit disorder' (disconnection between humans and the 'natural world') and Peter Kahn's diagnosis of 'environmental generation amnesia' (with each generation, environmental degradation becomes more normalised) to argue that an 'emotional death' has taken place due to our isolation from 'raw nature' and the loss of language to connect us to it.[74] Albrecht's approach highlights a key debate in the literature: the extent to which the so-called 'negative' emotions associated with anthropogenic loss are a 'natural' or 'cultural' response.

While Albrecht draws on Tuan's descriptive work as inspiration for his new vocabulary, Tuan's own interpretation of human feeling is far more culturally driven, with an emphasis on romantic and nostalgic readings of environments influencing feeling. He places the more recent romantic gaze in the context of a longer diminishment of the word 'nature' in the west: from its cosmic scope in the pre-medieval and medieval era to contemporary ideas of nature as synonymous with countryside, landscape, or wilderness.[75] We have moved, he suggests, from the up and

[71] Albrecht, *Earth Emotions*, 194.
[72] Albrecht, *Earth Emotions*, 68.
[73] Albrecht, *Earth Emotions*, 94.
[74] Albrecht, *Earth Emotions*, 67–69. See Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009); Peter H. Kahn Jr, *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture* (Boston, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999).
[75] Tuan, *Topophilia*, 129.

down of the heavenly hierarchy to the horizontal gaze of the landscape painting, nature becoming merely 'countryside, landscape, and scenery'.[76] Parallel to historical readings of the 'romantic' and its contemporary impact are discussions of nostalgia, especially for childhood environments: 'what people in advanced societies lack (and countercultural groups appear to seek) is the gentle, unselfconscious involvement with the physical world that prevailed in the past when the tempo of life was slower, and that young children still enjoy'.[77] While Albrecht and Tuan offer distinctive approaches in their use of new language, their appeal to 'natural' or 'cultural' framings are a regular feature in descriptions of feeling over anthropogenic loss. In the final part of this chapter, I turn to examples of these nature/culture readings and the associated anthropological narratives to which they appeal.

5. NATURE AND CULTURE

Descriptions of human feeling over anthropogenic loss are frequently accompanied by an assessment of the extent to which these are 'natural' or 'cultural' – a question which at least in part reflects an anxiety as to whether these feelings ought to be taken *seriously* as communicating something *authoritative*. I return to this problem in depth in chapter five, but here I introduce some of the approaches taken in existing literature on anthropogenic 'grief' and 'mourning'.

Arguments for universal, natural, or 'innate' mourning include those made by Glenn Albrecht and anthropologist Kay Milton. Milton's book *Loving Nature* explores the relationship between emotion and rationality in discourses about nature protection, a term she uses to refer to protective approaches towards nature and natural things (including deep ecology, non-human animals, and other natural entities).[78] She offers a helpful overview of the ways 'nature' and 'nurture' ideas influence studies of emotion:

> Studies of emotion appear to fall between two poles. At one extreme are the 'essentialist' or 'positivist' models which emphasise the biological nature of emotions. At least some emotions are assumed to be universal and inherited rather than learned, and explanations for them are sought in our evolutionary past… at the other extreme are the constructionist approaches which treat emotions as cultural products.[79]

[76] Tuan, *Topophilia*, 133. His more recent *Romantic Geography* offers an overview of western cultural readings of different ecologies, environments, and landscapes. See Yi-Fu Tuan, *Romantic Geography: In Search of the Sublime Landscape* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).
[77] Tuan, *Topophilia*, 96.
[78] Kay Milton, *Loving Nature: Towards an Ecology of Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.
[79] Milton, *Loving Nature*, 2.

Milton argues for ‘relational epistemology’ as innate, one expression of which is emotional attachment, ‘a product of universal perceptual experience… [ensuring] that people everywhere are quite likely to perceive a kind of personhood in non-human as well as human things’.[80] For Milton, personhood is therefore not ontological but relational: she uses personhood language in describing the non-human, suggesting that our perceptions of personhood must be guided by anticipations of something other than purely human characteristics. For example, anti-whaling campaigners don’t *symbolically* view whales as persons, they literally do – ‘personhood can be directly perceived in non-human things’.[81] However, she also describes emotional responses to knowledge about the world around us being influenced by the emotions of others, whether caregivers or community. We learn what to fear, love, and enjoy (including learning to enjoy nature) and the emotions of others can also induce emotional responses in us (for example, laughing harder when other people are laughing).

Sebastian Braun’s account of relatedness to environment also interprets environmental mourning as an extension of social relations – ‘people mourn for specific parts of their environments because they feel related to them’.[82] Braun’s reading of kinship attempts to balance the cultural and universal; the specific kinship relationships we might develop are influenced by culture (for example, family pets) and in our culture we might even read non-human kinship relationships as ‘symbolic’ in relation.[83] He notes, however, that there is no society *without* kinship, including relationships with non-human entities: ‘all societies create kinship ties with their environments, however selective… all societies therefore incur obligations to their environment (including mourning practices)’.[84] He is careful to avoid a romantic reading of relations, both in emphasising that kinship does not imply ‘equality’ or ‘harmony’ (even while it imposes mourning obligations on us) and in rejecting the ‘noble savage’ view of kinship (‘assuming the industrial societies innately lack connection to the

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[80] Milton, *Loving Nature*, 48. One of the few theological readings of anthropogenic loss available also proposes an ‘innate’ reading of mourning. Douglas Burton-Christie argues that an adequate response to environmental crisis first requires grief and mourning. He understands the human ability to mourn non-human creatures as pre-dating industrial cultures (‘the ability to mourn for the loss of other species is… an expression of our sense of participation in and responsibility for the whole fabric of life of which we are a part’). Douglas Burton-Christie, ‘The Gift of Tears: Loss, Mourning and the Work of Ecological Restoration’, *Worldviews*, no. 15 (2011): 30.
[81] Milton, *Loving Nature*, 46.
[82] Sebastian F. Braun, ‘Mourning Ourselves and/as Our Relatives: Environment as Kinship’, in *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*, ed. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 65.
[83] Braun, ‘Environment as Kinship’, 66.
[84] Braun, ‘Environment as Kinship’, 71.

environment gives then *carte blanche*').[85] Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis's work on ecological grief also draws on a 'natural' and 'cultural' frame, acknowledging the role of both:

> We contend that ecological grief is a natural response to ecological losses, particularly for people who retain close living, working and cultural relationships to the natural environment, and one that has the potential to be felt more strongly and by a growing number of people as we move deeper into the Anthropocene.[86]

For Cunsolo and Ellis, ecological grief is both 'natural' and intensified by 'cultural' attachment, in which culturally specific notions of value underpin grief responses.[87] A variant on this approach can also be found in Jensen's account of ecologies of guilt – he proposes that emotions ought to be treated as 'constitutionally' ecological, as 'forces immanent within biophysical ecologies', and thus not 'reducible to culture' – but he also warns against underestimating the role of culture, particularly in the expression of 'ecological connection'.[88]

Whether these types of emotions are 'natural' or 'cultural' is often a specific question about whether climate and ecological 'grief' and 'anxiety' is a western phenomenon. Until relatively recently, most of the studies and surveys took place in European, Northern American, or Australian contexts, even while the literature is also in general agreement that those who are anticipated to most dramatically feel the impacts of climate and environmental change are those living in 'ecologically sensitive areas', 'resource-dependent populations' and 'people with limited resources to respond to change'.[89] Studies have now begun to take place amongst majority world populations, and it is difficult to determine whether the overwhelmingly western reporting of 'negative emotions' is representative of the populations most likely to experience them, or simply a result of uneven resources for research and the dominance of English language accounts. It is also perfectly plausible to propose that expressions of grief, anxiety, etc in different parts of the globe are responding to *distinct* losses. This is part of the argument put forward by Lesley Head: that grief in the West is in response to 'the scale of the changes required in ways of living… the loss of the conditions that underpin contemporary Western prosperity… the approaching demise of the conditions sustaining life as we know it…

[85] Braun, 'Environment as Kinship', 70, 71.
[86] Cunsolo and Ellis, 'Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response', 275.
[87] Cunsolo makes the same point elsewhere: that 'the intensity of ecological grief experienced is proportional to the value attributed to the ecological loss'. Cunsolo, 'Climate Change as the Work of Mourning', 279.
[88] Jensen, *Ecologies of Guilt*, 19–20.
[89] Ojala et al., 'Narrative Review', 44.

the loss of a future characterised by hope'.[90] These are by no means universal experiences; the Tuvalu delegate who wept in the plenary of the Copenhagen COP 15 climate change negotiations was not likely to be grieving the loss of the modern western self or indeed 'a stable, pristine and certain past'.[91] For Head, the appropriate articulation of this western grief, then, is its incorporation into our politics such that we can imagine 'new kinds of selves', and particularly as those selves are understood in relation to non-human creatures.[92]

As already indicated, critics of a 'natural' reading of ecological grief and mourning frequently reference the West's romantic turn, and the extent to which it has influenced contemporary emotional responses to environments. Anthropologist Sebastian Braun neatly summarises this critique in his suggestion that 'mourning for the environment is an invention of industrial societies… mourning for environmental loss, as defined and imposed on others by American values, might be an expression of nostalgia, qualitatively different from mourning'.[93] Mike Hulme's *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* similarly describes one myth surrounding climate as a tendency towards 'Lamenting Eden'; as a parallel to romanticism in western environmental thought, the 'climate becomes something that is fragile and needs to be protected or "saved"'.[94] As Head points out, 'the fact that the past has never been static, and the future has never been assured, is irrelevant to their nostalgic and aspirational power'.[95] She urges a renewed assessment as to whether the thing we think we are grieving for is something we ever actually had to begin with (e.g., mythology around unpeopled wilderness, or the idea of a 'baseline' time to which we might return with the right kind of environmental 'restoration').[96]

For those who point to this historical-cultural transition as signifying the emergence of a distinctive kind of human feeling, a changing notion of 'place' and a related place-based nostalgia are consistently identified. Sociologist John Urry's contribution to the collection *Emotional Geographies* maps these shifts in understanding place, citing Wordsworth's distinction between land and landscape as distinct forms of belonging – the shift from 'land'

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[90] Head, *Hope and Grief*, 12.
[91] Head, *Hope and Grief*, 38, 18.
[92] Head, *Hope and Grief*, 14, 51, 80.
[93] Braun, 'Environment as Kinship', 73.
[94] Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 342–43.
[95] Head, *Hope and Grief*, 19.
[96] Head, *Hope and Grief*, 59–61.

as a physical, tangible resource to be worked, owned, and given to landscape, an intangible resource for visual consumption.[97] The 'romantic gaze', Urry writes, is 'a solitudinous, personal, semi-spiritual relationship with place'. He contrasts this with the 'collective tourist gaze' in which the experience of a place is as much about being part of an anonymous crowd as it is the landscape being consumed. [98] Related references to childhood attachment to place (and feelings of safety/health/innocence/purity in those places) are also a common theme. Lertzman makes one such assessment in her work with a community in the Great Lakes, Michigan:

> The idealized world of childhood is observed throughout my interview data… it became harder to be able to parse out, throughout the interviews, a profound sense of nostalgia and longing for an innocence lost and the association of the natural world, prior to the more recent despoliation.[99]

Despite this clear analysis of a cultural phenomenon, Lertzman also treats human feeling (or lack of feeling) as rooted in the loss of a normative or natural relationship. She treats apathy as a kind of dysfunction arising from failed relationship:

> Apathy is a psychic defence for managing intolerable primitive anxieties and is the result of a peculiar combination of helplessness, fear and omnipotence… disappointment emerges in close relation to helplessness insofar as it contains elements of both loss and resignation. However, common to both helplessness and disappointment is the recognition that something *is* in fact not right.[100]

The above examples illustrate diverse accounts of human feeling over anthropogenic loss, influenced by quite distinct disciplinary approaches. Whether ecological 'grief' and the like are interpreted as culturally driven experiences or identified as expressing some form of innate relationship is influenced by the disciplines to which a researcher appeals, and how that discipline interprets the broad category of 'emotion'. This is not to say that 'ecopsychology' and its associated philosophical and sociological texts don't form a broadly recognisable field. Psychological, sociological, and philosophical accounts of sorrow over anthropogenic loss

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[97] John Urry, 'The Place of Emotions within Place', in *Emotional Geographies*, ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith (London: Routledge, 2005), 76.
[98] Urry, 'Place of Emotions', 79.
[99] Lertzman, *Environmental Melancholia*, 30.
[100] Lertzman, *Environmental Melancholia*, 125. Apathy as a product of a cultural failure of imagination also emerges in Kari Marie Norgaard's *Living in Denial*, an in-depth case study climate denialism in a rural community in western Norway during an unusually warm winter (2001-2002). Her analysis argues that something like global warming or ecological crisis can be *both* common knowledge and emotionally and culturally unimaginable, complicating apathy/indifference readings of human responses to changing environments. Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (Boston, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011).

generally coalesce around three aims, two generally ethical in outcome and one therapeutic: proposing an alternative to the perceived failure of scientific communication in prompting behaviour change, a related desire to present an alternative narrative about being human in relation to non-human creatures, and an identified emerging mental health crisis which requires a therapeutic response.[101] The appropriate expression of these aims is, however, disputed, particularly in relation to the following questions: What is the loss to which we respond (is it specific places and species, innocence/an imagined past, a certain lifestyle, expectations of the future, a kind of relationship)? Does the expression of 'negative' emotions paralyse or mobilise (what do these emotions do and how can we use them better)? Is a moral frame for emotional expression appropriate (are there right and wrong ways to feel, and should those feelings largely be treated as therapeutic or political problems)?

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have given an overview which illuminates the two key challenges for straightforwardly answering the above questions. The first is the range of language employed across the literature: what do we mean by 'emotions', 'affects', and 'feelings', and how do they relate to our pre-existing worldviews or cultures? Further, it is difficult to demarcate between 'healthy' feeling about anthropogenic loss, and responses which ought to be diagnosed as mental illness. There are plenty of responses to climate change which may or may not represent dysfunction, depending on who you ask – one could debate, for example, whether it is *reasonable* or *proportionate* to decide that you will not have biological children because of the likely state of the world when they reach adulthood.[102] The second key challenge is related to the first. Without a governing anthropological account which both describes the moral role of human feeling and human relationships to non-human creatures, ecopsychology offers a range of divergent interpretations of human feeling about anthropogenic loss, frequently

[101] These aims are not always expressed explicitly, but underlie many of the other research motivations offered – for example, the following ambition articulated by Cunsolo and Ellis: 'a better understanding of ecological grief has the potential to enhance understanding of the emotional and psychological dimensions of climate change impacts; to aid identification of what climate-related losses matter to people; and to identify opportunities to cope with or heal ecological grief and human suffering due to these ecological losses'. Cunsolo and Ellis, 'Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response', 275. See also the description of climate psychology from Andrews and Hoggett: to make the unthinkable thinkable, contribute to change at all levels of politics and society, and build psychological resilience. While not explicitly framed in ethical and therapeutic terms, they nevertheless cover very similar ground to the aims I have summarised here. Andrews and Hoggett, 'Facing up to Ecological Crisis'.

[102] Birthstrike Movement, 'About', The Birthstrike Movement, accessed 6 March 2023, https://birthstrikemovement.org/about/.

accompanied by a reluctance to make explicit their moral implications. In the following chapter, I give an extended genealogy of the modern language of 'emotion' to illustrate these problems more fully and explicate my own departure from this linguistic framework.

CHAPTER TWO: A TROUBLED GENEALOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter one I examined a range of literature describing and explaining human responses to anthropogenic loss, the majority of which draws explicitly on the psycho-social category of 'emotions' and other related terms (feelings, affects). I gave close attention to accounts of climate and ecological 'grief', 'sadness', and 'mourning' to trace the kinds of category assumptions made about human relationships with non-human creatures, and the proposals offered for how we ought to interpret and express these relationships in a time of climate change and ecological collapse. As observed, a central challenge in identifying common ground across this emerging field is the range of language describing the response being articulated, and a relatedly broad range of definitions where similar terms are used. In this chapter I situate this challenge within the history of 'emotions' to demonstrate that a lack of clarity in the accounts examined thus far is a feature of this constantly shifting psychological category rather than a field-specific bug. The effect of this terminological difficulty (and over-reliance on a psychological term) is more significant than simply creating a problem of definition; much of the literature I have reviewed is primarily preoccupied with providing new or redefined psychological language to describe the experience or proposing therapeutic models which might help manage the symptoms of encountering such loss. Accounts which scrutinise the moral content of these encounters or which challenge prevailing assumptions about 'emotions' or 'grief' are far less common, and often lack certainty as to the actions these encounters might demand.

In constructing a theological account of human responses to anthropogenic loss, then, I need to identify appropriate language – and an appropriate definition – to describe the kind of response I want to examine. The following genealogical approach to the category of emotions and the more specific category of 'grief' offers a justification for my decision *not* to employ these terms, but rather to turn to theological accounts of the passion of sorrow. I first review the history of the term 'emotions' and the range of philosophical and social moves which led to its emergence and linguistic dominance. I then turn specifically to the recent history of 'grief' as a kind of emotion, paying attention to its trajectory of pathologisation, medicalisation, and privatisation. I then consider alternative approaches to describing the meaning and appropriate

expression of emotions, particularly as has emerged in twentieth century political theory and in the related field of affect theory. Finally, I review three thoughtful theological accounts of emotions to indicate where my own project departs from their use of the terms covered in the genealogy.

2. AN EMOTIONAL HISTORY

Thomas Dixon's genealogy of emotions observes that in contemporary western thought the 'over-inclusivity of "emotion" has made it impossible for there to be any consensus about what an emotion is'.[1] In particular, the assumption that this broad category of experience is essentially an 'amoral… autonomous physical or mental state characterised by vivid feeling and physical agitation' has had the effect that 'claims about emotions being good things or bad things (frequently the former in recent years) are sweeping, unsubtle and unconvincing'.[2] This is a widely shared criticism in emotions study. Amélie Rorty, for example, describes the paucity of coherent philosophical approaches:

> We sometimes hold people responsible for their emotions and the actions they perform from them. Yet normal behaviour is often explained and excused by the person 'suffering' an emotional condition. We treat emotions as interruptions or deflections of normal behavior, and yet also consider a person pathological if he fails to act or react from a standard range of emotions. Sometimes emotions are classified as a species of evaluative judgments whose analysis will be given in an adequate theory of cognition. But sometimes the cognitive or intentional character of an emotion is treated as dependent on, and ultimately explained by, a physical condition.[3]

In response, Rorty appeals to philosophical history as a guide to disentangling the range of agendas which have shaped the category, landing on the usefulness of distinguishing passions, emotions, affects, sentiments.[4] Philosopher of science Paul Griffiths also argues that the

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[1] Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of A Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 246.
[2] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 18, 247.
[3] Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 'Aristotle on the Metaphysical Status of Pathe', *Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984): 521. For another example, see William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Reddy argues that 'by the folk wisdom of the West, emotions are involuntary; they come over us irresistibly, or steal upon us when we least expect it. The will, aided by reason, must master them or be mastered by them. Psychologists have therefore looked for effects of emotion on "automatic," "subliminal," and "unconscious" cognitive processes… the meaning of these terms is as much in debate as the meaning of the term "emotion" itself'. (15).
[4] Rorty, 'Metaphysical Status of Pathe', 545, 522. Rorty's substantial work on the philosophy of mind argues that emotions can be changed by changing habituation. See Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, *Mind in Action: Essays in the Philosophy of Mind* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1988). Her reading is reminiscent of Judith Butler's political reading of grief as learned behaviour, which I return to later in this chapter and in chapter seven.

diversity of the category undermines its meaning; the assumption is that 'emotion' describes the psychological process behind a range of behaviours, but such a process simply cannot be identified.[5] For Griffiths, properly acknowledging the developments in evolutionary biology and experimental psychology ought to lead us to divide emotions up into distinct categories which reflect the causal mechanisms those disciplines describe, and, further, that these sciences represent the most promising fields of enquiry for future developments in how we describe our responses to the world. But disentangling ideology and narrative from the findings of neuroscience and evolutionary biology also poses an impossible task in seeking a description of emotions. As conceptual analyst Robert C. Roberts observes, the vocabulary humans use to refer to 'emotional phenomena' is no more 'scientific' in its origins than the language we use to describe music, even though we now possess extensive knowledge of the physics of music. Roberts argues that just as our physics of music is only useful for increasing our understanding insofar as it is framed by existing human ('folk') terminology, so too a neurological account will only help us understand emotions when interpreted in 'ordinary terms'.[6] Though, as this genealogy seeks to demonstrate, consensus about what constitutes 'ordinary terms' for emotions is difficult to come by.

The identifiable variety of passions or emotions has a longer history of flux.[7] The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw significant change in displacing the range of categories which had previously shaped moral imagination (e.g., appetites, passions, affections, and sentiments) with a broader category of emotion.[8] In the mid-eighteenth century Samuel Johnson's dictionary still offered separate entries for affection, appetite, emotion, feeling, passion (including love, fear, joy, and sorrow), sensibility, and sentiment, but some adaptations can already be observed: Johnson describes 'passions' as 'more violent commotions of the mind' and emotions as 'disturbance of the mind, vehemence of passion, pleasing or painful'.[9] As this modern category of emotion emerged, it began to conflate responses to the world which were previously considered appetites (e.g., lust) or affections (e.g., religious feeling) with the passions (e.g., anger, sorrow, joy).

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[5] Paul Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 14.
[6] Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54.
[7] Descartes proposed 41 passions, Hobbes 46, Hume 20, and, in the nineteenth century, James McCosh listed over 100 emotions. And, as noted in chapter three, Augustine saw all passions and affections as forms of love, and Aquinas suggested 4 or 11 basic passions. Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 18.
[8] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 2.
[9] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 62–63.

The emergence of emotion as an overarching category was heavily shaped by eighteenth century interest in 'nature' and the 'natural' – and its use both as an opposition to the supernatural or to the artificial/social.[10] The former opposition prompted questions concerning the affections or passions of the 'natural' versus the 'saved' human. The latter was concerned with whether humans were naturally virtuous or not – as counter to the 'naturally selfish' position taken by e.g., Thomas Hobbes. This latter opposition between the natural and social human allowed for the quiet disappearance of the will in human responses to the world.[11] As discussion about the human soul was replaced with discussion about human nature, the significance of the will in turning from sin and towards God was replaced with debate over the human's natural tendency towards virtue or vice – that is, that the passions and affections were themselves faculties of the soul. The treatment of passions and affections as a faculty of the soul is reflected in another significant intellectual move of the period: a tripartite model of the soul's faculties, as found in the work of psychologists Mendelssohn and Wolff and endorsed by Kant and Schopenhauer. The faculty of *feeling* was added to understanding and will, and as such separated and given its own causal power. It becomes 'irrational and involuntary'.[12]

A form of Cartesian dualism lurks in the background of this cultural shift.[13] Descartes' interpretation of the passions reflected his interpretation of the soul; rather than the Aristotelian model of the soul having different parts with different powers, the Cartesian soul is united in the single power of thought. As such, the passions become a kind of thought – a *perception* – through which the world acts on the soul via the body's senses.[14] But, more significantly, Descartes also describes them as emotions – because 'of all the kinds of thought which the soul

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[10] The nature/grace opposition reflects the basic position adopted by the 'revivalists', such as Jonathan Edwards and Isaac Watts, and the nature/social opposition reflects that of the 'moralists', a group including Joseph Butler and Thomas Reid. Dixon gives a summary of these two groups (which relates closely to the 'Dissenters' and 'Establishmentarian' groups defined by Harold Simonson in 1987). Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 66–69.
[11] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 74.
[12] The intellectual picture is more complicated than a simple move from one approach to the other, even in the work of specific thinkers. But it is in this period that these divergences emerge, and from which an eventually psychologically dominant model can be traced. Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 70–71.
[13] Again, this is not a universal rule. Hobbes, for example, rejected Descartes' dualist framework for a materialist model, arguing that the passions were motions of bodily power – they become elided with appetite. Interestingly, the outcome of this approach is a similar passivity in the passions: 'There are no self-caused volitions—only appetites which are themselves our experience of the causally determined motions of our bodies'. Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 135.
[14] For Descartes the passions could also therefore be described as 'sentiments', in that they are received through external senses. James, *Passion and Action*, 95.

may have, there are none that agitate and disturb it so strongly as the passions'.[15] Rather than the passions being powers of the sensible soul moving in conjunction with the will (the intellectual soul), the passions became 'for the most part passive perceptions of the bodily motions' with the power to cause deep disturbance.[16] This passivity is echoed in later treatments of the emotions.[17] And while Descartes maintained the body-soul conjunction to a certain degree in treating the passions as 'thoughts' which nevertheless depended on the body, his wider insistence on a body-soul dualism (splitting the mind from the animal body) and his mechanisation of the animal body would go on to influence the treatment of the passions as operating beyond reason.[18] The influence of this philosophical move can still be felt in contemporary psychological research; Reddy notes that experimental psychology continues to align itself with this dualism in assuming that both its researchers and subjects are 'trapped in the realm of subjective experience, which is uncertain, changeable, insubstantial'.[19]

These emerging approaches to a faculty of feeling still assumed that the faculty operated within a moral framework, to varying degrees. But if the passions and affections were a distinct faculty from the will or understanding, they could be stripped of their previously integral role in interpreting the human inner world or self. The passions and affections or (later) the emotions were not only contrasted with intellect or reason, but also distanced from the will and hence

[15] René Descartes, 'The Passions of the Soul', in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. J Cottingham, R Stoothoff, and D Murdoch, vol. i (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 68, quoted in James, *Passion and Action*, 95.
[16] James, *Passion and Action*, 94. I outline the model of the passions as powers of the sensible soul (sensitive appetite) in chapter three.
[17] G. Simon Harak offers the following summary: 'In general we can say that Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers began to conceive of affectivity as at best a second order process, which occurred either as a *reaction* to an external *stimulus*, or perhaps through some activity of the mind… that prompted ethicists toward an increasing conceptual divorce between reason and the passions because the body was so resistant to *control* by the reason, or by the will'. G. Simon Harak, *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 11.
[18] James, *Passion and Action*, 96. This approach was not only adopted by those who wished to be rid of the soul, but also those who claimed to defend Christian thought. Butler, for example, contradicted the Hobbesian model of the human as a selfish machine with a model of the human as a *virtuous* machine: 'Let us instance in a watch… Thus it is with regard to the inward frame of man… It is from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and above all the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature… our nature, i.e. constitution, is adapted to virtue… (as the watch) is adapted to measure time.' Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at Rolls Chapel and a Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue*, ed. T.A. Roberts (London: SPCK, 1970), 5–6, quoted in Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 90. While Butler would still insist that humans were agents, not simply passive, he also treated the human appetite as operating without reflection. 'Mechanical design-theology metaphors, which pictured human nature as a divine artefact, were conducive to a psychology in which agency appeared to ascribed either to the intelligent foresight of the Maker, or to secondary causes such as 'nature'… rather than to the self-initiated activity of the will'. Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 91–92.
[19] Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, 66.

from individual desires, agency, and by extension moral responsibility.[20] Such a distancing was made possible because of the wider distancing taking place in English intellectual life, whereby religion (and as such the assumption of a shared moral framework) played a diminishing role in the work of psychologists or philosophers. It is in this academic context that the full arrival of emotion takes place in the nineteenth century.[21]

Dixon traces the earliest use of emotion in this modern sense to the school of Scottish empiricist philosophers and mental scientists, beginning with David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, but most thoroughly outlined in perhaps the most influential English work on emotions in the nineteenth century: Thomas Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*. Brown, an advocate for natural religion and the new 'science of the mind' was the first to make a systematic 'terminological transition' from passions, affections, etc. to emotions.[22] While he shared the implicit design theology of the earlier moralists, he employed the language of natural scientists for describing the mind. Brown pursued the discovery of 'natural laws' for thought and emotion; a chain of cause and effect connecting emotions, sensations and thoughts, which could be analysed under the rules of natural science.[23] Sympathetic to the empiricist school of thought, Brown argued that rather than having a number of different powers or faculties, the mind only had a series of different 'states' or 'affections'. External affections of the mind were sensations, while internal affections of the mind were either thoughts or emotions.[24] The category of emotions was thus adopted for all feelings that were neither sensations nor intellectual states; they became *passive* and *non-cognitive*. Echoed, here, are the passive Cartesian 'perceptions' as a contrast to the intellect, but also a Hobbesian conviction that humans act out of an appetitive response unaltered by the intervention of judgment.[25] Most significant is the lack of precision in Brown's own definition for his term, beyond appealing to common understanding:

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[20] Harak neatly summarises this legacy: 'With respect to passions, Cartesian-based philosophers see the moral project as a struggle for *control* of the passions by the reason. It is a struggle for control of the other as well, since we do not want to be "in thrall" or "possessed." We want to be *agents*, we are told, and not to be acted upon; we do not want to be moved'. Harak, *Virtuous Passions*, 30.

[21] The use of 'emotion', 'passion', and 'reason' are not and were not homogenous in their development across Europe; context specific social and political changes also influenced their use in particular regions. It is impossible to capture the full picture here – but see, for example, Reddy's summary of the changing emotional scene in France, which charts the rapid cultural and intellectual shifts which took place concerning reason and emotion between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, 217.

[22] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 113.

[23] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 118.

[24] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 123.

[25] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 125.

> Every person understands what is meant by an emotion, at least as well as he understands what is meant by any intellectual power; or if he do not, it can be explained to him only, by stating the number of feelings to which we give the name, or the circumstances which induce them.[26]

This lack of specificity is still prevalent in psychological treatments of emotions today, but of equal pertinence here is Brown's suggestion that emotions can be defined not only by naming them, but by naming the circumstances which lead to them. If the emotion cannot be differentiated from the external event which prompts it, we have as little responsibility for the kind of response we have to an external event as we do for the event itself. A closely related assumption can be found in contemporary anthropological studies of emotions, in which the alignment of emotions and culture (that is, that emotions are culturally constructed) potentially renders us unable to identify any desires or appetitive movements which are not culturally determined; we cannot want things unless we have been taught to want them. The challenge, as Reddy goes on to note, is offering an account which affirms that emotions are indeed 'culturally constructed', but that individuals are still 'capable of taking meaningful action, making meaningful change'.[27] A similar attitude continued into the late nineteenth century, and, via dialogue with Darwin's evolutionary theory, the experience of an emotion would also be aligned with its expression in the world. Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* did not attempt to explain the origins of feelings, nor did he try to define them. Instead, he was interested in the behaviour they provoke, proposing that our expressions of emotions are hereditary, involuntary traits – and, by implication, that emotions were practically identical with the bodily action they provoke.[28] Darwin's approach influenced William James and Sigmund Freud, who remain perhaps the most influential psychological thinkers in contemporary treatment of emotions. While Freud picked up the notion of expression as inherited habit in his treatment of emotions as primal response, James entirely reduced emotions to a product of physical process.[29]

The main purpose of this genealogy is to demonstrate the ideological transition from discrete categories of passions, affections, appetites, etc. to an overarching category of emotion, but it is worth briefly touching on the interventions of Freud and James, given their enduring

[26] Thomas Brown, 'Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind', in *Collected Life and Works of Thomas Brown*, ed. Thomas Dixon (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2003), 102–3, quoted in Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 125.
[27] Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, 47.
[28] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 166–67.
[29] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 178. 210.

influence. The nineteenth century conception of emotion as 'discrete, episodic and purely affective states of consciousness' underwent considerable deconstruction at their hands, leading to the contemporary understanding of emotions as 'complex states of mind' inseparable from other mental states.[30] Long removed from debates over the structure of the soul, James and Freud opposed the Cartesian assumption that the *mind* is a single, transparent, conscious field of thought and feeling, experiencing simple states which can be individually identified. William James argued instead for treating the mind as a continuous stream, with conscious thought and feeling being complex, unrepeatable phenomena; bodily processes triggered by specific perceptions. Put simply, James treats emotions as caused by bodily sensations, rather than bodily sensations being prompted by the mind's response.[31] The basic problem with this inversion of a Cartesian reading is that a variety of emotions prompt very similar physiological changes.[32]

Sigmund Freud built on the deconstruction of discrete emotional states that James had begun but did not follow the epiphenomenal approach James proposed, first dividing the mind into conscious and unconscious parts, and later into three agents: the ego, id, and superego. In doing so, Freud differentiated emotions from 'feelings', treating the former as conscious and unconscious mental states, holding the potential to discharge a kind of *instinctual* energy which would terminate in the latter.[33] In this frame, it is possible to experience an emotion without feeling it; an emotion is a state that explains both thoughts and behaviours, and these states ultimately emerge from human instincts or drives: 'the motivating force of an unconscious emotion is always traceable to a basic instinct in whose aim the meaning of the thought or behaviour the emotion explains originates'.[34] Instinctual readings of emotion are not Freud's only legacy: contemporary cognitive psychology uses this differentiation of emotion and feeling in order to reintegrate the state of 'emotion' into the mind's ability to evaluate, rather than appealing to animal instinct. As John Deigh points out, this approach reveals a return to a

[30] John Deigh, 'Emotions: The Legacy of James and Freud', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 82, no. 6 (2001): 1247.
[31] 'Our natural way of thinking… is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My thesis, 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… We feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble'. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. II (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 449.
[32] The first to point this out was physiologist Walter Bradford Cannon in 1927. Andrew M. Colman, 'James-Lange Theory', in *A Dictionary of Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[33] Deigh, 'James and Freud', 1250–52. See Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (New York: Clydesdale Press, 2018).
[34] Deigh, 'James and Freud', 1254.

much older assumption that human responses to the world are in some sense a cognitive state, and that the mind's evaluation of the world shapes the kinds of responses we experience. In such a reading, emotions are states comparable to beliefs and judgments.[35] A similar assumption can be found in recent treatments of 'emotions' beyond strict 'philosophy of mind' or psychological/biological schools of thought.

3. DEFINING AND TREATING GRIEF

I move now from a generalised treatment of emotion to the twentieth century pathologisation of grief (grief becoming a health condition or even disease) worked out in what we can term the medicalisation of grief (modern therapeutic interventions that seek, primarily, to return those who have experienced loss to their previous levels of function and effectiveness as quickly as possible).[36] As was made clear in the previous chapter, Freudian interpretations of mourning and melancholia heavily influence contemporary interpretations of anthropogenic loss. More broadly, Freud's psychological description of mourning and melancholia marks a significant cultural turning point in assessments of grief – which, prior to the twentieth century, was not considered a topic requiring psychological study.[37] The work of differentiating different kinds of grief experiences, however, has a longer history, which I will delineate briefly before returning to Freud's establishment of grief as a 'psychological kind'.[38]

In the section which follows I draw on Leeat Granek's work on the history of grief theory; Granek thoughtfully demonstrates the cultural conditions which have nurtured contemporary western psychological study and gives a detailed account of Freud's theory, the context out of which he emerged, and the transitions which followed him. It is worth noting, however, that Granek's own definitions of grief and mourning are themselves a clear example of the assumed autonomy and amorality of 'emotions' as they have become understood. Using the terms 'grief' and 'mourning' interchangeably, she differentiates the 'universal phenomenon' of grief from its psychological reading.[39] To do so, she says that when she uses grief, she refers 'to the emotional reaction to the loss of a loved one that can include sadness, longing, sorrow, despair,

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[35] Deigh, 'James and Freud', 1254.
[36] Leeat Granek, 'Grief as Pathology: The Evolution of Grief Theory in Psychology From Freud to the Present', *History of Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2010): 48.
[37] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 46.
[38] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 51.
[39] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 46.

and anguish'.[40] There are several interesting claims which could be identified here, and which become even more striking when compared with the description of the passions which follows in the next chapter. For now, I will simply observe some of the assumptions implicit in her definition: firstly, grief is prompted by losing 'a loved one' – while she does not specify *human*, the phrase usually denotes a human being with whom one has an intimate relationship. Secondly, grief incorporates a wide range of distinct but undefined feeling – 'sorrow', 'despair', 'anguish', etc. And, thirdly, grief is an 'emotional reaction', implying its distinction from other kinds of reaction (that is, that the emotions are a separate category of human response). While Granek rightly warns about the growth in 'the widespread phenomena of turning everyday problems into psychological disorders to be managed and treated', she still echoes an interpretation of 'grief' which is highly culturally conditioned. Even amongst those who criticise the pathologisation of grief, a narrow (and recent) philosophical tradition still dominates the social sciences.

While Freud formalised and popularised psychological descriptions of grief, he was not the first to systematise the different iterations of negative feeling in order to identify those which require a cure. In the late sixteenth century, Timothy Bright's *Treatise of Melancholy* describes melancholy as a 'passion being not moved by any adversary present or imminent' – a 'heaviness' which lacks an apparent cause.[41] Half a century later, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* distinguishes between melancholy as disease and melancholy as fitting response to loss, need, sickness, sorrow, grief, etc.[42] The complicated relationship between grief, melancholy, and health continued into the nineteenth and early twentieth century. American physician Benjamin Rush featured grief in his book *The Diseases of the Mind*, though with the acknowledgment that grief was not necessarily sickness. Alexander Shand, founding member of the British Psychological Society, offered the first significant study on the psychology of grief. He influenced the replacement of 'passions' with 'sentiments', described emotions as 'forces', and sought to develop a 'science of human character' in *The Foundations of Character* (1914).[43] His science included dividing grief reactions into four 'types': active and externally directed, depressive and lacking energy, suppressed through self-control, and frenzied.[44] These

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[40] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 47.
[41] David J. A. Dozois, 'Influences on Freud's Mourning and Melancholia and Its Contextual Validity', *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 20, no. 2 (2000): 171.
[42] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 49.
[43] W.H. Winch, 'Review: The Foundations of Character; Being a Study of the Tendencies of the Emotions and Sentiments. by Alexander F. Shand', *Mind* 24, no. 96 (October 1915): 569–72.
[44] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 50.

studies of grief do not necessarily, however, represent popular perspective: the social turn toward psychological support had not yet taken place. Grief was still popularly considered 'a condition of the human spirit or soul' up until the nineteenth century – and while lunatic asylums would sometimes list grief as a *cause* of mania or melancholia, grief itself was not considered an illness.[45]

Freud shared this assessment of grief: mourning was not an illness to pathologise or treat but a 'normal affect'.[46] Freud did, however, open the door to grief being a 'psychological kind'; for Freud, everyday life was of interest to the psychoanalyst, and as such 'health and pathology were on a continuum' with 'no clear boundary between them', allowing the distinction between normality and abnormality to become increasingly blurred.[47] Freud's conceptualisation of grief is most thoroughly outlined in *Mourning and Melancholia*. A basic principle of Freud's assessment concerns the 'task' of the mourner: that they must detach their libido (their energy) from the deceased (whether person or other object) and instead transfer it elsewhere.[48] He thus differentiates between mourning and melancholia: while they can be prompted by the same objects, melancholia's causes are more wide-ranging.[49] And, sometimes, the cause cannot be identified: the 'object-loss' has been 'withdrawn from consciousness'.[50]

Freud offers a series of other distinctions between mourning and melancholia, all of which are couched in varying degrees of uncertainty. We might, he writes, encounter someone who has been made melancholic by an environmental cause which usually prompts mourning, therefore suspecting them to have a 'pathological disposition'; he observes that the 'distinguishing mental features' of mourning and melancholia are similar: 'a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity' but adds that melancholia is also accompanied by a 'lowering of the self-regarding feelings to

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[45] Lindsay Prior, *The Social Organisation of Death: Medical Discourse and Social Practices in Belfast* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989), 135, 207.
[46] 'Although mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition and to refer it to medical treatment… we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful'. Sigmund Freud, 'Part I: "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917e [1915])', in *On Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia'*, ed. Thierry Bokanowski et al. (London: Karnac, 2009), 43–44.
[47] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 51.
[48] 'Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on… The work which mourning performs… demand(s) that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object'. Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 44–45.
[49] Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 61.
[50] Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 46.

a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling'.[51] Unlike mourning, where the *world* stops prompting joy, in melancholia, it is the *ego* that has become 'poor and empty'.[52] (This analysis comes shortly after his description of melancholia's fluctuating definitions, the uncertainty of its clinical forms, and an insistence that '(we) drop all claim to general validity for our conclusions').[53]

Only five years after the publication of *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud had changed his mind: in 1923, he identified the tendency to internalise lost love-objects as a 'normal' part of dealing with loss and not specific to depression/melancholy. Ten years later, he would describe depression as being due to an 'excessively active superego'.[54] His non-pathological (and non-certain) framework for grief has nonetheless had considerable influence on contemporary psychotherapeutic models. Granek observes that Freud has been interpreted as advocating 'grief work', which is now an 'ingrained Western psychological concept' considered vital in preventing the development of psychiatric illness.[55] His assessment of the relationship between 'normal' mourning and depression or melancholia still influences contemporary distinctions between 'uncomplicated bereavement' and 'major depression', which rely on identifying 'symptom severity and self-reproach'.[56] Priscilla Roth notes a wider influence in Freud's analysis of the mind: his conceptualisation of an inner world with distinct parts helped to introduce the therapeutic concern with the quality of our internal relations, treating them as defining our moods, well-being, and even character.[57]

Freud may have (inadvertently) opened the door to pathologising grief experiences, but twentieth century psychologists and psychoanalysts ensured it was entirely kicked down. While Freud emphasised that mourning could be *normal*, the late 1930s and early 1940s saw a wave of grief pathologisation. In 1937, psychoanalyst and colleague of Freud Helene Deutsch published *The Absence of Grief*, arguing that grief *itself* could be pathological, either in being 'chronic' or 'unmanifested' (repressed), and further, that this repressed grief would emerge in other forms.[58] The outcome of her analysis was a much more explicit move towards treating

[51] Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 44.
[52] Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 47.
[53] Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', 43.
[54] Dozois, 'Influences on Freud', 186.
[55] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 51.
[56] Dozois, 'Influences on Freud', 188.
[57] Priscilla Roth, 'Melancholia, Mourning, and the Countertransference', in *On Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia'*, ed. Leticia Glocer Fiorini et al. (London: Karnac, 2009), 67.
[58] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 54.

mourning as a process which must be completed in order to bring about a form of healing from attachment:

> The process of mourning as a reaction to the real loss of a loved person *must be carried to completion.* As long as the early libidinal or aggressive attachments persist, the painful affect continues to flourish, or vice versa, the attachments are unresolved as long as the affective process of mourning has not been accomplished.[59]

The assumption here is that mourning is work to be finished, and that this work is primarily concerned with 'resolving' (severing) attachments which have become painful through loss. Grief is a state to be alleviated (healed) as promptly as possible.

Such an approach picked up speed. In 1940, psychoanalyst Melanie Klein made explicit reference to mourning as an illness (though she also acknowledged it could have positive effects).[60] In 1944, psychiatrist Eric Lindemann published his justification for psychiatrists treating 'acute grief' (i.e., grief which has not become 'chronic'), even if it were not 'a medical or psychiatric disorder in the strict sense of the word'.[61] He argued that grief was a 'definite syndrome with psychological and somatic symptomatology' which could thus be predicted, managed, and *treated* via 'grief work', and, moreover, that ministers of religion were not equipped to provide 'adequate assistance' for this work.[62] Lindemann's comments not only represent a shift in interpretations of grief, but also a significant expansion of the domain of psychology and psychiatry which began with Freud's interest in everyday life. The disciplinary reach of psychology had changed; psychotherapy was no longer simply a necessary tool for those requiring hospitalisation for mental illness, but for the ordinary struggles of otherwise healthy members of the public.[63] The shape of psychology as a discipline is too broad a subject to cover fully and is not my focus here. Rather, I raise this change to observe a societal shift in the spectrum of human feelings which participate in a good life – if we come to treat 'negative' emotions as requiring medical intervention, we cannot also see them as having a substantive place in our collective perception of human flourishing. I return to this point shortly.

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[59] Helene Deutsch, 'Absence of Grief', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 6 (1937): 21, quoted in Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 54.
[60] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 54.
[61] Eric Lindemann, 'Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 101 (1944): 141.
[62] Lindemann, 'Acute Grief', 141–47.
[63] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 57.

The thread this chapter has traced – the influence of the emerging sciences on our interpretations of emotions – explicitly re-emerges in the latter half of the twentieth century; American psychiatrist George Engel's 1961 article 'Is Grief a Disease? A challenge for Medical Research' opens with the disclosure that the paper 'has perhaps more than the qualities of a philosophic than a scientific discourse' but nevertheless goes on to identify grief as subjective (rather than somatic) and a 'disorder' which follows object loss.[64] While he acknowledges that 'the consequences of object loss and grief' may be 'manifest ultimately in biochemical, physiological, or social terms', he argues that 'they must first be initiated in the central nervous system'.[65] Of relevance, here, is not whether Engel believed grief was itself a disease, but that in opening the question, he makes explicit an adopted (albeit now medicalised) assumption: that emotions begin in the mind (that is, in his use, the *brain*), and that these go on to affect the body. Note the echoes of Thomas Brown's dualistic distinction between sensations and emotions or thoughts, filtered through a medicalised description which carries with it the implications of empirical knowledge.

The same movement towards presenting 'empirical' accounts of grief (that is, accounts which draw on observing patterns across those grieving) also took place in British psychiatry. In 1958, the first empirical study of bereavement took place (conducted by Peter Marris) and its findings included a list of grief symptoms.[66] The line between discovery and invention in naming grief symptoms is generally agreed to be thin, and this period also saw the invention of the clinical category of depression, a category whose relation to grief and loss remains disconcertingly blurry.[67] Recent changes to the American Psychiatric Association's criteria for major depression permits a diagnosis as early as two weeks after the death of a loved one.[68] The new entry for Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) in the International Classification of Disease identifies grief reactions which last more than 6 months and are 'out of proportion to or inconsistent with cultural, religious, or age appropriate norms' as signifying a diagnostic shift

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[64] Though this did not prevent Engel from publishing the article in the Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine. George Engel, 'Is Grief a Disease? A Challenge for Medical Research', *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 23, no. 1 (January 1961): 18.
[65] Engel, 'Is Grief a Disease?', 21.
[66] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 60.
[67] Darian Leader, *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2009), 13–14.
[68] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition (American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013).

from 'normal' and 'uncomplicated' to 'disordered'.[69] It is telling that the British Medical Journal proposes a 'newer' 'grief task model' which closely echoes a post-Freudian approach to grief 'work' – while they acknowledge the difficulty of defining when grief becomes 'pathological', failure to complete these tasks is still provided as an indication of PGD, and antidepressant medication is then presented as an effective and safe intervention on the basis that 'depression and PGD… share underlying mechanisms, including negative cognitions and reduced activity'.[70] I am not arguing that medical intervention is always inappropriate following bereavement or that the emergence of mainstream medical and psychological support for mental illness represents a negative cultural shift. Nor do I intend to undermine the severity of distress experienced by those who undergo the loss of close and identity defining relationships. Rather, I map this transition in imagination (and its constantly shifting application) precisely *because* it is a transition in imagination regarding human relationship with the world, and ought to be examined as such. Identifying these transitions of imagination – not only in our perception of the human, but also in our related perception of non-human creatures – is a core concern of this project, and I return to this latter set of perceptions in chapter five.

Tellingly, critical pushback against the pathologisation and related medicalisation of grief first emerged from outside the field. In the 1960s, anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer undertook a qualitative study of eighty bereaved people in the UK. Despite the continued dominance of religion in British mourning practices, he noted the growth in 'social denial and the individual repudiation of mourning' which had taken transatlantic hold and argued that the cultural or sociological aspects of bereavement were increasingly considered 'as exclusively or predominantly private and psychological'; grief is increasingly a privatised event.[71] Of particular interest to this project is his observation concerning the changing *moral* interpretation of grief. Gorer notes the emergence of a 'fun-morality'; 'the right to the pursuit of happiness has been turned into an obligation. Public and private mourning may be felt as contravening this ethic'.[72] His work is often now dismissed in contemporary psychology texts

[69] Paul A Boelen and Geert E Smid, 'Disturbed Grief: Prolonged Grief Disorder and Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder', *British Medical Journal* 357 (18 May 2017), https://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j2016. It is difficult to imagine how a GP might determine 'religious, cultural, and age-appropriate' norms for grief in a 10-minute consultation with a bereaved individual, but this is the context in which diagnosis usually takes place.
[70] Boelen and Smid, 'Disturbed Grief', 'Pharmalogical Interventions'.
[71] Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (London: Cresset Press, 1965), x, viii.
[72] Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning*, x.

for perceived methodological limitations.[73] But Gorer's observation also prompts a wider concern with a privatised and therapeutic approach to object loss. If such an approach is primarily concerned with *moving on* from damaging attachments, does it bear any useful application beyond the narrow window of intra-human occasional bereavement? Further, if one outcome of this privatisation is the public denial of sorrow, how can such a model be useful for describing and responding to grief as it takes place in relation to major death events, whether human or otherwise?

Skip forward to the last thirty years, and academic interest in grief within psychology and the wider social sciences is almost entirely concerned with its dysfunction and treatment. Granek points to a 1998 study on grief in the *Journal of Social Issues* by way of example – its introduction is littered with phrases like 'predictors of abnormal grieving and poor outcome' and the 'effectiveness of intervention programs'.[74] Other examples include the emergence of Major Depressive Disorder as a diagnosis to describe a 'general unhappiness', or shyness/introversion being relabelled as a social anxiety disorder.[75] Granek references critic Sandra Gilbert's damning indictment of contemporary Western relations to death: we are no longer simply concerned over whether we are honouring the dead, but we have a new and 'distinctively clinical' anxiety: is my recovery from the illness of grief moving at an appropriate rate?[76] This clinical anxiety reveals an inward turn: grief is treated primarily as a concern for the individual, and responding to grief is primarily conceived as a private set of tasks (or work) which accelerates recovery. It would be misleading to claim that the pathologisation and subsequent medicalisation of grief is the inevitable fallout of the longer history of emotion terminology. Rather, this genealogy has attempted to identify a pattern of thought concerning human responses to the world whose origins can be found in eighteenth century philosophical movements and which sit in the background of contemporary assumptions concerning experiences and interpretations of loss.

The narrowing of grief descriptions to a pathological state which requires treatment is an insufficient model to cover all kinds of experiences of loss, and certainly for covering other negative 'emotions' which are prompted by our interactions with an imperfect world, and with

[73] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 61.
[74] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 80.
[75] Granek, 'Grief as Pathology', 66.
[76] Sandra Gilbert, *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2006), 257.

our imperfect selves. But I do want to briefly pause here to make explicit the reasons this model poses problems for interpreting sorrow over anthropogenic loss. Firstly, and most obviously, this medicalised attitude to grief is primarily concerned with alleviating one's attachment to something or someone which has been lost and cannot be recovered. While there is some limited sense in which we might say that a *particular* forest or species which is destroyed cannot be recovered – certainly not as it once was – and is therefore a 'lost' object, developing a *general* lack of attachment as a response to encounters with wide-ranging and escalating anthropogenic loss raises considerable and obvious ethical concerns. Secondly, the medical grief model makes a basic assumption about where the 'problem' to be fixed can be found: in the mourner, not in the world. It is the mourner who has become 'abnormal' and must be returned to normality, rather than recognising the presence of death or loss in the world being that which requires healing. Within a Christian framework, such a model is problematic even at the level of personal loss, but when the object which prompts grief is the destructive presence of sin *everywhere*, the identification of the problem (as within the human) found in medicalised models appears even more disingenuous. Finally, the approach described above has little to no interest in the moral nature of *how* or *what* we grieve, only in how that grief can be managed most effectively and efficiently. Again, the problem with this attitude is only magnified when the scale to which we refer is now *our entire environment, our whole biosphere, the future of our shared home.*

4. POLITICAL FEELING

Bearing these objections in mind, I will track one final trajectory for this genealogy of emotions. As seen in the literature reviewed in the previous chapter, contemporary understandings of emotion are not entirely shaped by psychology or psychiatry. They are also reflected in (and arguably shaped by) the changing landscape of political theory: political philosophers and activists over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have increasingly drawn upon emotion as both revelatory of power and injustice and as resource to be drawn upon in struggling for change. Two pertinent examples for this transition are Audre Lorde and Judith Butler, who offer political readings of anger and grief respectively. These political readings bypass the dualistic and privatised approaches which this genealogy has described. Audre Lorde's essay *The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism* was first offered as the keynote presentation at the National Women's Studies Association Conference, 1981. Defending the role of anger in resisting racism, particularly in response to the criticism of white

women, Lorde defines anger as 'the grief of distortions between peers', its 'object' being 'change'.[77] This, for Lorde, is in contrast to hatred, which is 'the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction'.[78] Anger thus has a political and moral frame: its expression must be 'direct', 'creative', and serving as a 'source of empowerment'.[79] Lorde is also cognisant of anger's limitations because of the fear which it triggers – 'for women raised to fear, too often anger threatens annihilation'.[80] But turning from another's anger, she argues, is also to turn from insight, and as such the potential for transformation. Lorde treats her anger against racism and sexism as a kind of moral knowledge, to be exercised 'between women' and 'with precision' for the creation of good.[81]

Judith Butler treats sorrow in a similar way, applying a political (concerning a body politic) frame to the experience of grief, treating its expression as both revelatory and containing the potential for redirection. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler asks, 'what makes for a grievable life?' and in doing so presents grief as revealing the relational priorities individuals and communities already possess.[82] Grief, for Butler, becomes a kind of learned behaviour. She writes:

> When we lose certain people, or when we are dispossessed from a place, or a community, we may simply feel that we are undergoing something temporary, that mourning will be over and some restoration of prior order will be achieved. But maybe when we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us.[83]

Butler directly challenges a Freudian interpretation of mourning as a process of exchanging one object for another, instead arguing that 'one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever'; mourning becomes a process of transformation whose end cannot be fully known or planned.[84] Butler also emphasises the *collective* dimension of response to loss. For Butler, grief – and more specifically the collective act of mourning – creates a sense of political community. This collective act (and who is

[77] Audre Lorde, 'The Uses of Anger', *Women's Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 1/2 (Spring-Summer 1997): 282.
[78] Lorde, 'Uses of Anger', 282.
[79] Lorde, 'Uses of Anger', 281–82.
[80] Lorde, 'Uses of Anger', 283.
[81] Lorde, 'Uses of Anger', 283.
[82] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 20.
[83] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 22.
[84] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 21.

deemed worthy of receiving it) reveals our relational ties and their implications for our interdependency and the (limitations of) our ethical responsibility. Grief, Butler argues, can itself be made 'a resource for politics': we can ask who is mourned in public, in obituaries, in memorials, and reframe our political/moral imagination by expanding our vision for grievable bodies.[85] Both Lorde and Butler treat emotions as rooted in the experience of being a politicised body – anger and mourning emerge from inextricably tied intellectual/moral and sensory knowledge, and their expression also shapes these forms of knowledge in others.[86] This political turn in the genealogy of emotion re-emerges as a theme in chapter seven.

5. AFFECT AND THE AFFECTED

The most influential political/social turn in treatments of emotion, however, is the growing academic field concerned with the political or public dynamics of emotion and experience; 'Affect Theory' has become a catch-all descriptor for treatments of 'embodied emotions' and their role beyond the private domain.[87] Affect theory emerges out of clearly identifiable critical traditions.[88] But the field's precise area of concern and methodological approach is difficult to pin down (and its proponents often specifically reject attempts to do so).[89] The breadth of 'affect' descriptions have even led to distinct schools of thought regarding the inclusion (or not) of 'emotion' under the affect umbrella. Affect theorists will generally appeal to affect as having to do with 'sensual matter' distinct from or uncontained by cognition: Lauren Berlant

[85] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 32.

[86] As will hopefully become apparent, the approaches taken by Lorde and Butler have significant common ground with the tradition represented by Augustine and Aquinas. Diana Fritz Cates offers a compelling reading of Lorde in dialogue with Aquinas in Diana Fritz Cates, 'Taking Women's Experience Seriously: Thomas Aquinas and Audre Lorde on Anger', in *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives*, ed. G. Simon Harak (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996). However, Cates' observations about the longer history of theological interpretation which might be brought into dialogue with contemporary political theory is unusual, rather than standard – Sara Ahmed's overview of 'emotions' history, for example, references Aristotle, but then jumps straight to Descartes. Sara Ahmed, *Feel Your Way: The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

[87] Donovan Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 8.

[88] 'Affect' terminology has a longer history in philosophy – in particular, there is clear influence from Spinoza's description of *affectus* as the force of an affecting body and *affectio* as the impact it leaves on the affected (see Megan Watkins, 'Desiring Recognition, Accumulating Affect', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). But Schaefer summarises contemporary Affect Theory as emerging out of critiques of the public/private binary found in queer theory, feminism, and postcolonial theory, and influenced by the materialist turn. Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 8–9.

[89] The introductory essay in *The Affect Theory Reader*, for example, broadly describes 'affect' as 'in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*' which the body initiates and undergoes, and then offers the frustratingly oblique summary that 'there can only ever be infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect: theories as diverse and singularly delineated as their own highly particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds'. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, 'An Inventory of Shimmers', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2, 4.

defines affect as 'sensual matter that is elsewhere to sovereign consciousness but that has historical significance in domains of subjectivity'.[90] Donovan Schaefer's work on affect in religion argues that religion is an expression of 'what we feel, the things we want, the way our bodies are guided through thickly textured, magnetized worlds', and as such is not 'exclusively cognitive'.[91] But those who separate out 'emotion' from 'affect' go a step further, interpreting the latter as falling outside or under the 'conscious awareness' or perception that features in emotion.[92] Of course, such a distinction relies on an agreed definition of emotion in the first place – which, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, is easier said than done.

Despite these internal disagreements regarding the nature of affect, the field nevertheless pursues some consistent areas of concern which differentiate it from the psychological readings of 'emotion' which have dominated this chapter. The first is affect having a clear political dimension, both in describing the roots of one's affect and its consequences.[93] The second and related concern is the role of affect in shaping one's disposition and 'sense of self'; the encounters which produce affect and the process of being affected is pedagogical.[94] These descriptions somewhat align affect theory with the political/moral framing of 'emotions' as found in Butler and Lorde, and as such affect theory might be considered a potentially appropriate bedfellow for a moral theology. In the final section of this chapter, I review three different approaches to giving theological accounts of 'emotions', including two successful examples of employing affect theory. I also articulate my reasons for utilising a 'passion' framework rather than trying to integrate contemporary emotion theory with the Christian tradition.

6. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

The above genealogy has offered a limited introduction to the intellectual worlds which shape contemporary assumptions about emotion. It is by no means complete, but I have attempted to pick out the major threads at work. I am indebted to Thomas Dixon for this overview, and his work emphasises the diversity and complexity of thought at work in this genealogy better than

[90] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 53.
[91] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 3, 6.
[92] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 26–28. Schaefer goes on to critique this distinction between awareness/non-awareness.
[93] Seigworth and Gregg introduce the political dimension of affect as 'a body's capacity for becoming sensitive to the "manner" of the world'. Seigworth and Gregg, 'Inventory of Shimmers', 14.
[94] Watkins, 'Desiring Recognition', 269–70.

I can cover here. Our theories of passions and emotions are formed, as Amélie Rorty describes, ‘from the picturesque ruins of previous views’.[95] Mindful, then, of being unable to disentangle myself or this project from the ‘walking archaeology of abandoned theories’ that I carry with me, I turn now to an assessment of the ways ‘emotion’ language has been employed by Christian theologians.[96]

Christian theology has responded to these chronological shifts with a range of attitudes. In his assessment of contemporary Christian reception of pastoral psychology, Fraser Watts identifies a spectrum that runs all the way from ‘suspicion or even hostility to an uncritical enthusiasm that seems to assume psychotherapy is itself the Christian gospel’.[97] Watts emphasises that the ‘predominantly secular approach’ dominating twentieth century psychology along with its ‘prejudices and unexamined assumptions’ is one of a number of perspectives available.[98] This does not mean that Watts proposes a wholesale dismissal of contemporary psychological categories; he applies a theological lens to current debates in psychology and philosophy of mind and also offers a psychological reading of religious experience. Watts is one of many Christian thinkers in a variety of different academic disciplines proposing some form of integration between contemporary ‘psychology’ (in its broadest sense) and Christian theology. I now offer three brief examples of this integration before outlining the approach I will take.

i. Christian Emotions

Robert C. Roberts works in ‘moral’ and ‘Christian’ psychology, and makes a similar observation to Watts regarding the breadth of psychological frameworks available:

> Talk about “the therapeutic” notwithstanding, there is no single set of psychological categories in terms of which twentieth-century North American souls tend to be shaped. “Psychology” is not the name of any body of mutually coherent beliefs and concepts. Instead, we are surrounded by vendors of psychic health and maturity, with different versions of our well-being and different accounts of why we are so messed up and how we can get fixed.[99]

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[95] Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ‘From Passions to Emotions and Sentiments’, *Philosophy* 57 (1982): 172.
[96] Rorty, ‘Passions to Emotions and Sentiments’, 172.
[97] Fraser Watts, *Theology and Psychology* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 2.
[98] Watts, *Theology and Psychology*, 6. Later, Watts discusses religious experience, mysticism, and feeling, noting an ‘ambiguity about whether emotions are experiences, reactions, or states’, suggesting that they seem to have elements of all three. He laments the fact there is no vocabulary for ‘religious somethings’ comparable to the noun ‘emotions’ (93). The category of ‘passion’ helps address this linguistic gap.
[99] Robert C. Roberts, ‘Introduction: Christian Psychology?’, in *Limning the Psyche: Explorations in Christian Psychology*, ed. Robert C. Roberts and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 2.

Like Watts, Roberts also observes that this array of options has entered the theological language of the Church. Rather than proposing points of dialogue between two distinct disciplines, Roberts argues that theology is itself a *kind of psychology* ('formally similar to "personality theory"') in the statements it makes about human nature, motivation, and development.[100] Roberts offers helpful pushback against the notion that a clear distinction can be made between human psychological and spiritual needs, and instead identifies twentieth century psychotherapies as offering alternatives to Christian spirituality. As such, a 'Christian psychology' must begin from a different set of parameters: the sociality of the psyche, the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian agency, and the centrality of sin as a diagnostic category.[101]

Roberts makes a clear case for beginning from within the Christian tradition to make psychological judgements. But in a later text (*Spiritual Emotions*), Roberts incorporates 'emotion' language into a proposal for approaching Christian virtues.[102] Emotions, he argues, are 'an essential medium in which Christian teachings get incorporated into the life of the individual believer'.[103] The 'mature Christian' is thus one disposed to 'properly Christian' emotions like 'joy, contrition, gratitude, hope, compassion, and peace'.[104] He goes on to define emotions as 'concern-based construals' and 'interpretive perceptions' in part via the thought of Robert Solomon and Martha Nussbaum.[105] While at one point he refers to these as 'passions' to emphasise their *passivity* ('events that happen *to* us, rather than *act*ions that we perform'), he does not explicitly draw on the longer Christian tradition of the passions to justify his definition (and later uses the term 'passion' in the sense of having a desire for God).[106] Roberts helpfully identifies the gap between the Christian tradition's anthropology and the anthropological assumptions made in contemporary psychology; in particular, his emphasis on the necessity of 'sin' as a diagnostic category is a useful critical departure for this project. However, his work also highlights the challenge of successfully integrating contemporary vocabulary into Christian theological anthropology. At best there will be a gap in assumed use that has to be overcome (in this instance between contemporary psychological use of

[100] Roberts, 'Christian Psychology?', 10.
[101] Roberts, 'Christian Psychology?', 11–16.
[102] Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).
[103] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 5.
[104] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 8.
[105] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 11.
[106] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 22.

‘emotions’ and the Christian moral pursuit of what Roberts calls ‘emotions’). At worst we might encounter precisely the danger that Watts and to a certain extent Roberts warns against; that constantly shifting psychological categories are subsumed into theological anthropology to the point where they become indistinguishable for those who do not have advanced degrees in either. Perhaps, then, the psychological language of ‘emotions’ is so difficult to define and so loaded a term that it can be rejected as a starting point. But what about some of the other categories or interpretations raised in this chapter, in particular the idea of ‘affect’ as having political and moral implications? I turn now to two examples of using ‘affect’ framing to describe the Christian moral life.

ii. Religious Experience

Mark Wynn’s work on the philosophy of religious experience argues that emotional feeling and religious understanding can and do reciprocally influence each other, transforming values, but also (and relatedly) our reflection on doctrine.[107] Wynn proposes that some instances of ‘theistic experience’ can be described as ‘affectively toned sensitivity to the values that “make up” God’s reality’; an ‘affectively toned’ experience can reveal values to us which do not simply originate within ourselves.[108] Wynn is concerned to distinguish his description of affective experience from mere ‘feeling’ (which risks being perceived as like a sensation lacking intent).[109] He therefore turns to John Henry Newman’s *Grammar of Ascent*, whose description of experience in conscience accounts for conscience as both ‘an intellectual sentiment’ and ‘something more than a moral sense… it is always emotional’.[110] Relatedly, Newman also distinguishes between a ‘notion’ of God (knowledge by description) and having a ‘real image of God’ (knowledge by direct experiential encounter), the latter being something we cannot adequately put into words.[111] Wynn first applies this distinction to our moral understanding, which is most effective when it sits in our felt responses rather than simply in intellectual assent (we can, for example, say we believe that all humans are equal and still treat someone else with condescension or contempt).[112] He then extends this interpersonal application to our encounters with the value of *the world as a whole*, suggesting that insight

[107] Mark Wynn, *Emotional Experience and Religious Understanding: Integrating Perception, Conception and Feeling* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[108] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 5.
[109] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 8.
[110] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 18.
[111] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 19–20.
[112] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 30–31.

into the goodness of the world may *only* be available via a kind of intuitive perception, rather than via discursive thought.[113]

Wynn acknowledges that 'the possibility of an affectively toned, non-discursive apprehension of the value of the world as a whole' may be unusual but argues that this does not mean it is unintelligible.[114] He turns to examples of intense visionary experiences which transform perspective. Of course, these kinds of heightened and transient moments of 'sensitivity' are not and cannot be an enduring state, and there are many people who do not have these kinds of encounters.[115] Why should we trust that these non-discursive affects can and do have lasting moral effects which offer transformation beyond that which is possible via discursive thought? Wynn employs the lives of the saints as an example of embodied witness; they exemplify the transformative effect of having a 'real image' of God, and the goodness of the world, and as such their lives can offer us an affectively toned and non-discursive transformative encounter with goodness. Wynn does not argue for the separation of 'discursive thought' and 'conceptually inarticulate feelings' in the pursuit of religious understanding. Rather, he suggests that the two models fruitfully and reciprocally interact in the religious life:

> A primitive affective responsiveness… can help to generate new doctrinal reflections, which in turn can help to produce new possibilities for religious feeling… The affective complexes which arise in this way will be unified states of mind, and will owe their intentionality in part to feeling… Lastly, we should suppose that the saint's emotional feelings contribute not only to their 'ideas', but also to their conduct.[116]

The emphasis here on the *unity* of 'affective complexes' which arise from both 'feeling' and 'reflection' differs from the descriptions of 'affect' arising from affect theory, and it shares significant common ground with the relation between 'reason' and 'passion' in the Christian tradition which I introduce in the next chapter. Wynn must at times assume what is meant by 'emotional' or 'affective', and while the framing of 'reason' and 'passion' has its own limitations, they already exist in clear relation to a Christian description of the moral life. However, Wynn's description of non-discursive encounters with the world's goodness are highly compelling for the kind of encounter I am interested in describing; if one can affectively encounter *goodness*, presumably one can also affectively encounter its *opposite*. I therefore

[113] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 60–61.
[114] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 70.
[115] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 71, 78.
[116] Wynn, *Emotional Experience*, 133.

return to examples of these kinds of affective encounters in the Christian tradition in chapters four and six.

iii. Affect And The Spirit

The third example I introduce is Simeon Zahl's *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*.[117] Zahl observes that the modern/post-reformation era has struggled with identifying the place of 'experience' in theology; either insisting on treating it as *the* ground of theological knowledge or attempting to remove it from consideration entirely.[118] In response, Zahl asserts that doctrines do not only operate as truth claims, but that they also 'shape and generate' affective experience.[119] Particularly influenced by Donovan Schaefer's work on religious affects, Zahl proposes that the language of 'affect' helps us attend to bodies as subject to powerful external forces which shape our feeling and doing, but that bodies are nevertheless able to resist these altering efforts (for example, via religious practices).[120] It is, then, 'true that theological doctrines and religious practices do shape and form affects, and it is no less true that affects tend to resist such shaping and forming'.[121] His work is situated in this longer historical frame; in his treatment of the history of spiritual experience, for example, Zahl draws on instances where 'passion' has been negatively contrasted with 'reason' to indicate the Christian tradition's anxiety around 'religious experience'.[122] He goes on to identify 'affect' as the location of religious experience and emphasises its intimate relation to the 'conceptual' role of reason.[123]

Zahl also draws on Augustine's descriptions of desire in the Christian life, describing his project as 'affective Augustinianism', participating in a longer theological stream 'which brings together a particular kind of pessimism about human moral powers... with convictions

[117] Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
[118] Zahl traces this history of approaches to experience in protestant religious thought via Luther's shift away from incorporating subjectivity into theology, Schleiermacher's emphasis on the authority of individual religious experience, and the Barthian tradition of treating experience as solely 'flesh' rather than 'Spirit', and as such offering no basis for theological reflection. Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 18–30.
[119] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 146.
[120] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 150.
[121] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 151.
[122] Zahl gives the example of Charles Chauncy criticising revivalist preacher George Whitefield as representative of those who sought to undermine the role of human subjectivity in the religious life: Chauncy argues that Whitefield's followers 'place their Religion so much in the Heat and Fervour of the Passions, that they too much neglect their Reason and Judgment'. Zahl picks up the use of the word 'passion' and elides it with experience more generally. Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 22.
[123] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 25–26.

about the relatively greater power of affects over rational deliberation and decision-making in determining human behavior'.[124] It is in this 'affective' context that the Spirit works – he proposes that the Spirit transforms reason and passion/affect together, these two are inextricably intertwined, and they influence each other in the moral life. Of course, this use of affect is not *identical* to the way 'passions' are interpreted in Augustine and Aquinas; Zahl's approach levels the relationship between 'conceptual' reason and passion/sensory knowledge. Rather than the moral life being characterised by the power of the unruly passions being brought under the government of reason, in Zahl's account the two are transformed together, and act in concert with each other in receiving the Spirit. Zahl therefore looks for instances of 'practical recognisability' in temporal specificity (the Spirit's presence in specific moments, like conversions and revelatory communication) and affective impact (the Spirit's presence connected with what Zahl calls 'emotional-dispositional' outcomes or 'religious emotion').[125]

Zahl's association of 'affects' with passions offers a highly compelling interpretation of Christian anthropology via a contemporary category. His affective reading of *sin* as not only 'attributed' but also 'experienced' is an effective correction to the lack of moral clarity I have identified in chapter one and in the psychological accounts examined in this chapter. For Zahl, the presence of sin in the world is signified in 'affective anguish' for both individuals and communities.[126] Where sin 'was once understood to encompass both a set of feelings, experiences, and desires, *and* questions of moral responsibility', he argues that contemporary Christian treatments appear to have generally reduced it to 'an artifact of discourse alone'.[127] In Zahl's account, the 'negative' passions (including sorrow over sin) are associated with discovering that one is under the law, and the sweetness of joy, delight etc are associated with receiving grace. It is out of these 'positive' passions that Zahl sees good works emerging.[128]

It is here that my account differs from Zahl, and in significant part justifies my focus on the passions – and the passion of sorrow in particular – in chapters three and four. I argue that the passion of sorrow is a fitting response, a morally authoritative insight into how the world truly

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[124] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 198.
[125] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 75–76. He goes on to describe 'affect' as encompassing 'both feelings and desires' and 'tethered to embodiment' (77-78).
[126] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 160.
[127] Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 162.
[128] 'In Augustine's vision, doing the right thing for the wrong reasons is not Christian holiness. The crucial point is motivation… And these motivations have a specific affective character: the law is to be followed "gladly," joyously, out of "delight." Only so are such behaviors actually "free," and only so are they authentically fruit of the Spirit.' Zahl, *Christian Experience*, 193–94.

is. This is most significantly demonstrated in Christ's full experiences of sorrow, having entered a world in bondage to the law but nevertheless living in freedom from this bondage. Zahl's descriptor of the 'law' is a useful frame for describing, for example, an encounter with anthropogenic loss as personal/corporate guilt or dread over one's own annihilation. But it lacks application to those aspects which are experienced as sorrow over the deaths of others, disgust over encounters with greed and violence, or the longing for creation's liberation. We might say that each of these things – sorrow, disgust, longing – are the product of creation being under the continual bondage of the law, but this does not quite cover what it means for an individual who is no longer under that bondage to experience these things. Using Zahl's model, the Spirit's work would prompt sorrow over anthropogenic loss to convict a disordered heart, and in receiving this conviction the heart would turn to grace and subsequently receive delight at, say, the promise of God's redemption, and the joy of living in harmony with this promise in the present. This may well be true, but it seems little space is left for sorrow as an ongoing vocation for the individual Christian or indeed for the gathered Church.

These three theological accounts share some pertinent assumptions which I wish to carry forward. 'Emotions', 'affects', 'feelings', etc. have an intimate relation to the moral life, both in direction and its outworking, and they can be radically transformed by divine encounter. However, as this genealogy has sought to indicate, these assumptions are by no means inherent to contemporary psycho-social discourse about emotions. Indeed, in many instances the opposite is true; the range of experiences and responses to the world tied to the word 'emotion' – not to mention the ideological assumptions implicit in these projections – vary widely and are still developing.[129] This renders the category a troubling one for the purpose of communicating a theological framework for responding to anthropogenic loss. It is not inevitable that these kinds of responses must be interpreted through a psychotherapeutic frame, particularly given the changing use of emotion in political and social theory, and the growing discomfort with the term 'emotion' in a variety of academic spheres. It is my suspicion that the pertinent assumptions shared by the theological accounts I have reviewed have not primarily emerged from *emotion* or *affect* theory, but from the Church's fundamental doctrines concerning the nature of creation, the human person, sin, and encounters with grace. While

[129] As Roberts puts it, in describing the range of approaches developed over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: 'Emotions have been examined by the methods of evolutionary biology, experimental psychology, brain science, psychoanalysis and other clinical approaches, cultural anthropology, and cultural history and the history of ideas. In each case, one or another of a variety of theories forms a more or less definite background and shapes its results.' Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 4.

these doctrines do not preclude the usefulness of biological, psychological, or other philosophical descriptions, they must nevertheless carefully define their application.

7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have offered a genealogy of the term 'emotions' (and related terms), covering changing philosophical and social definitions concerning human feeling. I have particularly explored the influence of these changes on contemporary Western understandings of the nature and expression of grief. This genealogy is intended to contextualise my own move away from an 'emotions' and 'grief' frame in the rest of this thesis, and so I have also given three examples of theological accounts which employ contemporary psychological language in order to delineate where my own project differs in approach. Specifically, I am attempting a moral account of human feeling which begins from within a theological anthropology. It is with that challenge in mind that I turn to the Christian tradition's longer wrestling with defining and describing the nature of human responses to the world, and their significance for the moral life: in the next chapter I introduce the 'passions' as interpreted by Augustine and Aquinas.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PASSION OF SORROW

1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter two I offered a genealogy of 'emotion' as it has emerged and come to be variously interpreted in contemporary Western thought, including its application to theological anthropology. In this chapter I introduce the passion of sorrow as interpreted by Augustine and Aquinas. Over the course of this project, I develop an interpretation of sorrow over anthropogenic loss as a morally authoritative passion which can be both passively received and performed in morally beneficial or detrimental ways. I draw on the work of Augustine and Aquinas for two reasons. Firstly, as outlined in the previous chapter, the modern use of emotion seems unsatisfactory: it includes lots of responses to the world which would have previously been treated in carefully distinguished categories – as appetites, passions, affections, or sentiments. While this form of tightly defined categorisation is not *necessarily* superior, it does offer an attentiveness to the nature of divergent experiences which can be lost in the breadth of 'emotion'. This prior attentiveness expressed a concern for analysing the moral content of a particular feeling and, relatedly, a concern for identifying its proper relationship to human will. Adopting such an approach guides us away from the paralysing assumption that human emotions are beyond the governance of reason but can only be contained or expressed: for the Christian tradition, reason and passions are not necessarily warring opposites, nor are 'emotions' an overpowering or uncontrollable force.[1]

Secondly, and relatedly, the approach to experiences of sorrow found in the work of Augustine and Aquinas moves beyond pathology or therapy; they offer a moral frame, concerned with how we should live. This overview will invite two key questions of the tradition, which will be taken up in later chapters. Firstly, what does it mean for the passion of sorrow to be governed by 'reason' as the necessary requirement for its direction towards the good, and how might this be applied to anthropogenic loss? And secondly, can the *expression* of sorrow itself participate in the good, rather than sorrow simply being a passive response which might provoke such participation?

[1] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 22.

I first turn to the general account of the passions and then the particular account of sorrow found in Augustine's writings, before comparing these accounts with those found in Aquinas. I pay particular attention to the relationship between reason and passion which Augustine and Aquinas propose, and the *kinds* and *expressions* of sorrow which they deem fitting and unfitting. Their accounts help to establish the moral framework within which their theological anthropology operates before I turn to their treatments of Christ's sorrow in the next chapter. While some of my interlocutors make the interpretive move of using 'emotion' as a translation of *passiones*, I will, where possible, use *passion* to differentiate this moral psychological structure from contemporary definitions of emotion.[2]

2. AUGUSTINE ON THE PASSIONS

Prior to Augustine, early Christian approaches to the 'passions' were shaped by the Stoic interpretation of the soul as a rational unity. As such, passions are not necessary for human life, and can even be harmful in representing false judgements which deviate from the norms of nature and reason.[3] The aim of the Stoic was to achieve *apatheia*: 'to see the world and oneself from the point of view of universal reason… the Stoic wise man… is bound to immutable truths, and he does not see any independent value in particular things'.[4] The four Stoic passions (pleasure, distress/pain, appetite, and fear) are not present in the truly wise man.[5] He might however still experience *eupatheiai*: 'well-reasoned elation which is joy, with well-reasoned shrinking which is caution, and well-reasoned reaching out which is wishing. There was no good feeling corresponding to distress'.[6] A slight concession to the ambition of *apatheia* – the existence of *pre-passions* – did however emerge in internal Stoic debate. Seneca, for example, proposed that humans can experience 'transient affective states' which are not yet passions if we do not assent to them.[7]

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[2] When quoting other works, the word 'emotion' may also be used, and this should normally be taken to be a translation of *passio* unless otherwise indicated. While the language of 'grief' is commonplace in referring to the response to anthropogenic loss with which I am concerned, the prevailing translation for *tristitia* (the relevant passion in Augustine and Aquinas) is 'sorrow', and so this is the terminology I adopt from now on.

[3] Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59.

[4] Knuuttila, *Emotions,* 58.

[5] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 52. There were no wise women.

[6] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 68.

[7] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 63–64. Neo-Stoicism remains an influential school of psychology. Neo-Stoic Martha Nussbaum, for example, argues that emotions are composed entirely of layered networks of thoughts and evaluative judgments, whether they are conscious or unconscious: they are 'judgments in which the mind of the judge is projected unstably outward' into the world. These thoughts reflect the socially conditioned nature of human emotion, shaped as it is by metaphysical or religious beliefs. Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–2, 152. Nussbaum's approach is helpful in its emphasis on the role of reason and social conditioning (more broadly, *learning*) in the

Plato's treatment of the passions also had considerable influence. While Platonic philosophy treats the passions as acts of natural potencies which cannot be eradicated, the Platonist should still pursue *metriopatheia* (moderation) in the passions. Though Plato had initially treated the passions as taking place in the body, the *Republic* treats desires and passions as movements of the soul; the soul is divided into three parts or elements: calculative (or reason) (*logistikon*), spirited (*thumoeides*), and the desirous (or appetite) (*epithumtikon*).[8] In the virtuous man, the latter two elements are obedient to reason.

Clement of Alexandria offered one of the earliest substantial Christian interpretations of the Stoic and Platonic passions. Clement understood the *logos* as both incarnate Christ and a cosmic principle of intelligibility; Christian perfection required obedience to the divine Word through the pursuit of mystical knowledge (*gnosis*) and therefore detachment from ties to worldly things. With the Stoics, he argued that reason – divine reason, in Christ the *logos* – offered healing for the passions.[9] The first step taken in this healing echoes the platonic *metriopatheia*: reason must keep the other parts of the soul under strict control. But, for Clement, 'the true Gnostics do not have emotional ties to earthly things. They imitate the life of Christ, who was apathetic, entirely free from human passion, and therefore sinless'.[10] Moderation must move to eradication. This final *apatheia* is where *agape* is truly expressed.[11]

Clement's disciple Origen would follow this understanding of spiritual growth. Origen's homily on the Israelite journey into the wilderness, for example, allegorises this journey as that of the soul going into the wilderness to be separated from earthly attachment, putting to death the passions, and turning to true obedience. Like Clement, Origen's Christ was without passion. He interprets Jesus' instruction to learn from children as meaning that they are not sexual or prone to other passions of the soul like anger, fear, or distress, and employed the Stoic idea of

experience of emotion, but is limited, as Diana Fritz Cates notes, by its lack of flexibility in explaining human experience of inner conflict between judgment and appetite. I return to this point later, in relation to Aquinas. Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Enquiry* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 72.

[8] G.R.F. Ferrari, 'The Three-Part Soul', in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, ed. G.R.F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[9] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 115–18.

[10] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 118. See Clement's *Paedagogus* I.2. 'He is wholly free from human passions; wherefore He alone is judge, because He alone is sinless.' Clement of Alexandria, 'The Instructor', in *Fathers of the Second Century*, ed. Cleveland Coxe, vol. II, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 210.

[11] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 120.

pre-passions to interpret Christ's sorrow as the *temptation* to sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane.[12] Origen's interpretations had considerable influence on the Cappadocian Fathers, who would likewise use the Platonic levels of the soul to advocate for the control of passions, and even their entire mortification through asceticism and meditation. They would, however, allow that for those in the early stages of spiritual growth, the appetitive part of the soul could be of use to virtuous action. Penitential sorrow for one's sins, for example, would move God to mercy, and in the receipt of forgiveness one experiences joy.[13]

These early Christian approaches to the passions form the context for Augustine's evolving thought. Augustine's attitude towards the *passiones animae* develops over his writing: the *Confessions* documents his journey from a wariness of the passions (and a desire to suppress sorrow in particular) to a cautious ambivalence towards the passions, including his own grief. His later assessment in *City of God*, by contrast, presents an assertive defence of the role of the passions in the virtuous life, representing a significant shift away from the prevailing pagan and Christian interpretations which he had inherited. Augustine eventually claims that the passions (fear, sorrow, desire, joy) are all expressions of love, and if this love is properly directed, then these passions are expressions of virtue:

> If these emotions and affections, arising as they do from the love of what is good and from a holy charity, are to be called vices, then let us allow these emotions which are truly vices to pass under the name of virtues. But since these affections, when they are exercised in a becoming way, follow the guidance of right reason, who will dare to say that they are diseases or vicious passions? Wherefore even the Lord Himself, when He

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[12] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 121–23. Knuuttila quotes Origen's Commentary on Matthew 15.16-17: 'that which has been said about little children in respect of lustful pleasures, the same might also be said in regard to the rest of the affections and infirmities and sicknesses of the soul, into which it is not the nature of little children to fall, who have not yet fully attained to the possession of reason… he who is converted would become such a one as little children; and, having received from the Word a disposition incapable of grief, so that he becomes like the little child in regard to grief'. One wonders whether Origen ever actually met a child.

[13] Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 127–28. Knuuttila references Basil the Great's *Shorter Rules* 10 and Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione* to support this interpretation. But it's worth noting that the Fathers trod a careful pastoral line where needed, reflecting a range of theological interpretations of sorrow in response to death. Gregory Nazianzen's Epigrams contain both a condemnation of those weeping for over his mother's death – 'ye mortals, weep for mortals, but for one who… died in prayer, I weep not' (64) – and also deep lament for the loss of others – 'if mourning made any one into a tree or a stone, if any spring ever flowed as a result of lament, all Caesarius' friends and neighbours should be stones, rivers and mournful trees' (97) and 'Thou has torn from me my heart… thou has carried off too soon Carterius' (145). Gregory Nazianzen, 'The Epigrams of Saint Gregory the Theologian', in *The Greek Anthology*, trans. W.R. Paton, vol. II, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1917). Augustine's sermons reflect a similar tension in relation to bereavement: 'You are filled with sorrow over the burial of your dead one… would you mourn for the seed, when you went plowing?' (361) and 'We feel sad, as human beings, about a human being… we are naturally saddened by the departure of one of our number' (396). Augustine, 'Sermons', in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. E Hill, vol. III (New York: New City Press, 1997).

> condescended to lead a human life in the form of a slave, had no sin whatever, and yet exercised these emotions where He judged they should be exercised.[14]

The particular emphasis on Christ's exercise of the passions as justification for their defence is a key theme to which I return in the next chapter. For now, note that Augustine is careful to differentiate between the passions and affections as not being sinful *in and of themselves*, while still treating their expression as peculiar to a fallen world (especially sorrow) and so never being fully under the control of reason:

> Even when these affections are well regulated, and according to God's will, they are peculiar to this life, not to that future life we look for, and that often we yield to them against our will. And thus sometimes we weep in spite of ourselves, being carried beyond ourselves, not indeed by culpable desire, but by praiseworthy charity. In us therefore, these affections arise from human infirmity.[15]

To be 'carried beyond' oneself is not then a sign of sin, but a sign of human finitude. Rather than the passions being indicative of a sinful will (note here that Augustine specifically selects the example of weeping) their presence ought to be acknowledged in humility – and in doing so, the soul is drawn back to dependence on God.

3. AUGUSTINE ON SORROW

Augustine's theological wrestling with sorrow begins in personal experience of death, as recounted in his *Confessions*. The deaths of his childhood friend and his mother narrate his shift from treating sorrow as simply instructive of the need to redirect affection towards the Creator rather than the created, to cautiously accepting sorrow as a fitting expression of the human condition which can in turn guide the creature towards the love of God. While Augustine provides a defence of sorrow in *City of God*, his wider desire to emphasise the potential goodness of the passions remains most cautious in relation to sorrow. In this section, I outline the evolution of his approach in the *Confessions* and *City of God*, suggest some reasons for his caution, and consider whether these reasons are compelling.

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[14] Augustine, 'City of God' 14.9, in *St Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Marcus Dods, vol II, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of The Christian Church 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 269. Augustine appears to use 'passion' and 'affection' somewhat interchangeably in his discussion of human feeling. Some scholars think that his use of affection indicates a 'proper' or 'good' passion. See for example Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 40–41.

[15] *City* 14.9. (Dods: 269).

Augustine's first encounter with sorrow in his *Confessions* is the death of a close childhood friend in Book Four. He describes his deep sorrow over the loss, and is troubled that 'naught but tears were sweet' following his death:

> Whence, then, is it that such sweet fruit is plucked from the bitterness of life, from groans, tears, sighs, and lamentations? Is it the hope that You hear us that sweetens it? This is true of prayer, for therein is a desire to approach unto You. But is it also in grief for a thing lost, and the sorrow with which I was then overwhelmed?[16]

Augustine's concern over the nature of weeping becomes a theme of the *Confessions*, but in Book Four this question is quickly succeeded by concern over experiencing any sorrow at all. Having absorbed stoic assumptions about the problematic nature of sorrow, Augustine looks to grief for a lesson in how to grow in wisdom. In his case, this lesson is 'not of detachment in the sense of emotionlessness, but in the sense of redirection'.[17] He argues that his excessive sorrow is a symptom of misplaced affection, a sign that the soul is turned to something other than God.[18] While he clarifies that it is not the act of love itself which is condemned (chapter 12) emerging as it does from God's act of creative grace (chapter 13) Augustine treats the *extent* of his sorrow over his friend's death as indicating a spiritual disorientation – his pleasure in weeping indicates misdirected affection. The passions and their direction are, for Augustine, knowledge about what we love.

As noted, Augustine's assessment of the fittingness of sorrow over human death changes over time. His next encounter with death in *Confessions* is found in Book Nine, in which he wrestles with his tears over the death of his mother, Monica. Augustine's approach to sorrow in *Confessions* is not limited to sorrow over death – he also attends to sorrow over sin or the brokenness of the world. For both, the figure of Monica is central, the role of sorrow in their relationship explored in response to her death and in her response to his sin. The first mention of Monica in relation to sorrow appears in Book Two, where Augustine describes her 'fear' and 'solicitude' over his sin and unbelief.[19] The same theme emerges in Book Eight as he

[16] Augustine, 'The Confessions of St Augustin' 4.5, in *The Confessions and Letters of St Augustin, with a Sketch of his Life and Work*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J.G. Pilkington, vol. I, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of The Christian Church 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 71.
[17] Catherine Oppel, '"Why, My Soul, Are You Sad?": Augustine's Opinion on Sadness in the City of God and an Interpretation of His Tears in the Confessions', *Augustinian Studies* 35, no. 2 (2004): 213.
[18] *Confessions* 4.10 (Pilkington: 73).
[19] *Confessions* 2.3 (Pilkington: 56).

narrates his conversion; he describes how weeping leads him to a place of sufficient truthfulness regarding his condition that he can repent and receive salvation:

> When a profound reflection had, from the secret depths of my soul, drawn together and heaped up all my misery before the sight of my heart, there arose a mighty storm, accompanied by as mighty a shower of tears… I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo, I heard the voice...[20]

Having received salvation, he relays the news to Monica. Augustine presents her joy at his salvation as flowing in part from joy over answered prayer, and in particular prayer expressed in sorrow: 'she perceived You to have given her more for me than she used to ask by her pitiful and most doleful groanings… you turned her grief into a gladness much more plentiful than she had desired'.[21] Monica's weeping over Augustine's *spiritual* death, then, appears to be an unequivocal good, rather than a source of potential shame.[22] Later, Monica's tears set up a contrast for Augustine's response to his own weeping over her death. Augustine gives particular and detailed attention to observing the movement of his sorrow; from rejection, to rationalising, to frustration, to submission. Firstly, he articulates a 'violent' struggle for control over his body in trying to prevent his sadness from being expressed as tears.[23] He then reasons as to why tears would be inappropriate: 'she neither died unhappy, nor did she altogether die'.[24] Having attempted to rule his sorrow through argument, he searches for its source. He proposes that it is not so much that she had died, but that the goodness of her company was lost – that is, that the relationship that existed between them had died, 'that most sweet and dear habit of living together suddenly broken off'.[25] He tries again, then, to restrain himself, but finds that attempting self-restraint only increases his sorrow, rather than diminishing it:

> In Thine ears, where none of them heard, did I blame the softness of my feelings, and restrained the flow of my grief, which yielded a little unto me; but the paroxysm returned again, though not so as to burst forth into tears, nor to a change of countenance, though I knew what I repressed in my heart. And as I was exceedingly annoyed that these human things had such power over me, which in the due order and destiny of our natural condition must of necessity come to pass, with a new sorrow I sorrowed for my sorrow, and was wasted by a twofold sadness.[26]

[20] *Confessions* 8.12 (Pilkington: 127).
[21] *Confessions* 8.12 (Pilkington: 128).
[22] See William Werpehowski, 'Weeping at The Death of Dido: Sorrow, Virtue, and Augustine's "Confessions"', *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 19, no. 1 (1991): 183.
[23] *Confessions* 9.12 (Pilkington: 139).
[24] *Confessions* 9.12 (Pilkington: 139).
[25] *Confessions* 9.12 (Pilkington: 139).
[26] *Confessions* 9.12 (Pilkington: 139).

Reason having failed, he asks God to intervene ('with a troubled mind entreated Thee, as I was able, to heal my sorrow, but Thou didst not').[27] Finally, having exhausted his other options, he turns to contemplate Monica's life and death, finding relief in the flow of tears which he had sought to repress:

> And then little by little did I bring back my former thoughts of Thine handmaid… and it was pleasant to me to weep in Thy sight, for her and for me, concerning her and concerning myself. And I set free the tears which before I repressed, that they might flow at their will, spreading them beneath my heart; and it rested in them, for Thy ears were nigh me – not those of man, who would have put a scornful interpretation on my weeping.[28]

Augustine's differentiation between *God's* reception of his tears and *human* reception of them represents a significant shift in his understanding of sorrow. Here, God is not only uninterested in taking his sorrow away, but particularly present with him in weeping. Weeping becomes a sanctified act: the sorrowful response he offers is rendered fitting by God's reception of the tears. God's reception appears to be at least in part because it is *to God* that these tears are offered; they become a form of prayer.

In her work on Augustine's interpretation of weeping, Catherine Oppel emphasises that Augustine's shift in attitude (which he feels he must explicitly defend against a reader who might mock or criticise his tears) not only rejects Stoic interpretations of sorrow, but also other Christian approaches.[29] John Chrysostom, for example, considered any grief over loss in this world to be an act that should itself be grieved over, and it was common for the Church Fathers to treat grief over bodily death as rejecting belief in the resurrection.[30] Such an attitude mimics the Stoic conviction that the wise mind should exercise complete control over the passions, to the point of being able to reject them entirely: intellectual assent to a belief should be accompanied by elimination of a passion. Augustine's defence of sorrow is most systematically set out in Book Fourteen of *City of God*. Against the backdrop of Book Nine, in which Augustine more widely differentiates a 'Christian moral psychology' from 'Platonism,

[27] *Confessions* 9.12 (Pilkington: 139).
[28] *Confessions* 9.12 (Pilkington: 140).
[29] '...if he finds me to have sinned in weeping for my mother during so small a part of an hour — that mother who was for a while dead to my eyes, who had for many years wept for me, that I might live in Thine eyes — let him not laugh at me, but rather, if he be a man of a noble charity, let him weep for my sins'. *Confessions*, 9.12 (Pilkington: 140).
[30] Oppel, 'Opinion on Sadness', 216.

Stoicism, and Peripateticism, whose opinions on the passions Augustine lumps together', Augustine defends sorrow against the spiritual practices of *apatheia* or *tranquilitas*, and especially criticises Christians claiming liberation from the *passiones animae.*[31] The Stoics maintained that the *passiones animae* led the soul away from the happiness of rest, and treated sorrow as a failure to maintain mental supremacy over one's body.[32] In response, Augustine draws on classical writings and scripture to identify the passions as expressions of the will, or love.[33] He writes:

> What are desire and joy but a volition of consent to the things we wish? And what are fear and sadness but a volition of aversion from the things which we do not wish? But when consent takes the form of seeking to possess the things we wish, this is called desire; and when consent takes the form of enjoying the things we wish, this is called joy. In like manner, when we turn with aversion from that which we do not wish to happen, this volition is termed fear; and when we turn away from that which has happened against our will, this act of will is called sorrow.[34]

If the goodness of the *passiones animae* is in the direction of the will, then 'good' and 'bad' kinds of sorrow can be identified. Augustine does just this in Book Fourteen of *City of God*, using the distinction between *tristitia* which is *secundum deum* and *tristitia mundi* found in 2 Corinthians 7.[35] The wider context for this emphasis is Augustine's rejection of a dualism which roots sin in the flesh rather than the soul. The weakness or badness of the flesh is an implied assumption in the Stoic argument that the passions reside in the body, making the soul responsible for controlling and dismissing this weakness – and, relatedly, proposing that a 'good' can only be applied to living well, rather than to any physical benefit.[36] Instead, Augustine first argues that the corruption of flesh is a result of the soul's sinfulness, not the other way round (an argument supported by the evil of a fleshless devil) and then observes that desertion of the 'Creator good' for the 'created good' is a desertion whether it is made 'according to the flesh, or according to the soul, or according to the whole human nature, which

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[31] Oppel, 'Opinion on Sadness', 199. As Oppel goes on to summarise – Cicero treated grief as *dolor*, sickness, which disintegrates the person, while Plato argued that the mind demonstrated control over the body by resisting the natural temptation to grieve. For Cicero, Plato, and Socrates, grief was 'unmanly' (202).

[32] The Stoics could concede that some emotive traits can co-exist with apathy, but not sorrow. Johannes Brachtendorf, '"Et Lacrymatus Est Jesus" (John 11:35): The Sorrow of Jesus in the Teaching of Augustine and Aquinas on the Affections', *Augustinian Studies* 48, no. 1/2 (2017): 229.

[33] He quotes Virgil's identification of 'contentment' as a state which can just as much describe 'good and bad men alike' (14.8), and Cicero's praise for Caesar's virtue of 'compassion', which must surely involve a form of feeling (9.5). For scripture, he references 1 Corinthians 15:54 as evidence of fitting affections: 'they fear to sin, they desire to persevere, they grieve in sin, they rejoice in good works' (14.9). *City* (Dods: 268, 169, 269).

[34] *City* 14.6 (Dods: 266).

[35] *City* 14.8.

[36] *City* 9.4 (Dods: 167).

is composed of flesh and soul'.[37] The flesh and the soul are both capable of rebellion against God, and the affections, like the rest of the created order, are good in their own 'kind' and 'degree'.[38]

Despite this insistence that it is not residence in the flesh or soul which makes a thing good or bad but rather its direction, Augustine also emphasises that the passions and affections, including sorrow, are of the soul, not the flesh. Counter to Stoic reasoning, he argues that the mental pain of sorrow (*tristitia*) should not be confused with physical pain (*dolor*) – while pain that dwells in the flesh might be countered by an act of the will, he reasons, *tristitia* will not be subject to the same discipline, and so should be expected in the life of the wise man.[39] If it is indeed the case that sorrow resides in the soul, the affections he identifies (desire, joy, fear, and sorrow) are acts of the will, whose virtue resides in their direction – 'these motions are evil if the love is evil; good if the love is good'.[40] The affections (as works of love) are godly if they pursue the will of God, and sinful if they pursue the will of humans:

> Good and bad men alike will, are cautious, and contented; or, to say the same thing in other words, good and bad men alike desire, fear, rejoice, but the former in a good, the latter in a bad fashion, according as the will is right or wrong. Sorrow itself, too, which the Stoics would not allow to be represented in the mind of the wise man, is used in a good sense, and especially in our writings. For the apostle praises the Corinthians because they had a godly sorrow.[41]

It is, then, 'not a matter of whether one has a *passio animae* but why one has it'.[42] Having established this premise, Augustine begins to transition away from a general argument in defence of the affections towards a specific description of their role – including the role of sorrow – in the Christian life. Sorrow cannot be dismissed for two related reasons. Firstly, it unavoidably belongs to human experience in a fallen world and is therefore a fitting response to the weakness of earthly life after the fall (to deny it is to deny the reality of sin). Secondly, it has moral value when governed by a will which is directed towards God.

So, to the first point: being human in a fallen world necessarily involves experiencing the *passiones animae*, including sorrow. Augustine is careful to distinguish fallenness from the

[37] *City* 14.5 (Dods: 265).
[38] *City* 14.5 (Dods: 265).
[39] *City* 14.7 (Dods: 266–67).
[40] *City* 14.7 (Dods: 267).
[41] *City* 14.8 (Dods: 268).
[42] Brachtendorf, 'Et Lacrymatus Est Jesus', 230.

capacity for the passions (especially referencing Christ's expression of passion) but nevertheless emphasises that passions like sorrow and fear belong to a post-lapsarian world.[43] Rather than seeing this belonging as a reason to reject sorrow, Augustine argues that its expression is crucially truthful. Denying its expression denies both the fallenness of the world and one's own fallenness. As such, even *unfitting* sorrow affirms the weakness of human nature – being without passions inhibits one's capacity to pursue repentance.[44] There is no redemption without admission of its necessity.

Augustine also explores sorrow as a wounding (compunction) which opens the human to the capacity for love. In his exposition of Psalm 37, he wonders whether love can exist without sorrow; it is sorrow over what is lost or not yet possessed that witnesses to the object of love.[45] This love can be obviously misplaced – elsewhere in his exposition Augustine condemns mourning over a child's death when the parent did not mourn over sins during their life.[46] He is also consistent in arguing that sorrow which properly expresses love for a fellow creature must refuse to love creatures with the love owed to the Creator.[47] But being made open to this capacity for sorrow (and therefore accepting mortality) can ultimately guide the soul towards God. For Augustine, the wounding of sorrow is most fully an openness to love when it is sorrow over sin. In his commentary on Psalm 4, Augustine treats this wounding as a 'penitential grief' (paenitentiae dolorem).[48] As seen earlier in Augustine's description of Monica's tears, it is weeping over sin which transforms the one who weeps and is received as a fitting prayer on behalf of another. This brings us to the second point: when properly governed by the will directed towards God, sorrow is not only a kind of morally ambiguous but inevitable state.

[43] 'On account of (the first transgression of those first human beings) this nature is subject to the great corruption we feel and see, and to death, and is distracted and tossed with so many furious and contending emotions, and is certainly far different from what it was before sin, even though it were then lodged in an animal body'. *City* 14.12 (Dods: 272).
[44] 'So long as we wear the infirmity of this life, we are rather worse men than better if we have none of these emotions at all… For to be quite free from pain while we are in this place of misery is only purchased… at the price of blunted sensibilities both of mind and body… he who thinks he lives without sin puts aside not sin, but pardon. And if that is to be called apathy, where the mind is the subject of no emotion, then who would not consider this insensibility to be worse than all vices?' *City* 14.9 (Dods: 269–70).
[45] Oppel, 'Opinion on Sadness', 232.
[46] 'If any one's son dies, he mourns for him but does not mourn for him if he sins. It is then, when he sees him sinning, that he ought to make mourning for him, to lament over him'. Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, 37.23, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. VIII, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 110.
[47] Werpehowski, 'Sorrow, Virtue, and Augustine's "Confessions"', 184.
[48] Oppel's translation. Oppel, 'Opinion on Sadness', 225. Interestingly, many translations opt for 'pain' rather than 'grief' – see e.g., the Select Library series.

Properly governed, its expression can participate in the good. For Augustine, this is most fully expressed in the sorrow of Christ, which I return to in chapter four.

Augustine affirms sorrow as a fitting response to the world, as an instructive passion which can redirect our will, and as an expression of love, an 'acceptable sacrifice' to God.[49] In particular, sorrow over spiritual death (whether one's own or another's) is a Christian vocation. He remains ambivalent, however, over the question of whether sorrow over physical death is fitting, or simply permissible given human weakness (a concession he makes from his own experience of weeping). Augustine's ambivalence emerges from the danger of mourning becoming despair, either due to idolatrous affection (directing love for the Creator towards a fellow creature) or a denial of the promise of resurrection. Legitimate warnings, perhaps – and yet it seems that the influence of stoicism, its gendered assumptions, and wider Christian aspirations towards *apatheia* have not been fully shaken off, despite his critique of these philosophies in *City of God*. Certainly, Augustine would treat the general phenomenon of sorrow over the death of non-human creatures with suspicion, though sorrow over the sin which leads to this kind of death is a fitting application of his framework. But the point I hope to emphasise here is not necessarily the *kinds* of sorrow Augustine endorses, but the *expressions*. When sorrow is expressed as prayer – that is, when it is directed towards God, rather than passively turned into itself – it becomes a fitting expression. Augustine weeps over his mother's death, and then weeps 'tears of a far different sort' on behalf of Monica's soul; that God might forgive her and have mercy upon her.[50] Sorrow for Augustine, then, is not *only* a passively received passion. When expressed as prayer, it also manifests as an action, and one that the Christian can be instructed to carry out. The theological anthropology and moral psychology developed by Augustine provides the framework for later Christian understanding of the passions in the high Middle Ages, and in particular the extended analysis of the passions offered by Aquinas. I turn now to an overview of Aquinas' treatment of the passions before moving to his specific understanding of sorrow: Aquinas' account provides a clearer definition for the passions as distinguished from the affections, and this distinction is especially pertinent for clarifying the relationship between sensory knowledge and the moral life.

[49] *Confessions* 8.12 (Pilkington: 127).
[50] *Confessions* 9.13 (Pilkington: 140).

4. AQUINAS ON THE PASSIONS

While Aquinas' treatment of the passions offers some clear points of departure from Augustine, both come to similar conclusions. Aquinas adapts Augustine's understanding of the passions as expressions of love to say that the forms of passion are forms of love, which is itself movement – towards or away from a particular object.[51] Both read the passions through the fallen state of human nature, meaning that the moral nature of the passions should be treated with a certain ambivalence (with sorrow one of those posing the most difficulty), and both also emphasise the presence of free will, meaning reason can exercise (imperfect) governance over the passions. Aquinas, however, attempts a much more systematic introduction to the passions and their relations to each other, differentiating between passions and affections by associating them with different appetites.[52] He describes three appetites which move toward the good: the natural, the rational, and the sensitive. The natural appetite describes the tendency of everything which exists toward its proper end (everything that exists tends to be what it is, and to behave in line with its nature). Aquinas sometimes calls this tendency love.[53] The rational and sensitive appetites – and their interactions – are more complex. Before these are examined in further detail, they require a broader frame: Aquinas' understanding of passion and affection is best interpreted through his scale of being, from purely intellectual beings (angels) to purely material beings (stones). In between are vegetative beings (plants), sensory beings (animals), and humans – rational animals – who possess both sensory and intellectual powers, each conditioning the other.

The shared sensory powers of human and non-human animals are central to understanding Aquinas' construction of the passions. All animals have exterior and interior senses, and the four interior senses reflect some shared experience for human and nonhuman animals. The first, *sensus communis* (common sense) is the root and 'common term' of the exterior senses. It is 'the power that makes it possible for an animal – whether nonhuman or human – to have relatively complex sensory impressions'.[54] The second interior sense, *imaginatio* (imagination)

[51] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 45. See Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiæ of St Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Online (New Advent, 2017). IIa-IIae.24.4. Henceforward, *ST*.

[52] This differentiation in Aquinas can be overly emphasised – Aquinas argues that 'the passions of the soul are the same as the affections', both being drawn to something by the appetitive rather than the apprehensive power. *ST* Ia-IIae.22.2.s.c.

[53] 'Now to love God above all things is natural to man and to every nature, not only rational but irrational, and even to inanimate nature according to the manner of love which can belong to each creature'. *ST* Ia-IIae.109.3.resp. See Kevin White, 'The Passions of the Soul (Ia IIae, Qq.22-48)', in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 108.

[54] Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 113.

'makes it possible for an animal – whether nonhuman or human – to retain and make use of the sensible forms of objects (i.e., to work with sensory images)'.[55] A third interior sense is called the 'estimative' (*aestimativa*) sense in nonhuman animals (perceiving intentions using natural instinct) and in human animals is shaped by the intellect to mean that we can perceive intentions through collections of ideas – a cogitative power. While this is *shaped* by the intellect, it nevertheless sits in the sensory domain. Finally, the fourth interior sense is the 'memorative' power, drawing on past sensory judgments to make decisions. Human passions, then, can variously reflect the different powers humans possess, some of which are held in common with other animals.[56] Aquinas does not, however, treat the passions as purely instinctive responses which have no relation to rational apprehension. Just as there is a spectrum of being, there is a kind of spectrum of apprehension – sensory to intellectual. The cogitative power is the highest *sensory* power and has a close relationship with the intellect. Human sensory powers are conditioned by their intellectual powers, and as such are not experienced in the same way as non-human animals.

Humans also possess an intellectual (rational) appetite, moved not by sensory apprehension but by intellectual apprehension.[57] For Aquinas, the proper object of intellectual (rational) apprehension is universal being and truth, and so the proper object of the intellectual appetite is universal goodness.[58] In parallel to the sensory appetitive passions of hope, love, and joy, one thus finds the intellectual appetitive motions of hope, love, and joy in relation to a perceived good. Fritz Cates argues that the same is true of the sensory appetitive motions of hatred, aversion, and sorrow: their parallels exist in the intellectual appetite.[59] When these intellectual appetitive motions reflect a 'stable disposition of the will that causes one to desire rightly what pertains to one's highest end', they are a virtue.[60] These become *theological* virtues when they are habits infused by God, thus becoming somewhat healed of the disorder of sin, oriented toward that which is beyond human understanding.

To recap, and to return to the sensitive and intellectual appetites: the natural appetite is found in all creation – all things move towards that which is good (ultimately, God). The sensitive

[55] Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 113.
[56] Fritz Cates points, for example, to anger over a friend's betrayal and anger towards a fly buzzing around. Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 104.
[57] Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 193.
[58] Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 192. See *ST* Ia-IIae.9.1.
[59] Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 203.
[60] Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 196. See *ST* IIa-IIae.17.1.

appetite is found in creatures with 'sensation', a category Aquinas restricts to animals. And, finally, the rational appetite (the will) is found in humans.[61] Appetites desire the good – but different appetites desire different goods. The sensitive appetite desires things that are pleasant and useful (the *bonum delectabile* and the *bonum utile*) while the rational appetite can desire that which is *fitting* – the *bonum honestum*.[62] In humans (rational animals) the appetitive powers found in the sensitive and rational appetite also relate to apprehensive powers: we can apprehend that we need something, which prompts a passion.

Aquinas identifies the passions with bodily change, being found in the sensitive appetite (rather than the intellectual appetite, which requires no bodily change). This renders the experience of the passions spiritual (in the sensitive apprehension) and natural (in the body): the passions are experiences which involve both the soul's appetitive motion and a change in the body and are prompted by a sensory object.[63] They are, however, shaped by the rational soul that humans possess. To distinguish between the somatic element found in the passions and the nature of the affections, the affections have also been translated as 'pseudo passions': acts that resemble the passions but lack bodily change.[64] In his analysis of morality in the passions, Robert C Roberts picks up on a narrow distinction Aquinas makes here: the object of a human response to the world (joy, anger, etc) can sometimes be unsensory (for example, joy over a rectified injustice). Aquinas would not treat these experiences as passions; 'if either the object of the mental state is not sensory, or the subject of the state has no body in which physical change can occur, then we must say that the states belong not to the sensory appetite, but to the will'.[65] By extension, if we have a sensory response to something that is not sensory, this is an intense overflow of the movement of the will. Love, for example, can be described as both a passion and an affection.[66] While this distinction is interesting, I want to query such a clear differentiation between sensory and intellectual apprehension of something like an injustice. Humans often (or even *always*) identify injustices by their material effects in the world, rather than simply in the abstract. We might think, for example, of the experience of reading an article

[61] *ST* Ia-IIae.8.1.
[62] Aquinas further divides up these pursuits in the sensitive appetite by identifying two powers: the 'irascible' power (seeking the useful good, even if it is difficult) and the 'concupiscible' power (seeking pleasure, shunning pain). *ST* Ia-IIae.23.1.
[63] Aquinas, *ST* Ia.20.1.
[64] Peter King, 'Aquinas on the Passions', in *Aquinas's Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 105.
[65] Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 295.
[66] 'When love and joy and the like are ascribed to God or the angels, or to man in respect of his intellectual appetite, they signify simple acts of the will having like effects, but without passion'. *ST* Ia-IIae.22.3.ad 3.

about a river polluted by sewage run-off. While we might say that responding with anger to this article is a movement of the will, since we are not actually present at the river and sensorily experiencing it, this anger also relies on our prior sensory experiences of rivers, healthy and otherwise. I find Aquinas' account most compelling where he maintains intimacy between the sensory and intellectual appetites.

As a sensory-appetitive motion, the passions are always in response to an object experienced via sensory apprehension.[67] These motions can take place in human and nonhuman animals, though the details and complexity will differ – most fundamentally in the influence of the rational soul on the sensitive appetite. Importantly, the *whole* human (that is, as an embodied soul) experiences a passion, not the mind/soul or body as a distinct entity. Aquinas' framework is helpful in offering a clear description of the relations between the appetites and the diversity of experiences accounted for in the range of appetitive motions. The flexibility of this approach is highly relevant to the relation of the passions to goodness. While Aquinas emphasises that moral good or evil depends on reason rather than movements of the irrational appetite (the passions have no essential moral good or evil), if the passions are 'subject to the command of the reason and will, then moral good and evil are in them'; if the passions are voluntary (either commanded or unchecked by the will) then they can be called 'good' or 'evil'.[68] Even the 'lower' appetitive powers are able to partake in some sort of reason – and so the responses of the sensitive appetite are closely concerned with virtue:

> Since man's good is founded on reason as its root, that good will be all the more perfect, according as it extends to more things pertaining to man… since the sensitive appetite can obey reason… it belongs to the perfection of moral or human good, that the passions themselves also should be controlled by reason. Accordingly, just as it is better that man should both will good and do it in his external act; so also does it belong to the perfection of moral good, that man should be moved unto good, not only in respect of his will, but also in respect of his sensitive appetite.[69]

Aquinas presents a nuanced interpretation of the relation between the passions and virtue. Even if the sensitive appetite is passive in its reception of the passions, this does not mean that the whole body/soul is passive in relation to them. Robert Miner points out three different

[67] Relatedly, Aquinas accepts that purely spiritual beings can be 'angry' or experience 'pity', but these again must be movements of the will. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, 295. These movements of the will must however be different to *human* movements of the will – an angel's intellectual sorrow is not the same as a human's intellectual sorrow, just as a human's sensory sorrow is not the same as an animal's sensory sorrow.
[68] *ST* Ia-IIae.24.1.resp.
[69] *ST* Ia-IIae.24.3.resp.

intuitions Aquinas supports in describing the moral power of the passions: Firstly, we have indirect but significant control over some passions, and so are responsible for them. These are 'consequent passions' which follow an act of reason. For example, choosing to use one's imagination to provoke feelings of pity.[70] Secondly, in some instances, we have no control over the experience of a passion, but we still have some responsibility. This is because our experience of passions reflects human character, for which we are responsible. These are 'antecedent passions' – ones which occur before an act of the will, but which could have been prevented by reason if foreseen.[71] (For example, violent anger under the influence of alcohol). And, finally, in some instances, we have no control and no responsibility – this kind of 'antecedent passion' is experienced when even the virtuous person could not have foreseen the passion (e.g., initial stirrings of lust). Following Augustine, Aquinas refers to these as *propassions*.[72] Miner's list provides helpful specificity for describing the kinds of passions with moral power that anthropogenic loss might provoke. Someone might read about the devastation wrought by another year of unseasonal drought and feel moved to regret and pity (a 'consequent passion'). A community forced to live with the consequences of an ecocidal corporation's negligence might experience anger in seeing pollutants enter their water supply, contextualised by the unjust circumstances they have been dealt (an antecedent passion).[73] The first fluttering – and subsequent rejection – of nihilistic despair after the release of another frightening IPCC report might be called a 'propassion'. The challenge with Miner's outline, however, is that it is difficult to avoid constructing an assumed chronology for the movement of reason and passion in describing an experience; while we might sometimes be aware of their interaction, the dialogue of reason and passion is often much more difficult to tease out. Such a strict chronological account also risks returning all the moral weight to the *reason* which comes before or after a passion, rather than seeing the passion itself as a participant in moving one towards or away from the good.

Aquinas' account does not necessarily require such a strict chronology – his treatment of the passions both acknowledges that they might arise unbidden, and that they are useful in equipping us to choose goodness. And while the 'affections' are also morally pertinent for Aquinas (the rational appetite can prompt virtuous action prior to or without bodily sensation),

[70] *ST* Ia-IIae.24.3.ad 1.
[71] *ST* Ia-IIae.17.7.
[72] Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 101–7.
[73] In his outline, Miner gives a *negative* example of an antecedent passion that ought to have been *prevented*, but we could just as easily give a positive example of an antecedent passion that reason ought to *prompt*.

as noted above, Aquinas affirms that being moved to do the good is morally superior to simply performing it on its own – it *perfects* the good. In his description of this moral frame, where reason and passion move in concert, Robin Gill adopts the helpful shortcut term 'moral passions' – movements shaped by reason and accompanied by grace.[74] Further, if the passions do in fact participate in movement towards the good, then we might also treat reasoned movements of the sensitive appetite as offering moral insight; they can be revelatory of how things *ought* to be, and can be our first access to this revelation, before we think we have 'reasoned' our way to an account of a particular good.[75]

The question, then, is how to identify disordered passions from ordered passions: how do we analyse the moral content of the variety of responses which anthropogenic loss might provoke? Rather than trying to determine what movement toward the good *generally* looks like in the passions, Aquinas instead assesses the movements of different passions to describe their relation to virtue. I therefore now turn to his treatment of the passion of sorrow.

5. AQUINAS ON SORROW

Aquinas proposes that there are four principal passions which can be further broken down into eleven passions from which all others flow. These passions emerge from either the 'concupiscible' or 'irascible' appetites of the sensory appetite. The concupiscible passions encourage a creature to seek sensible good and avoid injury; we sorrow, for example, over failing to obtain a sensible good in the past. The irascible passions are those that encourage a creature to resist obstacles and seek a 'difficult' good; we hope, for example, to overcome an obstacle in the future to obtain a good. Sorrow is identified as one of the four principal passions, the others being joy, hope, and fear.[76] Elsewhere, Aquinas further differentiates the passions into love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, aversion, hope, despair, fear, daring, and anger.[77]

[74] Robin Gill, *Moral Passion and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[75] Jean Porter offers a thoughtful and nuanced defence of such a position in Jean Porter, 'Passion, Reasons and the Virtues as Perfecting Habits', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 36, no. 2 (May 2023): 231-253.

[76] Aquinas distinguishes these passions based on their relation to time. While joy and sorrow are concerned with present experience, hope and fear are passions which move the appetite toward something, and so are concerned with the future – e.g., joy relates to present good, hope relates to future good. *ST* Ia-IIae.25.4.

[77] *ST* Ia-IIae.23.4. Aquinas identifies six passions as belonging to the concupiscible faculty – love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, and aversion – and five which belong to the irascible faculty – hope and despair, fear and daring, and anger. Note that despair *is not* an extreme form of sorrow, but the opposite of hope.

Aquinas makes a specific distinction between 'pain' and 'sorrow', or '*dolor exterior*' and '*dolor interior*' – pain caused by the apprehension of sense, and pain caused by interior apprehension – in the imagination or reason. He compares the two experiences: while outward (bodily) pain is strictly concerned with present suffering, inward pain (sorrow) can be caused by the present, past, and future.[78] Inward pain, Aquinas argues, is more keenly felt than outward pain; while outward pain is repugnant to the appetite *indirectly* (because it is repugnant to the body) sorrow is *directly* repugnant to the appetite. Similarly, the apprehension of sorrow takes place in one's reason or imagination, which is of a higher order than the apprehension of sense of touch. He provides examples to demonstrate this: humans will willingly experience bodily pain to avoid sorrow, and not all bodily pain is disagreeable to the appetite – it can be pleasant in a way that sorrow cannot. He is also clear that the differentiation of inner and outer pain is not related to categorising different kinds of evil, but in the ways the appetite receives these causes.[79]

He then further differentiates between different species of sorrow. While 'the proper object of sorrow is "one's own evil"' (what we might call repentance), sorrow can also be concerned for an object foreign to it. We can be sorry for an evil that is not our own (pity) and we can be sorry for another's good (envy).[80] A further two species involve the ways that the motion of sorrow can be made incomplete. Sorrow, Aquinas argues, involves the withdrawal or 'flight' of the appetite from something – we can be unable to 'flee' (anxiety), or the flight and the appetite can both be weighed down and rendered immobile (torpor).[81] Miner observes that Aquinas also distinguishes between *dolor interior* – an inner pain which can be experienced by any animal – and *tristitia*, pain caused by 'rational' apprehension. Animals possess sufficient capacity for memory and imagination that they can experience pain which does not touch them (though it is still *felt* physically).[82] But they cannot experience *tristitia cordis*

[78] *ST* Ia-IIae.35.2.
[79] *ST* Ia-IIae.35.7.ad. 1: 'Inward pain can also arise from things that are destructive of life. And then the comparison of inward to outward pain must not be taken in reference to the various evils that cause pain; but in regard to the various ways in which this cause of pain is compared to the appetite'.
[80] *ST* Ia-IIae.35.8.
[81] *ST* Ia-IIae.35.8. Aquinas deals separately with the question of despair. Rather than relating despair to something like depression or torpor (implying immobility), Aquinas describes despair as movement away from the arduous good which is desired, on the basis that it has been determined to be impossible to attain. It is therefore an opposite to hope, which pursues the arduous good. See *ST* Ia-IIae.40.4.
[82] As noted earlier in relation to the interior senses, human experience of these senses is shaped by possessing a rational soul. We might argue that humans, for example, possess a more intense and extended capacity for experiencing non-physical pain (e.g., imagination of death), which creates a much broader horizon for human passions. Christ's passions, by comparison, exist over an eternal time frame – a theme I return to in the next chapter.

(sorrow of the heart), an expression Aquinas draws from Sirach.[83] Aquinas' approach to categorising pain and sorrow can therefore be summarised as follows:

1. *Dolor* (any pain or sorrow)
2. *Dolor exterior* (pain caused by immediate senses)
3. *Dolor interior* (pain caused by imagination)
4. *Tristitia* (pain caused by rational apprehension but involving a motion of the sensitive appetite).[84]

As a concupiscible passion, sorrow is to some extent a shared experience of human and nonhuman animals: '*dolor exterior*' and '*dolor interior*' are pains which relate to senses animals share, though to varying degrees: when an animal is deprived of a sensible good, it experiences inner pain at awareness of the deprivation. *Tristitia*, however, is a pain belonging only to the human animal, being caused by the rational apprehension. Aquinas' treatment of the appetites as forms of *tending* provides a useful descriptive guide for applying this framework to human experience; sorrow is not experienced as an isolated response, but part of a wider schema of tendencies and repulsions. As mentioned earlier, sorrow can be understood as relating closely to hatred and aversion, forming the parallel repulsions to the movements of love, desire, and delight. As Cates explains:

> Hatred, aversion, and sorrow are three moments in what is commonly a seamless process of tending. The process includes (1) an initial motion of being uncomfortable with or disturbed by the sensory impression that one stands in a disharmonious or injurious relationship to an object, and one is poised to be (further) united with that object in a way that is hurtful to oneself; (2) a subsequent motion of recoiling or withdrawing interiorly, and perhaps also in the form of bodily motion, from the prospect of (further) union with the object; and (3) a motion of being (further) pained if the (further) hurtful union occurs anyway… One could say that there is a dimension of sorrow – a painful dissonance – present at every stage of this process. Being gripped by the prospect of a hurtful union and feeling impelled to avoid that union are themselves disturbing.[85]

Aquinas' framework for the passion of sorrow both resists the modern tendency to treat 'emotions' as discrete events and offers a useful counter for a Freudian or Jamesian interpretation of a largely instinctual or entirely sensory response to the world. The moral implications of sorrow become clear in Aquinas' description of its causes and effects, which I now introduce.

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[83] Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 195. See *ST* Ia-IIae.35.7.
[84] Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 196.
[85] Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 148.

Having established a description of sorrow, Aquinas goes on to present its causes, effects, and remedies. Question 36 describes the relation of evil as the *object* of sorrow and love and desire as the *cause* of sorrow. As a 'kind of flight of withdrawal' sorrow's object is evil.[86] But love, the first principle of the appetitive movement, moves the appetite towards the good.[87] Anything contrary to the movement of love toward the good (that is, evil) provokes sorrow. Desire also causes sorrow: we can desire hurtful things, desire good things but not attain them, or lose good things and desire their return. Aquinas identifies the desire for unity as a special provocation:

> Forasmuch as the desire or craving for good is reckoned as a cause of sorrow, so must a craving for unity, and love, be accounted as causing sorrow… everything naturally desires unity, just as it desires goodness: and therefore, just as love or desire for good is a cause of sorrow, so also is the love or craving for unity.[88]

The experience of encountering anthropogenic loss can be helpfully understood as an encounter with this category of disunion. If the passions are an indication of the fittingness or harmony of an object in relation to what we know of the good, then the passions that e.g., climate breakdown provokes are a product of a form of extreme alienation between human and nonhuman creation. The category of disunion offers a useful summary of how Augustine and Aquinas treat creaturely response to fallenness and makes clear the relation between human sorrow and wider creaturely context.

What, then, does sorrow bring about? Aquinas treats sorrow as more harmful to the body than the other passions, arguing that action taken with sorrow will always be weaker than action taken with pleasure.[89] He also warns that sorrow is powerful to hinder reason, and as such requires the virtue of patience in order to ensure that sorrow is suffered well.[90] He does, however, consider sorrow natural to the rational creature as well as the irrational creature; it has moral value when rightly used. Aquinas presents *moderate* sorrow (that is, regulated by reason) as capable of enhancing learning (particularly learning things which would reduce sorrow), and a condition which can lead to spiritual growth.[91] When combined with the hope

[86] *ST* Ia-IIae.36.1.resp.
[87] *ST* Ia-IIae.36.2.
[88] *ST* Ia-IIae.36.3.resp.
[89] *ST* Ia-IIae.37.2.ad. 4.
[90] *ST* IIa-IIae.136.1.
[91] *ST* Ia-IIae.37.1.ad. 2.

of release from sorrow, it can even be an energising passion.[92] He therefore concedes that sorrow can participate in both the *bonum honestum* and *bonum utile*; it can be useful to experience sorrow and can also help bring about that which is fitting to the human condition. Both Augustine and Aquinas present sorrow in the life of the Christian as a fitting and useful passion in response to evil. Aquinas' summary of the remedies of sorrow also suggests that sorrow might even participate in the *bonum delectabile*; expressing sorrow can aid the pursuit of the pleasurable good. Like Augustine, Aquinas identifies weeping as soothing in the face of grief:

> Tears and groans naturally assuage sorrow: and this for two reasons. Firstly, because a hurtful thing hurts yet more if we keep it shut up… secondly, because an action, that befits a man according to his natural disposition, is always pleasant to him. Now tears and groans are actions befitting a man who is in sorrow or pain; and consequently they become pleasant to him.[93]

Aquinas goes one step further than Augustine in his analysis of weeping: the pleasantness of tears is not at best a strange product of human weakness, but a befitting action – while Augustine questions whether the pleasantness of his tears are an indicator of his sin, Aquinas treats the pleasantness of tears as an indicator of a natural human disposition, appropriate to the experience of sorrow. He explores the inverse scenario to emphasise the point:

> The image of that which saddens us, considered in itself, has a natural tendency to increase sorrow: yet from the very fact that a man imagines himself to be doing that which is fitting according to his actual state, he feels a certain amount of pleasure. For the same reason if laughter escapes a man when he is so disposed that he thinks he ought to weep, he is sorry for it, as having done something unbecoming to him.[94]

Weeping is pleasurable because we know we are responding appropriately. It is not just a natural animal response, but one which can be governed by reason. The inverse is also true – that giving the *wrong* response to evil – in this case, laughter – can cause discomfort, even if that laughter is unbidden. Weeping appears to be a moral act.

Of course, the moral weight afforded to passionate expression depends on whether one interprets Aquinas as treating the passions as basically good, in so far as the appetite is a good,

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[92] When an action stands in relation to sorrow as its principle and cause, an action is improved by sorrow – the greater the sorrow, the more the sorrower will try to shake it off – provided there is hope that this is possible. *ST* Ia-IIae.37.3.

[93] *ST* Ia-IIae.38.2.resp.

[94] *ST* Ia-IIae.38.2.ad. 3.

or basically troubling.[95] Possible responses to this question coalesce around the distinction Aquinas makes between the passions and affections, and how much weight this distinction should be afforded. Dixon focuses on the passions as potentially destructive, arguing that Aquinas treats the passions as essentially unruly and dangerous, while the affections are to be pursued as voluntary goods.[96] But, as Lombardo points out, Aquinas is prone to use affection interchangeably with passion in a way that treats both as involving bodily modification and mirrors Augustine's more fluid use of the two terms.[97] Aquinas also regards passion as essential to virtue in two particular ways: firstly, if passions are movements of the sensitive appetite, a passionless virtue would mean that the virtues make the sensitive appetite idle. While goodness in God and the angels doesn't require passions because they are without body, embodiment means that good operation in humans will involve the bodily passions.[98] And, secondly, Aquinas not only locates virtue in the intellect and will, but also the sense appetite. For example, he proposes that virtue sorrows moderately over the things that thwart virtue or wisdom and identifies moderate sorrow as 'the mark of a well-conditioned mind, according to the present state of life'.[99] In reading sorrow as a participant in the good, Kevin White makes an even stronger case:

> In the case of interior pain (sadness or sorrow), perception of evil based on right judgment of reason and resistance to it based on a well-disposed will make of sorrow a noble good (Ia IIae, q.39, a. 2). Sorrow can also be a useful good, not in its mere opposition to a present evil, but in its further impulse to avoid evils that ought to be avoided, notably sin and its occasions: by taking these as not only evil but also painful, sorrow usefully doubles the motive for avoiding them (Ia IIae, q.39, a.3). This allusion to a useful sorrow for sin in general anticipates the discussion in the *Tertia pars* of repentance, the sorrow for past sins that is a virtue and a sacrament (IIIa, q.84, a. 1; IIIa, q.85).[100]

Reflections of Augustine's treatment of sorrow are visible here; the role of sorrow (and specifically weeping) over past sins is sanctified in its direction to God. Aquinas does not offer an explicit description of *prayerful* sorrow. But the distinctions he offers guides my proposal that expressing sorrow over sin as prayer exercises a fitting relation between passion and

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[95] As clarified at the start of this section, Aquinas emphasises that the passions are in essence neither good nor evil. But this does not necessarily indicate whether the passions pose a general challenge or general aid to the pursuit of virtue.
[96] Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, 24.
[97] Nicholas Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 16.
[98] Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 16–17. See *ST* Ia-IIae.59.5.
[99] *ST* Ia-IIae.59.3.ad. 3.
[100] White, 'Passions of the Soul', 112.

reason. The two act in concert: reason guides the form of expression which ought to be offered, but the passion of sorrow reveals the need for it. Sorrowful prayer (which we usually call 'lament') begins to break down the distinction between the 'received' (passive) nature of the passions and the active expression of the virtues. In doing so, I interpret the passions as Aquinas presents them as possessing a tendency to follow the guidance of reason, so long as reason guides the passions in line with their nature.[101] This inclination towards reason is a natural state rather than one born by virtue (though virtue strengthens it), and reason also tends towards receiving from the sensitive appetite; while the sensitive appetite has an 'inborn aptitude' to obey reason, reason also has an 'inborn aptitude' to receive [knowledge] from the senses.[102] Characterising the unreasonable passions as existing in isolation to the well-ordered affections misses the subtlety of Aquinas' anthropology; Aquinas holds together the created goodness of the appetite, the reality of the disordered inner life/the fallenness of creation, and the capacity of the will to pursue virtue through grace. His most compelling presentation of the passions' relation to goodness is, however, not found in his analysis of the nature of the passions but his treatment of the passions in Christ. This is the focus of the following chapter.

Given Aquinas' emphasis on the role of reason and the intellectual appetite in governing and guiding the passions, interpreting responses to anthropogenic loss through the categories of passion and affection also requires clarity over the nature of human reason. For Aquinas, properly practised reason is implicitly shaped by God's revelation, the subsequent wisdom of Church tradition, and the influence of the intellectual appetite. John Webster's description of sorrow in the Christian life as a kind of 'pilgrim knowledge' is a pertinent interpretive reading of the reason-passion relation I am seeking to describe; as a passion, sorrow is part of the creaturely life, but those who have received the tools of reason (in particular, divine revelation) can seek a proper understanding of sorrow, 'acquired and exercised over time'. This proper understanding is framed by certainty over our calling, while also acknowledging that our understanding remains an imperfect movement to an end, within 'the incomplete history of God's dealings with creatures'.[103] He proposes that for the Christian, the gospel does not 'eliminate sorrow through understanding' but rather offers instruction on 'when and how to sorrow' – it is concerned with sorrow's moral expression.[104] For Webster, such instruction is

[101] Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 238.
[102] *ST* Ia-IIae.50.1.ad. 3.
[103] John Webster, 'Dolent Gaudentque: Sorrow in the Christian Life', in *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology*, vol. 2: Virtue and Intellect (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 5–6.
[104] Webster, 'Dolent Gaudentque', 6.

found in the community of saints: it is in the Church that 'fitting emotions are learned… *how* to rejoice, *how* to weep' and also where we discern 'fitting occasions… *when* to rejoice, *when* to weep'.[105] Webster turns to the language of lament, noting the damage caused by private (unexpressed) sorrow, and contrasts this condition with an expression of sorrow 'which is not simply an isolating cry of pain but an act of *communication*, part of life in conjunction with others… and in conjunction with God'.[106] The theological significance of communication in expressing sorrow over anthropogenic loss is a particular focus of the second half of this thesis, but this account of sorrow is first strengthened by a closer examination of Christ's passions in the Christian tradition, which is the focus of the next chapter.

6. CONCLUSION

How, then, might Augustine and Aquinas guide a moral anthropological approach to sorrow over anthropogenic loss? A considerable challenge in negotiating responses to anthropogenic loss is the range of responses gathered under a broad 'emotion' category: anxiety or dread, sorrow, anger, guilt, despair – and also the range of expressions these responses have prompted, depending on the relative power and moral commitments of the subject: nihilistic excess, hoarding, ascetic withdrawal, denial, paralysis, suicide, depression, protest, community resilience building, frenzied border control, or an entire therapeutic industry, to name a few.[107] This chapter has therefore introduced the passion of sorrow as described by Augustine and Aquinas to offer an alternative framework. By using the language of 'passions' I do not suggest that Augustine or Aquinas offer a better neurobiological description of the human body than contemporary science. Rather, I observe that the category of 'emotion' is also bound up with a series of philosophical and ideological moves, and so should be treated as such. As an alternative ideology, the 'passions' offer a helpful frame for the following reasons: firstly, they

[105] Webster, 'Dolent Gaudentque', 19–20.
[106] Webster, 'Dolent Gaudentque', 20.
[107] For examples of some of these, see the bunkers of the wealthy in New Zealand (Mark O'Connell, 'Why Silicon Valley Billionaires Are Prepping for the Apocalypse in New Zealand', *The Guardian*, 15 February 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/15/why-silicon-valley-billionaires-are-prepping-for-the-apocalypse-in-new-zealand.), suicides in India (Michael Safi, 'Suicides of Nearly 60,000 Indian Farmers Linked to Climate Change, Study Claims', *The Guardian*, 31 July 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jul/31/suicides-of-nearly-60000-indian-farmers-linked-to-climate-change-study-claims.), border control spending increases (Molly Taft, 'Wealthy Countries Are Spending More on Border Security Than Climate Aid', News and Opinion, Gizmodo.com, 26 October 2021, https://gizmodo.com/wealthy-countries-are-spending-more-on-border-security-1847931924.), and the for-profit 'Climate Psychologists' company, whose aim is to 'support mental well-being, overcoming trauma, anxiety, grief, dissonance and promoting resilience in sustainability'. 'Climate Psychologists: Turning Climate Anxiety into Sustainable Climate Action', Climate Psychologists, accessed 4 January 2022, https://www.climatepsychologists.com/.

are fundamentally defined by the doctrines of Christian faith; they take seriously the doctrine of creation and the existence of the soul (humans have shared creaturely intimacy with other animals, while also being intellectually distinct and as such being morally responsible), the doctrines of sin and grace, and the significance of the incarnation for describing fully expressed humanity. Secondly (and relatedly) the location of the passions – and sorrow in particular – in the sensory appetite illuminates both the shared creaturely relationships which prompt this form of grief and the particularities of human sorrow. And finally, the governance of reason through corporate revelation frees sorrow from its potentially paralysing treatment as an inevitable, private, and morally neutral state.

In discerning the implications of this account for the life of the Church, I have also proposed that the passion of sorrow can offer an avenue to the pursuit of the good, and that prayer has a sanctifying role in expressing sorrow. In doing so, I am applying the intimate relationship between the passions and affections which Aquinas assumes: if love or hope, for example, are both passions and affections, related but distinct, sorrow might also have a parallel affection (a movement of the will) which could be defined as lament. Lament is the collective and prayerful expression of sorrow over the sin that leads to death, a discipline of the virtuous life, and framed by the reasoning of others and divine revelation of God's goodness. As already noted, the accounts of sorrow presented in this chapter rest heavily on Christology; for Augustine and Aquinas, it is *Christ's* sorrow which assures the disciple of its fitting role in the Christian life. I therefore turn to interpretations of Christ's sorrow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MAN OF SORROWS

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I introduced the basic metaphysical structure of the passions as understood by Augustine and Aquinas. I turn now to the core concern which has historically driven many of the theological accounts of the passions (and sorrow in particular): the passions of Christ, their implications for his divinity and humanity, and their relation to the moral life. The first part of this chapter outlines the early genealogy of this theological concern, noting some of the shifting contexts which have prompted re-examination of Christ's passions. Within this genealogy, I pay particular attention to treatments of Christ's sorrow in Augustine and Aquinas, and specifically Christ's passions as a moral exemplar for the Christian, most notably in his sorrow over sin. Their accounts respond to concerns over the 'real' nature of Christ's sorrow without pathologisation or underplaying his divine nature. I also consider the voluntary nature of Christ's humanity (and therefore His passions), the potential challenge this poses to its exemplary role in the Christian life, and the extent to which Christ's sorrow participates in his *salvific* humanity.

With these questions in mind, I turn to several 'theologians of sorrow' in the second part of this chapter. I begin with the Cistercian tradition and Margery Kempe to consider the late medieval spirituality of Christ's suffering as the Man of Sorrows. I do so to introduce the challenges related to theologically differentiating between sorrow and bodily suffering, the role of experiential knowledge in curative sorrow, and the relation between tears of compunction (sorrow over one's sin) and compassion (sorrow over the effects of sin in the world). These traditions also introduce tears of devotion (or joy over heaven), which is *not* sorrow but is nevertheless closely related to it as a sign of grace. This attention to late medieval spirituality more fully accounts for experiential knowledge as moral knowledge, a concern I then approach in greater depth via accounts of Christ's passions in the Black theological tradition: in the final part of this chapter I introduce the work of James Cone and Howard Thurman to examine the claim that Christ's sorrow is an expression of God's incarnate solidarity with oppressed peoples, and that those who undergo involuntary sorrow might find it a source of moral knowledge. I propose that the two readings of Christ's sorrow introduced in this chapter – as exemplar and as solidarity – provide complementary approaches to interpreting the moral

implications of sorrow over anthropogenic loss. These traditions coalesce in affirming the curative nature of sorrow, most significantly in its expression as prayer. Sorrow over sin and its consequences is an outworking of grace; the grace to see sin as it really is, and the grace to respond by joining the community of those who cry out to God.

2. AUGUSTINE'S TROUBLED CHRIST

Early concerns over interpreting Christ's sorrow were prompted by the differing emphases it receives in the gospel accounts and the question of whether affirming the negative passions in Christ undermines his divine intimacy with the Father and the perfection of his human will. The gospels share a basic narrative of Jesus' sorrow, specifically in relation to Jesus' compassion at the sight of suffering, his lament over the sins of Jerusalem and her religious teachers, and his tears at the grave of Lazarus.[1] They also agree that Jesus is troubled in the Garden of Gethsemane, though accounts differ. Mark and Matthew put the greatest emphasis on Christ's *pathos* in the Garden and the intensity of his sorrow and fear; Jesus began to be 'distressed' or 'grieved', describing himself as 'deeply grieved, even to death'.[2] Three times, he asks the Father to 'remove this cup', differentiating between the Father's will and his own.[3] By contrast, Luke's account of the Garden describes the *disciples* experiencing sorrow, and Jesus prays only once for the 'cup' to be removed.[4] Luke also describes Jesus' prayerful anguish as so great that his sweat becomes like drops of blood, though some manuscripts remove this verse.[5] John's account of the arrest of Jesus removes the scene in the garden entirely. While Jesus twice describes his soul as 'troubled', he denies that he should ask the Father to spare Him from the hour of his death.[6] Do the gospels indicate that God the Son's will was at odds with God the Father?

This was a real interpretive concern for the early church. As briefly explained in the previous chapter, the Stoic understanding of the passions as antithetical to the pursuit of wisdom significantly coloured early church readings of Christ's sorrow (or lack of it). Clement of

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[1] For example, Jesus' 'sighing' as he heals a deaf man (Mark 7:34), Jesus' 'lament' over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41 and Matthew 23:37), and Jesus 'sighing' over the Pharisees (Mark 8:12), which is widely interpreted as sorrow rather than sarcasm. Jesus' tears for Lazarus are specific to John's gospel (John 11:35).
[2] Mark 14:33-34, Matthew 26:37-38. For further discussion see Kevin Madigan, *The Passions of Christ in High Medieval Thought: An Essay on Christological Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 65.
[3] Mark 14:35-41, Matthew 26:39-44.
[4] Luke 22:42-45.
[5] Luke 22:44.
[6] John 12:27.

Alexandria and Origen employed the stoic category of *propassions* to interpret the gospel accounts of Christ's sorrow, fear, and seeming despair in the Garden of Gethsemane, and their readings would go on to influence the Cappadocian Fathers. The reading of Jesus' dis-ease as pre-passions (*propassions*) finds its scriptural ground in the words 'Jesus *began* to be'. Of primary concern (and the concern that dominated discussion about Jesus' passions into the high Middle Ages) was Christ's sorrow and fear over his impending death. Drawing on the description of Jesus' human nature as being tempted in every respect but remaining without sin, Origen argues that these accounts describe *temptations*.[7] Jesus' 'distress' was only the beginning of distress in his human nature, not a full-blooded passion. Origen's pre-passions reading might offer a solution to the problem of Christ's will but leans docetic in its summary of the relation between Christ's divine and human natures. In response, I introduce Augustine's account of the same events.

Augustine's analysis of Christ's fear and sorrow (his 'trouble') in the garden merits situating in his account of Christ's passions and their implications for the Christian life. In *City of God* Augustine describes Christ's sorrow as both *genuine* and *chosen*:

> Wherefore even the Lord Himself, when He condescended to lead a human life in the form of a slave, had no sin whatever, and yet exercised these emotions where He judged they should be exercised. For as there was in Him a true human body and a true human soul, so was there also a true human emotion.[8]

Augustine adopts Jesus' passions as a guide for the proper expression of human affectivity, referencing three instances: sorrowful indignation towards the hard-heartedness of Jerusalem, tears at the tomb of Lazarus, and sorrow prior to his crucifixion.[9] Perfect in his full humanity, Christ's passions must be genuinely felt and completely governed by reason. For this governance of reason to be full, Augustine argues that Christ's passions must also be chosen. While even the 'well regulated' sorrow of humans comes 'from human infirmity', it is 'not so with the Lord Jesus, for even His infirmity was the consequence of His power'.[10] Christ's

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[7] Richard A. Layton, 'Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions', *Vigiliae Christianae* 54, no. 3 (2000): 268. Jerome also interprets Christ's fear and sorrow in the garden – encapsulated in his request for the cup of suffering to be taken away – as a pre-passion. See Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002), 68–69.
[8] *City* 14.9 (Dods: 269).
[9] *City* 14.9 (Dods: 269).
[10] *City* 14.9 (Dods: 269).

passions are perfected because, like his poverty and bodily suffering, they are voluntary rather than imposed.

If we take these dual conditions of Christ's sorrow seriously (sorrow as chosen *and* genuine), for Christ (and, by extension, Christ's disciples – a point to which I will imminently return) *opting into* sorrow is not counter to its proper expression. Sorrow can be a condition one suffers and a fitting attitude one cultivates. While the perfect governance of reason is not possible for fallen humanity, the passions of Christ affirm that even sorrow can participate in the good when it flows from the judgement of a properly directed will. Further, this fitting sorrow is not always chosen, but nevertheless flows from a will aligned with divine compassion: 'sometimes we weep in spite of ourselves, being carried beyond ourselves, not indeed by culpable desire; *but by praiseworthy charity*'.[11] This unchosen but fitting sorrow springs from a fittingly ordered desire; a spiritual reorientation which turns human frailty toward the good. To what end, then, does Jesus choose to undergo the fullness of human passions, including sorrow?

Augustine's answer largely comes via his commentary on Jesus' 'trouble' in John 11-13.[12] He begins with the same point made in *The City of God* – Jesus' distress is not unwillingly provoked, but chosen: 'who could trouble Him, save He Himself?', 'Thou art troubled against thy will; Christ was troubled because he willed'.[13] Augustine identifies the reason Christ troubles himself. Christians ought to be troubled by sin, and so moved to 'penitential sorrow': 'why did Christ weep but to teach man to weep?'[14] Christ's passions are so wholly wed to his reason that his expression of sorrow is *exemplary*, entirely morally fitting, providing a model for a full humanity. As outlined in chapter three, Augustine draws on the two kinds of sorrow described in 2 Corinthians 8: godly sorrow (leading to repentance and salvation) and worldly sorrow (leading to death). The sorrow Jesus expresses is the former; a godly passion flowing from well-ordered reason. Sorrow emerging *from reason* is difficult conceptually for many of our contemporary accounts of emotion, which are often wed to the idea that 'genuine' feeling is spontaneous and unbidden reactivity. But here Augustine interprets the passions as emerging from a pre-existing alignment of the will. Christ's tears at Lazarus' grave, for example, are a

[11] *City* 14.9 (Dods: 269). Emphasis mine.
[12] Brachtendorf, 'Et Lacrymatus Est Jesus', 241.
[13] Augustine, 'Homilies on the Gospel of John' 49.18 in *St Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies*, trans. John Gibb and James Innes, vol. VII, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 276.
[14] *Homilies* 49.19 (Gibb and Innes: 276).

response to 'a mass of iniquity' rather than strictly being over his friend's death.[15] Christ's weeping flows from a perfectly directed will which discerns sin and offers the most fitting response. In this act Augustine also sees a wider moral application for the Christian disciple. Weeping over sin and the death it brings testifies to a rightly ordered will which desires the good.

While Christ's tears in chapter 11 are straightforwardly interpreted as a fitting response to sin, the chapters which follow, in which Jesus is 'deeply troubled' over his own death, seem more problematic for the perfection of Christ's human nature. Why would he *truly* sorrow over his death when he knew it would bring salvation? Augustine proposes that, again, Christ's sorrow is in some way *for* his disciples: 'He who died for us, was also Himself troubled in our place'.[16] If his weeping over Lazarus teaches us to weep, his distress over his death was for our consolation:

> And what else, then, does His being troubled signify, but that, by voluntarily assuming the likeness of their weakness, He comforted the weak members in His own body, that is, in His Church; to the end that, if any of His own are still troubled at the approach of death, they may fix their gaze upon Him, and so be kept from… being swallowed up in the more grievous death of despair?[17]

Christ sorrows over his imminent death for the sake of human weakness. We learn to resist the *unreasonable* despair that sorrow over death provokes, comforted that Christ truly felt sorrow over his death and yet promises salvation.[18] Again, Augustine emphasises that this trouble is not the product of Christ's weakness, but his power; voluntary distress consoles our involuntary distress.[19] I return to the relation between the fullness and freedom of Christ's passions in this next section, where I introduce Aquinas' interpretation of Christ's sorrow.

3. AQUINAS ON CHRIST'S REASONED SORROW

Augustine's emphasis on the voluntary nature of Christ's passions reflects a theological anxiety about whether Christ, sinless in his full divinity and full humanity, could experience the

[15] *Homilies* 49.19 (Gibb and Innes: 276).
[16] *Homilies* 60.2 (Gibb and Innes: 309).
[17] *Homilies* 60.5 (Gibb and Innes: 310).
[18] Brachtendorf, 'Et Lacrymatus Est Jesus', 243–44.
[19] '[Christ] was troubled… not through any infirmity of mind, but in the fullness of power… so no despair of salvation need arise in our minds, when we are trouble, not in the possession of power, but in the midst of our weakness'. *Homilies* 60.5 (Gibb and Innes: 310).

negative passions – and particularly over his salvific death. How could Christ know his salvific role but pray for deliverance if His will was fully aligned with the Father? A fresh flurry of reflections on Christ's negative passions and physical suffering arose in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, prompted by renewed interest in Jesus' human nature. Book 3 of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, for example, dedicates four questions to the negative passions of Christ.[20] Lombard counters Hilary of Poitiers' dismissal of fear and sorrow in Christ by employing Augustine's emphasis on the voluntary nature of Christ's sorrow, and its origin in his reason.[21] Discussion of Christ's passions and their purpose reached its peak in the high-medieval period, so much so that commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* produced a new question to be answered: 'Whether Christ doubted when he said, "If it is possible…"'.[22] One such commentary was that of Thomas Aquinas. While his most thorough investigation of Christ's passions is found in the *Summa Theologiae*, Lombard's *Sentences* provide the theological context and exploratory frame within which he works. Aquinas' treatment is focused on those passions under examination in the texts which precede him (pain, sadness, fear, wonder, and anger).[23] He defends the *fullness* and *fittingness* of Christ's passions as a defence of Christ's salvific power, the truth of His human nature, and the exemplary nature of his virtue.[24]

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[20] Distinction 15 of Book 3 covers 'Man's defects which Christ assumed', 'the propassion and passion of fear or sadness', 'the rather obscure chapters of Hilary which appear to contradict the common opinion [removing the passion from Christ's flesh], and 'Christ's sorrow and its cause according to the same'. The preceding Distinction is concerned with the power and wisdom of Christ, and the succeeding Distinction addresses Christ's physical suffering. While divisions between 'inner' and 'outer' suffering would later be elided, they were still, at this stage, treated as separate enquiries by those concerning themselves with describing the nature of Christ's humanity. Peter Lombard, *The Sentences Book 3: On the Incarnation of the Word*, trans. Giulio Silano, Medieval Sources in Translation (Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), 57–65.

[21] Lombard was also influenced by Ambrose's fourth century defence of Christ's humanity against the Arians, who assigns Christ's passions to his human nature in *De Trinitate* II. This assumption is not lost in the high medieval period, but a complicating factor in following the lines of argument in Lombard's writings and the responses it generated is the re-emergence of the language of 'propassions' as a description of Christ's sorrow and fear. The interpretation of a propassion by the eleventh and twelfth centuries differs from Origen's use of the same term. Lombard, for example, follows Jerome in interpreting 'propassions' as resident in 'one who voluntarily endures fear and sorrow so that the mind is moved neither from virtue nor from the contemplation of God'. Here, again, the voluntary nature of Christ's sorrow is emphasised, but not at the expense of the *trueness* of his sorrow. Bonaventure's commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* emphasises that 'without doubt, as the Master [Lombard] says and as the gospel text also confirms, there was real sorrow in Christ'. Further, this sorrow is experienced 'truly and intensely'. The important distinction is between sorrow against the judgment of reason and sorrow brought about via obedience to rightly ordered reason. In Christ, it is the intellect which provokes the sensitive soul to respond. Aquinas picks up the same term, and his use is outlined in more detail in this chapter. Madigan, *Passions of Christ*, 68–69.

[22] 'Utrum Christus dubitavit quando dixit, Si possibile est...' Madigan, *Passions of Christ*, 64.

[23] Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 203. See *ST* IIIa.15. These passions are reflective of the biblical witness, rather than introducing speculation about other unmentioned passions.

[24] *ST* IIIa.15.1.

Aquinas' description of Christ's passions falls under his discussion of 'the defects of the soul' which Christ took on in his human nature. Behind this discussion is Aquinas' category of those things 'co-assumed' by Christ; features specific to an individual human, thereby differentiating us from each other in the perfections and defects we more-or-less possess.[25] Aquinas therefore asks which co-assumed features Jesus must have, and follows two principles in his assessment: 'what is conducive to Christ's salvific work' and 'the testimony of scripture'.[26] These bring Aquinas to affirm the fullness of Christ's sorrow and its salvific and exemplary roles.

The *Summa Theologiae* divides Aquinas' overview of the passions and his reading of Christ's passions. But this division risks misrepresenting Aquinas' own conception of the relation between Christology, soteriology, and anthropology.[27] If Christ's experience and expression of the passions demonstrates a perfected relation between passion and reason, his treatment of the passions in Christology are fundamental to interpreting human passions; Aquinas assesses pre-lapsarian humanity and compares it to the salvific human nature Christ assumes. I first turn to the kind of humanity Aquinas ascribes to Christ before introducing his treatment of the interactions between Christ's divine and human natures as applied to sorrow. This helps to answer two questions: how does Aquinas understand the role of sorrow in the Christian life? And how is Christ's sorrow exemplary for post-lapsarian humanity?

Pre-lapsarian (Adamic) humanity is covered in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. Pre- and post-lapsarian humanity differs in six ways: his mortality, body possibility, affectivity, virtue, knowledge, and external environment.[28] While these differences intersect, their relevance to Adam's passions is found in Aquinas' discussion of Adam's external environment and its effect on his affectivity and virtue. In Adam's 'primitive state' there was neither present nor imminent evil in his environment. Adam's pre-lapsarian nature did not experience any passions with 'evil as (their) object; such as fear, sorrow, and like', or which relate to difficult goods not yet possessed.[29] Finally, all the passions he *did* have 'in the state of innocence'

[25] *ST* IIIa.9-15.
[26] Joseph Wawrykow, 'Jesus in the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 19.
[27] Joseph Wawrykow, 'The Christology of Thomas Aquinas in Its Scholastic Context', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesa Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[28] Stewart Clem, 'The Passions of Christ in the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas: An Integrative Account', *New Blackfriars* 99, no. 1082 (March 2017): 465. See Aquinas, *ST* Ia.94-97.
[29] *ST* Ia.95.2.resp.

existed ‘only as consequent upon the judgment of reason’.[30] Adam’s passions flow perfectly from a perfectly aligned will.

A related concern regarding Adam’s external world emerges in Aquinas’ description of the pre-lapsarian virtues. While Aquinas insists that Adam possessed all virtues, he differentiates between virtues *in habit* and virtues *in act*: Adam could, for example, possess the virtues of penance (sorrow for sin committed) and mercy (sorrow for another’s unhappiness) in *habit* but not in *act* – Adam *would* repent if he encountered sin, but this capacity is not actualised ‘because sorrow, guilt, and unhappiness are incompatible with the perfection of the primitive state’.[31] Note here the relationships drawn between environment and passion and between passion and working out a virtue. Aquinas describes the *virtue* of mercy as requiring – or almost *being* – the *passion* of sorrow; to the properly aligned will, one would almost instantaneously follow the other. This theme re-emerges in Aquinas’ description of Christ’s passions, to which I now turn.

Despite being the true fulfilment of human nature, the post-lapsarian world to which Christ comes means He assumes ‘defects’ (negative passions, weaknesses of the flesh) which Adam’s humanity does not. The *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa* opens with Aquinas’ assessment of the motives for the incarnation. Two reasons he identifies are especially relevant: ‘with regard to well-doing, in which He set us an example’ and ‘with regard to the full participation of the Divinity… this is bestowed on us by Christ’s humanity’.[32] In Questions 14 and 15, Aquinas outlines the necessity of Christ’s assumption of human weakness: Stewart Clem summarises these as soteriological (the satisfaction of our sin), doctrinal (demonstrating the truth of his human nature), and moral (as exemplar).[33] These reasons are intimately related, raising a further question: how does a perfect human nature, consubstantial with a divine nature, undergo passions which are a product of the fall? How are Christ’s passions different to our own?

Aquinas describes Christ as experiencing three kinds of knowledge in his human soul: immediate beatific knowledge of God, infused supernatural knowledge, and acquired human

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[30] *ST* Ia.95.2.resp.
[31] *ST* Ia.95.3.resp.
[32] *ST* IIIa.1.2.resp. See Brian J. Shanley, ‘Aquinas’s Exemplar Ethics’, *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 72, no. 3 (July 2008): 354–55.
[33] Clem, ‘Passions of Christ’, 472. See *ST* IIIa.14.1, which Aquinas summarises again in IIIa.15.1.resp. as follows: ‘Christ assumed our defects that He might satisfy for us, that He might prove the truth of His human nature, and that He might become an example of virtue to us’.

knowledge.[34] As Lombardo points out, Christ's knowledge of God the Father potentially poses a problem for Christ's identification with humanity. Can he experience the constant joy springing from this knowledge while also experiencing sorrow, fear, and anger?[35] By way of solution, Aquinas isolates Christ's beatific joy in his intellectual appetite as distinct from his sense appetite, where he experiences sorrow. This divine work-around ensures Christ could experience constant beatific knowledge of God and fully express human sorrow.[36] It does, however, require Aquinas to treat Christ's affectivity as quite different to ordinary human affectivity. For Aquinas, our sorrow can sometimes involve the intellectual appetite.[37] But Christ's sorrow only involves the sense appetite and is not 'perfect', but a 'propassion'.[38] On this basis, Aquinas distinguishes between Christ's passions and our own regarding their object (not towards the unlawful), regarding their principle (not forestalling the judgement of reason), and regarding their effect – (remaining in the sensitive appetite). It is in relation to this third distinction that Aquinas uses the historically complicated term *propassio*, distinguishing what remains in the sensitive appetite from the *passio perfecta* which dominate reason.[39] As Barrett Turner notes, his adoption of 'propassion' is a potential distraction, especially since Aquinas does not use the term to mean a 'half-passion' but rather a 'fitting affective response'.[40] Aquinas seems overly wed to received terminology in a bid to make a variety of scriptures fit into an increasingly complex system. Nevertheless, the point remains that the distinctiveness of Christ's passions is not necessarily a barrier to their relevance for the Christian life. Christ's human affectivity *should* be distinct from the affectivity of ordinary humans by virtue of his sinlessness. This does, however, raise the question of whether Aquinas would only treat sorrow as sinless if restricted to the sense appetite. Does the presence of sorrow in the intellectual appetite indicate that it has overtaken (and thus is not guided by) reason?

This question relates to Aquinas' other key distinction between Christ's sorrow and ours. Christ's passions are perfected because they are fully under the direction of reason and are

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[34] *ST* IIIa.9.

[35] Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 207.

[36] For further discussion see Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 215–17.

[37] 'By Divine dispensation the joy of contemplation remained in Christ's mind so as not to overflow into the sensitive powers, and thereby shut out sensible pain. Now even as sensible pain is in the sensitive appetite, so also is sorrow… as there could be true pain in Christ, so too could there be true sorrow'. *ST* IIIa.15.6.resp.

[38] 'Sorrow was not in Christ, as a perfect passion; yet it was inchoatively in Him as a 'propassion' and 'in the soul of the wise man there may be sorrow in the sensitive appetite by his apprehending these evils; without this sorrow disturbing the reason… Christ's sorrow was a propassion, and not a passion'. *ST* IIIa.15.6.ad. 1.

[39] *ST* IIIa.15.4. For more on this see Clem, 'Passions of Christ', 474.

[40] Barrett Turner, 'The Propassiones of Christ, His Fullness of Grace, and His Moral Exemplarity According to St Thomas Aquinas', *Nova et Vetera* 18, no. 1 (2020): 203.

therefore perfectly harmonious.[41] Perhaps surprisingly, the impact of this distinction is that Christ experienced the passions to a greater degree of intensity than we do.[42] Aquinas argues, for example, that Christ's suffering on the cross (including his sorrow) was greater than any other human pain or sorrow, due to the extreme sources of his suffering, his greater sensitivity, the lack of mitigation he permitted from reason, and the voluntary nature of his suffering (it therefore being proportionate to its cause, human sin).[43] Like his predecessors, however, Aquinas is most careful when explicating Christ's 'trouble' over his impending death in John 12, arguing that these words do not arise from his reason, but that the reason speaks *in persona* of the *naturalis affectio* which resists death. His *ratio* then responds with the insistence that God the Father must be glorified.[44] Aquinas follows Augustine's justification concerning this expression of sorrow: Christ is troubled to teach us how to die, sorrowing over evil but resisting despair.

Aquinas is understandably cautious about describing Christ's sorrow as *good*, but he does seem to treat it as fitting. He insists that the natural inclinations of the sensible 'will' are not counter to the perfection of Christ's human nature. In his extended discussion of Christ's prayer in the garden Aquinas emphasises that the twofold human wills of sensuality and reason can be *naturally* at odds with each other.[45] Christ's divine will freely permits the natural and sensible wills to move 'according to the order of their nature', so long as the sensible will is moved to follow the rational will.[46] Christ's passions were thus full, fitting, and not experienced in his rational soul. Is this a model for human expression? Perhaps in a limited way. Like Augustine, Aquinas reads Christ's sorrow in John 11 as demonstrative. In weeping over those mourning and over the evil of a family member and friend dying, he demonstrates that we ought to be saddened by sin and angered over death.[47] Sorrow thus has a key role in the moral life and

[41] Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 206.
[42] Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 209. See *ST* IIIa.15, 46.
[43] *ST* IIIa.46.6. In reference to whether Christ's reason might 'mitigate' his inner or outer suffering, Aquinas appeals to John Damascene's argument that Christ 'permitted each one of His powers to exercise his proper function'. The implication is that Christ's suffering on the cross is unique in part because he does not allow reason to limit the fullness of the sensitive appetite's pain and sorrow. In this instance, Christ's full control of his reason and sense means He can choose *not* to restrain or dampen sorrow when it is not fitting to do so.
[44] Brachtendorf, 'Et Lacrymatus Est Jesus', 240. See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 6-12*, trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P. and James A. Weisheipl, O.P. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 285: 'reason is speaking as an advocate of the natural inclination not to die… [then] his reason proposes its own petition'.
[45] 'The will of sensuality naturally shrinks from sensible pains and bodily hurt. In like manner, the will as nature turns from what is against nature and what is evil in itself, as death and the like; yet the will as reason may at time choose these things in relation to an end'. *ST* IIIa.18.5.resp.
[46] *ST* IIIa.18.6.resp.
[47] Aquinas, *Gospel of John*, 239–42. See Brachtendorf, 'Et Lacrymatus Est Jesus', 239.

represents a dangerous power when experienced in the absence of properly directed reason. Christ is the exemplar for knowing which circumstances should provoke sorrow, and how it ought to be expressed. But, again, Aquinas holds Christ's sorrow as *full* and *voluntary*, two states generally assumed to be in conflict in the ordinary human condition.[48]

Turning, then, to the concerns outlined at the start of this chapter: what is it that holds together Christ's voluntary (and thus salvific) human nature, chosen out of obedience to the Father, and the fullness of his sorrow? I believe they are held together with a careful understanding of the nature of grace, and Christ's expression of sorrow as prayer. Joseph Wawrykow reads Jesus' perfect humanity as an expression of the fullness of grace, meaning he can be both exemplar and saviour. In receiving the fullness of grace there are perfections and defects which Christ does not experience: for example, the perfections of faith and hope, because he already possesses full beatific knowledge of the Father.[49] In his full grace he is not *less* human, but *more* so. As such, he is the exemplar for humans (who ask to receive the grace Jesus offers); in his perfected humanity his grace can be *for* others, offered to the Father for the salvation of the world.[50] The expression of this full grace on earth does not preclude sorrow but requires it. While Christ does not require this sorrow to be healed, he nevertheless takes on this expression of grace as our salvific model.[51]

Grace does not function as an alternative to the work of reason in guiding the passions – rather, a fitting relation between reason and passion is an outworking of grace. A properly graced relationship between reason and passion does not mean that sorrow is always expressed in the same way or to the same degree, but there are certain kinds of expression (drawn from the life of Christ) which Aquinas sees as fitting. I explore other graced expressions of sorrow in the latter half of this chapter, but a fundamental expression of this graced relationship which I want to draw out is Christ's sorrow offered as prayer. While Augustine and Aquinas pay little explicit attention to this consciously prayerful direction in relation to Christ, the use of the psalms of lament during his passion are I think crucial to interpreting his sorrow as salvific and exemplary. New Testament scholar Rebekah Eklund notes that most of Jesus' words in the passion narratives either allude to or directly quote the lament psalms. In the lead-up to and

[48] Brachtendorf, 'Et Lacrymatus Est Jesus', 240.
[49] Wawrykow, 'Moral Theology', 23.
[50] Wawrykow, 'Moral Theology', 24.
[51] As Wawrykow notes, Aquinas identifies sensitivity to sin as a function of grace; a sign that the self is healing. Wawrykow, 'Moral Theology', 16. See *ST* Ia-IIae.109.7, 8.

during his crucifixion Jesus embodies the pattern of these laments: he weeps over Lazarus, expresses his trouble, fear, and grief, submits to God's will, thirsts for the presence of God, and, in his final moments, commends his spirit to God's keeping.[52] Jesus' sorrow is fundamentally expressed as prayer, his fully gracious humanity exemplary for the disciple. This example is possible to imitate because of his divine nature; his beatific knowledge of the Father is never lost, and so the salvific quality of his prayer is also assured.

If we apply this account to sorrow over anthropogenic loss, we can describe it as a graced (and thus fitting) response to the sin that brings death. Restraint in sorrowing over evil is counter to the witness of Christ. Here, however, several questions emerge. Firstly, how does this account respond to involuntary sorrow? We might apply *voluntary* sorrow in those places which have provoked the causes of anthropogenic loss and who are least inclined to express remorse. But an emphasis on voluntary sorrow is only narrowly applicable in the Christian life and dismisses the experiences of those already undergoing significant traumatic events as result of anthropogenic loss. Secondly (and relatedly), what is the relation between physical and psychological suffering (or outer and inner pain, as Aquinas would have it)? Aquinas divides these experiences. But given the emphasis he rightly places on the external environment in prompting sorrow and the unity of the body-soul composite which experiences sorrow, this seems arbitrary. It is particularly limiting in the instance of anthropogenic loss, whereby material conditions prompt sorrow. Thirdly, if Christ's expressions of sorrow are *exemplary*, is our sorrow simply a matter of personal holiness, or does it also shape the world around us? And finally: while Augustine and Aquinas offer overarching guidance for the nature of the reason out of which sorrow should flow (a desire for the good and the beatitude of knowledge of God – and a resultant rejection of sin and death, which obscure this desire) how does this apply to our relation to non-human creation, when the Christian tradition has generally omitted this relation in its description of sorrow? In the rest of this chapter, I introduce further theological reflections on the sorrow of Christ which respond directly to questions one and two. Questions three and four occupy much of the latter half of this project.

In approaching the questions of involuntary sorrow and the relation between sorrow and bodily pain, I turn now to the spiritual interpretation of tears which emerged in the twelfth century

[52] Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015). Across the garden narratives Jesus quotes or alludes to psalms 6, 41, and 42. His lament from the cross draws on psalms 22, 31, and 69.

and was further shaped by the suffering and loss brought about by the Black Death. While scholastic discourse over the nature of Christ's human defects unfolded, approaches to Christ's humanity were also made via Christian spirituality, especially meditation on the physical suffering of the cross as a route to intimacy with Christ. In some respects, this contemporaneous tradition offers a first response to the limitations of neatly distinguishing inner and outer pain, both in relation to Christ's sorrow and the sorrow of the Christian disciple. But it also fleshes out sorrow's relation to sin, grace, and prayer in the Christian life.

4. THE GRACE OF TEARS

Caesurius of Heisterbach's early thirteenth century *Dialogue on Miracles* recounts the story of a monk of Villers in Brabant who sought the grace of tears (*gratia lacrimarum*). He wanted to receive the grace to weep out of compunction – that is, over his sin. In his travels, he meets a holy woman (a *begginae*) who reiterates the necessity of his search; 'someone who does not weep for his sins is not a monk'.[53] Caesurius was not the first to refer to the 'grace of tears'. Gregory the Great uses it in his *Dialogues* almost six hundred years earlier, with reference to two kinds of tears: those prompted by remembering sin, and by the desire for heaven.[54] This definition for *gracious* tears (as opposed to those arising from lesser human attachments) remained consistent until the mid-twelfth century in both the eastern and western monastic traditions, with tears of compunction taking primary place.[55] The early Desert Fathers treated tears of compunction as a necessary basis for the monastic life, with regular instructions to weep out of compunction and thus be graciously transformed.[56] The capacity to express compunction was in itself a gift; the disciple could not recognise his sin without first receiving the grace to do so. This weeping was closely related to remembering the presence of death (one's own and the death of others) but the relation between the two was nevertheless one of

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[53] Brian P. McGuire, *The Difficult Saint: Bernard of Clairvaux & His Tradition*, Cistercian Studies Series 126 (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 134.

[54] McGuire, *Difficult Saint*, 136.

[55] Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 425.

[56] For example: Abba Antony's instruction for those wanting to be monks was to 'weep, and groan in your heart', while Abba Poeman insisted that 'Whoever wishes to be liberated from sins is liberated from them by shedding tears, and whoever wishes to acquire the virtues acquires them by shedding tears. Tears are the way which Scripture and our Fathers have handed down to us, saying Weep. There is no other way than this'. Benedicta Ward, *The Desert Christian: Sayings of the Desert Fathers. The Alphabetical Collection.* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1975), 136, 184. These and further examples from the Desert Fathers can be found in Burton-Christie, 'Gift of Tears'.

compunction rather than compassion.[57] It was not until the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the gap between tears of sorrow over one's sin and sorrow over human loss began to close.[58] One reason for this was a spiritual turn to Christ's bodily suffering and death, leading to compassion as a new category of gracious tears.

The 'Man of Sorrows' primarily interpreted and depicted as Christ's 'bleeding body draped across a crucifix' was prevalent in late medieval Europe, but it claims a slightly earlier pedigree.[59] The late eleventh century prayers of Anselm of Canterbury, for example, employ vivid descriptions of the crucifixion, the suffering of Christ and the sorrow of Mary drawing the pray-er to tearfully confess sin:

> Why, oh my soul, were you not there to be pierced by a sword of bitter sorrow when you could not bear the piercing of the side of your Saviour with a lance?
> Why could you not bear to see the nails violate the hands and feet of your creator? Why did you not see with horror the blood that poured out of the side of your redeemer?
> Why were you not drunk with bitter tears when they gave him bitter gall to drink?
> …
> My most merciful lady,
> What can I say about the fountains that flowed from your most pure eyes when you saw your only son before you bound, beaten and hurt?
> What do I know of the flood that drenched your matchless face…
> How can I judge what sobs troubled your most pure breast when you heard, "Woman behold your son"?[60]

Anselm appeals to the bodily suffering of Christ and the mental suffering of Mary, seeing them as rightly provoking sorrow in the Christian. This gracious sorrow is not only compunction; the address to Mary suggests both compunction *and* compassion. Mary's tears are tears of mourning, not guilt, and the pray-er is invited to feel *with* and *for* her. Here, a new and yet unnamed category of gracious weeping emerges. Mary's compassionate tears invite

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[57] Abba Poeman is reported to have encountered women weeping at tombs on two occasions. The first encounter prompted him to propose that the depth and consistency of the 'sorrow… (in) the soul of this woman' was an example for the consistency of compunction in the monk, and in the second encounter he directly describes the woman's weeping *as* compunction. Ward, *Desert Christian*, 171, 175.
[58] McGuire, *Difficult Saint*, 138.
[59] Catherine Oppel, 'A Theology of Tears from Augustine to the Early Thirteenth Century' (Australia, Monash University, 2002), 65.
[60] Anselm of Canterbury, *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 95–96. Cited in Oppel, 'Theology of Tears', 74. As Oppel points out, tearful compunction over the crucifixion was not *invented* in this period (Augustine describes the celebration of the Passion of the Lord as 'a time of moaning, a time of groaning, a time of confession and prayer. And who of us has tears enough for such grief?... Even if there were a fountain of tears in our eyes it would not suffice…' (73). But the bodily suffering of Christ took a much more central place in Christian devotion.

participation. In feeling compassionate sorrow with and for Mary (and therefore for Christ's suffering), compassionate sorrow takes on the same curative power as tears of compunction.

The explicit addition of compassion to Gregory's categories of tears was emerging several hundred miles away in the Cistercian monastery of Bernard of Clairvaux.[61] Following the death of his brother, Bernard departs from the previous tradition of emphasising joy for the departed. Instead, Sermon 26 in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs* abruptly introduces his lament for Gerard. While he acknowledges that he cannot mourn out of misery for Gerard's fate, he nevertheless has 'reason' to mourn – for his own wounds, the loss suffered by the monastic community, and for the poor for whom Gerard cared.[62] These are not tears of compunction or joy, but compassion, and it is to Christ's sorrow that Bernard appeals:

> At the tomb of Lazarus Christ neither rebuked those who wept nor forbade them to weep, rather he wept with those who wept… These tears were witnesses to his human kindness, not signs that he lacked trust. Moreover, he who had been dead came forth at once at his word, lest the manifestation of sorrow be thought harmful to faith. In the same way, our weeping is not a sign of a lack of faith, it indicates the human condition.[63]

Bernard expands the traditional explanation of Christ's weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. It demonstrates his 'human kindness' – it is in his weeping that his compassion (and therefore the virtuous humanity we ought to adopt) is revealed, an expression of love in the face of the death which sin brings about.[64]

The English Cistercian monk Aelred of Rievaulx followed Bernard's tearful pattern in mourning the loss of a friend.[65] Aelred likewise drew on Christ's demonstration of 'the naturalness of this affection for the flesh' by weeping for Lazarus and also over the city of Jerusalem, his home and the home of his ancestors 'according to the flesh'.[66] But Aelred also

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[61] McGuire, *Difficult Saint*, 140.

[62] Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux Volume Three: On the Song of Songs II*, trans. Kilian Walsh, Cistercian Fathers Series 7 (Oxford: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 71.

[63] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Works*, 72.

[64] For more on Bernard's interpretation of Christ's weeping, see Anna Harrison, '"Jesus Wept": Mourning as Imitation of Christ in Bernard's Sermon Twenty-Six on the Song of Songs', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2013): 433–67.

[65] 'I grieved and moaned, poor wretch, and from my inmost being drew long sighs, but yet I did not weep… My mind was no numb that even when his limbs were at last uncovered for washing, I did not believe he had passed on… But my numbness at last gave way to attachment (*affectui*), gave way to grief (*dolori*), gave way to compassion (*compassio*)'. Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Mirror of Charity*, trans. Elizabeth Connor, Cistercian Fathers Series 17 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 156–57, quoted in Fulton, *Judgment to Passion*, 423.

[66] Fulton, *Judgment to Passion*, 420.

turns to Christ's passion as a prompt for compassionate weeping, referring to the human 'compassion' expressed by Christ's prayers for others in the garden, and appealing to the disciple to weep with compassion at the thought of Christ on the cross:

> His sweet hands and feet are pierced with nails, he is stretched out on the Cross and hung up between two thieves… It is not unsurprising if when the sun mourns you mourn too, if when the earth trembles you tremble with it, if when rocks are split your heart is torn in pieces, if when the women who are by the Cross weep you add your tears to theirs… What then? Will your eyes be dry as you see your most loving Lady in tears? Will you not weep as her soul is pierced by the sword of sorrow?[67]

Note both the appeal to all of creation grieving over the death of Christ, and the turn to the tears of the women at the cross. Aelred interprets their weeping (and especially the weeping of Mary the mother of God) as *compassion*. Mary weeps for her son, and in joining her tears, compassionate weeping is as gracious as weeping over one's own sin, or the sins of others.[68] The Christian does not simply weep over sin, but also over its consequences in the world, and especially for those whose sorrow is because of the sins of others. This was not the first attention given to the role of compassion in Christ's earthly ministry and death.[69] But here a particular connection is made between the gracious sorrow of Christ (and his mother) and compassion; weeping both arises *out of* compassion and opens the weeper to a greater capacity *for* compassion.

i. Women Who Weep

Mary's tears (often a compilation of the Marys in scripture) continued to influence twelfth and thirteenth century reflections on prayerful and thus gracious weeping, acting as a discipleship parallel to the tears that Jesus shed in his humanity.[70] But, as McGuire observes, the weeping

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[67] Aelred of Rievaulx, *Aelred of Rievaulx: Treatises and Pastoral Prayer*, trans. Mary Paul Macpherson, Cistercian Fathers Series 2 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 89–90, quoted in Fulton, *Judgment to Passion*, 422–23.

[68] Bernard likewise interprets Mary's tears as compassion. See Fulton, *Judgment to Passion*, 425.

[69] For more on the role of compassion in interpretations of the gospels and in the early Church, see Susan Wessel, *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[70] See for example Stephen of Tournai – writing in the 1190s, he argued that 'Mary' wept before Jesus – for her own sin as she washed Jesus' feet, for her brother Lazarus, and for Christ when he rose, therefore demonstrating the tears of compunction, compassion, and joy. McGuire, *Difficult Saint*, 146. One of the most popular religious works of the entire later Middle Ages was a lament on the sorrow of Mary and John at the cross: 'These two martyrs were silent, and could not even speak for sorrow… They wept bitterly because they were bitterly grief-stricken, for the sword of Christ had pierced the souls of both of them… The mother was torn to pieces by the death of her loved one… She was one whom great sorrow held. Great sorrows grew in her mind; raging cruelly within, they could not be poured out… The soul cannot speak, nor the mind conceive, the extent of the sorrow which affected the pious innards of Mary'. Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 174–77.

of this period was moderate in comparison to the late Middle Ages, which were 'bathed' in violent, uncontrollable tears over the pain of life and death.[71] McGuire is somewhat dismissive of this emotional transition, and it is unfortunate that he does not pause to expand upon why this violence of feeling came about (the suffering and loss inflicted by the Black Death). It is in this context that the bodily suffering of Christ is foregrounded in late medieval depictions of the Man of Sorrows. Gazing upon a representation of Christ's suffering and distress is intended to provoke compassion in the viewer, whose curative sorrow thereby participates spiritually in Christ's death.[72] The gracious prompting of compassion might then direct the recipient to compunction, and by extension to compassion for others. The mysticism of this period marks a significant shift in the relation between spiritual knowledge and the world; understanding emerges from affective experience and does not necessarily rely upon access to intellectual knowledge to be the product of grace.[73] Gracious tears might be the foremost example of this transition, and the foremost example of grace-infused weeping in the fourteenth and fifteenth century was Margery Kempe.

Born in the late fourteenth century, Margery Kempe received a series of mystical visions and experiences following the birth of her first child. These visions – including of Jesus and his mother Mary – prompted 'profuse tears of contrition', 'tears of high devotion', and 'bitter tears of compassion'.[74] Her weeping (which constantly and relentlessly accompanies her) becomes so great and so overwhelming that Kempe longs to die.[75] But in two distinct visions Jesus reassures her of the *gift* of tears and the ministry to which she is therefore called:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ said to her mind that she should remain and languish in love: "For I have ordained you to kneel before the Trinity in order to pray for the whole world … tears of compunction, devotion, and compassion are the highest and surest gifts that I give on earth".[76]

[71] McGuire, *Difficult Saint*, 148.
[72] Ellen M. Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (Cary, North Carolina: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.
[73] Ross, *Grief of God*, 10.
[74] Margery Kempe and Anthony Bale, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. Anthony Bale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4, 15, 19.
[75] Her contemplations would sometimes consist of 'two hours of weeping and often longer with our Lord's Passion in mind, sometimes because of her own sin, sometimes because of the sin of the people, sometimes for the souls in Purgatory, sometimes for those who are in poverty or in any distress, for she desired to comfort them all.' Kempe and Bale, *Book*, 22.
[76] Kempe and Bale, *Book*, 22, 32.

Kempe echoes the categories of gracious tears (compunction, devotion, and compassion) and clarifies their proper expression. The gift of tears expressed in love is a gift *of prayer*. Later, Kempe visits Julian of Norwich, who reassures her of the same connection:

> When God visits a creature with tears of contrition, devotion, or compassion, the creature can and ought to believe that the Holy Ghost is in their soul. St Paul says that the Holy Ghost asks for us with lamentations and unspeakable groaning; that is to say, he makes us ask and pray with lamentations and weeping so plentifully that the tears may not be counted. No evil spirit can give these tokens.[77]

For Julian and Kempe, their physical (and often violent) tears are external signs of inner union with God in prayer. In Kempe's accounts of her weeping the boundary between external and internal pain repeatedly collapses, most often resulting from visions of Christ's suffering on the cross, but also with compassion for his sorrow over Jerusalem, for the sorrow of Mary, and for the suffering of others.[78] This compassion for other creatures emerges in direct relation to her compassion for Christ on the cross:

> Sometimes, when she saw the crucifix, or if she saw a person or a beast, whichever it was, who was wounded, of if a man beat a child in front of her, or struck a horse or another beast with a whip, if she could see it or hear it, in her thought she saw our Lord being beaten or wounded.[79]

Through her ministry of tears, Kempe cultivates the capacity to see Christ's sorrows in the world around her and respond accordingly.[80] Her experience of sorrow – expressed in prayer and shaped by the graces of tearful compunction, devotion, and compassion – expands her moral knowledge. In this sense, Christ's sorrow is also *exemplary* and *salvific* for her, as it was for the Cistercians and for Augustine and Aquinas. Most contemporary readers would likely not consider Kempe's tears 'governed by reason'. Perhaps Aquinas – and even Bernard –

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[77] Kempe and Bale, *Book*, 42.

[78] 'She had such great compassion and such great pain to see our Lord's pain that she could not keep herself from crying and roaring, though she could have died from it… this kind of crying endured for many years after this time' (64), 'When the said creature heard it read how the Lord wept (over the city of Jerusalem), then she wept bitterly and cried loudly' (130), 'It is myself, almighty God, that makes you weep every day for your own sins, for the great compassion that I give you for my bitter Passion, for the sorrows that my mother had on earth, for the anguish suffered and for the tears that she wept… for the great sorrow that you have for the whole world, that you might help them as well as you would help yourself both spiritual and physical' (144). Kempe and Bale, *Book*.

[79] Kempe and Bale, *Book*, 65.

[80] Jessie Gutgsell, 'The Gift of Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination of Western Medieval Christianity', *Anglican Theological Review* 97, no. 2 (March 2015): 239–53. Gutgsell notes a similar typology of tears in the writings of Catherine of Siena, who emphasises the intercessory character of tears, their capacity to encourage intimacy with God directly related to their expression out of love for others (245).

would agree with such an assessment. Her weeping is violent, constant, and isolating (she is mocked or vilified almost everywhere she goes). And yet they produce in her a desire for holiness which echoes the tradition's understanding of the place of sorrow in the Christian life. Her tears turn her from sin, prompt her intercession for the world, and increase her compassion. They represent fitting sorrow emerging from physical as well as mental suffering. Her experiences seem to replace and even transcend the intellect in pursuing moral knowledge. She lives through a plague, her husband repeatedly rapes her, she gives birth to 14 children, she undergoes several heresy trials, and she is shunned by the communities she visits. But in her visions of Christ's sufferings on the cross, she receives the grace to turn repeatedly to prayer. Christ's compassion for her, expressed in his willingness to undergo great and salvific sorrow, provokes a curative sorrow in her. The saviour for whom she feels compassion thus promises her that her earthly sorrows will finally be turned to joy.

In his reflection on the weeping of Bernard of Clairvaux, McGuire observes that the 'tears of monastic Villers in 1200 are not in the same category as those of Freudian Vienna in 1900'.[81] He emphasises the different valence tears take on when expressed in the context of 'communities based on love'.[82] Communities of love give one of the primary contexts in which the passions can be usefully governed by reason, and the corporate (or *political*) expression of sorrow emerges as a theme in the final part of this chapter and receives extended attention in chapter seven. Kempe was deprived of this earthly gift. And yet in expressing her tears as prayer, she does indeed join a spiritual community of love, and it is this love which guides her to compunction, compassion, and devotion.

So far, this chapter has introduced two related but distinct approaches to the relationship between Christ's salvific work and his affectivity; one which came to prominence in scholastic discourse about Christ's human nature, and the other which emerged in late medieval mystic responses to widespread suffering and loss, most significantly in the context of the Black Death. While these two approaches differ in emphasis and expression, they both reflect a basic assumption about Christ's sorrow as exemplary for the Christian life, and a guide to faithful

[81] McGuire, *Difficult Saint*, 135.
[82] McGuire, *Difficult Saint*, 151.

discipleship. I now introduce an apparently contrasting approach which arises in the Black Theology tradition: Christ's sorrow as solidarity.[83] I do so for three reasons.

Firstly, like the late medieval mystic's attentiveness to the cross, the Black theological tradition approaches Christ's sorrow through experiential encounter with God, often in the context of personal and corporate suffering. The two traditions thus share a close interpretive alignment between Christ's 'inner' and 'outer' pain; his bodily suffering is not treated in distinction from his 'sorrow'. Secondly, and relatedly, the Black theological tradition emphasises the particularity of Christ's incarnation, who comes as one of the poor and dies a violent death, and whose sorrow is therefore most closely acquainted with the sorrow of the oppressed. This is of fundamental significance for my project; sorrow over anthropogenic loss is not evenly distributed, and is not purely mental suffering; for most people (and indeed most *Christians*) it is closely wedded to overwhelming material loss.[84] A theology of such sorrow which is written at a remove from the most immediate and severe effects of climate change and ecological destruction ought to anticipate this danger; a theology of purely *exemplary* sorrow is insufficient (and insulting) for those who do not need to be instructed to grieve but are already oppressed by the weight of sorrow over the sins of others. Thirdly, I seek to demonstrate that these diverse Christian traditions share an assumption that sorrow is prompted by sin and is most properly expressed as prayer, in communion with others. This direction shapes its meaning and practice in the life of the Church.

I therefore draw on James Cone and Howard Thurman, who emphasise Christ's identification with the poor in his social and political context and crucifixion. I also introduce the wider theological tradition of spirituals and gospel songs which both reflect and direct Black experiences of sorrow (and to which Cone and Thurman both appeal). I do not have the space here to do full justice to the complexity and diversity of the Black theological tradition (not least its divergent expressions in different parts of the world), but by introducing the Christology represented in Thurman and Cone as response to and dialogue partner with the longer Christian history of the passions, I hope to demonstrate that they share a commitment to both the moral weight of the passions (and sorrow in particular) in the Christian life, and

[83] Though the tradition represented by Margery Kempe shares a crucial theological assumption with the Black theological tradition: the role of embodied experience in theological knowledge.

[84] Beyond the threat of mass death from sudden and extreme weather events, we can add longer-term cycles of starvation, air pollution, water scarcity, disease, unbearable heat, and growth in human trafficking and military violence, to name a few.

that their shared emphasis on Christ's incarnation as the theological lynchpin for this moral interpretation can also inform Christian interpretations and expressions of sorrow over anthropogenic loss.

5. A RESPONSE FROM BLACK THEOLOGY

Nobody knows de trouble I've seen,
Nobody knows my sorrow.
Nobody knows de trouble I've seen…
Glory Hallelujah!

Nobody knows the trouble I see,
Nobody knows but Jesus,
Nobody knows the trouble I see,
Glory Hallelujah![85]

James Cone and Howard Thurman represent different generations of Black thought. Born at the turn of the century, Thurman was a non-violent advocate for integration, the minister of the first major interracial church in the United States and a mentor to Martin Luther King Jr. Born a generation later, Cone's thought developed during the militantly radical protest movements of the 1960s and is widely recognised as the founder of Black liberation theology. They thus differ slightly in their interpretations of Christ's sorrow and its effect on the spiritual life. Thurman's focus trends towards individual spiritual and social liberation, while Cone is primarily concerned with Black communal liberation.[86] However, Thurman and Cone both testify to and draw heavily upon the centrality of Christ's incarnation and death for a Black theology of suffering and sorrow. They name the spirituals as representative of the earliest iterations of this theology in the lives of enslaved Black people. Rather than identifying the specific moments where Jesus wept as requiring theological justification, Cone and Thurman take the sociological and political context of Jesus as demonstrating his constant and consistent embodiment as the Man of Sorrows.[87] The sorrow of Jesus is not first a theological problem to be solved but rather a vital identity of the Christ who comes to liberate the oppressed.

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[85] Quotations from two variations of 'Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen', an African American Spiritual.
[86] Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *God, Being and Liberation: A Comparative Analysis of the Theologies and Ethics of James H. Cone and Howard Thurman* (London: University Press of America, 1989).
[87] 'Jesus was not the subject of theological questioning. He was perceived in the reality of black experience, and black slaves affirmed both his *divinity* and *humanity* without debating the philosophical question, "How can God become human being?... there is no suggestion of a docetic or gnostic Christ who only appeared to be human. His suffering was real and his pain was great. He died the death of a natural man'. James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2022), 43–44.

Before continuing, I want to make a few observations about forms of theological knowledge, and the work of the Holy Spirit within the bounds of the Christian tradition. In terms of social context and education, the worlds of Augustine and Aquinas could not be further removed from the experiences of enslaved Africans in the antebellum south of the United States. Although Augustine is rightly recognised as an African theologian, he and Aquinas represent the development of western Christianity out of a Greek philosophical tradition and hundreds of years of debates concerning language about God. By contrast, the enslaved Africans who received a (heretically racist) version of Christianity via their white masters had no such theological context in which to work and were therefore reliant on reading the scripture made available to them.[88] In one sense, then, the doctrinal 'theory' represented in their theology of the incarnation is, to use Thurman's phrase, 'very simple': 'God' and 'Jesus' are used as interchangeable terms, without a clearly laid out schema relating them to each other:

> Whether the song uses the term, Jesus, or the oft repeated Lord, or Saviour, or God, the same insistence is present – God is in them, in their souls, as they put it, and what is just as important, He is in the facts of their world. In short, God is active in history in a personal and primary manner.[89]

I raise this dynamic to make explicit that I will *not* be reviewing what follows as a technical exercise in describing the relationship between the economic and immanent Trinity.[90] To do so would distract from the point – the meaning of Christ's sorrow for the Christian. And, in another just as real sense, the theology of the incarnation, theodicy, and soteriology which emerged out of the experience of slavery offers astonishing depth of insight which a theological education simply cannot replicate. I also raise this dynamic as an invitation to repentant worship. Despite the powers which sought to separate enslaved Africans from an orthodox Christianity which honoured their dignity as those made in the image of God, the Holy Spirit was at work in that most cruel of places. In them, the Spirit ignited a knowledge of their saviour

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[88] Restricting or manipulating access to scripture was used widely as a tool of control by slaveowners in the United States and across the Caribbean. For example, see the 'Slave Bible' produced by the Society for the Conversion of Negro Slaves, which contained only parts of 14 books of the Bible. Brigit Katz, 'Heavily Abridged "Slave Bible" Removed Passages That Might Encourage Uprisings', *Smithsonian Magazine*, 4 January 2019, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/heavily-abridged-slave-bible-removed-passages-might-encourage-uprisings-180970989/#8BtObVqQWlOWTvKg.99.

[89] Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spiritual Speaks Of Life And Death* (New York: Harper and Brother, 1947), 38–39.

[90] It should be emphasised that the theological tradition which began on the plantations was nevertheless an orthodox, Trinitarian Christianity. See 'Songs of the Spirit' in Andrew Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality Amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

which their white masters did not possess.[91] In their faith the tradition of the passions re-emerges, many hundreds of years and many miles away: sorrow is a response to the sin of the world. God can give us the grace to see it. And our sorrow is most fully realised in prayer.

I therefore first introduce Black theological readings of the conditions of Jesus' incarnation and his death. I conclude this chapter by drawing out the relation of Christ's sorrow to human sorrow as prayer. In doing so I note the spirituals as prayerful expression of sorrow, made in the conviction that Jesus both knew and bore the sorrow of enslaved Africans and could be trusted to bring about justice for their suffering.

i. *He Was Oppressed, And He Was Afflicted*

Poor little Jesus boy,
made him be born in a manger,
World treated him so mean,
Treats me mean too…[92]

The historicity of Jesus' incarnation is of fundamental importance to the theologies of Cone and Thurman.[93] In *God of the Oppressed*, Cone emphasises Jesus' identity as a 'particular Jew', countering those who so universalise his incarnation that his 'true humanity' is pushed to 'the periphery of Christological analysis' or 'merely verbalized for the purpose of focusing on his divinity'.[94] Instead, Cone appeals to Jesus' Jewishness – born into poverty in Palestine, to a people struggling for freedom – as revealing the identity and telos of the poor (liberated

[91] Howard Thurman movingly picks up this dynamic in his work on the theological world of the spirituals: 'What greater tribute could be paid to… their religious faith in particular than this: It taught a people how to ride high to life, to look squarely in the face those facts that argue most dramatically against all hope and to use those facts as raw material out of which they fashioned a hope that the environment, with all of its cruelty, could not crush. With untutored hands – with a sure artistry and genius created out of a vast vitality, a concept of God was wrenched from the Sacred Book, the Bible, the chronicle of a people who had learned through great necessity the secret meaning of suffering. This total experience enabled them to reject annihilation and affirm a terrible right to live. The center of focus was beyond themselves in a God who was a companion to them in their miseries even as He enabled them to transcend their miseries. And this is good news!' Thurman, *Negro Spiritual*, 40–41.
[92] Quotation from an African American spiritual in James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013), 22.
[93] The historic circumstances of the incarnation were and are a constant in Black religious identity. See for example historian W. E. B. Du Bois, writing at the turn of the century: 'Yet Jesus Christ was a laborer and black men are laborers; He was poor and we are poor; He was despised of his fellow men and we are despised; He was persecuted and crucified, and we are mobbed and lynched. If Jesus Christ came to America He would associate with Negroes and Italians and working people; He would eat and pray with them, and He would seldom see the interior of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine'. W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Church and the Negro', *The Crisis*, October 1913.
[94] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (London: SPCK, 1977), 119, 117.

children of God).[95] Christ's incarnation with 'the poor, the despised, and the black' discloses his solidarity with them, and transforming them from 'oppressed slaves' to 'liberated servants'.[96] In the spirituals, Cone finds that the social and political context of Jesus' earthly life is tied to the nature of God's saving work in the past (the oppressed children of Israel), the present (those enslaved), and the future (justice and peace among all people, judgement for the oppressor). The composers of the spirituals offered up prayers in which they identified with both Jesus' suffering and the suffering of those Jesus came to dignify, heal, and raise, holding to the promise of God's justice for their oppressors.[97] The promise of salvation was a continuous narrative:

> They truly believed the story of Jesus' past existence with the poor as told in the Bible. Indeed, their own power to struggle to be human was due to the presence of Jesus with them. From his past history with the weak and his present existence with them, black people received a vision of his coming presence to fully heal the misery of human suffering.[98]

Cone describes Jesus' presence amongst the suffering poor as a *real* presence, both in the past and present, through the incarnation and bodily ascension. When enslaved Black people sang 'nobody knows (my sorrow) but Jesus', their conviction was not merely that Jesus was *aware of* their sorrow or *sympathised with* their sorrow, but that Jesus intimately *knew* their sorrow, and would bear their pain and heal it: 'Glory, Hallelujah'. Limiting Jesus' bodily identification with the poor to his time on earth is therefore met by Cone's charge of Docetism. To fully understand Jesus' solidarity with those who sorrow, it must also be represented in his risen body:

> The risen Lord's identification with the suffering poor today is just as real as was his presence with the outcasts in first-century Palestine. His presence with the poor today is not docetic; but like yesterday, today also he takes the pain of the poor upon himself and bears it for them… Christ *must* be black in order to remain faithful to the divine promise to bear the suffering of the poor.[99]

Here Jesus' 'blackness' functions as a statement of God's rejection of the sin of 'whiteness', a category constructed to further oppressive rule over other people. For Cone, God's rejection of

[95] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 120.
[96] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 136.
[97] For example, the spiritual 'Bosom of Abraham (Rock my soul)', which uses Luke 16 to identify the singer with Lazarus, the poor man who dies and goes to heaven, while the rich man who refused him charity dies and goes to hell.
[98] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 131.
[99] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 135.

this sin is most fully affirmed in his incarnation as one of the poor, who suffer at the hands of an idolatrous Empire's desires for power.

Did you ever see such a man as God?
A little more faith in Jesus,
A preaching the Gospel to the poor,
A little more faith in Jesus.[100]

Likewise, Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* centres the non-incidental nature of Jesus' Jewishness; not just a Jew, but a *poor* Jew, a member of 'the masses of the people', and as such 'more truly Son of man'.[101] Thurman associates the truthfulness of the designation 'Son of man' with the majority experience of poverty and its associated struggles; not, he argues, to suggest that Jesus' background sufficiently explains his ministry, but rather that his ministry expressed belonging to and took place among the socially and politically disinherited. It would be docetic to assume that Jesus was not shaped by his cultural and political climate.[102] Like Cone, Thurman points to the sorrows implicit in the kind of incarnation Jesus adopts as demonstration of his solidarity. But Thurman also proposes an *exemplary* meaning for Christ's sorrow; Jesus is an example for the oppressed because he came as one of them. Thurman argues for a 'striking similarity' between the position of Jesus as an oppressed religious minority and Black Americans under Jim Crow, proposing that these conditions produce the same psychology in their subjects.[103] In Jesus' response to the conditions of his suffering, he is therefore a moral exemplar. As Thurman explains:

> Wherever (the spirit of Jesus) appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them.[104]

In Jesus' teaching, Thurman finds a *right* and *wrong* expression of sorrow for those who stand 'with their backs against the wall'.[105] He argues that Jesus' ministry calls upon those who follow him to resist the temptation to fear, to deception, and to hatred. Like Cone, Thurman's reading of Jesus' sorrow is influenced by the spirituals. Elsewhere, Thurman takes up accusations of naivety concerning the call to inner spiritual transformation in the lives of the

[100] Quotation from an African-American spiritual in Thurman, *Negro Spiritual*, 38.
[101] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1996), 7.
[102] Thurman, *Disinherited*, 8.
[103] Thurman, *Disinherited*, 23.
[104] Thurman, *Disinherited*, 19.
[105] Thurman, *Disinherited*, 1.

oppressed, appealing to the witness of enslaved people; the wealth of their spiritual lives was not at the expense of resistance to the sin of their masters.[106] Rather, in the songs they sang to each other and to God, there was 'an awareness that against the darkness of their days, something warred, "a strange new courage." To them it was the work of God and who could say to them NAY?'[107] This courage found its fulfilment in the sorrow of Jesus' crucifixion and the assurance of his resurrection, to which I now turn.

ii. Like A Lamb Led To The Slaughter

I was there when they nailed him to the cross,
Oh! How it makes me sadder, sadder,
When I think how they nailed him to the cross.[108]

For Cone and Thurman, the solidarity of Jesus with the sorrow of the oppressed ties together the poverty of his life and the cruelty of his death. The rejection and crucifixion of Jesus was foundational to the theology of enslaved Africans, running through the spirituals and gospel songs, and with more sermons, prayers, and testimonies on the cross than anything else.[109] This solidarity was deeply intimate, echoing in some respects the kind of mystical knowledge of Jesus' suffering which provoked the spiritual tears of Margery Kempe: the composers of the spirituals invoke both the presence of the risen Christ with them in their suffering and their own empathic presence with Jesus at his death. Under the constant threat of violent, cruel, and unjust death, they identified with the cross: 'He suffered, He died, but not alone – they were with Him. They knew what He suffered; it was a cry of the heart that found a response and an echo in their own woes. They entered into the fellowship of His suffering'.[110] This theological emphasis underpins the longer Black theological tradition, wed as it is to a history of lynching. In his final theological work, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Cone places the cross and the lynching tree side by side, identifying Christ with the 'recrucified' lynched Black body as

[106] 'There are those who say that the religion was so simple, so naïve, so completely otherworldly that no impression was made by the supra-immoral aspects of the environment; only a simple acceptance of one's fate. Any person who has talked with an ex-slave could hardly hold such a position'. Thurman, *The Negro Spiritual*, 30. Some of those who organised insurrections against slave masters appealed to their faith in Jesus; enslaved man and preacher Nat Turner led a four-day rebellion in Virginia, arguing that *not* rebelling against slavery would be 'wasting the Holy Spirit'. Julian Kunnie, 'Jesus in Black Theology: The Ancient Ancestor Visits', in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 100–101.
[107] Thurman, *Negro Spiritual*, 42–43.
[108] Quotation from an African-American spiritual in Cone, *Lynching Tree*, 22.
[109] Cone, *Lynching Tree*, 21.
[110] Howard Thurman, *Deep River: Reflections on the Religious Insight of Certain of the Negro Spirituals* (New York: Harper, 1955), 21–22.

indictment of white supremacist Christianity.[111] By necessary extension this identification is a sign of Jesus' presence with Black Christians *over and against* the sin of white people.[112] In the cross, Cone argues that Jesus' identification with this suffering goes beyond solidarity and into *total* identification. In his commentary on Isaiah 53, Cone argues that the 'pain of the oppressed *is God's pain*, for he takes their suffering as their own, thereby freeing them from its ultimate control of their lives'.[113] Leaving aside the question of Jesus' passions and their relation to the impassibility of God, the point here is that if Jesus' sorrow is *solidaristic*, the fitting expression of Black sorrow is prayerful defiance, knowing that their prayers are heard by one who knows their sorrow and is triumphant over their oppressors. To return to the earlier relationship drawn between God's salvation in the past, present, and future, it is the *risen* and yet still *wounded* Christ in whom the assurance of healing for sorrow is found. The South African cleric, politician and anti-apartheid activist Allan Boesak draws on the vision of Revelation to make this point:

> It is not necessary to dichotomize the Cross and the resurrection... John sees Jesus as the "lamb that was slain," and it is as the "slain lamb" that Jesus is found worthy to open the scroll… He is Lord in his suffering, not in spite of it. As suffering Lord he is victor over his enemies, and the enemies of the little ones with whom he has identified himself, for he carries their wounds in his body… He is risen, but that does not remove him from his people.[114]

Like the tradition represented in Augustine and Aquinas, the Black theological tradition as represented here identifies Christ's sorrow as having salvific implications. Christ's sorrow is *voluntary*, and the chosen nature of his passions affirms the saving potency of his incarnation and death. As such, Christ's sorrow affirms that sorrow is a fitting response to sin, drawing the Christian closer to Christ when this sorrow is offered as prayer. The difference here is one of emphasis on the salvific meaning of this sorrow: for Augustine and Aquinas, Christ's sorrow demonstrates the salvific sufficiency of the incarnation (Christ truly takes on human nature and is yet without sin). In the spirituals and in Cone and Thurman, Christ's sorrow indicates the *kind* of salvation which Christ offers (liberation from sinful powers which oppress the poor). In this interpretation of Christ's sorrow, I am reminded of the third category of gracious tears

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[111] Cone, *Lynching Tree*, xv.
[112] 'Black Christians believed that just knowing that Jesus went through an experience of suffering in a manner similar to theirs gave them faith that God was with them, even in suffering on lynching trees, just as God was present with Jesus in suffering on the cross'. Cone, *Lynching Tree*, 22.
[113] Cone, *Lynching Tree*, 175.
[114] Allan A. Boesak, 'Theodicy: "De Lawd Knowed How It Was." Black Theology and Black Suffering', in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 164.

which emerged in the late medieval period: devotion, or holy joy. In the prayers of the spirituals and the theology of Cone and Thurman, tears of sorrow become tears of devotion. In Christ's solidaristic suffering, assurance of salvation and the administration of divine justice is promised, prompting the oppressed to conquering praise.

iii. By His Bruises We Are Healed

Sometimes I hangs my head an' cries,
But Jesus goin' to wipe my weep'n eyes.[115]

Rebekah Eklund proposes that there are two basic theological interpretations of Jesus' laments; they are 'anthropological' (expressing solidaristic humanity) or 'Christological' (the sinless one grieves over sin and enacts atonement). In the former, Christ joins in the sorrow of humanity, and in the latter, humanity is called to join in the sorrow of Christ.[116] This chapter has introduced three distinct approaches which place varying degrees of emphasis on these two interpretative lenses. But as Eklund goes on to insist – and as I have sought to indicate – these readings should not be mutually exclusive. We can and do talk about sorrow as something we suffer *and* as something that we cultivate as a moral response to the world, and for the Christian the relation between these two experiences (and more precisely, the relation between the people who undergo these two experiences) is found in Christ, the Man of Sorrows. The Black theological tradition's emphasis on Christ's socio-political context and physical suffering helps close the gap between the voluntary nature of the incarnation, Christ's willed expressions of sorrow over the presence of sin, and Christ's sorrow as endured suffering at the hands of others. I return with Eklund to the nature of Jesus' prayers of lament to interpret the relation between these two points: when Jesus' prays the psalms of lament, he prays as a particular human with co-assumed perfections and defects. He prays as an Israelite who prays the prayers of his oppressed people. He is a human who sorrows over the death of his friend, over the sins of the city with which he closely identifies, and over his bodily suffering. But Jesus' prayers of lament are also unique because they *fulfil* the humanity he takes on – he is truly the 'righteous sufferer' of the psalms. In his perfect obedience to the Father, Jesus' sorrow does not inhibit or undermine the intimacy of their divine relations. His disciples can be assured of its salvific potency in conquering the consequences of sin in the world.

[115] Quotation from an African American spiritual in Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues*, 50.
[116] Lament is therefore either mainly 'a form of protest or a form of penitence'. Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 51–52.

I've been in the storm so long; O give me little time to pray.[117]

A criticism easily levied at emphasising sorrow as prayer is that it doesn't prompt *activity*. Certainly, there is a legacy within Christianity which is alarmingly dismissive about the seriousness of prayer as a response to sin. Stripped of its curative properties, the pray-er does not walk away with compunction, compassion, or devotion. But the accounts of Christ's sorrow covered in this chapter have sought to demonstrate that truly prayerful sorrow emerges from grace: the curative capacity to see the true nature of sin in the world, and to be turned – to compunction, to compassion, and to the courage-making conviction that Christ is found with the sorrowing. The guilty and the downtrodden meet in the Man of the Sorrows and walk away with renewed moral vision.

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have introduced three distinct approaches to interpreting the sorrow of Christ, drawing out a shared conviction concerning the curative nature of sorrow, especially when expressed as prayer. I have paid particular attention to Christ's sorrow as a meeting point for voluntary and involuntary expressions of sorrow and human expression of sorrow as a body-soul composite. I have given these points particular attention because sorrow over anthropogenic loss has become a recognisable phenomenon since the effects of climate change and ecological collapse have begun to be experienced by bodies rather than simply theorised. We understand them as signifying more than a one-off event or aberration because of the human capacity to place these experiences in the context of the past and the future. Of course, as a movement of the sensitive appetite, such sorrow can operate beyond the control of reason, both in tendencies towards nihilistic despair and in the temptation to deny the necessary changes to human behaviour which this sorrow illuminates. But in Christ's sorrow, we receive an example of total unification between the rational and sensitive appetites and the graced outcomes of this unification. This same grace creates the possibility of ever-greater unification between these appetites in us, too, and this gracious work is transformative of our relationships to God and to other creatures. In the co-operation of our reason and the passion of sorrow, this movement of the sensitive appetite participates in revealing truth about sin and its consequences. In this light, sorrow can be a *graced* and therefore *morally authoritative* passion.

[117] Quotation from an African American spiritual in Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, 334.

Such a reading of the moral role of sorrow might of course be generically applied to a wide range of circumstances in which Christians respond to sin and its consequences. In the second half of this thesis, I seek to demonstrate that sorrow over anthropogenic loss belongs in this *graced and thus revelatory* category. I make the case that such a culturally determined and temporally bound response can and does mediate morally authoritative truth – about ourselves, about other creatures, and about the God we worship. I also attend to the efficacious nature of sorrow's expression as prayer, turning both to the theological tradition of humans as priests of creation and political accounts which treat human speech about the world as transformative for both human and non-human creatures.

CHAPTER FIVE: READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter three I gave an overview of the passion of sorrow as it has been understood in the Christian tradition, with two foci: the relationship between passion and reason and the role of sorrow in the moral life. In chapter four I gave further attention to the latter focus by examining several theological interpretations of Christ's sorrow, especially as they illuminate sorrow's embodied nature and its most fitting expression (which, I argue, is prayer). I have proposed that these accounts treat the passion of sorrow as in some sense revealing truth about the world. However, applying this theological frame to sorrow over anthropogenic loss requires further justification. Sorrow over the destabilising effects of human activity on the biosphere is a new category for theological investigation, and even within this historical moment it remains clearly culturally conditioned as an experience. In this chapter I address the question of whether the culturally conditioned nature of sorrow over anthropogenic loss undermines its moral authority as an experience which reveals truth.

Using our creaturely identity as a basis for describing the relationship between culture and nature, I propose that the cultural conditioning of sorrow over anthropogenic loss does not present such a barrier. I also seek to avoid an interpretation which collapses the distinction between culturally shaped human feeling and the real 'nature' of non-human creatures. A nature-culture frame for this sorrow clarifies that our responses to anthropogenic loss are both narratively shaped *and* narratively shaping; they connect the realm of sensory response to death to the realm of forming narratives which concern our spiritual and moral relation to the world. I thus offer an account of creation – including human creatures – as a world of signs which can be read. Such a reading follows on from the account of the human passions I have offered thus far; encounters which bring about sorrow signify the consequences of sin and these signs can be received and interpreted by the intellectual and sensitive appetite. This is not to say that our reading of these signs is always equally effective. While the range of sorrows gathered under the umbrella of 'climate grief' can be more *or less* an approximation of what is real, sorrow over anthropogenic loss can nevertheless be interpreted as a passion which can communicate at least partial truth about human and non-human creatures.[1] I begin with a brief introduction

[1] As previously noted, the elasticity of the term 'climate grief' means that it can and does also lead to sorrow which is nihilistic, selfish, and even actively violent towards other humans.

to the culturally determined nature of this sorrow before offering a critical overview of the modern relation between nature and culture. In the latter half of the chapter, I propose a semiotic reading of human reception and interpretation of non-human creation.

2. CULTURES OF ANTHROPOGENIC LOSS

Sorrowful responses to anthropogenic loss are not universal experiences.[2] They are culturally conditioned, prompted and shaped by narratives concerning human relation to the non-human and determined by one's local environment and context. As evidenced in chapter one, the most clearly documented accounts of sorrow over anthropogenic loss belong either to those cultures with very close relation to their immediate environments (farmers and indigenous communities) or who have high levels of exposure to information about climate change and ecological collapse (scientists and environmental activists). Sorrow over anthropogenic loss is also temporally bound; those who experience sorrow over the human-caused extinction of other creatures do not, for example, tend to articulate those feelings in relation to former extinction events. Indeed, this latter point can be used to downplay the significance of human dread, anxiety, or guilt over *this* extinction event.

Objections to taking sorrow over anthropogenic loss seriously express a kind of nature/culture dualism: in criticisms of climate and ecological grief as a purely cultural phenomenon, the critic implies that a culturally determined passion cannot also be legitimately described as a 'real' response to something 'true'. In this reading, 'cultural' narratives which prompt such sorrow are not necessarily related to the real fabric of an external 'nature', and so are fundamentally unreliable as a source of knowledge. By contrast, 'nature' is treated as that which is 'real', verifiable not through human experiences but through a supposedly separate realm of scientific data. On the other side, the speeches and campaigns of climate activists can also operate under an apparent nature/culture divide, claiming to tell wholly *natural* stories about human identity. The result, of course, is highly cultural; romanticising the non-human ('we need to learn from Mother Nature'), flattening the obvious differences between humans and other creatures in order to emphasise similarities ('we are nature defending itself'), or

[2] There are many people who *do not* claim to experience climate and ecological grief, despite living under the same changing material conditions as those who do. This can be contrasted with, say, grief over the death of a loved one, which, while highly culturally conditioned in its expression, can relatively safely be read as a universal human experience.

demonising all human activity ('humans are the virus (in an otherwise benign natural world)').[3] Such approaches share a common problem: they claim to transcend culturally determined interpretations of the relationship between humans and other creatures in order to give greater credence to their campaigns. Human culture is treated as a thin veneer of creative interpretation which can be scraped away to face what is 'really' there. Can a culturally determined movement of the sensitive appetite also reveal truth about the nature of those creatures or places which provoke such a movement? Or, to put it another way, if sorrow over anthropogenic loss is a humanly constructed passion, can it be trusted to be morally authoritative? Answering this question requires an assessment of our use of 'nature' and 'culture' as competing – or at least wholly distinct – modes of being.

3. NATURE/CULTURE

The climate and ecological crises have prompted a flurry of ideological scapegoating. Who or what is to blame for such an unprecedentedly dysfunctional relationship between human and non-human creatures?[4] Christianity, the reformation, colonialism, capitalism, anthropocentrism, and the Copernican and Cartesian revolutions have all variously come under fire, and while each critique certainly contains varying degrees of truth, they cannot really be successfully disentangled to identify a solo culprit.[5] What *does* seem to be a point of agreement is that the modern era ushered in a new and isolationist imagination concerning the human creature, both in removing divine power from interpretations of the movements of the cosmos and in an increasingly self-referential mode of human meaning-making. In *Passage to Modernity* Louis Dupré describes these related processes as a 'double breakup: the one between the transcendent constituent and its cosmic-human counterpart, and the one between the person

[3] These are culturally determined phrases. Mother Nature is comfortably claimed as a teacher when we do not live in fear of smallpox. We might say that we are 'nature defending itself' to decry littering while in the same breath promoting the nature-transcending ethics of veganism. And it is very easy to claim that 'humans are the virus' when no one is threatening to wipe out your particular people group.

[4] Humanity has a longer history of ecocidal behaviour – the arrival of the Norse in Greenland and the collapse of Mayan civilisation in Central America are two pertinent examples. But the distinctive scale and extent of this current collapse in the biosphere's stability is certainly unprecedented in human history.

[5] For examples of the above, see Lynn White Jr, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, 155.3767 (1967), 1203–7, Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), James H. Cone, 'Whose Earth Is It Anyway?', *CrossCurrents*, 50.1/2 (2000), 36–46, Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2015), David Keller, *Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010), and Michael Northcott, *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (London: SPCK, 2014). Amitav Ghosh observes that despite the western world's insistence on its uniqueness as the source of modernity, the 'carbon economy' and its reliance on fossil fuels is a *global* and multifaceted product, both in its sources and in the technological innovations which led to its extraction and movement. See Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, 91–108.

and cosmos'.[6] He articulates the consequences of this new self-referential reading of humanity: humans, and humans alone, possess *inherent* meaning, and as such any meaning perceived outside the human subject is only the product of human meaning making, rather than humans being creatures who can interpret meaning which exists independently of human perception.[7] The loss of nature's transcendent *telos* left a vacuum of purpose which could only be filled by human purposes. The new 'nature' as distinct from human 'culture' therefore became characterised by utility – if God was there to be praised for creation, He was to be praised not out of wonder over the creatures themselves but because of their use in human advancement.

For examples of this attitude emerging out of modernity, Francis Bacon and Robert Boyle make regular appearances in literature concerning the modern reimagination of human and non-human nature, particularly concerning three interrelated ideas which remain fundamental to understanding the trust (or lack of it) which we place in our interpretations of the world: nature as knowable, as utility, and as manipulable.[8]

Francis Bacon's development of 'true directions concerning the interpretation of nature' in *Novum Organum* argues that scientific knowledge (that is, knowledge of the true nature of things) is pursued in the accumulation of observable data, freed from human preconception or tradition. Its purpose is the human use and control of creation, or the 'Empire' and 'Reign' of 'man'.[9] *Novum Organum* forms one part of his broader project – *Instauratio Magna* – concerned with the purpose of science, including partitioning knowledge into discrete categories.[10] It outlines Bacon's theological anthropology: humanity is 'the servant [minister] and interpreter of nature' and 'human knowledge and power come to the same thing'.[11] Bacon reads scientific knowledge and the instruments it produces as re-establishing a pre-lapsarian

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[6] Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 3. Bruno Latour similarly describes modernity as the simultaneous birth of 'humanity' and 'nonhumanity' and a 'crossed-out God', arising 'first from the conjoined creation of those three entities, and then from the masking of the conjoined birth and the separate treatment of the three communities while, underneath, hybrids continue to multiply as an effect of this separate treatment'. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13.

[7] Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 24.

[8] Bacon and Boyle feature in several of the titles mentioned in note 5.

[9] Bacon identifies four 'idols' – the Tribe (projections of human nature), the Den (one's particular experiences), the Marketplace (language), and the Theatre (philosophers) – as deterring a truthful reading of nature. Francis Bacon, *The Instauratio Magna Part II: Novum Organum and Associated Texts*, ed. Graham Rees and Maria Wakely (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 79–83.

[10] This division of knowledge in *De Augmentis Scientiarum* is symptomatic of the broader 'purification' attempt as described by Bruno Latour in the division of nature and culture. I return to this point later in this chapter.

[11] Bacon, *Novum Organum*, p. 65.

order, in which humans once again wield control over creation. As Oliver Davies points out, here the work of 'eliminative induction' becomes 'equated with the purification of mind' and a return to 'unity with the world'.[12] Bacon interprets Adam naming other animals as representing a pure form of knowledge, from which humanity has fallen, and to which the study of nature might help us return.[13] While Bacon certainly characterises this work as for the glory of God, he nevertheless approaches nature as though it bears no intrinsic *telos*. He compares investigation into final causes to a consecrated virgin who has no children; there is no final causality to be discerned beyond the practical application of the uses of nature for humanity's advancement.[14] Dupré describes the consequences of negating nature's end as follows:

> Science for Bacon offered the most practical as well as the least expensive solutions to basic human problems. But without a common teleology that integrates humanity with nature, the mastery of nature becomes its own end, and the purposes originally pursued by it end up becoming secondary.[15]

Davies also picks up on this 'common teleology' gap in Bacon's thought. If, Davies argues, knowledge is only concerned with the 'fundamental material constitution of things' (understanding is knowing how something is made and being able to imitate that process), little room is left for acknowledging the imaginative work which humans do to 'comprehend the world *as a whole*' and to conceive of our place within it.[16] In driving a wedge between human imagination and intellectual enquiry into the nature of other creatures, a sense of human participation in God's cosmos is lost. With no common *telos*, the human is 'cut adrift or exiled from the world'.[17]

Like Bacon, mechanical philosopher Robert Boyle sought to protect the acquisition of knowledge from human discourse or prejudice. Against a Hobbesian appeal to natural law, Boyle argued that facts could be established through experimentation which would make

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[12] Oliver Davies, *The Creativity of God: World, Eucharist, Reason*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54.
[13] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 54.
[14] Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 72. As Milbank puts it, 'in Francis Bacon, the 'truth of the made' begins to degenerate into the merely experimental confirmation of the utile working of a well-constructed machine… the indispensable disclosing *fictio*… is banished to the realm of a depoliticised rhetoric and poetics where it now discloses merely a decorous 'beauty' whose role tends to be reduced to subservience to either reason or utility or else to an integrating imaginative function that has a merely subjective import'. John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People*, Illuminations: Theory and Religion Series (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2014), 219.
[15] Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 74.
[16] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 54.
[17] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 71.

hidden realities apparent to the senses.[18] Bruno Latour describes Boyle's emphasis on laboratory experimentation as appealing to the 'inert' authority of the non-human, creatures who lack souls and are thus 'incapable of will and bias but capable of showing, signing, writing, and scribbling on laboratory instruments before trustworthy witnesses' (that is, the scientist). By contrast, the human possesses will but is not trusted to 'indicate phenomena in a reliable way'.[19] Such an approach to the location of authority transforms both our perception of the non-human and our perception of scientists, who step in as 'authorized spokespersons', simultaneously arguing that natural forces cannot 'speak' to us, *and* that 'facts speak for themselves'.[20] While Hobbesian political power places the determination of destiny in the hands of human citizens, Boyle's legacy of a natural power which places scientific experimentation as the only reliable communicative bridge between the non-human object and the human agent promises that 'Nature' is simply there to be nakedly discovered, and upon discovery can be replicated by human artifice.[21] Latour describes this as the distinction between 'unifying but senseless nature, on the one hand, and on the other, cultures packed with meaning'.[22] What are the consequences of such a distinction? In transforming the location of meaning and meaning making, the human response to encounters with non-human creation is also transformed.

The shift in nature's meaning changes human meaning making. By way of example: Simon Oliver draws on Boyle's treatise on the final causes of natural things, in which *curiosity* is cited as that which ought to motivate the Christian's enquiries into nature:

> There are not many subjects in the whole compass of Natural Philosophy, that better deserve to be inquired into by Christian philosophers, than that which is discoursed of in the following Essay. For certainly it becomes such men to have curiosity enough to try at least, whether it can be discovered, that there are any knowable final causes, to be considered in the works of nature. Since, if we neglect this inquiry, we live in danger of being ungrateful, in overlooking the uses of things, that may give us just cause of admiring and thanking the author of them, and of losing the benefits, relating as well to philosophy as piety, that the knowledge of them may afford us.[23]

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[18] Steven Shapin and Simon Shaeffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).
[19] Latour, *Modern*, 23.
[20] Latour, *Modern*, 28–29. I return to this relationship in chapter seven.
[21] Latour, *Modern*, 30.
[22] Latour, *War of the Worlds: What about Peace?*, trans. Charlotte Bigg (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2002), p.14.
[23] Robert Boyle, *A Disquisition about the Final Causes of Natural Things* (London, 1688), A2. Cited in Simon Oliver, 'Life's Wonder', in *Astonishment and Science: Engagements with William Desmond*, ed. Paul Tyson (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023), 189.

This attentiveness is in the service of discerning utility, out of which it was assumed gratitude to God might flow.[24] Oliver describes the curiosity of early modern science as a ‘prurient and quizzical gaze’, unable to find *intrinsic* purpose or value in its subject, inimical to the kind of studious attention (*studiositas*) which encounters another creature for its own sake.[25] By contrast, early modernity’s *curiositas* ‘could not be studiously reverent because there was nothing to reverence’.[26] The operative theological assumption is that curiosity gives way to wonder (and as such worship), rather than the pursuit of knowledge working the other way round. For Augustine and Aquinas, fitting enquiry into the nature of creatures emerges out of wonder; Aquinas describes this curiosity as a vice, a product of a misdirected sensitive appetite which concerns an inappropriate desire for knowledge of sensible things.[27] Unlike *studiositas*, which pursues knowledge ‘by reason of the necessity of sustaining nature’ or for ‘the study of intelligible truth’, *curiositas* describes an unhelpful distraction, the pursuit of knowledge which leads to harm, or a desire to know the truth about another creature without due reverence to its *telos* in God.[28] The curiosity of early natural science lacks ‘wonder and reverence towards the sheer givenness of being’.[29] Oliver draws on the air pump experiment as a disturbing example of this irreverence, in which nature’s knowable utility tips over into manipulation as a demonstration of power; creating a vacuum, perhaps the most *antinatural* of states.[30] Here, a particular narrative concerning the nature of creation (naked utility) is associated with a particular passion (curiosity), and this movement of the sensitive appetite inhibits one’s capacity to see the *telos* of the world.[31]

By locating meaning-making in human activity and so treating non-human creation as a passive utility whose mechanisms can be revealed and mimicked, the capacity for humans to know the world truthfully is limited to those investigations which claim only to investigate what is

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[24] Boyle recommended that experiments be carried out on Sundays, participating in the Church’s worshipping life, and scientists became ‘priests of nature’; those who revealed the mysteries of God. See Shapin and Shaeffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 319. A quite different understanding of humans as priests of creation is the focus of the next chapter.
[25] Oliver, ‘Life’s Wonder’, 196.
[26] Oliver, ‘Life’s Wonder’, 196.
[27] Oliver, Life’s Wonder’, 187–89.
[28] Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiæ of St Thomas Aquinas*. II-II, q. 167, a.2.
[29] Oliver, ‘Life’s Wonder’, 184.
[30] Oliver, ‘Life’s Wonder’, 190.
[31] Aquinas treats *curiositas* as a movement of the sensitive appetite – it is a form of concupiscence. Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q.167, a.2.

presumed to be simply there, as distinct from the meanings or desires humans project onto it.[32] Latour identifies two paradoxical practices emerging from such a split: imaginative 'purification' (separating humans from non-humans into entirely separate 'ontological zones') and simultaneous 'translation' or 'mediation' (making networks of nature-culture hybrids).[33] This imagined divide between 'things-in-themselves' and 'humans-among-themselves'[34] permits us to operate as if there are separate categories of nature (with science as its intermediary) on the one hand and politics on the other. This collective self-deception, Latour argues, facilitates further translation work; 'the more we forbid ourselves to conceive of hybrids, the more possible their interbreeding becomes'.[35] Two obvious outcomes of these hidden hybrids are climate change and ecological collapse, and Latour uses these as brief illustrative examples in *We Have Never Been Modern*.[36] He then treats them at length in *Facing Gaia*.[37] But here I will focus on Latour's broader description of attempts to cross this imagined nature/culture divide, the kind of resistance they encounter, and how this illuminates suspicion concerning those claiming to experience sorrow over anthropogenic loss.

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[32] Mechanistic descriptions of nature are often associated with this loss of intrinsic agency or meaning. But historian of science Jessica Riskin points out that mechanistic descriptions of life were not inevitably associated with passivity. The early modern period produced different approaches to describing life – one passive, one agential (if the world is a clock, is it full of inert or restless parts?). Riskin argues that the passive imagination won out. This history of competing narratives recalls that a passive/inert description of 'natural things' is as much an act of faith as ascribing agency to living subjects. Riskin argues that the world can and *has been* imagined as full of agents; possessing 'an intrinsic capacity to act in the world, to do things in a way that is neither predetermined nor random… A thing with agency is a thing whose activity originates inside itself rather than outside'. If this is the case, the actions of those agents contain *intention*, which can potentially be read and interpreted by other actors – including us. If, by contrast, the clock is made up of inert parts, then it is indeed the case that any assumed agency – that is, any assumed desire to persist in existing, and capacity to respond to that desire – is merely human projection. Even when we seem to encounter something that appears to indicate agential communication, it is all too easy to dismiss it. We might think for example of a tree warning other trees of leaf cutter ants by means of electrical signals – there is a clear capacity for communication, but we may or may not see this communication as 'deliberate' and might otherwise read it as an 'instinctive' (by which we mean unintentional) response. Jessica Riskin, *The Restless Clock: A History of the Centuries-Long Argument over What Makes Living Things Tick* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3.

[33] Latour, *Modern*, 10–11.

[34] Latour, *Modern*, 5.

[35] Latour, *Modern*, 12.

[36] 'So long as Nature was remote and under control, it still vaguely resembled the constitutional pole of tradition, and science could still be seen as a mere intermediary to uncover it. Nature seemed to be held in reserve, transcendent, inexhaustible, distant enough. But where are we to classify the ozone hole story, or global warming, or deforestation?... Are they human? Human because they are our work. Are they natural? Natural because they are not our doing. Are they local or global? Both.' Latour, *Modern*, 50.

[37] Latour describes climate and ecological breakdown (the Anthropocene) as a 'profound mutation in our relation to the world', an expression which in itself betrays our ongoing participation in the modern imagination of a nature/culture distinction. In response, Latour argues that if we are to face the reality of the Anthropocene we must treat nature/culture as one concept divided into two parts – one cannot be described without reference to the other. Latour proposes that we use the word 'world' to hold together nature/culture. I will return to a critical evaluation of this proposal later in this chapter. Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p. 8.

Even as our networks of hybrids become larger and more complex, Latour observes that attempts to cross the nature/culture divide are treated as 'just… discourse, representation, language, texts, rhetorics'.[38] It is assumed that if we are not solely talking about some external 'nature of things' *or* solely talking about the 'pragmatic or social context' we are not talking about anything *real*:

> In the eyes of our critics the ozone hole above our heads, the moral law in our hearts, the autonomous text, may each be of interest, but only separately. That a delicate shuttle should have woven together the heavens, industry, texts, souls and moral law – this remains uncanny, unthinkable, unseemly… is it our fault if the networks are *simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society?*[39]

If we therefore cannot describe an event or encounter in terms which can be neatly framed by a distinct academic discipline, it cannot or should not be described at all. In *Facing Gaia* Latour outlines the consequences of such a move in climate communication. Successful attacks on climate experts by those profiting from inaction on climate change are rooted in the accusation that the expert has 'crossed the yellow line between facts and values'; they are inventing 'facts' to cover up a set of political desires.[40] The consequence of this manipulation is that those communicating climate science operate as though they cannot make moral or political recommendations and must only communicate pure data, even while this data is repeatedly undermined by an opposing political actor:

> Mr Spock's mechanical voice is not supposed to quaver before the measurements, the alarms, the warnings, and the imputations of responsibility. Yet the climatologists' voice never stopped quavering before discoveries that were all the more awkward in that the experts didn't know how to handle their moral and political charge, even though the implications were quite obvious. What is to be done, indeed, in the face of "inconvenient truths" if you possess only the right of uttering them with a mechanical voice and without adding any recommendation to them? You will remain paralysed.[41]

Such a hard distinction between data description and its social implications is of course pure invention, and despite recent efforts to overcome this divide in climate communication the challenge persists.[42] Photographer Neal Haddaway's interviews on hope and grief with those 'on the "front lines" of environmental research' provides clear examples of the material

[38] Latour, *Modern*, 5.
[39] Latour, *Modern*, 5–6.
[40] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 27.
[41] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 28.
[42] For example, Wray, *Generation Dread*, and Katharine Hayhoe, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* (New York: One Signal Publishers/Atria, 2021).

consequences of this gap. Neal reports the following reflection from conservation scientist Charlie:

> "I cannot f*cking believe that we had everything, and we allowed it to be destroyed. How can that be?!" he asks, incredulous. The discussion is tinged with sadness, "it's not shock, I literally can't describe it. It's the most outrageous and nonsensical thing." He says he feels this deeply as a scientist, "you spend your entire life coming up with answers, and people choose not to use them. We have the answers – we know what to do. But as a society we just don't do it. We could sort all of it out if we just decided to dedicate adequate resources to it. It's just completely incomprehensible. It just doesn't make any sense at all.[43]

Charlie's description of incomprehensibility in describing the gap between scientific knowledge and societal response reveals the extent to which the divide Latour identifies has been sustained. Aina, a science communicator with a speciality in sustainable consumption and production, offers the following reflection on why this gap might exist, and what might be required in response:

> We have solutions already, but we don't want to pay attention. And we can't think the solution is purely technological – it has to be about how we interact with the world – but there's very little progress and emphasis on that… I don't feel like science alone can provide all the answers. But in my work we aren't encouraged to look beyond "hard facts". Involving values and emotions is usually frowned upon in the research world. It makes the work a bit inhumane.[44]

The problem of climate communication compartmentalising human desire and feeling in its attempts to shape interactions with the world has been repeatedly observed, though historically with little change in approach taken. A decade ago, the Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society included a chapter focused on 'closing the science-action gap', noting that the 'state of public opinion raises critical questions as to the effectiveness of twenty or more years of public education, outreach, and engagement approaches', and that the gap between science and action on climate change must necessarily involve 'a cognitive, an affective, and a behavioral dimension'.[45] The chapter goes on to note that scientific information is filtered through the belief systems and value judgments of the recipient, emphasising that this reality ought to guide discourse about climate change – though, oddly, the authors resist the

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[43] Neal Haddaway, 'Hope? And How to Grieve for the Planet', nealhaddaway.com, 2021, www.nealhaddaway.com/hope/#project.
[44] Haddaway, 'Hope?'.
[45] Susanne C. Moser and Lisa Dilling, 'Communicating Climate Change: Closing the Science-Action Gap', in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, ed. John S Dryzek, Richard B. Norgaard, and David Schlosberg, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 161–62.

politicisation of science, and also offer no indication that they consider climate science itself to be the product of people who also operate within belief systems.[46] The rest of the handbook also reveals a reluctance to engage with human feeling. Only two chapters directly address felt relationship to environment as being in any way revelatory, one focusing on the loss of indigenous 'environmental identity', and the other exploring climate denial as an emotional response in a wealthy western nation. Both chapters do, however, point to the fundamentally *political* nature of feeling; Robert Melchior Figueroa emphasises that the environmental identities of indigenous peoples express a community's shared and cumulative heritage, with the loss of stable environment closely tied to the loss of community participation.[47] Kari Marie Norgaard's analysis of climate denial in a Norwegian community also emphasises the political nature of emotional expression (or its absence):

> Cultural norms of emotion limited the extent to which community members could bring strong feelings they privately held regarding climate change into the public political process, which in turn served to reinforce the sense that everything was fine… Until recently denial has been studied almost exclusively as a psychological phenomenon. Yet even the briefest examination of Norwegian political economy illustrates the relevance of linking psychological material on interactions and culture with macro-level political economy… The notion that well-educated, wealthy people in the Northern hemisphere do not respond to climate change because they are poorly informed fails to capture how, in the present global context, 'knowing' or 'not knowing' is itself a political act… Citizens of wealthy nations who fail to respond to the issue of climate change benefit from their denial in economic terms. They also benefit by avoiding the emotional and psychological entanglement and identity conflicts that may arise from knowing that one is doing "the wrong thing".[48]

Norgaard's analysis frames the expression of human feeling about anthropogenic loss as a political and thus moral act. But her approach remains unusual amongst those who are currently tasked with communicating the extent of the damage to the wider public.

Between 2014 and 2020, Australian science communicator Joe Duggan approached climate scientists for a project called *Is This How You Feel*, in which he asked them to respond to the

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[46] Moser and Dilling, 'Science-Action Gap', 162–66.
[47] Robert Melchior Figueroa, 'Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Losses', in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, ed. John S Dryzek, Richard B. Norgaard, and David Schlosberg, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 232–33.
[48] Kari Marie Norgaard, 'Climate Denial: Emotion, Psychology, Culture, and Political Economy', in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, ed. John S Dryzek, Richard B. Norgaard, and David Schlosberg, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 408–9.

question ‘How does climate change make you feel’?[49] Despite being asked about personal feeling, many respondents turned to scientific data, either explicitly, via statistical information, or implicitly, by referring to ‘the science’ or ‘scientists’. Many responses also reveal an implicit nature/culture divide, despite almost universally appealing for political action. For example, a research fellow at the University of Exeter distinguishes between the *data* as not producing an emotional reaction (‘I don’t really have feelings on the science of climate change’) and the *politics* of climate change, which does (‘I do have feelings about the cacophony of opinions and misdirection around… “what do we do about climate change”’).[50] A senior researcher at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) makes a similar distinction, describing the ‘science’ as ‘intriguing’, though the ‘debate’ was getting ‘tiresome’ because its motivations are not ‘purely science driven’.[51] The ‘science’ is assumed to be distinct from the messiness of human motivations, agency, and passion: scientific data is ‘intriguing’ (provoking curiosity) while human response to data is tiresome and discouraging. By the end of their letter, however, the UNSW senior researcher weakens the distinction by giving science a moral opinion, even if only indirectly. The science ‘implies that we should somehow get our act together, the sooner the better, for the prosperity of future generations’.[52] A third respondent – a professor and theme leader on climate change at the University of Exeter – goes even further in differentiating his ‘human’ response from his response as a ‘scientist’:

> As a climate scientist I feel privileged to be alive when things are changing so fast. Humanity is currently carrying out an unintended experiment on the climate system, which means that new questions are being thrown-up continuously and our knowledge is advancing fast. As a research scientist that is exciting!
> As a human-being, and especially as a parent, I feel concerned that we are doing damage to the planet. I don’t want to leave a mess for my children, or anyone else’s children, to clear-up. We are currently creating a problem for them at an alarming rate – that is worrying.[53]

Rather than seeing excitement at doing ground-breaking work and alarm at the findings of that work as both manifestly *human* reactions, here the scientist transcends (or is at least unique amongst) the reactions of ordinary human beings. The appropriateness of any form of sorrow

[49] Joe Duggan, ‘This Is How Scientists Feel’, Is This How You Feel?, accessed 15 January 2023, https://www.isthishowyoufeel.com/this-is-how-scientists-feel.html.
[50] Duggan, ‘How Scientists Feel’.
[51] Duggan, ‘How Scientists Feel’.
[52] Duggan, ‘How Scientists Feel’.
[53] Duggan, ‘How Scientists Feel’.

over climate change is restricted to the intra-human (political) realm of concern, while observations about changes in the non-human are restricted to curiosity.

Other contributors express their bewilderment that climate science (unlike other forms of data) is not accepted as truth. One research fellow at Australian National University's School of Earth Sciences writes:

> I feel perplexed at why many of our politicians, business leaders, and members of the public don't get that increased CO2 in the Earth's atmosphere is a problem. The very premise that CO2 traps heat is based on fundamental physics – the very same physics that underpins so much of modern society.[54]

This is a prime example of Latour's purification/translation paradox. While 'modern society' is clearly made up of a myriad of nature/culture hybrids, including a warming climate, climate science has been 'purified' – relegated to the realm of resourcing 'nature' as utility, but not as an entity which makes demands on human decision-making. Even where it is accepted as truthful, it cannot be treated as innately politically relevant. A professor at the University of Lethbridge also appeals to the fundamental reality of 'nature', treating science as a mediating tool which helps us constrain the indifference of a non-human entity: 'listen to the science, *or* to nature. The latter will speak louder, with random and terrible viciousness – storms, heat waves, drought, floods, pollution – all causing pain and suffering'.[55] One of the only responses which directly identifies climate change with ideology comes from an adjunct professor who works in an explicitly hybrid research context.[56] *Is This How You Feel* offers compelling examples of the ongoing challenge Latour identifies. Even amongst those dedicated to climate communication, something akin to sorrow must be treated in strict distinction from data, which communicates a 'nature' which is neither the product of human narrative nor makes any emergent narrative claims on us. Such an assumption does not, of course, make the hybrid disappear, despite our best efforts to conceal it.[57] To describe this sorrow as cultural, then,

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[54] Duggan, 'How Scientists Feel'.
[55] Duggan, 'How Scientists Feel'. (Emphasis mine).
[56] "Climate change is one of many global changes that are destabilising our planetary life support system. It is ultimately a question of core values." Adjunct Professor, Fenner School of Environment and Society. Duggan, 'How Scientists Feel'.
[57] Milbank writes similarly about denials concerning narrative in the sciences: 'As the phrase 'natural history' suggests, natural science does not rid itself of narrative, and indeed, it is just as possible to tell a story in which the characters are atoms, plants, animals, or quasars, as one where they are human beings. Moreover, these stories are always necessarily – however disguised this may become – stories of our human interrelationships, and our social relationships to the natural world... The gradual isolation of a more rigorous 'natural science', in contrast to a vaguer, more speculative 'natural philosophy', does not at all indicate success in prescinding from

simply acknowledges what was there all along: the context prompting such a response is a network of nature-culture hybrids whose story belongs as much to humans as to any other creature.

4. AGENT

Another (related) way of examining the authoritative nature of sorrow over anthropogenic loss is to consider whether we treat the world as populated by agents – capable of acting on us and thus capable of prompting a movement of the sensitive appetite – or whether we assume that non-human existence lacks the agency to *move* us, and thus any sense of being moved is pure projection. For Latour, the nature/culture divide has precisely this latter effect: 'when we claim that there is, on one side, a natural world and, on the other, a human world, we are simply proposing… that an arbitrary portion of the actors will be stripped of all action'.[58] Rather than face awkward questions concerning who or what is speaking when, for example, a scientist communicates data, we make a linguistic move by which the material world is 'rendered mute', and thus deanimated, made separate from the world of human subjects.[59]

Latour uses the River Mississippi as an example of a 'force of nature' which nevertheless possesses agency and imposes its agency on humans.[60] Beginning with the early eighteenth century settlement of New Orleans, attempts to control the direction and height of the river using levees has created ongoing tension between the needs of human communities living along the river (and 41% of the population of the United States) and the river's own trajectory. As gravity encourages the Mississippi down the Atchafalaya riverbed to the Gulf of Mexico, human interests divert water into the Mississippi using floodgates at the Old River Control Structure and upriver defences. If/when the river floods enough that these defences fail (that is, if/when the river returns to its 'desired' course) the resulting destruction of human communities will be devastating. In his 1987 *New Yorker* essay on the Mississippi, John McPhee tracks the attempts made by humans to control the flow of the river, treating it as a water system to be managed rather than an 'individual' with direction:

> Industries were there because of the river. They had come for its navigational convenience and its fresh water. They would not, and could not, linger beside a tidal

narrative and human relationship, to penetrate to an ontologically immutable level.' John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 269.

[58] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 58.

[59] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 67.

[60] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 51–54.

> creek. For nature to take its course was simply unthinkable… Nature, in this place, had become an enemy of the state.[61]

McPhee describes the Atchafalaya – 'this most apparently natural of natural worlds' as lying 'between walls, like a zoo. It is utterly dependent on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, whose decisions at Old River can cut it dry or fill it with water and silt'.[62] But if the river were not shaping and being shaped by its environment, one-off management would be sufficient: the river could be 'coded' to behave a certain way, its behaviour rendered predictable. But the river persists in behaving like an agent. McPhee interviews Oliver Houck, a professor of law at Tulane University. Houck observes:

> "The greatest arrogance was the stealing of the sun," he said. "The second-greatest arrogance is running rivers backward. The third-greatest arrogance is trying to hold the Mississippi in place. The ancient channels of the river go almost to Texas. Human beings have tried to restrict the river to one course—that's where the arrogance began."

The Mississippi continues pursuing its desired course, even as it is transformed by human intervention. Shifts in river management strategy also shift human relationship to it. Once it is treated as inert utility, expectations of its behaviour begin to change too:

> In years gone by, when there were no control structures, naturally there were no complaints. The water went where it pleased. People took it as it came. The delta was in a state of nature. But now that Old River is valved and metered there are two million nine hundred thousand potential complainers, very few of whom are reluctant to present a grievance to the Corps... In General Sands' words, "…There's no place in the U.S. where there are so many competing interests relating to one water resource."[63]

However, language treating the river (or nature) as an agent even persists in the rhetoric of those trying to control the river. McPhee goes on to reference 'The Valley of the Giant', a 1940s documentary about the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project produced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Mississippi becomes an 'opponent': 'we are fighting Mother Nature. . . It's a battle we have to fight day by day, year by year; the health of our economy depends on victory."'[64] It is easy to dismiss this as anthropomorphising reporting for dramatic effect – which we had best avoid if our description of the non-human is to be taken seriously.

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[61] John McPhee, 'Atchafalaya', *The New Yorker*, 23 February 1987, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1987/02/23/atchafalaya.
[62] McPhee, 'Atchafalaya'.
[63] McPhee, 'Atchafalaya'.
[64] McPhee, 'Atchafalaya'.

But whether we reject the language of 'Mother Nature' or not, it nevertheless appears that these engineers are describing a dynamic they have encountered: 'on the side of the subject, there is no mastery; on the side of the object, no possible deanimation'.[65] It is not that the *use* of other creatures is inherently insulting to their agency. We might compare this framing of the river as battleground with Heidegger's example of the Rhine in his discussion of nature and technology; while modern technology seeks to treat nature as an extractable 'standing-reserve' (for example, by isolating a river to turn it into a hydroelectric plant), it is possible instead for technology to be used to reveal the power of another being (for example, a windmill).[66]

Latour responds to the accusation of anthropomorphism by proposing that we must see ourselves as inhabiting a *metamorphic* zone, characterised by a series of 'metamorphoses'; agents constantly exchanging properties with each other and being transformed in the process.[67] This zone of 'common exchange' is not simply a 'phenomenon of language about the world' but 'a property of the world itself'.[68] Rather than seeing human descriptions of agency in the non-human as mere metaphor, a cultural skin which gets between human perception and what is 'really' there, Latour argues that speaking about the non-human is only possible because *signification* is a property of agents:

> As long as they are acting, agents signify. This is why their signification can be followed, pursued, captured, translated, formulated in language. Which does not mean that "every thing in the world is merely a matter of discourse" but, rather, that every possibility of discourse is due to the presence of agents in quest of their existence.[69]

We are not obliged to say that the Mississippi possesses the kind of free will we associate with humans, but we can say it is not inert – it *signifies,* which is another way of saying that it *acts*, and this action can change us, including changing our responses to encountering it.

5. SIGN

A description of nature-culture as being composed of agents who signify to each other requires both a shared reference point which underpins the signs and (relatedly) a basis upon which to

[65] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 54.
[66] Heidegger proposes that technology *reveals* the energy of nature to us, and different kinds of technology provide different kinds of revelation (extractive or otherwise). Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 14, 16–17.
[67] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 57–58.
[68] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 69.
[69] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 70.

trust that the signs can be interpreted truthfully, at least in part.[70] We cannot simply 'reconcile' nature and culture or 'go beyond' the opposition to make peaceful relations between the two.[71] But we can identify a 'common core' which holds the parts together.[72] Latour's proposed shared reference is the term 'world'; 'which opens to the multiplicity of *existents*, on the one hand, and to the multiplicity of ways they have of existing, on the other'.[73] Latour's proposal is a helpful reminder of the particular material biosphere in which we find ourselves, whose present condition is as much the product of human cultural history as it is the product of non-human agents. These agencies are tangled up in each other. They cannot now be teased apart. And yet the entangled materiality of the world still seems to bring us up short. As Latour points out, by moving from 'nature' to the multiplicity of the word 'world', we may simply end up with a 'diversity of cultures', each presenting an unrelated story about the state of the world and human belonging to it.[74] And further: how do we know we can read our shared materiality *well*? How do we trust that data concerning the global average temperature over the last couple of centuries can approximate truth which is meaningful to our moral lives? In what follows I propose a theological approach to answering this question.

By framing nature-culture's shared reference point as being that which is created, the signifying capacity of creaturely agents – and our capacity to interpret the signs of other creatures – relies upon trust in God's faithful self-communication. We can read the world because the world is made to be read, and our status as cultural creatures does not alienate us from this condition because we are no less a creature than any other signifying agent. Another way of putting this is that the signs of the world are gifts. All that is created is freely given, and as creatures we therefore trust that we can give freely of ourselves in communicating ourselves to the world, and vice versa. The end of this self-communication is the revelation of truth – creaturely signs

[70] Otherwise, we might treat the world as full of agents who each speak different languages – communicating but unable to be understood. Such an approach may again solely rely upon scientific data to be the translator between agents, assuming that as soon as that data is given *meaning*, the translator has moved further away from truth.
[71] The problem of trying to simply 'reconcile' or 'go beyond' nature/culture can also emerge as a desire to 'return' to a premodern cosmological framework. As Davies notes – we cannot *return* to pre-modernity and must avoid simply indulging in 'cultural nostalgia' for a way of thinking which cannot be sincerely retrieved. However, with Davies, I think it is possible to retrieve something of the theological imagination concerning the world's *meaning* which has underpinned the Christian tradition for most of its existence. It is this retrieval which I am concerned with in the rest of this chapter and in the one which follows. Davies, *Creativity of God*, 6.
[72] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 19–20.
[73] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 35.
[74] Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 36–37.

are not simply meaningful because we ascribe them meaning, but because they carry intrinsic meaning which we can at least partially discern.

John Milbank makes a very similar argument in responding to modern philosophy's desire to avoid metaphysical questions by concerning ourselves strictly with the 'inertly factual' (paradoxically called that which is 'given').[75] But of course we cannot treat any 'data' as 'inviolable… uncontaminated by synthesis or interpretation or evaluation'.[76] There is nothing, it seems, which is uncontestably given except for our existence. We take it as 'given' that we are beings reflecting on being, and we take it as 'given' that we occupy a 'specific existence in time and space'.[77] The same is true of other creatures, who also appear to us 'via spatial journeyings and temporal advents' – the sunrise and a budding tree arrive before us as though simply given, and that is how we respond to them.[78] We might say that the *givenness* of things – that things are *real*, just as we are, and continue existing – is distinct from a capacity to communicate or interpret meaning. But Milbank interprets the givenness of things as holding together our trust that other things are real and our trust that they are signifying agents:

> A sign has always a material vehicle, like the person speaking, the medium in which it is inscribed, the actions, place and time that accompany it. The vehicle itself supplements the import of the sign, and not just the next sign to which it gives rise. This ensures that *some* meaning is already realized… a sign proffered by a material someone deploying a material vehicle is not just a sign, it is also a gift. Inversely, a material thing handed over must be also a sign in order to be a gift. So gift is the exact point of intersection between the real and the signifying.[79]

What, then, might this 'gift' framing make possible for how we perceive our responses to the world? Oliver emphasises the moral import of reading creation as a signifying gift. Nature/culture dualism treats culture as 'the domain of free and creative subjects… intention, purpose, and freedom' and nature as 'brute animal instinct and necessity… an objective domain governed by the laws of nature'.[80] By contrast, a shared creaturely 'gift' identity resists cutting off human culture from nature, and instead 'places moral demands on human agents' because

[75] John Milbank, 'The Gift and the Given', *Theory, Culture and Society* 23, no. 2–3 (May 2006): 444.
[76] Milbank, 'The Gift', 444.
[77] Milbank, 'The Gift', 444.
[78] Milbank, 'The Gift', 444–45.
[79] Milbank, 'The Gift', 446–47.
[80] Simon Oliver, 'Every Good and Perfect Gift Is from Above: Creation Ex Nihilo before Nature and Culture', in *Knowing Creation: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 28–29.

we trust that a real relationship exists between 'giver' and 'recipient'.[81] By seeing the world as a product of gratuitous and divine love, relationships between creatures can be 'characterised as self-donation'; the essence of being a creature is being gift – and so creaturely agents communicate (that is, *give*) themselves to other creatures. In a theological parallel to Latour's earlier observation concerning agent and signification, Oliver proposes that 'the act of being is the act of self-communication or self-donation'.[82] To be a creature is to signify, and this self-giving is in some sense trustworthy because it reflects God's faithful self-giving in creation. We trust that our encounters with loss – and the passion they provoke – can reveal truth because our cultural creatureliness (that which humans make, whether meaning or physical structure) is not cut off from the creatureliness of the other agents around us. We also give and receive material signs, and we share an ontology which assures the possibility of relationship: we are given, and so can give to each other. This givenness has consequences for our response to receiving signs from other creatures. The reception of signs from another self-giving creature are not received merely as neutral data which resources curiosity or utility, but as the basis upon which a relationship between self-giving agents can flourish.[83]

Placing trust in the possibility of truthful self-communication is not at odds with acknowledging the partiality or incompleteness of this communication and its reception by other agents. Nathan Lyons addresses this problem in his use of medieval semiotics to propose an intimately related 'natural culture' and 'cultural nature'.[84] Drawing on Nicholas of Cusa's distinction between *true* knowledge and *complete* knowledge, culture is understood as an elaboration of nature, in line with the longer tradition of understanding art as a *similitude* or *imitatio* of nature, while also acknowledging the 'determinative' attributes of art in subsequently constituting nature in a mutual fashion.[85] Speech and reasoning offer examples

[81] Oliver, 'Creation Ex Nihilo', 31.
[82] Oliver, 'Creation Ex Nihilo', 35.
[83] Christoph Schwöbel makes a similar observation, reading creation as a divine 'speech-act': 'the view that God creates by creatively speaking… avoids the disjunction between meaning and being that is characteristic for much of modern science. The world of nature in all its dimensions cannot be understood as a set of data that appears meaningless unless meaning is ascribed to it… creation as a divine speech-act… posits an indissoluble unity of being and meaning.' Christoph Schwöbel, '"We Are All God's Vocabulary": The Idea of Creation as a Speech-Act of the Trinitarian God and Its Significance for the Dialogue between Theology and Sciences', in *Knowing Creation: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 57.
[84] Nathan Lyons, *Signs in the Dust: A Theory of Natural Culture and Cultural Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). He argues that moving away from treating human culture as 'uniquely meaningful' against an 'unmeaning material nature', requires culture to be understood as being 'at home in natural materiality' (3).
[85] Lyons, *Signs*, 75.

of this process: they are 'arts' which are learned, but each language also has 'a stable nature which becomes natural', and each creature who reasons is exercising a natural capacity of rational inference.[86] Culture, Lyons thus proposes, is a domain 'in which nature and art coincide and mutually create each other'.[87] This mutually constitutive framing of nature and culture challenges the notion that our responses to other creatures are arbitrary. Lyons puts it like this:

> The interpretation of environments that occurs in perception are not then an arbitrary imposition but rather a sort of active evocation of affordances that are in a sense already there in the things… Nature, then, to take up an old metaphor, is a book ready to be read, but its many meanings only come to the fore when the things of nature are set in an actual environmental context and in relation to a particular observer.[88]

We trust that our interpretations have some connection to the way things *are* – we can 'read' the world truthfully – and yet this does not mean that each individual instance of 'reading' is equally authoritative. Rather, the spatial and temporal relationships within which signs take place provide necessary interpretative context. The necessity of relational context is clear in relation to responses to climate change or ecological collapse. We might enjoy a snowy winter's day or a temperate summer evening and receive these as signs that the world is not warming after all. Or we might admire the Lake District as an 'Area of Outstanding *Natural* Beauty' while being unaware that its sheep-denuded hills were, for most of their existence, covered in broadleaf woodland and their current condition is a cultural imposition. Of course, this does not mean that a snowy day, a temperate summer evening, or the hills of Cumbria cannot truthfully inspire admiration or contentment, or that these responses bear no relation to what is 'really' there. Rather, we require discernment as to what kind of sign we encounter. We can distinguish between these different kinds of signs by drawing on other signs available to us – our experience of the decline in snowy winters over our lifetimes, or instances of woodland returning to hills where sheep are excluded – to come closer to the possibility of more faithful sign-reception.

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[86] Lyons, *Signs*, 76. As Lyons later observes, culture is not limited to things like 'speech' or 'texts' whose production we often treat as the product of reason *as opposed to* the body, despite the necessarily embodied expression which both entail. Rather, the signs constituting culture 'includes the whole range of our biological being in the world', and as such 'every aspect of our natural bodily existence contributes to the meanings of our cultural life' (93).

[87] Lyons, *Signs*, 76.

[88] Lyons, *Signs*, 92.

Sign action can and does offer truthful revelation, but 'there is always the possibility of ever greater precision through the addition of further signs'.[89] Cusa's creaturely semiosis, according to Lyons, treats both 'perceptual signs' (received by the body's senses) and 'stipulated signs' (those in a particular culture) as *partial* and yet *truthful*, in that it is a truth which ''images' its full truth in God… this partial and culturally mediated truth is nonetheless *true*, for in the creaturely sign the infinite meaning of things 'shines forth' in a partial manner'.[90] This partiality is not, however, a static partiality, wherein all sign-making and sign-receiving is equally limited and thus equal limiting for the possibility of relationship. Rather, we can participate in sign-making and sign-receiving which is less like 'a circle of self-referring signs without purchase on the real' and more like 'an upward curve that endlessly approaches the "Preciseness of every nameable name"'.[91] The material nature of our sign-making and sign-receiving is vulnerable to both the corruption of sin and the limitations of physical finitude, but this does not mean that the material nature of our communication and culture is simply a frustration to which we are resigned.[92] To illustrate this point, Lyons compares spiritual and material creaturely communication: angels can 'beam' their thoughts to another spiritual creature using 'perfect' immaterial signs, while we, as material creatures, cannot communicate externally unless we 'make something happen in the real world'.[93] But this 'detouring through the real' is not only a detour through corruption. It is also a detour through *creativity*:

> The material elements of our cultural productions and exchanges constantly mislead, disrupt, decay, and fail… The imperfection of materiality comes, however, with a concomitant blessing, because the constant encounter with the material real makes corporeal culture peculiarly open to creativity.[94]

Here Lyons touches upon similar ground to that articulated by Oliver. Our self-communication does not simply enable the passive reception of signs. Rather, our response to such signs both creatively shapes and is creatively shaped by our relationships with other creatures. This creative potential – and responsibility – gives great significance to the narratives about the world and our place in it which we simultaneously encounter and create. The stories we tell about our material lives move us closer to or further away from the reception of truth, and even

[89] Lyons, *Signs*, 65.
[90] Lyons, *Signs*, 67.
[91] Lyons, *Signs*, 69.
[92] I am distinguishing between sin and finitude. Not all aspects of finitude (e.g., the boundaries of time and space, being *this* kind of creature and not *that* kind) are products of sin and should not be treated as an evil to be overcome but part of the gift of being a material creature.
[93] Lyons, *Signs*, 176.
[94] Lyons, *Signs*, 177.

shape the fabric of reality itself.[95] Dupré articulates this concern in his closing reflection on the consequences of modernity's 'spiritual revolution':

> Ecological concerns as well as scientific theories have forced us to take seriously the idea that reality does not remain indifferent to modes of thinking and feeling. Their correlation appeared less obvious during the early modern period. Yet mental life is as essential a component of the real as neutrons and Milky Ways – and far more powerful in imposing its effect upon other forms of reality.[96]

In changing our understanding of the relationship between the human mind and the cosmos, we have, Dupré argues, changed 'the nature of the real' – 'spiritual revolutions transform reality as much as physical changes do'.[97] In receiving the signs of other creatures, then, we not only passively respond to a kind of naked data which we can act on (or not). The narrative that frames our reception of those signs is itself a kind of self-communication which we give back to other creatures. Sorrow is not only a (more-or-less) faithful response to a revelation of truth. We are not called to passively sorrow, but to express this sorrow such that we offer a narrative which more closely reflects the truth of the signs we have received. We are to tell a story which is as faithful as possible to our trust in God's self-revelation.

6. STORY

In *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, Milbank argues that narrative is not a category which is limited to a 'special "human" sphere', but 'the mode in which the entirety of reality presents itself to us'.[98] Milbank proposes that the 'facts and motions' which we consider 'stable' or 'isolatable' are actually always presenting themselves to us as 'meanings'.[99] Rather than assuming nothing really exists apart from human perception or discourse, here nature and culture constantly make each other.[100] The stories we tell are porous and plastic, open to the influence of other sign-making creatures. This does not mean that we

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[95] E.g., the ontological significance of *metaphor* in shaping human relation to other kinds of creatures, *and* the influence metaphor has on how we experience other creatures relating to us – recall, for example, the description of nature as enacting 'random violence' if we do not listen to scientists. Another straightforward example already noted in this chapter is the influence of the analogies of 'clock' and 'book' for describing 'nature'. For more on this point see Schwöbel, 'Creation as a Speech-Act', 48–53.
[96] Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 251.
[97] Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 252.
[98] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 362.
[99] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 362. Milbank describes natural scientific knowledge as a 'mode of narration', akin to narrated social knowledge (263).
[100] For more on Milbank's interpretation of 'Nature' and 'Culture', see Carmody T S Grey, 'Theology, Science and Life with John Milbank and Hans Jonas' (University of Bristol, 2017), 40–46.

cannot judge the truthfulness of these stories. As I have proposed, we receive a governing narrative – being a creature, and as such participating in gift – which guides our interpretations of the world and assures us that we can trust the sign-making agency of other self-giving creatures.

Milbank goes further in teasing out the implications of identifying specifically with the governing narrative of Christian theology. We not only receive meaning, but we also participate in *peace making*. It is out of peace that creation is freely given, and it is to peace that creation moves.[101] Milbank finds this peace-making exemplified in the concrete life of the Church. If the meaning-making of sorrow over anthropogenic loss can be considered authoritative within this governing narrative of a peaceably offered creation, we are not merely passive (passionate) observers of violence. We also receive signs of a particular relational obligation, respond in peace, and trust that this relational giving is itself *significant* of and for redemption. In doing so, we reflect our discipleship of Christ, whose sorrow is exemplary in its opposition to sin and its compassion for those oppressed by sin's consequences. We might say that Christ's sorrow offers us this governing narrative *incarnate*: the One who comes to us as a gift prayerfully laments the signs of the world's violence, and in doing so guides us to the source of the peace to which we are called.

7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have offered a history of changing narratives concerning 'nature' and their material consequences to demonstrate that experiences of sorrow shaped by culture are not necessarily less authoritative in the moral demands they make; as sign-making and sign-receiving creatures, we can trust we are able to fittingly interpret the communication of the non-human. This history also serves as a reminder that narratives concerning our relation to non-human creatures can and do change very rapidly, and their rapid change can also facilitate rapid transformations in the condition of the world. Along a similar vein, Rowan Williams describes sign-making as 'the action of hope… that this world may become other and that its experienced fragmentariness can be worked into sense'.[102] In the following chapter, I flesh out this working 'into sense', particularly for the body of Christ. Our willingness to participate in

[101] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 440.
[102] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 224.

sorrow over the loss of the world we have known can be an attentive receptivity to the significance of other creatures, and as such an action of hope.

CHAPTER SIX: SORROW AS PRAYER

1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter five I proposed that sorrow over anthropogenic loss can be treated as morally authoritative on the basis that we are sign-making and sign-receiving creatures. All of creation participates in this communicative gift. However, I also noted that our encounters with other creatures – and the responses they provoke – are not all equally revelatory of truth, and as such sit within a governing narrative which guides our discernment. Further, we do not simply *passively* receive signs which confirm this governing narrative to greater or lesser degrees, but we also participate in this narrative and its manifestation in the world. Accounts of this sorrow do not merely indicate that we are passive/passionate observers of the death of things, but they call us back to a particular relational obligation. In this chapter I offer an account of humans as 'priests of creation' as a governing narrative which guides our receptivity of the world's signs and by extension directs a particular kind of sign-making in which we participate; we receive the speech of the world and offer it in prayer. Sorrow over anthropogenic loss can therefore be interpreted as a passionate response to our neglect of the human vocation, and its expression is thus also a fitting return to vocational responsibility.

I first introduce the Christian tradition's understanding of humans as a mediating microcosm, and the description it offers of the creaturely relationship within which our reading of the world is renewed. The human's microcosmic status facilitates our priestly vocation; as a microcosm of creation, it is possible for us to gather up the world and offer it back to God in praise. I propose that this dynamic of gathering and offering not only instructs our expression of praise, but our expression of sorrow, and, further, that this act of gathering and offering is transformative for both human and non-human creation. By way of illustrating this governing narrative, I turn to focus on one iteration of this renewal in the Christian tradition: the mystic's account of the life of prayer as transforming one's perception of the world, enabling the human to properly perceive the signs which other creatures make and receive. I outline where we might find this renewed sign-receiving and sign-making in the life of the Church, and the implications this has for a fitting expression of sorrow over anthropogenic loss. Finally, I turn to the Catholic phenomenologist Jean-Louis Chrétien's account of prayer; while he draws on the priestly anthropology found in Maximus, his interpretation offers a critical corrective to reading this

anthropology as a 'silencing' of non-human creatures. Chrétien's twentieth century phenomenological approach is also a welcome rebuttal to the modern re-imagination of the *scientist* as fulfilling the priestly vocation; as briefly noted in the previous chapter, a seventeenth century account of the scientist as 'priest of nature' emerged as one theological expression of modern science's emphasis on accumulating knowledge (and thus power) as the most fitting relational dynamic between human and non-human creation. In such an account, the scientist is considered a priest by virtue of their capacity to reveal to others that which at first seems mysterious, particularly through conducting experiments which secured their authority as arbiters of truth.[1] By contrast, Chrétien's interpretation of Maximus' anthropology emphasises priesthood as the reception and offering of the world's polyphonous and creative speech, reminding us of our own limitations and prompting us to prayer.

2. MICROCOSMOS

The reading of humans as 'priests' amongst the created order is closely tied to interpretations of the human as 'microcosm'; the human creature gathers up other creatures in worship because the human is a little world in whom the cosmos is mirrored.[2] Most of this chapter approaches this reading via the writings of Maximus the Confessor and those who have interpreted him, but it's worth pointing out that such a cosmological approach to theological anthropology is found more broadly across the Christian tradition. As will be seen in this first section, Maximus draws on Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory Nyssen in his theological anthropology, and so it should come as no surprise that they also characterise the human as microcosm.[3] Later medieval theologians in the western Church also treat humanity as a *minor mundus,* including Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Nicholas of Cusa.[4] Here, however, I focus on Maximus' account both because it offers perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of humans as priests of creation, and because Maximus also fleshes out a resulting theology of human perception of

[1] Shapin and Shaeffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 319.

[2] Maximus describes the human as 'a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal poles through their proper parts and leading into unity in itself those things that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval. In order to bring about the union of everything with God as its cause, the human person begins first of all with its own division'. Maximus the Confessor, *Difficulty* 41.1305BC in *Maximus the Confessor*, by Andrew Louth (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 155.

[3] Simon Oliver provides a brief but comprehensive summary of humans as microcosm and particularly points to Gregory Nyssen's 'On the Making of Man' and 'On the Soul and the Resurrection'. See Simon Oliver, 'Creation and Prayer', in *T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Prayer*, ed. Ashley Cocksworth and John McDowell (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 165–70.

[4] Oliver, 'Creation and Prayer', 167. See also Oliver Davies' summary of Bonaventure's interpretation of creation in Davies, *Creativity of God*, 36–42.

and response to the rest of creation in relation to the spiritual life, through which I approach interpretations of creation in the mystical tradition. His treatment also provides a key theological frame for Jean-Louis Chrétien, whose phenomenology of prayer comprises the final section of this chapter.

Maximus understands creation as fundamentally characterised by movement, from its origin in the eternal Λογος (who creates all things from His gathered λογοι, the pre-existent ideas of every creature) towards its end in God. This creaturely movement towards the 'proper end' is a 'natural power' or 'passion' to denote the passing from 'one thing to another'.[5] As such, no creature is free of passions, but rather exists in a state of passibility. Each creature moves towards God's impassibility, not to be or become impassible in essence, but to experience God's impassible rest.[6] Because this movement is a movement towards God, creatures participate in God simply by continuing to be. This participation is proportionate to each kind of creature; 'whether by intellect, by reason, by sense-perception, by vital motion, or by some habitual fitness'.[7] The diversity and proportionate beauty of the creatures who participate in God are a revelation and multiplication of the goodness of the Λογος, and it is in the Λογος that all things are recapitulated.[8] The revelation of God's goodness in each creature is especially true of human beings, in which the intellect and senses were first mingled, and thus the 'abundance of God's goodness' might be fully known.[9] Here Maximus draws on Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration on the Nativity*:

> the Creator-Word, wishing to display this mingling and to produce a single living being with both intellect and sensation, invisible and visible, made man. Taking a body from already existing matter and breathing life into it from himself, the Word fashioned an intellectual soul made in the image of God as a kind of second cosmos. He placed this marvellous creature, though weak in comparison to other animals, on the earth, *like an angel he was able to worship God with the senses as well as the intellec*t.[10]

Because God unifies the intellect and the senses in the human creature, the human mirrors the whole cosmos. In *Mystagogia* Maximus clarifies the relationship: 'the whole spiritual world'

[5] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1072B in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 48.
[6] *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1073B (Blowers and Wilken: 49–50).
[7] *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1080B (Blowers and Wilken: 55).
[8] *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1080B (Blowers and Wilken: 55.
[9] *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1093D (Blowers and Wilken: 68). Maximus argues via Gregory that prior to humans, creation praised silently. I return to this point in the following chapter.
[10] *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1093D (Blowers and Wilken: 68). Emphasis mine.

(the gathered λογοι) is 'mystically imprinted on the whole sensible world in symbolic forms, for those who are capable of seeing this, and conversely the whole sensible world is spiritually explained in the mind in the principles which it contains'.[11] The human mirrors this relation in that 'the whole world, made up of visible and invisible things is man and conversely that man made up of body and soul is a world'; Maximus describes 'intelligible things' as the soul of 'sensible things', and sensible things as the body of 'intelligible things', with neither element denying or displacing the other.[12] In Maximus' gloss on Gregory's thought, he argues that through this synthesis of intellect and sense (which parallels the soul and body), the body can become 'familiar' with God, and thus God can 'reside proportionately' in all creatures.[13]

God has placed humans, then, at the centre of creation, the uniting point for the material and spiritual, the intended mediating point between the intelligible and sensible worlds.[14] As a united body-soul, the human's gift – and task – is to practise a particular expression of love.[15] Louth summarises Maximus' theological anthropology as follows:

> To be human is to be a creature that loves with a love that integrates the several layers of our being, layers some of which we share with the non-rational, and even non-animal creation… for Maximus, what is distinctive about being human is self-determination… this self-determination is, then, ordered towards God: human beings are creatures whose nature finds its fulfilment in their freely turning towards the God to whom they owe their being.[16]

Humans are in this sense intended as 'priests': they unite the immaterial with the material, and so freely gather up the praise of creation as a love offering to God.[17] Maximus describes this

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[11] Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia* Chapter 2 in *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. George Berthold (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 189.
[12] *Mystagogia* Chapter 7 (Berthold: 196).
[13] *Ambiguum* 7 PG 91:1092C (Blowers and Wilken: 66). While Maximus undoubtedly has a hierarchical view of the relationship between the soul and body (the latter of which he describes as 'lower'), the soul's 'use' of the body makes the body a 'fellow servant' with the soul, capable of immortality. For more on the superiority of the intellect over the material, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 172.
[14] 'Centre' is not a spatial term but a metaphysical one. Descriptions of humanity as the 'centre' understandably provoke warnings about the consequences of an anthropocentrism which treats humans as the beginning and end of ethical enquiry. But as von Balthasar emphasises in his summary, humans are the 'midpoint… where (the world's) horizontal and vertical polarities cross. He stands in the middle, not as an independent lord; through his natural being… he is drawn into the internal mechanism of the macrocosm'. von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 175.
[15] Maximus the Confessor, 'Letter 2: On Love', in *Maximus the Confessor*, by Andrew Louth, Early Church Fathers (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); *Difficulty* 41.1308B (Louth: 156).
[16] Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, The Early Church Fathers (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 60.
[17] The language of priestly ministry as 'offering' comes with the connotation of 'sacrifice'. Is it appropriate to envisage humanity's relation to non-human creation as one of *sacrificing*? I am guided by Douglas Hedley's

uniting role as drawing together five divisions: uncreated and created nature, perception by the mind and perception by the senses, heaven and earth, paradise and the inhabited world, and male and female.[18] Adam's decision to satisfy his passions over the call to love (misusing the intellectual faculty in turning it away from God and toward the world of the senses) is a denial of this mediating role and has the opposite effect.[19] Adam's sin brings about the disorientation and death of the whole creation; creatures act in ways which run counter to their λογοι, and the meaning of the world becomes obscured.[20] Human natural passions are corrupted into 'unnatural passions', rendering humanity 'helpless'.[21] It is to this helplessness that the incarnate Λογος comes, the true mediator of the divisions between uncreated/created, intelligible/sensible, heaven/earth, paradise/world, and male/female.[22]

The unifying nature of Christ's saving work also transforms our spiritual knowledge. Maximus recognises three kinds of law: nature, scripture (the written law), and grace. The law of the nature of things is that which natural contemplation reveals, and the written law is that which records God's acts in history, providing guidance for the intellect or spirit. Where Maximus differs from other proponents of the Books of Nature/Scripture is that the third law of grace,

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reading of Nicholas Cusa. In a Christological frame, Cusa treats humanity's relation to the cosmos as a sacrificial rite – in the sense, as Hedley notes, of dedicating things to a sacred purpose, and in so doing making them sacred. Douglas Hedley, *Sacrifice Imagined: Violence, Atonement, and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 57–58.

[18] *Difficulty* 41.1312AB (Louth: 158).

[19] This is not the same as the sensitive appetite being intrinsically corrupting. Maximus see the motion of the sense as one part of the soul, a 'synthetic' movement that 'receives from visible things, in the form of symbols, some insight into their *logoi* which itself it refers to reason'. Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1995), 172. Thunberg goes on to give a detailed description of Maximus' interpretation of the relation between mind, reason, and sense (170-176).

[20] As Louth puts it; 'if the human fails to fulfil such a priestly, interpretative, relating role, then that failure is not just a personal, individual failing; it is a failing with cosmic consequences'. We are more aware that our reductively consumptive treatment of creation 'threatens the ordered beauty of the cosmos', but Louth argues that Maximus goes still further - that 'fallen human activity threatens the very *meaning* the cosmos, insofar as that meaning is perceived by and articulated through the human person'. Andrew Louth, 'Man and Cosmos in St. Maximus the Confessor', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, by John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 61–62.

[21] Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 21, PG 7:129 in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 111.

[22] 'With us and through us he encompasses the whole creation through its intermediaries and the extremities through their own parts. He binds about himself each with the other, tightly and indissolubly, paradise and the inhabited world, heaven and earth, things sensible and things intelligible… he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being, completed by the gathering together of its parts one with another in itself'. *Difficulty* 41.1312AB (Louth: 158). These divisions are healed in the events of Christ's saving work – in the incarnation, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension; the division between heaven and earth, for example, is healed at the ascension.

embodied in Christ, finds these two in a non-hierarchical, mutually complementary relationship. It is in Christ that these laws are united, both 'simultaneously reveal[ing] and conceal[ing] the same word', even taking on 'equal value and equal dignity… teach[ing] the same things in complementary ways'.[23] Given the formal hierarchy of intellectual/material that Maximus maintains throughout his writing, I do not think he is suggesting that the world and scripture are *interchangeable* in facilitating knowledge of God. Rather, he is describing the possibility of absolute communion between forms of knowledge for the recipient of grace. The revealed narrative of God's purposes in creation is consistent. Christ, the Word made flesh, makes it possible for the believer to receive 'active knowledge' of him.[24] In his discourse on the mystery of Christ, Maximus distinguishes between 'relative' and 'authentic' knowledge of divine things; the former rooted in 'reason and ideas' and the latter 'gained only by actual experience… a total perception of the known object through a participation by grace'.[25] It is this latter knowledge which makes future deification possible, and which will finally supersede rational knowledge. But in the present, it seems that for Maximus an 'active knowledge' which unifies the intellect and senses is possible, and in which the contemplative can encounter the mystery of God. This is perhaps a present glimpse of the future 'grace' which will 'confer on those created beings the knowledge of *what they themselves and other beings are in essence*, and manifest the principles of their origin which preexist uniformly in him'.[26]

Maximus is describing a kind of seeing in which the self (mind, reason, and sense-perception) is wholly integrated, and the sensible world is perceived *truly*.[27] This of course implies that there are less true and more disintegrated ways of perceiving the world, and so some kind of framework is required to discern whether a particular movement of the sensitive appetite is the product of an integrated or disintegrated interpretation. One indicator of an integrated self is the capacity to see the sensible world as *sign*, through which spiritual principles are revealed.

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[23] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 10.18 in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, trans. Nicholas Constas, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 197, 195.

[24] Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 60, CCSG 22:77 in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 125.

[25] *Ad Thalassium* 60, CCSG 22:77 (Blowers and Wilken: 126).

[26] *Ad Thalassium* 60, CCSG 22:81 (Blowers and Wilken: 128).

[27] 'Mind', 'reason', and 'sense-perception' are Aquino's translations for nous, logos, and aesthesis, the two latter modes of knowing united by the former, the 'spiritual subject'. He points out that, for Maximus, human perception of and response to the world ('perceptual knowledge') is closely connected to theological anthropology. Frederick D. Aquino, 'Maximus the Confessor', in *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, ed. Paul L Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 107.

I return now to his description of the relationship between the sensible and the spiritual world, this time noting that for Maximus the sensible world participates in the spiritual education of the human:

> For the whole spiritual world seems mystically imprinted on the whole sensible world in symbolic forms, for those who are capable of seeing this, and conversely the whole sensible world is spiritually explained in the mind in the principles which it contains ... Indeed, the symbolic contemplation of intelligible things by means of visible realities is spiritual knowledge and understanding of invisible things through the visible. For it is necessary that things which manifest each other bear a mutual reflection in an altogether true and clear manner and keep their relationship intact.[28]

In Maximus' theological anthropology, attentiveness to the communication of the sensible world is a sign and outworking of the presence of grace. It is not simply that the communication of the sensible world transforms our knowledge of God. It also transforms our knowledge of the world and relation to it. As such, the human priestly vocation is truly one with *macrocosmic* consequences; the spiritual and the sensible meet in the human receiving the world and offering it to God. As one illustration of what this meeting between spiritual and sensible looks like in practice, I turn to the mystical tradition as found in Eastern Orthodoxy.

3. MYSTICISM AND CREATION

The mystical experiences which inform Eastern Orthodox theology offer clear examples of the participation of the non-human sensible world in the spiritual life. These encounters are transformative for the recipient. They reveal truth about God's relation to creation and the consequently priestly role humans receive and perform, often expressed in an overflow of *compassion* or *pity* for the world and in the life of prayer, both of which are considered an outworking of grace.[29] In chapter four I briefly introduced mystical experience of Christ as

[28] *Mystagogia* Chapter 2 (Berthold: 189).

[29] I lack sufficient space to include similar examples in Western Christianity, though the Franciscan tradition in particular offers explicit examples of both non-human creation's praise and Christ's bodily suffering operating as key mystical modes of encounter with God – see Edward A. Armstrong, *St Francis: Nature Mystic: The Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). Other traditions are also available: the early Puritans – most notably Jonathan Edwards – emphasised the communication of creation and the transformed senses which the Spirit brings about (see Belden C. Lane, *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Ray S. Yeo, *Renewing Spiritual Perception with Jonathan Edwards: Contemporary Philosophy and the Theological Psychology of Transforming Grace* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Avihu Zakai, 'Jonathan Edwards and the Language of Nature: The Re-Enchantment of the World in the Age of Scientific Reasoning', *The Journal of Religious History* 26, no. 1 (February 2002). More recently Pentecostalism's emphasis on encounter has also been interpreted as a mystical tradition (see Daniel Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017). There is *one*

creating renewed perception of the world in relation to Margery Kempe, but here I give an overview of how mystical experience and the contemplative life have been understood in Eastern Orthodoxy, focusing on the relationship to other creatures which they produce. I also address the use of the word 'passions' in Eastern Orthodoxy, and the ways its use is distinct from the tradition to which I appeal in chapters three and four. My engagement with this divergent interpretation is not intended as a formal reconciliation of eastern and western Christian uses of the term. I am rather drawing on aspects of Eastern Orthodoxy's interpretation of the sensitive appetite to offer a heuristic picture of sorrow as part of the human priestly vocation. As such I aim to make clear that there is sufficient shared interpretive ground between a western moral interpretation of the passion of sorrow and an eastern emphasis on *compassion*, *pity*, and *weeping* in the mystical life.

In *Toward An Ecology of Transfiguration* John Chryssavgis and Bruce Foltz opt to organise their collection around a quotation from St Isaac the Syrian, the 7th century mystic:

> What is knowledge? The experience of eternal life.
> And what is eternal life? The experience of all things in God.
> For love comes from meeting God. Knowledge united to God fulfils every desire. And for the heart that receives it, it is altogether sweetness overflowing on the earth. Indeed, there is nothing like the sweetness of God.[30]

This is both a structural trope (the collection moves from historical analysis of Patristic and twentieth century thought to theological engagement with environmental theory, and finally to Orthodox spirituality) and a reflection of the approach taken by the contributors, which consciously emphasises appeals to lived experience, mysticism, liturgy, and sacramentality.[31] Rather than mysticism being one aspect of a theological approach to the climate and ecological crises, it is treated as the fundamental lens through which this tradition ought to be understood.

Spirit whose grace is at work in our transformative encounters with the world, and so one should reasonably anticipate that this Spirit would bring about similar *practically recognisable affects*, even if those affects are framed by distinct philosophical and cultural commitments and language. I have chosen to employ the Eastern Orthodox tradition because the descriptions of encounters with non-human creation are tied much more closely to Maximus the Confessor's theological anthropology of humans as priests of creation, and I think this framing of the relationship between God, humans, and non-human creation offers the most compelling theological interpretation of the revelatory and vocational role of climate grief. Later in this chapter I will flesh out the implications of this reading by returning to the Western tradition via the thought of Jean-Louis Chrétien, whose work draws on Maximus' interpretation of humans as priests.

[30] John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz, 'Introduction. "The Sweetness of Heaven Overflows onto the Earth": Orthodox Christianity and Environmental Thought', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration:Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, by Bruce V. Foltz and John Chryssavgis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 5.

[31] Chryssavgis and Foltz, 'Introduction', 4.

This is perhaps a surprising emphasis to take: the eastern mystical tradition appears at times to present an at best ambivalent relationship between the spiritual and the sensible; Vladimir Lossky, for example, identifies mysticism as a detachment from 'all created things' and a renunciation of 'finite knowledge' so that the saint might attain union with God. But in almost the same breath he describes the world as 'the point of contact between the infinite and the finite'.[32] He further proposes that the end of renouncing *finite* knowledge is 'perfect knowledge of the created world' – divine contemplation gives the mystic true knowledge of the world's reason for being and its relation to God.[33] This true or perfect knowledge renders the appearance of the universe 'more and more unified, more and more coherent, penetrated with spiritual forces and forming one whole within the hand of God'.[34] Mystical experience can be understood as *both* a turn inwards *and* as transforming one's perception of the world. This ambivalence – or perhaps more accurately, this constant movement – between worldly rejection and worldly engagement is found throughout the tradition. I turn first to addressing this challenge before introducing specific examples of non-human creation's participation in mystical encounter.

4. APATHEIA, CONTEMPLATION, LOVE

A key dynamic for interpreting mystical perception of the world is the relationship between *apatheia*, contemplation, and love for creation. I address these in turn, using examples from the ascetic monastic tradition and with a particular focus on Maximus the Confessor. Such an account also requires a brief intervention concerning language. Thus far I have interpreted the passions via Western Catholic thought, and Eastern Orthodoxy throws up some significant challenges to these readings. In particular, the *passions* take on a much more negative valence in the history of Eastern Orthodoxy, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to try to compare and assess Western and Eastern approaches to 'passion' before moving forward with the term. I will however give a brief overview of the interpretation of passion in Eastern Orthodoxy to demonstrate that what is being described is distinct to the passions as understood by Augustine and Aquinas. Engaging with Eastern Orthodox thought also throws up questions concerning the nature of asceticism and the role of liturgy in communicating reality; these are raised here not because they necessarily conflict with the traditions I have drawn on so far, but because

[32] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge & London: James Clarke & Co Ltd, 1973), 98.
[33] Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 99.
[34] Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 106.

they merit particular attention in interpreting Eastern Orthodox treatments of mystical experience.

The ascetic/contemplative life is consistently described as one free from passion, and it is this freedom which permits truthful knowledge of the world. I have proposed that the sensitive appetite can be a vehicle for truthful contemplation, which is at odds with such an account. But the Eastern orthodox tradition's emphasis on *compassion* or *pity* as outcomes of true ascesis offers a compelling overlap with my previous framing of sorrow as a morally authoritative passion – and as I hope to demonstrate, the Orthodox tradition's pursuit of freedom from 'passion' should not be understood as *primarily* concerned with rejecting the sensitive appetite, either in humans or other creatures.

Maximus the Confessor describes the possibility of true knowledge of (and thus true love for) other creatures as arising from 'natural contemplation' or 'contemplation of the λογοι in creation' which requires apatheia – knowing an object without 'passion'.[35] Natural contemplation as part of monastic spirituality originated with Evagrius of Pontus: ascesis purifies the soul, and this purification leads to contemplation of the λογοι.[36] The λογοι can be taken to refer to divine will carried out in divine energies, or more simply 'the cosmos as God intended it' but the meaning of 'passion' here is tricky to define.[37] Descriptions include 'self-referential desire', 'emotional energy that unconsciously motivates one to act', and 'natural impulses' inextricably bound to a 'sensual egoism'.[38] 'Self-love' is 'the mother of the

[35] These two descriptions are, respectively, translations of θεωρια φυσικη from Metropolitan Jonah Paffhausen, 'Natural Contemplation in St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Isaac the Syrian', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. by John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013) and Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 78. Von Balthasar and Foltz simply translate it as the 'contemplation of nature' – see Bruce V. Foltz, 'Traces of Divine Fragrance, Droplets of Divine Love: On the Beauty of Visible Creation', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. by John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 331; von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 61. Von Balthasar points out that in describing wisdom which can be gleaned from the world, Maximus appeals to the idea of the book of nature.
[36] Nicholas R. Anton, 'Glossary', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 412.
[37] Paul Blowers notes that Maximus uses Dionysus' definition of the λογοι as 'God's intentions (θελεματα) for his creatures. Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 112. See also Louth, 'Man and Cosmos', 64.
[38] These definitions come from the following sources: Rowan Williams, *Looking East in Winter: Contemporary Thought and the Easter Christian Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2021), 53–54; Paffhausen, 'Natural Contemplation', 54; von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 194–95.

passions', the passions being 'a movement of the soul contrary to nature either toward irrational love or senseless hate of something or on account of something material'.[39] In *Ad Thalassium* 1, Maximus devotes a question to the 'utility of the Passions'; are they 'evil in themselves' or simply when used in an evil way?' 'Grief' is used as an example in framing the question.[40] Maximus responds by appealing to Gregory Nyssen's suggestion that the passions are introduced on account of humanity's fall, a developed likeness to 'unreasoning animals'.[41] The passions do, however, become good in the 'spiritually earnest', who can separate them from 'corporeal objects' and use them to 'gain possession of heavenly things' – grief, for example, can be turned to 'corrective repentance of a present evil'.[42] There is a risk that this summary can be interpreted as Maximus imagining that pre-fall humanity *was not animal*, thus essentially falling into Gnosticism. But Maximus makes a careful distinction between 'the irrational part of human nature' and 'the passions', the latter attaching themselves to the former.[43] For Maximus, the passions are not *identical* with the senses; they are often shorthand for misdirected desire, specifically sexual sin.[44] He also distinguishes between 'natural passibility' and 'passions' in describing Christ's human nature.[45]

If the 'passions' are the product of self-love, the 'natural' state which *contemplation* brings about is, by contrast, cleansed from the passions. It is in this state that the contemplative truly perceives creation as a divine mystery and experiences 'passion-free' eros, a true love which desires that the other 'be itself'.[46] Brought about through ascetic discipline, natural contemplation is a state of detachment, in which a clear vision of both God and creation is possible.[47] This clear vision of the world is described by ascetic theologians as encountering all things as 'droplets of the love of God… little loves through which we attain to the Great

[39] Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love* 2.8, 16 in *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. George Berthold (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 47, 48.
[40] Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 1, CCSG 7:47 in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 97.
[41] *Ad Thalassium* 1, CCSG 7:47 (Blowers and Wilken: 97).
[42] *Ad Thalassium* 1, CCSG 7:48 (Blowers and Wilken: 98).
[43] *Ad Thalassium* 1, CCSG 7:47 (Blowers and Wilken: 97). In *Ambiguum* 7 Maximus also specifically addresses this dualist imagination, describing it as 'untenable' and 'improbable'. *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91:1096B (Blowers and Wilken: 46).
[44] For example, *Ad Thalassium* 21, PG 7:127 (Blowers and Wilken: 109).
[45] 'The evil powers could find nothing at all [culpable] in the possibility proper to his human nature… he completely freed our human nature from the evil which had insinuated itself therein through the liability to the passions. For he subjugated – to this very same possibility – the evil tyranny which had once ruled within it'. *Ad Thalassium* 21, PG 7:132-133 (Blowers and Wilken: 113).
[46] Williams, *East in Winter*, 53.
[47] Paffhausen, 'Natural Contemplation', 49.

Love that is Christ' and a deep 'admiration' for creation, such that 'the least plant' brings 'remembrance of the Creator'.[48] Gregory Nyssen describes the 'whole creation imitat[ing] within itself' a 'slight trace of the divine perfume'.[49] Gregory Nazianzen appeals to his encounter with the 'natural' (non-rational) communication of non-human creatures:

> All creation sings the glory of God in wordless strain, for it is through me that God is thanked for all of his works. In this way their hymn becomes our own, since it is from them that I take my song. Now the whole of the animal kingdom is smiling and all our senses are at feast.[50]

Here the theological frame of the human as priest of creation ('through me God is thanked') guides Nazianzen's interpretation of the communication of other creatures – they offer a hymn of praise to God. But it is also the communication of other creatures which informs the way he inhabits this role. *Their* song becomes the song he offers, and in this act of receptivity the human experience of being a material creature is also transformed – along with the other animals, his sensitive appetite is 'at feast'. The Orthodox priest and theologian John Anthony McGuckin summarises Nazianzen's interpretation of human priestly identity as follows:

> What the world is, in its beauty and mystery, is a sacrament that sings out silently but whose song can only be heard by a trained ear. To have that ear, to hear that song, is to be a priest of cosmic beauty. The priestly task is at one and the same moment a confession of the deepest levels of existential reality and also the discovery of the principles (*logoi*) of the heart of human identity as transcendent mystery.[51]

Receiving the world's speech does not simply transform one's reading of the world and direct one's speech about it, but also guides understanding of human identity and as a result human relation to God.

[48] Sisters of the Holy Convent of Chrysopigi, *Wounded by Love: The Life and Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios* (Limni, Evia, Greece: Denise Harvey, 2005), 140; Basil the Great, *The Hexaemeron*, in Nicene and Post- Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 8, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 12, quoted in Foltz, 'Visible Creation', 324, 329. For more examples, see 330.
[49] Gregory of Nyssa, 'Homily 1', in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, trans. Richard A. Norris (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 41.
[50] St Gregory of Nazianzus, 'Oration 44', *Select Orations*, The Fathers of the Church, trans. Martha Vinson (Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 237, quoted in Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, trans. Douglas Stott (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 108.
[51] John Anthony McGuckin, 'The Beauty of the World and Its Significance in St. Gregory the Theologian', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 44–45.

The theme of spiritual activity informing renewed delight in material reality is repeated across the tradition. Elder Ephraim finds that in springtime 'one feels inexpressible joy when this natural beauty is accompanied by a sublime spiritual state'.[52] The Russian Pilgrim in *The Pilgrim's Tale* explicitly relates this new seeing of the world with prayer: 'When I began to pray with all my heart… all that surrounded me appeared delightful to me: the trees, the grass, the birds, the earth, the air, and the light'.[53] In the *Philokalia*, St Peter of Damascus makes a similar connection: 'It is remarkable how the human *nous* sees things differently according to its own light… even when these things are unalterable and in themselves remain what they are'.[54] I want to make two observations at this point: firstly, the 'passion' referred to by Maximus and other Eastern theologians is *not* identical with the passions in the Western tradition, and certainly cannot be a description of Christ's true experience of sorrow.[55] Secondly, the mutually *sensory* and *intellectual* valence of these descriptions of *clear seeing* seems obvious – a loving gaze, feelings of admiration and wonder flowing from attentive seeing, the world filled with a spiritual scent, feasting, delight. Whether these descriptions are conceptual metaphor rather than mystical encounters transforming the sensitive appetite is a question I return to later in this chapter, though it's worth emphasising here that these examples give no indication of such a distinction.

How, then, do these encounters relate to the passions as I have recounted them thus far? What kind of relation ought mystical experience create between the contemplative and the world? There is certainly a powerful ascetic bent to Eastern Orthodox mysticism which maintains a dualistic separation from the distractions of the body (though as I indicate later, even this separation in Eastern Christian thought does not translate into a lack of compassion for the world). The ascetic tradition warns against the 'idolatrous gaze' which can overcome our

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[52] Elder Ephraim, *Counsels from the Holy Mountain: Selected from the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim* (Florence, Ariz.: St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, 1998), 1, quoted in Foltz, 'Visible Creation', 329.
[53] *The Pilgrim's Tale*, ed. Aleksei Pentkovsky, trans. T. Allan Smith (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 77, quoted in Foltz, 330.
[54] *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, comp. St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 3:171, quoted in Foltz, 330.
[55] In his *Disputation with Pyrrhus* Maximus describes Christ's 'blameless passions' in using the passible faculties and natural instincts of his humanity, particularly in relation to Jesus' fear of the crucifixion. He argues that this fear emerges from the passible faculties of desire and temper, which parallel the animal drives of inclination and aversion. But in Christ, these faculties are blameless, and do not become the unnatural passions. In his interpretation of Maximus, Blowers argues that this moral psychology seems to present Christ as creating 'a new repertoire of godly passions' in his fulfilment of human nature. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 237–39.

yearning for beauty and as such our encounters with the world.[56] The self-love which births the passions is associated with the bodily vices of lust and gluttony.[57] At times, as von Balthasar notes, Maximus falls into eliding the egoism of 'passion' with the sensitive appetite, and treating reason and sensing as in opposition to each other; Von Balthasar describes this parallelism of body-soul with flesh-spirit/mind as the source of the '"original lie", or at least the gaping danger, of Eastern religious anthropology'.[58] I am inclined to agree. I have thus far argued that the sensing soul is not a barrier to knowledge of truth about the world, or the prayerful expression of such knowledge, but can be its avenue. But this difference in anthropological accounts does not override the Eastern mystic's encounter with creation as being a source of moral transformation. The relation between the mystic contemplative and the world is *not* one of rejection, but of loving compassion, or pity.

Here I return to Isaac the Syrian – his description of the holy life (one can assume as he *experienced* it) is one which creates greater intimacy – greater feeling – between humans and the rest of creation, rather than greater distance:

> And what is a merciful heart? It is the heart burning for the sake of all creation, for men, for birds, for animals, for demons, and for every created thing; and by the recollection of them the eyes of a merciful man pour forth abundant tears. By the strong and vehement mercy which grips his heart and by his great compassion his heart is humbled and he cannot bear to hear or to see any injury or slight sorrow in creation. For this reason he offers up tearful prayer continually even for irrational beasts, for the enemies of the truth, and for those who harm him, that they be protected and receive mercy. And in like manner he ever prays for the family of reptiles because of the great compassion that burns without measure in his heart in the likeness of God.[59]

The difference between the compassion Isaac describes and the passions Eastern Orthodoxy rejects is fundamentally one of orientation. The corrupted passions are self-oriented, even in their relation to other creatures. Compassion is a love without selfish preference, characterised by the equal pity the merciful heart offers even to demons. And note that compassion is accompanied by the hallmark of the moral passion of sorrow that I have identified so far in this thesis: tearful prayer. These encounters – and the prayerful response they provoke – clearly transform the one who experiences them.

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[56] Foltz observes that this warning goes back to the admonitions against idol worship in Deuteronomy: idolatry isn't just a danger for the things humans make, but the things humans see. Foltz, 'Visible Creation', 333.
[57] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 239.
[58] von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 195 note.
[59] Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian* (Trappist, Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000), 43.

I close this section on Eastern Orthodoxy with one example of how mysticism and the human's relation to the rest of creation has been interpreted in the modern era. The early twentieth century Russian Orthodox priest, scientist, and martyr Pavel Florensky was a Christian Platonist and student of Russian Symbolism (the world is composed of symbols or reflections of the noumena, and this Truth is experienced by those who receive new life in the Spirit).[60] Florensky argues that it is *only* in 'living religious experience' that humans gain knowledge of Truth.[61] In describing both the conception and recognition of Truth, Florensky's *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* offers a series of dialectical letters, one of which is titled 'Creation'. Florensky begins by asserting that objectivity *is* God's creation – that is, the creation God made, not its corruption, which is like a 'crust of sin' over the 'pure core'. We must seek to truly 'live and feel together with all creation', seeing its 'higher nature'. This seeing is only possible for the 'spiritual' person, formed by the ascetic life.[62] There are a lot of claims back-to-back here, but Florensky goes on to clarify his meaning. The ascetic life purifies the heart, which is necessary for communion with God. When the person is in communion with God,

> the light of Divine love also sanctifies the boundary of the person, the body, and, from there, radiates into the nature that is outside the person… grace also sanctifies all that surrounds the ascetic and flows into the core of all creation. The body, that common boundary of man and the rest of creation, unites them.[63]

The sensitive appetite is not a barrier to be overcome by the Spirit, but rather the Spirit transforms this appetite into one which facilitates a new kind of communion with other creatures.

Florensky articulates a direct relation between the presence of the Holy Spirit and a loving (*true*) seeing of creation. Crucial to this relation is Florensky's interpretation of asceticism.[64]

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[60] Christoph Schneider, 'Pavel Florensky: At the Boundary of Immanence and Transcendence', in *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, by Caryl Emerson, George Pattison, and Randall A. Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Richard F. Gustafson, 'Introduction to the Translation', in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, by Pavel Florensky, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), xi.

[61] Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5.

[62] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 192.

[63] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 198.

[64] 'The brighter his inner eye shines, the deeper the Holy Spirit descends into his heart – the more clearly then will he see the inner, absolutely valuable core of creation… It is precisely among the charismatics and ascetics that we find the most striking examples of a feeling that I can only call the *being-in-love* with creation'. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 216.

He distinguishes between 'true' and 'false' asceticism. The former is a 'mysticism of the heart', leading to deep connection with all creation, resisting the temptation to despise any creature or lust after any part of creation, or develop pride over his knowledge of creation's mysteries.[65] The true ascetic loves all creation, sees creation as full of reality, is joyful and holy, sees death as unintelligible, and lets light enter his eyes so that he might see the world more clearly.[66] The ascetic sees the world as it *really* is; creation speaks, and it is through the 'ladder' of creation that the angels of God descend to meet us.[67]

By contrast, the false ascetic falls victim to either the mysticism of the head (driven by the prideful longing to grasp all creation's mysteries) or mysticism of the stomach (driven by the desire to consume). This is 'man's asceticism', leading to gloominess, despair, the acceptance of death, and eyes which are closed to creation.[68] This distinction does not mean that for Florensky the mystic only sees the goodness of the world and not its wounding. Rather, to the 'renewed and spirit-bearing consciousness', creation is a 'suffering' and 'beautiful but dirt-stained being'. Here, Florensky is careful to distinguish between God and the world, while still seeing God working *through* the world. In comparison to a pagan world 'full of gods', whereby the things we experience are a 'skin', a 'beautiful form' without 'genuine reality', Florensky argues that in Christianity 'nature' has its own inner reality, its own ontological weight in its relation to God.[69] As such, 'only Christianity has given birth to an unprecedented being-in-love with creation. Only Christianity has wounded the heart with the wound of loving pity for all being'.[70] This woundedness longs for creation's renewal, but also embeds a sense of responsibility, pity, and a knowledge of one's own participation in this state of sin. The result for the true ascetic is weeping.[71] Such knowledge of the gap between the existing order and the 'true' nature of creation does not lead to distancing from the world. Rather, it leads to a true love for and belonging to the world as it is.[72] Florensky roots his interpretation of ascetic mysticism in the long history of ascetic saints, pointing out that nearly all hagiography depicts the saint in nature, with other wild creatures, in a mutual relationship of care.[73] Such experiences are neither universally attainable nor simply a *metaphor* for a spiritual reality.

[65] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 199.
[66] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 212.
[67] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 200.
[68] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 200.
[69] Florensky draws here on Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 201.
[70] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 210.
[71] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 211.
[72] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 215–16.
[73] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 222.

Rather, this reception of the Spirit through the world, the world seen as it is and as it will be, means that charismatics and ascetics provide the clearest examples of love for creation.[74]

How, then, might these non-universal experiences be encountered in the Church? They are found in the Church's liturgy, which is for Florensky 'the Church's living self-consciousness'.[75] Florensky only mentions the possibilities of liturgy as source and product of the Church's encounter with Truth in passing. But his references to the ascetic's experience of the world coheres with other Orthodox emphases on the role of liturgy in this form of special seeing; in the liturgy we learn to see the world again. In this next section I look to the sacramental and liturgical outworking of the human priestly vocation as running in parallel to mystical experience of the world; both function as expressions of the same sign-making and sign-receptivity.

5. SACRAMENTS AND SIGNS

Thus far I have framed the community of creation as characterised by communication. Sigurd Bergmann's commentary on Gregory Nazianzen's cosmology helpfully summarises this characteristic as a 'capacity to issue cogent signals, to exchange them, and thus to guide, instruct, and even to proclaim'.[76] Further, our receptivity and response to the communication of other creatures is rooted in the uniting work of the incarnation. This receptivity is expressed in the liturgy of the Church. I therefore turn now to the relationship between liturgy and receptivity to the signs of other creatures. I propose that the worship of the Church ought to be understood as a *creaturely* activity, not exclusively a human one. The Church's worship gives the context for communication with (and thus communion with) other creatures as well as with God. The passions as understood by the Western Christian tradition play a vital role in this communicative activity and enable the life of prayer which Eastern Orthodox mysticism reveals. In particular, the sorrow of Christ and the Christian, the speech of the world, and the life of the Church meet in the bodily and mystical encounter of the Eucharist, in which Christ's passion for the world is communicated to us and received in our bodies. This means of grace is a clarifying encounter. If sin distorts our perception of our own nature, the nature of other creatures, and our own desires, the liturgy of the Church, most fully encountered in the

[74] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 216.
[75] Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 217.
[76] Bergmann, *Creation Set Free*, 108. Bergmann draws, for example, on Gregory's description of creation as 'the great and celebrated sign of God by which God is heralded in silent proclamation' (109).

Eucharist, ought to facilitate a renewed seeing which reveals the world's sorrow to those who have dismissed it and offers assurance of Christ's compassion to those who are intimately familiar with sorrow through no choice of their own. I first address the liturgy of the Church as an activity which celebrates and reinforces our communion with other creatures, and then turn specifically to the Eucharist.

Andrew Louth describes the liturgical implications of Maximus' cosmology as follows:

> The liturgical movement celebrates the healing of the five divisions by the Incarnation… and the rhythm of the liturgy enables the participant to realise the healing power of divine grace. The divisions are not done away, rather they contribute to the multiplicity inevitable in creatures who are 'after God'... The movement between God and humankind in the Incarnation, ascetic struggle leading to contemplation as a healing of the divisions between the human person and the cosmos, the liturgy as celebrating the mutual encounter between divine self-emptying and human deification: these are the themes Maximus draws together in his vision of the cosmic liturgy.[77]

The liturgy facilitates an encounter with the presence of grace in the world, a renewed perception of other creatures, their relation to God, and the place of humans in the cosmos. In describing this liturgy as a *cosmic* liturgy, Louth points to the liturgical participation of all creation, caught up in the liturgy of the Church and shaping the prayers we offer.

Simon Oliver's work on the relationship between prayer and the doctrine of creation also emphasises the participation of the whole creation in liturgy, not only being caught up in the prayer of humans but also *informing* and *enabling* that prayer.[78] Beginning with the deployment of the structures and cycles of the Genesis account in the tabernacle and temple worship instituted in the Torah, Oliver puts it that liturgy and prayer are not an escape from 'the material elements of God's creation' to 'an immaterial spiritual realm'.[79] Rather, the rituals of prayer established in scripture are a shared creaturely activity, assimilating creation's 'deepest structures, symbols and cycles'.[80] The same is true of the Church's liturgy; Oliver references the controversy over the dating of Easter and the Spring Equinox by way of example – rather than being an 'anniversary', Easter is a cosmically set festival which unites 'natural time' and

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[77] Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 77.
[78] Oliver, 'Creation and Prayer', 170.
[79] Oliver, 'Creation and Prayer', 173. For example, the Sabbath as an expression of 'the unity and completeness of creation' (171).
[80] Oliver, 'Creation and Prayer', 173.

'time established by divine authority'.[81] Oliver proposes that the rituals and liturgies of the worshipping community are *both* natural and cultural – this nature-culture positionality renders the liturgical structure of corporate prayer a fitting place for the expression of anthropogenic loss. I explore this point in greater depth in the closing section of this chapter.

In *World as Sacrament,* Eastern Orthodox priest Alexander Schmemann makes a similar observation concerning the relationship between creation and prayer. Schmemann places human encounter with the *truth* of the world within the liturgical cycles of the Church, both throughout the year and in the cycle of daily prayers.[82] The service of Vespers begins in thanksgiving with the words of Psalm 104; creation is good and filled with diverse beauty. But it is in the truth of this beauty, Schmemann argues, that the sin of the world is discovered:

> If Psalm 104 speaks truly, the world as we know it is – by contrast – a nightmare. Because we have first seen the beauty of the world, we can now see the ugliness, realize what we have lost, understand how our whole life (and not only some "trespasses") has become sin, and can repent for it.[83]

This contrast guides the worshipper into the second theme of vespers: sorrow over sin. In the liturgy, the worshipper encounters 'the glory of creation', and so must offer 'a tremendous sadness' in response.[84] The liturgy does not simply encourage intellectual assent to theological truths which cannot be otherwise encountered in the world; to return to Florensky's language, it is not *only* a physical metaphor in the sense that we usually use the word. Rather, liturgy which describes the praise of creation reflects a reality not ordinarily accessible to our senses, and yet is more than just an imaginative turn of phrase. In describing this relation between liturgy and reality, Elizabeth Theokritoff employs mystical experience as the link between liturgy and our ordinary senses. Visions of cosmic praise associated with mystical experience are 'objective reality', even if this reality is different from our *normal* perception: 'it is the capacity for perception, *not its object*, that is different in mystical experience'.[85] Theokritoff

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[81] Oliver, 'Creation and Prayer', 174.
[82] For example, in the Paschal liturgy in which 'All Creation does celebrate the Resurrection of Christ/On whom it is founded'. Alexander Schmemann, *The World as Sacrament* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1966), 70.
[83] Schmemann, *World as Sacrament*, 74–75. Later, Schmemann indicates the response required of someone who has seen the sin of the world as it really is – sorrow over death. He too draws on Christ's sorrow as a guide for the Christian: 'Christianity proclaims (death) to be *abnormal* and, therefore, truly horrible. At the grave of Lazarus Jesus wept. And when his own hour to die approached, "he began to be sore amazed and very heavy." In the light of Christ, *this* world, this *life* are lost… because they have accepted and normalized death'. Schmemann, *World as Sacrament*, 124.
[84] Schmemann, *World as Sacrament*, 75.
[85] Elizabeth Theokritoff, 'Liturgy, Cosmic Worship, and Christian Cosmology', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. John Chryssavgis

argues that the liturgical texts describing the praise of creation point to *actual* mystical experiences of creation truly praising God.[86] In speaking these texts, we 'affirm an inward reality to visible things'.[87] While this reality is only directly experienced by a few saints, our participation in this liturgy opens us to the possibility of sharing in this mystical encounter.

One simple (but not straightforward) way of describing this 'inward reality to visible things' is the language of sacrament. As Schmemann notes, it is a certain kind of *seeing* – to see the world as sacrament is, for Schmemann, to see everything as a 'revelation of God, a sign of his presence… the call to communion with him'.[88] Rather than offering one definition for sacrament, Schmemann employs a cluster of words; the Church as sacrament, for example, is 'the gift, the beginning, the presence, the promise, the reality, the anticipation' of the Kingdom.[89] In this descriptive cluster there is no attempt to tidy up the tension between gift, presence, and reality on the one hand, and beginning, promise, and anticipation on the other. In the more recent *Creation as Sacrament*, John Chryssavgis draws out similar language in describing the Church's reading of the world, turning to biblical revelation and mystical experience as demonstrating the world's sacramental nature 'where the relationship of humanity to the environment is perceived in terms of communion'.[90] Such an interpretation is possible because the sacramental is *both* material *and* opens us to the eternal or inner nature of things. Schmemann goes still further in describing the mode in which this opening up is fully realised – in the Eucharist:

> This offering to God of bread and wine, of the food that we must eat in order to live, is our offering to him of ourselves, of our life and of the whole world… It is the movement that Adam failed to perform, and that in Christ has become the very life of man. A movement of adoration and praise in which all joy and suffering, all beauty and all frustration, all hunger and all satisfaction are referred to their ultimate End and become finally *meaningful*.[91]

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and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 297. Theokritoff acknowledges that some suggest this is because liturgy gives us the 'grammar' for these experiences, shaping how we describe them. Even if this is in some sense true, it does not necessarily follow that this grammar is *arbitrarily* applied. I am not convinced that the relation between speech and experience is especially illuminated by trying to determine their relative chronology.

[86] Theokritoff draws, for example, on Gregory Nyssen's interpretation of the Psalms as being a record of experience that David had (i.e. that he *heard* the hymn of the universe) and in the key role of creation's praise or worship in the lives of mystics – like St Nectarios, Anastasius of Sinai and Fr Maximos of Simonopetra. Theokritoff, 'Christian Cosmology', 297–99.

[87] Theokritoff, 'Christian Cosmology', 306.

[88] Schmemann, *World as Sacrament*, 140–41.

[89] Schmemann, *World as Sacrament*, 141.

[90] Though perhaps we ought to treat these forms of revelation as having at the very least significant overlap. John Chryssavgis, *Creation as Sacrament* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 97.

[91] Schmemann, *World as Sacrament*, 40–41.

Schmemann's reference to the renewed perception of the world's meaning is particularly relevant to the point I am making. The sign-making and sign-receiving nature of the world becomes real in the Eucharist.[92]

In his work on the doctrine of creation, Oliver Davies also makes an explicit connection between the Eucharist and Christian semiotics.[93] For Davies, it is not that the Eucharist is a 'unique instantiation' of the sign making and receiving qualities of creation, but rather 'a particularly intensive representation' of these semiotic principles.[94] It does this in three ways: by emphasising divine initiative (the giving of God), the 'incompleteness' or 'journeying' of the world (in need of the gift), and the particular and fundamental role of humans – who, responsive to and shaped by divine speech, receive a new 'perception' and can therefore 'shape and sanctify the world through action, culture and expression'.[95] Davies goes on to clarify the nature of this renewed 'Eucharistic' perception; worshipful attentiveness before God trains us in apprehending 'the real' through all the senses. By the 'real', Davies means seeing the world 'not as a domain to be conquered… but as a fecundity and an abundance (that makes possible)… the infinite variety of human ways of knowing, sensing and feeling'.[96] Like the mystics introduced in this chapter and in chapter four, Davies identifies compassion as a consequence of the kind of embodied sign which the Eucharist offers. Its location 'within the body' makes it 'as reminiscent of the passions as it is of the virtues': the sorrow of another body is felt in our own bodies, and as such compassion demands a response which belongs to both the intellectual and sensitive appetites.[97]

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[92] There is a longer Christian tradition of treating the material nature of the Eucharist as a sign of the goodness of being a material creature, and as a promise of God's work in and through flesh, both now and in the life of the world to come. Irenaeus, for example, uses the creaturely reality of the Eucharist as a basis upon which to reject the idea that flesh cannot receive eternity: 'And as we are His members, we are also nourished by means of the creation (and He himself grants the creation to us, for He causes His sun to rise, and sends rain when He wills Matthew 5:45). He has acknowledged the cup (which is a part of the creation) as His own blood, from which He bedews our blood; and the bread (also a part of the creation) He has established as His own body, from which He gives increase to our bodies… When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made, from which things the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they affirm that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal, which [flesh] is nourished from the body and the blood of the Lord, and is a member of Him?' Irenaeus, 'Against Heresies' V.2.2-3 in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* ed. and trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 1. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 528.

[93] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 140, 145, 172.

[94] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 140.

[95] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 140–41.

[96] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 145.

[97] Davies, *Creativity of God*, 163.

In this frame, the worship of the Church initiates a transformed perception of the world which demands that the human-as-priest is not simply a passive participant who correctly interprets signs of the real nature of things, but whose response to the world's signs also participates in this 'real'. The Eucharist is a material reminder that this response is rooted as much in the body's passions as it is in the intellect, and that such a unity between the passions and the will is possible because these have been united fully in the person of Christ. In the final section of this chapter, I turn to Jean-Louis Chrétien, applying his reading of transforming prayer to sorrow over anthropogenic loss, both as a personal and corporate response.

6. WOUNDED SPEECH

Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of creaturely voices seeks to articulate the tension of our intimacy to other creatures and our priestly distinction from them. I use his phenomenology of prayer to interpret the expression of sorrow, turning to *The Ark of Speech* and *The Call and the Response*, in which Chrétien treats the particularity of human experience as reiterating our belonging to rather than detachment from the world, and, further, that this belonging bears implications for our relationships with other creatures.

Chrétien proposes that the relation between self and world is not one of subject-object, but call and response. Chrétien summarises his own thought as describing the 'excess of the encounter with things, other, world, and God', the imperative for response their call places on us, and the impossibility of responding adequately.[98] The frame of call and response emphasises two relational realities. Firstly, we are not actors on a passive stage, but rather we encounter other agents who insist on imparting meaningful communication to us.[99] This experience reinforces the insufficiency of our listening; there is always more to hear than we can take in. Secondly, a dynamic of 'call' and 'response' employs the language of sensory experience to insist that movements of the sensitive appetite are meaningful in receiving this communication.[100]

[98] Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For*, trans. Jeffrey Bloechl (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 121, quoted in Joseph Ballan, 'Between Call and Voice: The Antiphonal Thought of Jean-Louis Chrétien', in *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, ed. Norman Wirzba and Bruce Ellis Benson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 206.
[99] Ballan summarises this well: 'Chrétien claims that our sensory encounters open upon a meaning, a *logos*, however obscure… our engagement in the world is not a one-way operation, where the (passive) things surrender themselves to our prying eyes (and bodies), but is rather that aspect of our existence in which we are made to halt, to listen, and to find ourselves addressed by things'. Ballan, 'Between Call and Voice', 196–97.
[100] Ballan, 'Between Call and Voice', 198.

Chrétien's account of human receptivity to the world is explicitly theological. In *The Call and the Response,* he turns to Augustine's enquiry into *what* he is loving when he says that he 'loves God' in Book 10 of *Confessions*:

> It is certainly not any sensible quality as such, yet there is in his love a "certain light and a certain voice, a certain perfume and nourishment and embrace." To thus evoke what is beyond the sensible but not beyond the sensorial is to announce… what theology will term spiritual senses… The ouverture of our senses to the world and to being according to each sensory dimension exceeds the sensible as such and remains open beyond it. Our senses still make sense after we have turned to what is purely spiritual.[101]

Chrétien picks up on the role of the material world as sign, not as diminishment of its intrinsic value, but as deepened awareness of its essential participation in the revelation of God to creation. Chrétien continues by recounting Augustine's turn to the earth, sea, and air, asking each one what it is that he loves when he loves God. They point Augustine away from themselves to 'He Himself who made us' and in doing so they participate as a 'visible word [which] shepherds us away to the invisible land that ceaselessly gives it and has forever given it voice'.[102] Chrétien insists, therefore, that Augustinian thought is highly suspicious of claims that God speaks 'directly to the soul' in 'pure inwardness'.[103] Not because this is impossible, but because it is a *prelapsarian* possibility. In a postlapsarian world, by contrast, the 'outside' and 'bodily' word becomes necessary for receiving God's revelation. The call of God must be heard in the world, via 'the chorus of God's witnesses'.[104] As will become apparent when I turn to Chrétien's account of prayer, he is not offering a natural theology here. Rather, he is describing the necessarily material nature of human receptivity to divine revelation, and the correspondingly material quality of our worship.

The theological anthropology underlying Chrétien's study of prayer speaks directly to the place (and related role) of humans in the cosmos. In *The Ark of Speech* Chrétien employs the tradition of humans as priests of creation, beginning with Philo, who describes the *eukharistia* – the heartfelt thanksgiving – of humans as their most essential response to God's generosity, being

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[101] Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 34. Henceforward, *CR.*
[102] Chrétien, *CR*, 34–35, 38.
[103] Chrétien, *CR*, 50.
[104] Chrétien, *CR*, 50.

made creatures of hymns and praises.[105] Philo treats human thanksgiving as a cosmic liturgy, made up of the world itself; 'we sing of the beauty of the world, and we sing on its behalf of what it cannot itself say'.[106] Our microcosmic status (being spiritual and material, a little mirror of the world) makes it possible for us to 'offer the world in offering ourselves', and by doing so we do not add anything to the world, but, by declaring the world's origin, we offer it back to its creator.[107] Chrétien turns to these themes in Maximus the Confessor and Hans Urs von Balthasar, for whom our hymn supplements the hymn of creation; our humanity completed in communion with the world and so turning the world from 'a scattered vocabulary' into 'a poem'.[108] He directs us to the eschatological bent of Maximus' cosmic liturgy – the world, like humans, will die and be resurrected, a promise made secure in Christ's incarnation. Behind this conviction is Maximus' vision of cosmic healing which begins with the human person: the Word made (human) flesh who ascends to the Father heals the divisions in creation, including that of the material and spiritual. When we follow Christ in lovingly offering the world to God 'on the altar of ourselves', we anticipate the Easter when these healings will be fully realised.[109]

Against this theological backdrop Chrétien describes prayer as wounded speech, a vulnerability seemingly at odds with the power implied in designating humans as little worlds who reflect the world back to God. Chrétien's description is rooted in the premise that prayer is a response to theophany: we speak because we have been spoken to, responding only because we have heard the speech of God in the world. Our speech, therefore, does not modify God, but rather modifies us.[110] Prayer is also wounded speech in origin: it emerges from distress, sin, finitude, and gratitude; out of vulnerability and contingency, whether praise or petition.[111] Finally, prayer is wounded because the act of praying realises our inability to pray fully or well. We are 'called by a call that completely exceeds (us)', and as we bring the world before God in prayer, attempting to 'give voice to all the voices that are silent', we realise the 'radical otherness' of the person to whom we speak.[112] We are unable to demand healing or resolution,

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[105] Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Routledge, 2003), 121. Henceforward, *AS*.
[106] Chrétien, *AS*, 123.
[107] Chrétien, *AS,* 124, 127.
[108] Chrétien, *AS*, 132.
[109] Chrétien, *AS*, 133.
[110] Chrétien, *AS*, 21.
[111] Chrétien, *AS*, 24.
[112] Chrétien, *AS*, 37, 38. Chrétien's description of prayer as wound is limiting, since describing finitude/contingency as wound implies the need for healing, while my approach to human nature treats them as good. Similarly, I do not claim that grief or trauma are a special source of holiness or theological knowledge,

but the act of prayer tests us, strengthening us through the wound it creates. Crucially, this prayer ought to be externalised, acknowledging that we do not speak alone. Our speech always responds to speech that has gone before, and, as participants in the body of the Christ, all prayer is always communal. Chrétien summarises his theological anthropology like this:

> The Christian song of the world brings man's responsibility to a culmination in the place of grace where the two branches of the cross, horizontal and vertical, intersect. In responding to God, man does not respond all alone, he responds on behalf of the world and takes responsibility for the world that never ceases to accompany him and which he never ceases to inhabit, in his fall as in his redemption. And this song is possible only if it is exceeded twice over by the disproportionate magnitude both of that which is its task to bear in its speech, the vast and various world, and of the one to whom it addresses that speech in antiphonal response, the God who is always greater. This is the breathing of the song: the fact that there is always more air than our lungs can contain.[113]

Here, power and contingency, human distance and creaturely intimacy hang together. Both carry us back to humility, a receptiveness to our dependency and a responsible engagement with our call to serve.[114]

Thus far I have largely drawn on the language of speech/listening to describe the communication between sign-giving and sign-receiving creatures, but Chrétien's discussion of touch in *The Call and the Response* also offers an enlarged vision of how bodies receive and give signs. Chrétien insists upon the senses being a *unity* (he describes, for example, the 'listening eye' and 'visible voice').[115] But, given that 'there is no voice but the bodily voice', he treats touch as 'the most fundamental and universal of all senses', following an Aristotelian account of touch as coextensive with animal life.[116] He also draws on Aquinas's understanding of the perfection of sensitivity as the perfection of touch – that is, we can say that to be more

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which might be one interpretation. However, treating as prayer 'wound' to connote openness, vulnerability, intimacy, and failure is I believe pertinent to my subject matter.

[113] Chrétien, *AS*, 143. The use of 'man' for 'human' in his description is not an essential assumption of the theological claims he references; Maximus' theology includes the male/female division as one healed alongside material/spiritual. For an ecofeminist reading of a very similar theological claim, see Meehyun Chung, 'Salvation for All! Cosmic Salvation for an Age of Climate Injustice: A Korean Perspective', in *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

[114] Norman Wirzba, 'The Touch of Humility: An Invitation to Creatureliness', *Modern Theology* 24, no. 2 (March 2008).

[115] Chrétien, *CR*, 33.

[116] Chrétien, *CR*, 83, 85.

sensitive is to be more *in touch* with the world.[117] This phenomenology of the senses can help us interpret the kind of response Chrétien believes that the world demands of us. When Chrétien insists that truly seein*g* the 'suffering and beauty of the visible… is to be dedicated to providing it forever with the asylum of our own voice', he does not simply have in mind that we can *abstractly speak* about the beauty and suffering we see, as though this can be detached from the responses of our other senses.[118] Rather, the voice of the world speaks to us an 'appeal for compassion', a bodily demand, felt because one body has received signs from another.[119]

Humans taking compassionate responsibility for a world to which we belong is at the crux of interpreting sorrow through the lens of prayer. Beginning with humans naming animals in Genesis (described as a gesture of hospitality, an ark in which all creatures are gathered, their natures obediently honoured in their diversity), Chrétien understands human prayer as having special responsibility for bringing the world before God. The human voice is uniquely 'hymn-like', giving voice to other creatures, and in doing so becoming a location for the whole 'wounded' world to be offered to God and so return to Him.[120]

The human voice does not, however, replace other voices. While the tradition of humans as priests of creation has historically rendered the rest of creation silent prior to human speech, Chrétien accords speech to creatures independent of human existence, a shared creaturely trait expressed to varying extents.[121] If speech emerges from listening to God, who is first to speak and to whom all things respond, other creatures also hear and respond to divine speech, and have done so before humans ever listened or responded. The world, as Chrétien puts it, is

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[117] 'To have a keener sight is not to be generally and absolutely speaking more sensitive, but simply to be more clairvoyant. To have a more refined touch is to be as a whole more thoroughly delivered to the world, exposed to it – to respond to it better, through the whole of our body and therefore through the whole of our soul.' Chrétien, *CR*, 104.
[118] Chrétien, *CR*, 43.
[119] Chrétien, *AS*, 128, 130. Ballan also picks up on the *bodily* demand of Chrétien's encounter between self and world, and connects it to the discipline of humility: 'This gap between the insistence of the call and the impossibility of an adequate response is inscribed on human bodies – by means of the effects of beauty upon the senses as well as the shattering of the voice that endeavors to sing it – and has a name in Christian spirituality: humility, which for Chrétien is the "touchstone" of Christian mysticism'. Ballan, 'Between Call and Voice', 206.
[120] Chrétien, *AS*, 2–3, 36. Chrétien also refers to the voice as 'shelter' in *CR*, 45. I return to the significance of naming in chapter seven.
[121] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, pg 91:1093D in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003). For more on this distinction in Chrétien, see Christina Gschwandtner, 'Creativity as Call to Care for Creation? John Zizioulas and Jean-Louis Chrétien', in *Being-in-Creation: Human Responsibility in an Endangered World*, ed. Brian Treanor, Bruce Ellis Benson, and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

‘heavy with speech’, calling on other creatures (including humans) to speak, and constantly responding ‘to the Speech that created it’.[122] Our speech about the world is not external to it, but also comes out of a response to the speech we receive.

This ordering of speech is important for understanding the task we are given: ‘the world sings man before man sings the world’, and ‘we cannot sing the world unless the world itself sings already’.[123] We are never the first to listen or offer hospitality. Anything we offer is only possible because of what we have received.[124] This means that prayer is never distinct from our worldliness. Describing humans as having a particular task or location in creation which differentiates us from other creatures therefore describes the *kind* of creature we are, rather than denying our creatureliness. We can say nothing that is not a response to the world – as Chrétien points out, even the Bible only speaks about God via its speech about creation, creaturely history, and God’s gift of salvation for the world.[125] We have no speech which is not worldly. Chrétien therefore understands the wounding from which prayer emerges as a call not only from God, but from the world and its inhabitants. His emphasis on belonging to the world as the beginning of prayer frames sorrow over anthropogenic loss as a necessary speech in which we participate, an expression of our ability to welcome other creatures which ‘presupposes a dialogue with things… that our kinship renders fraternal’.[126] Our participation in dialogue is a result of each creature already praising, exercising the ‘gift of speech that they have always already received’.[127] Articulating a peculiarly human role as a welcome offered to other creatures does not diminish our creatureliness but identifies us *as* creatures. To return to Maximus’ cosmology: if Christ takes on flesh to redeem flesh, our fleshiness is integral to our acts of love, just as our fleshiness is integral to understanding the damage we have done. In prayer, we constantly affirm our mysterious distance from and closeness to the other: we are creatures, and yet we are called to offer all of creation to God. The world speaks without us, and yet the world also demands that we speak.

This interpretation of prayer prompts us to treat sorrow over anthropogenic loss as a response to a call, through which we participate in Christ’s work of reconciliation. It is not that this sorrow can or should *only* be described as prayer; not all speech about the world is prayer, nor

[122] Chrétien, *AS*, 129.
[123] Chrétien, *AS*, 129, 132.
[124] Chrétien, *AS*, 9.
[125] Chrétien, *AS*, 120.
[126] Chrétien, *AS*, 131–32.
[127] Chrétien, *AS*, 132.

should it be treated that way. Our speech about the world often simply articulates ‘a detailed enumeration of things’.[128] Chrétien is specific about the speech which counts as prayer, emphasising its hymnic and relatedly eucharistic quality: the hymn is a song which praises God with both body and soul, and also acts as witness to all of creation, acknowledging that all of existence witnesses to itself in its own right.[129] This means that in singing the world, ‘the world offers itself in our song… states its presence in the hymn of praise... (and) is thereby transfigured by the song that resembles it… if the world really offers itself in song, it will not be left untouched in the process’.[130] If this is true of praise, it is also true of lament, praise’s companion – it is praise that makes lamentation possible. For our ‘Paschal song’ of praise to be genuine, it must represent the truth of the world’s wounds: ‘offering the world to God means offering the real world to the true God… what is wounded to the one who alone can cure. Demand, plaint, supplication, all enter essentially into its polyphony too’.[131] Sorrow is both a wound from which prayer emerges, and a prayer which will itself wound us as we hear its truthfulness and acknowledge our insufficiency to fully sing the sorrow of the world. But it is not simply a spontaneous response, reducible to a movement of the sensitive appetite which makes no further demands. As a sacrificial hymn, this sorrow becomes a witness; one we are obliged to practise, distinct from any prior desire to do so. In the practice we will better learn to see the human and non-human other as a sign-giving agent, for whom we are instructed to lament.

If, as Chrétien argues, prayer does not change God, and we are not the only creatures who respond to God, what does human prayer *do*? Chrétien refers to Gregory Nyssen’s emphasis that speech is not an alternative to action. But he also claims that when we sing the world, we move beyond simply offering ‘a detailed enumeration of things (which) does not make a world’ into *world making,* a unity which can be grasped.[132] What then happens when the speech that sings the world is absent from it?

> The word is not some extra item in the world, as if it added something to it, as if it conferred on it a supplementary perfection, as if in creating it God were putting the final touches to his work. Nothing is added to the world by the speech that magnifies

[128] Chrétien, *AS*, 132.
[129] Chrétien refers explicitly to the ‘cosmic Eucharist’ which the whole world sings in drawing on the *Spiritual Canticle* of John of the Cross. Chrétien, *AS*, 72–73.
[130] Chrétien, *AS*, 137.
[131] Chrétien, *AS*, 145.
[132] Chrétien, *AS*, 132. I return to the political task of ‘world making’ – and the anthropological questions it raises – in chapter seven.

> it, and speech does not form a new world. And yet, everything is changed by the speech that expresses the totality: the world really does become a world when it comes into the light of speech.[133]

When offered as prayer, human sorrow – like human praise – has a distinctively transformative power. If this power is one of *world making*, in antithesis to our *world destroying*, we can begin to interrogate the function of sorrow over anthropogenic loss. It helps us turn to *both* located losses *and* the loss of the whole. I might, for example, feel sorrow over the lack of birds in my neighbourhood and the loss this lack represents: the global collapse of bird populations. Perhaps our desire to articulate the world as a whole, rather than only a series of disparate experiences, is not only an acknowledgement of a biological or physical reality, but rooted in the reconciling work of Christ, the great high priest of creation, since it is in him that 'the world is gathered and unified'.[134] In 'singing the world', our sorrow and praise can transcend our own preferences, drawing us to a greater capacity for expressing Christ's reconciling love.

Our world making is always born out of our locations and experiences. Chrétien holds the tension between the particular and the universal in his reading of speech. Part of the wounding for Chrétien is the polyphonic nature of voices contained in all speech – we are constantly reconfigured and reoriented by the calls we hear. Our sorrow should not be private, but choral. Bruce Ellis Benson proposes that these calls are not intended to be solely harmonious – alongside polyphony we must set heterophony, where voices 'do not simply blend or produce a pleasing harmony but remain distinct and sometimes dissonant, sometimes precisely when we would rather they were not'.[135] Expressing sorrow over anthropogenic loss as prayer insists that we hold in tension our desire to make the world as a whole which we can offer to God, and also accept the diversity of voices and experiences whose call we receive, not least amongst humans. This sorrow as a necessary and transformative response to the call of both Creator and creation invites us to begin with human subjectivity and responsibility. It rejects claims that creaturely value rests in human interest or concern and accepts that our relations with other creatures are inevitably shaped by creaturely finitude, a condition not synonymous with brokenness. It holds our distance from and intimacy with other creatures in tension, resisting the desire to control or abuse while acknowledging that we are responsible: both in destruction

[133] Chrétien, *AS*, 122.
[134] Chrétien, *AS*, 147.
[135] Bruce Ellis Benson, 'Chrétien on the Call That Wounds', in *Words of Life: New Theological Turns in French Phenomenology*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 212.

and in the call to follow our high priest's example. And it holds these tensions in the constant call to prayer, teaching us to listen before we try to sing.

7. CONCLUSION

Chrétien's theological anthropology is concerned with prompting the human to be '(re-) awakened to a world where everything speaks'.[136] But at the end of the *Ark of Speech* Chrétien draws on St Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures* to emphasise the need not for simply sign reception but *sense making*. We are 'brothers of the wind and the moon only through this brotherhood founded in the Speech that was itself made flesh… it is not enough to sing the world, this song must have meaning, it must say something, it must make sense'.[137] The governing narrative with which we interpret encounters with loss is fundamentally important to the role these encounters play in the moral life.

In this chapter I have therefore given an account of the governing narrative provided by framing humans as priests of creation, and the implications this has for our reception of and response to the signs of other creatures. Drawing on Maximus' reading of humans as a microcosm of creation and its application in Chrétien's phenomenology, I have explored the implications of this anthropology for the Church's life of prayer in a time of anthropogenic loss. The mystic tradition as found in Eastern Orthodoxy and the liturgical shape of the Church's worship have provided examples of the ways non-human creation both shapes and is shaped by the human vocation to offer the world in prayer. In this chapter I have predominantly appealed to a quite distinct Christian tradition from that employed thus far. In drawing on a range of sources I am not attempting to offer substantive comparative commentary concerning their points of difference, but rather to develop a picture of a governing priestly narrative which takes seriously the moral and spiritual significance of human feeling and human relationship to non-human creatures. This governing narrative is a reminder of a fundamental relational dynamic (between the human and non-human creature) whose brokenness ought to prompt sorrow, and a reminder as to how this dynamic ought to be expressed. The practice of prayer is transformative for our relation to the world and even for the world itself. This transformation is possible because we pray in and through Christ, whose incarnation assures us of the unity of the material and spiritual in praise of the Creator.

[136] Chrétien, *CR*, 14.
[137] Chrétien, *AS*, 140.

In the next chapter I turn to the implications of this theological framing for our political expression of sorrow. If anthropogenic loss is a sign of our failure to fulfil a priestly role, what place ought the Church's prayerful speech take in public? Drawing on Hannah Arendt's political anthropology, I propose that the human priestly vocation is necessarily concerned with the politics of anthropogenic loss, and indeed that the Church's prayerful speech *in public* is a form of political speech.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SORROW IN PUBLIC

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous two chapters I examined sorrow as a response to anthropogenic loss via the political and theological implications of creatures as sign-making and sign-receiving agents. In chapter five I introduced the political problem of nature/culture dualism and its influence on how we receive the signs of other creatures, proposing that sorrow can be treated as an authoritative response to the world's signs. In chapter six I proposed that interpreting humans as priests of creation provides a theological anthropology which guides our response to the reception of these signs and the sorrow they can provoke. This priestly narratival account turns our expression of sorrow to prayer. I now turn to the role of this sorrow in the broader body politic, examining the public expression of anthropogenic loss. What difference does this prayerful framing of sorrow make to the Church's participation in public discourse about climate change and ecological collapse? Drawing on Hannah Arendt's description of 'communicative action' as the political mode through which the world is collectively realised – in the sense of simultaneously being made and understood – I propose that this corporate 'bearing witness' is a transformative action. Arendt treats humans as *world-making* creatures, an approach to human activity paralleling Jean-Louis Chrétien's theological account of human speech as world-making in its communication of a graspable whole. Arendt's understanding of the 'world' as that which is held in common between humans, perpetuated by the work of their hands and their speech together, similarly relies upon a relationship between communication and belonging, and it is this relationship that this chapter investigates as a frame for interpreting the political efficacy of expressing sorrow over anthropogenic loss. Specifically, I attend to the ways we might treat the prayerful expression of sorrow as politically efficacious.

As noted in the previous chapter, the culturally and geographically determined nature of sorrow over anthropogenic loss means that its expression can be polyphonic, heterophonic, or even entirely absent. These different expressions (or lack thereof) carry distinct narratives, both in communicating the variety of experiences which lead to sorrow over anthropogenic loss and in the expression of sorrow which they assume is most fitting. I adopt Arendt's concept of communicative action to offer a political reading of the passion of sorrow and its relation to making the world to which we belong. I first outline the problem of 'earth alienation' which Arendt identifies and to which she responds via the categories of Labour, Work, and Action.

Arendt's description of 'earth alienation' further illuminates the nature-culture split described in chapter five; like Latour, Arendt sees human alienation from the non-human as a political problem with a political solution. I therefore introduce her reading of political speech as that which takes place in public and use it as a frame for interpreting Chrétien's interest in human *naming* as a world-making activity and its relation to prayerful speech. I do this to illuminate two key claims: firstly, that our capacity to speak together about the world and its creatures reflects a state of belonging or alienation, and secondly, that this speech (or lack of it) is governed by and perpetuates narratives about which kinds of creatures are worthy of our attention and worthy of sorrow.

2. EARTH ALIENATION

In *The Human Condition* Hannah Arendt presents her diagnosis of the ways the *vita activa* has been treated as secondary to the *vita contemplativa* in the modern west, describing the *vita activa's* historical interpretations and the contemporary consequences of its mischaracterisation. She notes that the *vita activa* – which came to refer to all activity pertaining to 'the things of this world' – has been negatively defined against the *vita contemplativa*, the life of quiet contemplation.[1] Arendt proposes that this binary account – which encourages primary emphasis on the 'inner' life over and against human activity in the world – has blurred the distinct activities making up the *vita activa* (labour, work, and action) and in particular the degradation of the political (public) life (where action takes place). While she traces a much longer history of this binary tradition, she is especially concerned with its realisation in the modern era. Her phenomenological account identifies two key and intertwined losses tied to the advent of modernity: firstly, 'world alienation' in the centuries leading to the nineteenth century (the flight from the world to the self), and secondly, 'earth alienation' with the advent of the twentieth century (the flight from the earth into the universe).[2] According to Arendt, these flights have threatened our ability to speak together about the world, and as such threaten our ability to *make sense* of the world – to 'experience meaningfulness'.[3] Arendt is thus concerned to present a renewed account of the human condition in light of 'our

[1] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 14–15. Henceforward, *HC*.
[2] Arendt, *HC*, 6.
[3] Arendt, *HC*, 4.

newest experiences and most recent fears', to have us 'think what we are doing', proposing that it is human speech which makes us political beings.[4]

Arendt begins with the first satellite launched into space, observing that this event was welcomed as a desirable movement away from belonging to the earth. She responds to this sense of progress with alarm. If the earth 'is the very quintessence of the human condition', our desire to leave it (also expressed in the artificialisation of human life via attempts at genetic enhancement) forges a path of alienation from the earth and as such alienation from each other.[5] This second political alienation rests in Arendt's observation that the growing 'language' of the sciences through which truth about the earth is communicated is now beyond 'normal expression in speech and thought', and it is our speech together (in public) which makes us political beings, capable of making sense of that which is around us. The loss of our capacity to speak meaningfully about the earth together and the relationship she draws between our belonging to the earth and speech as sense-making highlights the necessity of articulating sorrow over anthropogenic loss. Our encounter with these losses is a product of our alienation from the earth/world, and our inability to articulate these losses is a symptom of the same alienation. I use this relationship between belonging and sense-making as a point of focus for applying her reading of the *vita activa* to the political expression of sorrow because it is in learning to articulate this sorrow that renewed belonging can emerge.

Arendt bookends her account of the *vita activa* with descriptions of the earth/world alienation which has stifled it, particularly in relation to the alienating emergence of scientific speech. While the prologue deals with twentieth century earth alienation via the first satellite and genetic manipulation (I return to her analysis of this later) the closing chapter of the book turns to events which shaped the early modern era, mapping the origins of 'world alienation', its progress over the succeeding centuries and the subsequent turn toward the self which it provoked. Arendt appeals to three landmark events which determine the shape of modernity: global exploration (especially the discovery of the Americas), the Reformation (especially the expropriation of the Church and, as such, the peasantry), and the invention of the telescope, which facilitated a new science – one which 'considers the nature of the earth from the

[4] Arendt, *HC*, 5.
[5] Arendt, *HC*, 2.

viewpoint of the universe'.[6] Each event constitutes a distinctive (and unintended) movement towards alienation for Arendt, but she gives the latter the greatest attention.

Galileo's discovery of an instrument which could uncover phenomena beyond the human senses and yet which could now be grasped 'with the certainty of sense-perception' marks the unfolding realisation of 'the ancient fear that our senses, our very organs for the reception of reality, might betray us'.[7] Our 'Archimedean wish' for a point outside the earth from which we could unhinge the world is realised only via this loss of reality; Arendt points to contemporary scientific experimentation in nuclear power, atomic accelerators, and the production of new elements as examples of our action on the earth as though we can 'dispose of it from outside'.[8] We are still bound to the earth, but the telescope's separation of reality from what can be sensed has precipitated the development of scientific endeavour which acts as though we are not so bound, even to the point of endangering life itself. In the invention of the telescope Arendt sees a tragic shift in the criteria of reality to which we collectively refer. We can no longer trust that what *feels* real *is* real. In her analysis of scientific authority, Laura Ephraim describes Arendt's notion of a threatened reality as resting in the loss of collective experience:

> The feeling of realness depends on each spectator perceiving that she is not the only one to see, hear, or otherwise sense appearing things. But the telescope at once enhanced and blinkered Galileo's vision, temporarily disappearing his visible surroundings – including the presence of other people around him.[9]

Ephraim makes explicit the Arendtian relationship between trusting what appears to the senses and trusting that these appearances are in some sense held in common. She goes on to note that, for Arendt, the telescope might facilitate intimacy with 'the invisible phenomena of the universe' but because these phenomena only appear to one 'instrumentally enhanced' eye at once, it cannot give rise to the relationships between spectators which the 'earth's appearances' foster.[10] The telescope signifies the disruption of what Arendt elsewhere calls 'common sense';

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[6] Arendt, *HC*, 248. For the first two events Arendt points to exploration as having shrunk the globe, encouraging humans to survey it as if from a distance (most epitomised by the advent of flight), and the loss of property as a loss of share in a common world and the rise of the capitalist economy. While these two narratives are intertwined with her survey of Galileo and the emergence of modern science (the third event), my focus – like Arendt's – will be on this third event, because it is in the telescope that she sees the disruption of human speech about the world.

[7] Arendt, *HC*, 260, 262. Arendt directly quotes Galileo's assertion that the moon's rough surface could now be known 'with the certainty of sense-perception'.

[8] Arendt, *HC*, 262.

[9] Laura Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature? On the Politics of Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 54–55.

[10] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 55.

our capacity to gauge the world's reality as being rooted in the fact that it is held in common.[11] If, she says, the five senses together fit the human into reality, common sense is 'the sixth and highest sense', ruling over and uniting the others.[12] She makes a similar observation in Volume I of *The Life of the Mind:*

> In a world of appearances, filled with error and semblance, reality is guaranteed by this threefold commonness: the five senses, utterly different from each other, have the same object in common; members of the same species have the same context in common that endows every single object with its particular meaning; and all other sense-endowed beings, though perceiving this object from utterly different perspectives, agree on its identity. Out of this threefold commonness arises the sensation of reality.[13]

We trust that we perceive reality because the things we perceive are perceived by others – there is a point at which our encounters of objects converge, even if in slightly different ways. An emphasis on what is held in common does not replace the different perspectives of the object, but rather trusts that a shared and thus meaningful encounter is possible because we can communicate across difference – even the difference of being different kinds of creatures.[14] Common sense, then, describes the human ability to make a *world* of the *earth*; 'it is by virtue

[11] The precise meaning of 'common sense' in Arendt's writings is disputed – see for example Remi Peeters, 'Truth, Meaning and the Common World: The Significance and Meaning of Common Sense in Hannah Arendt's Though - Part One', *Ethical Perspectives* 16, no. 3 (2009): 337–59. and Sandra K. Hinchman, 'Common Sense & Political Barbarism in the Theory of Hannah Arendt', *Polity* 17, no. 2 (1984): 317–39. I am not offering a precise definition here, but rather pointing out the broad themes which govern her use of the term and the relation which 'common sense' forges between politics and the senses in her thought. I return to Arendt's use of 'world' later in this chapter, but I will note here that, as Finn Bowring observes, Arendt 'sometimes uses the term "world" synonymously with "reality"… the world human beings share is neither imprisoned within, nor indifferently external to, individuals, but is rather that which lies *between* them and which becomes real to them – that is, becomes a shared object instead of a private sense impression – when they talk *about* it and show it their concern'. Finn Bowring, *Hannah Arendt: A Critical Introduction* (Pluto Press, 2011), 14.

[12] Arendt, *HC*, 274.

[13] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy, vol. One: Thinking (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978), 50. There is a broader metaphysical point at stake for Arendt here – that the supposed divide between '(true) Being and (mere) Appearance' must be overcome in our account of perceiving the world (23). Arendt cautions against the same division in *The Human Condition*, noting that the separation of Being and Appearance is a fundamental assumption of modern science, and that the inevitable fall-out is doubt over *everything*. Arendt, *HC*, 275.

[14] As Ephraim summarises, 'What Arendt means by "common"… is a connection forged across difference: we have a world in common insofar as we each perceive different aspects of the same thing'. Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 61. This sense of *commonality* does not exclude the mysterious lives of other creatures, but necessarily includes them: 'although Arendt considers us to be outsiders to the worlds of bats or lizards… she also maintains that this outsider status is itself an asset to common sense and the realness of the human world (and, presumably, the worlds of bats and lizards). The otherness that divides sentient creatures into separate species-worlds is among earth's most valuable gifts, challenging members of each species to perceive identity across even radical difference'. (43). Arendt makes a similar observation in volume one of *Life of the Mind*; in response to zoologist Adolf Portmann's aesthetics of nature's diversity, Arendt contends that the diverse displays of other creatures are *meant* to be seen, and that this divergence reflects an intrinsic worth. Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 20–21.

of common sense that the other sense perceptions are known to disclose reality and are not merely felt as irritations of our nerves or resistance sensations of our bodies'.[15] While this sense is part of our *biological* materiality, it also requires us to spectate *together* – it requires establishment, and maintained commitment.[16]

There is a mutual communication between 'earth' and 'world' which Arendt warns we have lost; the abundant diversity of appearances the earth offers gathers diverse and divergent spectators who are thus able to have the world in common. And, further, this common world-making between plural spectators reciprocally safeguards the earth's plural nature.[17] Our trust in a plural mutuality is, however, eroded by science's preferential turn towards that which cannot be commonly perceived. Arendt's account of the origins of modern science is also, then, a 'tragic turn in both the history of truth-telling and the history of politics'; the movement away from trust in sensory (and thus at least partially shareable) encounter with the earth is also a move away from trust in the revelatory power of human speech.[18]

Arendt traces the fall-out of this collapse of trust via Descartes, in whom she identifies the beginning of modern philosophical doubt; the new conviction that 'neither truth nor reality is given, that neither of them appears as it is, and that only interference with appearance, doing away with appearances, can hold out a hope for true knowledge'.[19] The Cartesian response to this universalisation of doubt was to turn inwards – 'even if there is no truth, man can be truthful… If there was salvation, it had to lie in man himself… If everything has become doubtful, then doubting at least is certain and real'.[20] Any certainty comes only from what the individual mind produces.[21] This constitutes a profound spiritual loss; as the earth becomes inscrutable, so do God's intentions behind creation.[22] The previously plural possession of *common sense* becomes a singular and inner faculty; *knowing* is an assumed internal affair.[23]

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[15] Arendt, *HC*, 208–9.
[16] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 51–52.
[17] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 61–62.
[18] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 57.
[19] Arendt, *HC*, 274.
[20] Arendt, *HC*, 279.
[21] Arendt, *HC*, 280.
[22] Arendt, *HC*, 281.
[23] 'For common sense, which once had been the one by which all other senses… were fitted into the common world… now became an inner faculty without any world relationship… What men now have in common is not the world but the structure of their minds, and this they cannot have in common… their faculty of reasoning can only happen to be the same in everybody.' Arendt, *HC*, 283. As previously noted, Arendt identifies a similar problem with experimental science; 'where Descartes withdrew from nature's appearing things into the quiet of

If, then, the external expression of Arendt's common sense is human speech, she finds that the external expression of Cartesian reason is the language of mathematics. Mathematical knowledge as understood by the modern age is not 'knowledge of ideal forms given outside the mind' but 'forms produced *by a mind* which… does not even need the stimulation – or, rather, the irritation – of the senses by objects other than itself'; modern understanding of common-sense reasoning (like two plus two equals four) is reduced to 'the playing of the mind with itself'.[24] Arendt's condemnation of the consequences of abstracting mathematical language goes still further. When mathematical modelling indicates to us that the macrocosm and microcosm follow the same patterns, we cannot fully rejoice in this revelation of unity, because we suspect that, once again, we are only reiterating patterns in our mind.[25] We find we can no longer even adequately model *mathematical* answers to questions about nature, because those models are too shaped by sense experience for us to trust them.[26] The 'disappearance of the sensually given world' also threatens the disappearance of the 'transcendent world'; where once we measured and represented the transcendent against the material, we can no longer do so.[27] Ephraim draws out the consequences of a failed relationship between scientific knowledge and our shared political life: having retreated into 'scientific jargon', scientists struggle to 'reenter the space of appearances' to share the results of their research.[28] Ephraim rightly notes that this linguistic gap is far more serious than simply representing a 'correctable verbal tic'; the human ability to present observations about the world before the body politic is itself compromised.[29]

Arendt stresses that this alienation from sense is an unintended consequence of experimental science. And yet this unintended turn has nevertheless produced *intentional* divisions of communication which splinter our apprehension of the earth and our ability to speak about it together. Ephraim frames this division in terms of the 'two-sciences settlement' underpinned

his mind, the experimental scientist withdraws *with* nature's appearing things into the quiet of the lab in order to contort them into reflections of his own intentions'. Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 64.
[24] Arendt, *HC*, 283, 284. Arendt's friend and interlocutor Hans Jonas also picks up on modern characterisations of mathematics as the language of the universe, and likewise associates this move with Cartesian dualism. But he further notes that this was not *only* a claim about the purest form of human knowledge, but also a claim regarding the way that God communicates with creation; God's 'signs' and 'symbols' in 'the great book of the universe' become 'triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures'. Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 66–67.
[25] Arendt, *HC*, 286.
[26] Arendt, *HC*, 287.
[27] Arendt, *HC*, 288.
[28] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 66.
[29] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 66.

by a 'two-worlds ontology'; the 'separate but equal' division between natural and social science which emerged in the post-war period that 'obscures the political constitution of both natural and political science'.[30] The fallout for the scientist's public speech which Ephraim identifies has considerable overlap with Latour's nature-culture dualism. The scientist's account of climate change is removed from the political sphere because the earth and encounters with the earth have been removed from the shared speech (the *common* sense) which we participate in together.[31] Those scientists who appeal to statistics to communicate how climate change makes them feel (or, more dramatically, who distinguish between their feelings as scientists and their feelings as people – that is, as members of the *public*) are thus symptoms of our inability to receive and articulate the earth's appearances to us. They demonstrate the dual alienation of humans from the earth (as material creatures) and from our world (as political creatures). The reduction of creaturely signs to scientific data fails to move us because it does not communicate genuine encounter with the world as we find it.

Arendt's distinction between 'world' and 'earth' and her subsequent description of the appropriate expression of the *vita activa* has prompted scepticism concerning the extent to which she conceives of a place for non-human creatures in the political sphere.[32] Does Arendt see any role for nature in the communicative action of humans? I turn now to Arendt's description of the *vita activa*, particularly Arendt's use of the categories of 'world' and 'culture', to introduce the relationship her frame might establish between the communicative action of political speech and a fitting attention to the sign making activity of non-human creatures. Arendt's public sphere (where political speech occurs) is characterised by two related conditions; a common world providing a durable setting for human activity, and the

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[30] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 11.

[31] Ephraim points to the same kinds of events as Latour in demonstrating the consequences of our imagined duality, turning likewise to the language of *hybrids*: 'The picture of two worlds, *Geist* versus *Natur*… improperly restricts which institutions, formations, controversies, events, and actions can count as political, blinding us to the hybridity of some of the most pressing issues we face today, such as financial bubbles, drone strikes, oil spills, and water rights… physical matter and political meaning cannot be divided in this way without doing violence to reality.' Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature*, 16. She goes on to specify that his influence is particularly felt in her focus on the political agency of scientists, though she challenges his assumption that the scientists' authority in speaking for the nonhuman ought to be enshrined as the basis upon which nonhumans participate in the political sphere (21-22).

[32] As Ephraim summarises: 'Arendt is well known for using the category of the world to *exclude* nature and its sway over the human body from politics… Generations of readers have seen Arendt's labor-work-action triad in "'territorial' terms"… as a way of protecting action against the instrumentalism of work and the necessity of labor… But a closer look at Arendt's critical appraisal of the *natural* sciences complicates this territorial impression of the earth-world relationship and reveals tensions between her vision of politics and the two-sciences settlement. While Arendt charges behaviorist social sciences with conflating nature and politics, her primary concern with the natural sciences is their tendency to *disconnect* us from the reality of nature on earth'. Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature*, 34–35.

capacity to appear to one another through shared speech. While her reading of the 'world' is somewhat ambivalent as to the participation of non-human creatures, her description of public life nevertheless provides a clear frame within which to critique and reimagine the politics of our speech about anthropogenic loss.

3. COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Arendt's description of the *vita activa* comprises a division of three human activities: labour, work, and action. Labour refers to the cyclical activity of producing those necessities which feed the biological processes of humans (a state of 'worldlessness'), while work refers to activity which produces the 'artificial' world of things – those relatively permanent aspects of human existence which distinguish it from its 'natural' surroundings.[33] It is in work that humans produce the artefacts of 'culture', not out of necessity, but to make a world.[34] Work, for Arendt, always contains 'an element of violation and violence… *homo faber*, the creator of human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature'.[35] The activity of work is an expression of our human ambivalence in our relations to other creatures; while work enables us to build the kind of permanence which offers protection from 'nature', it also remains reliant on the presence of nature for the resources behind its construction.

Action is the activity that goes on directly between people, tied to the 'human condition of plurality', which founds political life in our living on the earth and inhabiting the world.[36] The work of world-making creates sufficient distance from the demands of our animal nature that it is possible for us to transcend the predictability of the metabolic cycle and begin something new – to act.[37] When action is coupled to human speech – *communicative action* – the world of things which appear to us become real.[38] The distinctive qualities of labour, work, and action

[33] Arendt, *HC*, 115, 7.
[34] Bowring, *Arendt*, 18.
[35] Arendt, *HC*, 139.
[36] Arendt, *HC*, 7.
[37] Arendt, *HC*, 177–78. Note, here, that while 'action' is distinguished from work in its exclusively intra-human nature, it nevertheless remains reliant on the worlds built via the presence of non-human creatures. See Paul Ott, 'World and Earth: Hannah Arendt and the Human Relationship to Nature', *Ethics, Place and Environment* 12, no. 1 (2009): 15. The role – or not – of non-human creatures in Arendt's political vision is contested, and I will return to it shortly, though for now it is worth noting that the expression of natality is not *only* found in strictly human relationships. In *Between Past and Future,* Arendt notes that 'man is as capable of starting natural processes which would not have come about without human interference as he is of starting something new in the field of human affairs'. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Second (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 58. For further discussion of this point, see Bowring, *Arendt*, 119.
[38] Arendt, *HC*, 50–51, 198–99.

also constitute the 'private' and 'public' spheres of the human condition. Labour is properly the activity of the private realm – the household – while the public realm is constructed by work ('the fabrication of human hands') and constituted by our capacity for action (humans gathering and holding the world 'in common').[39] For Arendt, being in public means being seen and heard by others, and as such demands plurality.[40] She is specifically critical of the Christian tradition's emphasis on goodness as an activity which ought not to be seen and the Church's related rejection of the public realm in its turn away from the world.[41] This criticism is especially pertinent to whether we imagine prayerful sorrow as a political act. I return to the need for the Church to participate in public later in this chapter.

Central to Arendt's description of action is her emphasis on the human faculty for newness (natality).[42] Arendt departs from a Heideggerian emphasis on being-towards-death as characterising the human condition, giving focus instead to our potential for newness – for life – as central for understanding humans as political creatures.[43] Arendt's emphasis on natality began in her early study of St Augustine; in *City of God* he describes humanity's reason for being created as introducing 'a beginning', and she cites this description in almost all her writing on natality.[44] Arendt interprets this capacity to both initiate and imagine beginnings as the source of human freedom.[45] Rather than being consigned to repeating cycles of decay and death, humans have a faculty for interruption, and each human has a unique interruptive

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[39] Arendt, *HC*, 52.

[40] Arendt, *HC*, 58. For a detailed summary of the distinctively plural nature of Arendt's public realm, see Craig Calhoun, 'Plurality, Promises, and Public Spaces', in *Hannah Arendt and The Meaning of Politics*, ed. Craig Calhoun and John McGowan, Contradictions of Modernity 6 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). The distinctive role of public speech in her account of action and plurality receives particular attention in George Kateb, 'Political Action: Its Nature and Advantages', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[41] Arendt, *HC*, 74.

[42] Arendt, *HC*, 246–47.

[43] Arendt, *HC*, 9. For more on her turn to natality over mortality, see Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989); Karin Fry, 'Natality', in *Hannah Arendt: Key Concepts*, ed. Patrick Hayden (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[44] To give two examples: she leaves the final words of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to natality ('Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the supreme capacity of man, politically, it is identical with man's freedom. *Initium ut esset homo creatus est* – "that a beginning be made, man was created" said Augustine. This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man') and in her essay on traditions of political thought in *The Promise of Politics* she also emphasises the enormous political implications of the human as a 'beginning', while bemoaning Augustine's failure to apply his own principle to his political writing. Her original and extended treatment of Augustine and natality can be found in her edits to *Love and St Augustine*. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc, 1968), 479; Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2005), 56–59; Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 51–57.

[45] Arendt specifically cites the capacity for imagination as tied to natality in 'Lying in Politics' – see Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc, 1972), 5.

capacity by virtue of their own specific and unrepeatable birth.[46] But Arendt also interprets this capacity for action in light of our highly conditioned nature, each of us tied both to the material circumstances of our unique birth and to the 'web of human relationships' in which we act (we may be free, but we are not sovereign).[47] The newness of action and its necessary context within this web means it is also fraught with risk; action is characterised by 'unpredictability' and 'irreversibility' (we cannot foresee and control its consequences). But rather than the entanglements and pitfalls of human finitude providing justification for a dismissal of the efficacy of political life, or for minimising the number of actors involved in offering their speech to each other, Arendt instead finds the remedy in humans *strengthening* their collective ties in the acts of promise making and forgiveness.[48] Arendt's emphasis on humans as the only creatures capable of initiating beginnings is potentially distracting for the point I am seeking to make – interactions between non-human creatures of many different kinds constantly initiate unprecedented ways of being in the world (one could for instance argue that a general creaturely capacity for new life drives adaptive and evolutionary processes just as much as death does).[49] But I nevertheless want to remain with the key claim that humans have a particular capacity to make beginnings in a particular way – and this facilitates our political life, which is another way of saying that it facilitates our capacity to change the way things are.

Arendt's three-fold description of human activity treads a careful line in the relation it draws between human and non-human creation. Arendt roots labour in the same cycles of growth, metabolism, and decay which govern all biological life, our need to consume connecting humans to all other living creatures.[50] But she also resists collapsing even labour into the activity of other creatures.[51] Labour cannot be disentangled from the ways 'work' and 'action' shape its expression – and, further, Arendt warns that we can improperly express their

[46] Arendt, *HC*, 246, 177–78.
[47] Arendt, *HC*, 183, 234–35.
[48] Arendt, *HC*, 237–38.
[49] Hans Jonas' description of freedom as a condition of all life, which is 'turned outward and toward the world in a peculiar relatedness of dependence and possibility' provides a useful balancing narrative here. Jonas, *Phenomenon of Life*, 84.
[50] Arendt, *HC,* 96-99. In this respect she shares a framework with Hans Jonas' emphasis on metabolism in *Phenomenon of Life*. But, for Arendt, the disordered attention to consumption over other components of the *vita activa* is a key failure in our current condition – I return to this point shortly.
[51] It is distinct, for example, in the development of agriculture, and the organised storage of food and water, which demonstrate blurred lines between 'labour' and 'work' – though agricultural practice remains a labouring activity because of the necessity of its repetition. Arendt, *HC,* 138. As Paul Ott observes, Arendt's frame both avoids an absolute nature/culture dualism and resists producing a nature-culture monism whereby we cannot meaningfully distinguish human creaturely activity from the activity of other creatures. Humans are uniquely shaped by a series of both *given* and *self-made* conditions, which can be both meaningfully distinguished and yet also constantly overlap in their source and expression. See Ott, 'World and Earth'.

relationship to each other.[52] While labour ought to mimic the cyclical rhythm of the body's metabolism, the disruption of this appropriate balance between production and decay renders our consumption insatiable. While our consumption might connect us to other creatures, Arendt considers one of the key problems we face to be the confusion of our *consuming* nature with our *world building* nature. What we consume becomes long-lasting and a source of meaning, and the things that build worlds become disposable.[53] We might think, for example, of food preservatives and their attendant chemical pollution, or products of work – like cars and electronics – which are treated like short-term consumable goods.[54] 'The ideals of *homo faber*, the fabrication of the world, which are permanence, stability, and durability, have been sacrificed to abundance, the ideal of the *animal laborans*'.[55] This invites dysfunction into our entangled world and earth. As Bowring summarises:

> Both the earth and human artifice are components of our worldly existence, and our culture – our cultivation of each – complements and enhances our ability to care for the other. But when modern technoscience acts into nature, unharnessing, from a standpoint outside the world, processes that are alien to earthly life, it carries human unpredictability, bereft of the remedies that action enjoys in the realm of human affairs, into the organic environment, and this is then followed by the reverberating spread of a kind of artificial nature back into the human world.[56]

Note that it is not simply the case that *work* – our 'artificial' world building activity – produces environmentally problematic desires which ought to be negated. We are not trying to 'return to nature', but rather attempting to better live out the *vita activa* in light of our aptitude for destruction. *Action*, then, is also required to renegotiate our expression of labour and work, to remedy the dysfunctional relationship between labour and work which we risk perpetuating.[57]

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[52] In his commentary on Arendt's account, Ott notes that human animals have (*much like non-human* animals) largely treated their environments with little regard as to the outcome. But unlike other animals, our behaviour is severe enough to do lasting harm. This has also become *more true* over time, and especially since the industrial revolution. Ott, 'World and Earth', 6–7.
[53] Arendt, *HC*, 124-125. As Paul Voice points out, this observation also implies a useful approach to constructing an environmental ethic: 'Arendt is offering us an argument for limited consumption… because in being consumers above all else we misunderstand our own nature, distort our own self-understanding, and stunt our own human capacities'. Paul Voice, 'Consuming the World: Hannah Arendt on Politics and the Environment', *Journal of International Political Theory* 9, no. 2 (2013): 188. p.188
[54] Ott, 'World and Earth', 15.
[55] Arendt, *HC*, 126.
[56] Bowring, *Arendt*, 122–23.
[57] This is true from a purely organisational perspective ('only within the framework of political organization, where men not merely live, but act, together, can specialization of work and division of labor take place') but is also true from the perspective of the kinds of consequences from our labour and work which we anticipate and permit. Arendt, *HC*, 123.

Arendt's description of a fitting mode of world-making within the *vita activa* is also informed by her understanding of culture. For Arendt, objects are cultural to the extent that they can endure beyond those who make them. In *Between Past and Future* she contrasts this cultural durability with functionality, the latter being a quality which makes them disappear through use.[58] If 'culture' is premised on the assumption of outlasting the people currently in the world, its perseverance directly challenges a predominantly consuming society, which 'cannot possibly know how to take care of a world and the things which belong exclusively to the space of worldly appearances, because its central attitude toward all objects, the attitude of consumption, spells ruin to everything it touches'.[59] Arendt draws a relationship here between the perseverance of culture and a human capacity to make and care for things which exist beyond our immediate desire for consumption.

Culture – which she traces to its Roman origins in *colere* (cultivate, dwell, take care, tend, preserve) – is related to the 'intercourse of man with nature' in the sense that nature is cultivated and tended for human habitation, and it is out of this relationship of 'loving care' where the political faculty of taste (love of beauty) emerges.[60] Nature, then, 'helps constitute culture', informing our notion of judging the intrinsic value of the things we see; things which appear before us and between us.[61] Our capacity to observe and communicate the *non-instrumentality* of things both emerges out of and prevents the distortion of the *vita activa*.[62]

The *vita activa* constitutes a description of the distinct and closely intertwined relationships between human and non-human creatures. It contains a necessary ambivalence towards the non-human, given that the activity of work is premised on the interpretation of nature as both

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[58] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 202. This is contrasted with *entertainment,* which is *not* a phenomenon of the world but rather its transience makes it a phenomenon of life.
[59] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 208.
[60] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 208.
[61] Kerry Whiteside, 'Worldliness and Respect for Nature: An Ecological Application of Hannah Arendt's Conception of Culture', *Environmental Values* 7, no. 1 (1998): 32. Arendt points out that this interest in beauty not only shapes our appreciation of cultural artefacts, but also our appreciation for and judgment of things which we design for *use*, and that as a result these things also enter our public life – 'there is in fact no thing that does not in some way transcend its functional use, and its transcendence, its beauty or ugliness, is identical with appearing publicly and being seen… The standard by which a thing's excellence is judged is never mere usefulness'. Arendt, *HC*, 173.
[62] See Whiteside, 'Worldliness and Respect for Nature', 35. Paul Voice's reading of Arendtian culture reaches a similar conclusion: 'Arendt combines the thought of both taking care and fitness for human habitation, and contrasts both with an unconstrained utilitarian attitude of domination… an attitude of loving care is both a making use of nature and the preservation of nature… this attitude of loving care, as partnership, sustains nature not for its own sake but for the sake of freeing our own capabilities for a fully human life'. Voice, 'Consuming the World', 186–87.

gift and threat to stability.[63] The distortion of the *vita activa* emerges from and reinforces the intertwined conditions of earth and world alienation – our alienation from the conditions of organic existence is wrapped up in our alienation from our own human artefacts.[64] Returning to a fitting expression of the *vita activa* requires re-establishing our capacity for common sense – holding those things which appear before us in common. One crucial outcome of this common sense-making will be a renewed capacity to speak about and judge together the non-instrumentality of these appearances, whether the appearance is an artefact or a fellow creature. In recognising this non-instrumentality, we also renew our capacity for culture-making – for cultivating care.

Arendt's description of communicative action as directing our world making is premised on our shared capacity to perceive things which appear before us. While her predominant description of the relationship between communicative action and world making is concerned with things humans *make* rather than things they simply *receive*, the earth and the world nevertheless share 'the ontological propensity to appear between us'; our relationship to non-human creatures is not only in labouring (out of the necessity of survival) but is also found in spectating (the earth appears to us) and in speech (we speak for and about non-human creatures).[65] Further, in appearing before us, the earth also *teaches* us to be political actors: 'by appearing, earth solicits our spectatorship and calls us to supplement its colorful displays of diversity by performing our plurality in speech and action'.[66] Arendt makes this relationship explicit in the opening of *The Life of the Mind*:

> The world men are born into contains many things, natural and artificial, living and dead, transient and sempiternal, all of which have in common that they appear and hence are meant to be seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled, to be perceived by sentient creatures endowed with the appropriate sense organs… Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a spectator.[67]

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[63] Arendt opens *HC* by describing the material conditions of the earth as 'a free gift from nowhere (secularly speaking)' and warning against the modern human desire to 'exchange [it]… for something he has made himself'. Arendt, *HC*, 2–3.

[64] Arendt makes this explicit contrast between 'earth' and 'world': 'This world… is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together'. Arendt, *HC*, 52.

[65] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 36.

[66] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 37.

[67] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 19.

Arendt emphasises that *all* living beings are 'not just in the world, they are of the world' because they simultaneously perceive and are perceived, and because, like 'actors', they desire to appear before others on a stage 'common to all who are alive'.[68] While she limits the category of agency to sentient creatures, she nevertheless identifies a shared *intent to appear* between human and non-human agents. When these appearances are greeted by multiple spectators, and as such when we also *witness each other* perceiving these diverse appearances, we encounter them as real, and they take their place in our communicative action.[69]

I have two concerns about possible directions Arendt's framework might go. I will briefly address them here to specify which aspects of her approach are of relevance to my argument, and which implications I am not seeking to draw in the description I offer of human speech and world-making. The first concern relates to Arendt's treatment of labour as the 'least human' part of the *vita activa*, because of its 'worldlessness' – that is, that it produces no lasting memorials to the labourer, and is a private rather than public activity. This is only true if one assumes that those aspects of human existence which we have in common with other creatures (consuming, reproducing) are less relevant in describing our humanity than those aspects of human existence which are distinct from other creatures (making artefacts which endure).[70] This kind of claim is not necessary for the approach I take, and indeed threatens to distract from it. Relatedly, it is also beyond the scope of this argument to determine whether it is possible to say that other creatures have 'worlds' of any kind, if 'world' can easily become elided with general 'meaning-making' or 'value', rather than being strictly used in the sense of that which humans create when they make common cultural artefacts which outlast their makers.[71] For the purposes of this chapter, my use of 'world' will be chiefly concerned with

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[68] Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 20–21.
[69] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 143.
[70] Mary Midgley offers a compelling response to this problem in *Beast and Man*, proposing that humans have a distinct nature and yet 'the point on which humanity is excellent is one in which it is *not* wholly unique – that at least some aspect of it might be shared with other beings' (31). Further, just as the nature of other creatures will remain to some extent mysterious to us, so will our own human nature: 'We cannot expect. . . that things not made by man will necessarily have an essence we can grasp. . . when we ask *What is the characteristic excellence of Man?*. . . we do not help ourselves at all in answering it if we decide in advance that the answer ought to be a single, simple characteristic, unshared by other species, such as the differentia is meant to be (143). Midgley treats the distinctiveness of human nature as the shape of a cluster of properties, many of which we share with other creatures. These parallels are not considered a threat to 'the distinctively human structural properties involved in conceptual thought and language' (21). Instead, they help us better interpret our human distinctiveness: 'the traditional distinguishing marks of man – speech, rationality, culture – are not something opposed to our nature, but continuous with and growing out of it'. (230). Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). Adobe E-reader.
[71] This problematic interpretation of Arendt's 'worldlessness' can be found, for example, in Paul Ott, who interprets Arendt as suggesting that 'human valuing is inseparable from living in a world, and thus inseparable from the ability to treat things objectively, as objects, something non-human animals are incapable of. The very

this latter sense – what takes place when *humans* make worlds, rather than speculating about its possible application for other creatures. I want to avoid the inference that because we learn to value the earth from within a cultural world, nature's value does not exist outside of human projection. It is more useful to say that cultural world building can be better or worse in teaching us how to see intrinsic value (that is, that which creatures communicate to us about the nature of creation). I have already argued that other creatures are *agents* in communicating signs to us, and so human world-making cannot be premised on the assumption that other creatures *passively* receive our world-making.[72]

The second concern relates to whether Arendtian suspicion of the alienating consequences of modern science can turn towards a generalised suspicion of the work and communication of scientists as a mode of human enquiry and, as such, truth telling. Climate change and ecological collapse have been largely invisible to everyday human awareness over the period scientists have collected data tracking its progress. Its burgeoning arrival as a felt material condition for much of the world's population is scarcely a decade old. Until very recently, it has not been presentable to our *common sense*, and even those sudden and violent changes to weather patterns which scientists describe as one consequence of a changing climate cannot be placed directly at the feet of a perceptible actor called 'climate change'.[73] One temptation therefore might be to use Arendt's critical frame to exclude the use of climate science and ecology in our

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ability to designate value as intrinsically located in nature is dependent on the construction of worlds from which to do the designation. This follows from Arendt's statement that nature only becomes an object for us once worlds are built into it. Thus, value could not even exist in nature until humans put it there through valuation and the creation of worlds... until humans beings evolved with the capacity for morality, nature was value-free'. Ott, 'World and Earth', 8–9. The need for a *world* may well be an adequate description of human value-observing, but it doesn't necessarily follow that this is true of other creatures and their capacity to value things, or, further, whether other creatures have any *intrinsic* value to speak of. It *certainly* doesn't follow that this is true within the order of creation; within a theistic framework, the value or not of other creatures is not reduced to whether we perceive other animals as behaving in ways that we recognise as meaning-making.

[72] I do not think this is a necessary extension of Arendt's framework, even if at times she appears to imply it. She clearly distinguishes between the 'human condition' and 'human nature', the former being comprised of 'whatever enters the human world of its own accord or is drawn into it by human effort'. But, as she goes on to emphasise, 'the sum total of human activities and capabilities which correspond to the human condition does not constitute anything like human nature'. Arendt, *HC*, 9–10.

[73] For example, news coverage of flooding events in which scientists say that climate change makes the disaster X times more likely, rather than 'climate change caused this event'. We could compare this to the relatively straightforward *common-sense* assessment of an oil spill – it has a direct agent behind it, with consequences that appear to multiple spectators at once. Timothy Morton's *Hyperobjects* makes a similar point regarding the sheer *scale* of objects which are so massively distributed in time and space as to be ungraspable (like climate change, or Styrofoam): 'I can think and compute climate… but I can't directly see or touch it. The gap between phenomenon and thing yawns open, disturbing my sense of presence and being in the world... I cannot locate the gap between phenomenon and thing anywhere in my given, phenomenal, experiential, or indeed scientific space'. Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 12.

communicative action; the modern mode of scientific research has already contributed to our earth and world alienation.[74] Modern science's refusal to participate in our common sense-making – and its active *erasure* of our capacity to perceive and collectively interpret the appearances of things – means it cannot operate as a trustworthy partner in our political speech together. This is, of course, an apt summary of much contemporary suspicion of the role of scientists as political actors. Their claim to offer data which is both removed from our everyday experience *and* transcends the murky motivations of political ideologies (*or even human feeling*) is not plausible to us because it does not *appear to us* that way, either in our encounters with scientists as subject to the same desires and motivations as everybody else, or in our experience of the material effects of action taken on the basis of their data collection and interpretation.[75] Those scientists who *do* attempt to transparently communicate the political significance of the signs they receive are subsequently treated as having violated the only basis on which their data should be trusted – that it sits outside the fluid and contested interpretations of the *polis*.[76]

Ephraim points out that the scientist thus sits in an odd position: the scientist's authority as one who can 'speak for nature' both relies on our political world-building, in that they receive a *polis* to whom they can communicate, and also relies on our willingness to selectively put aside the common sense on which our politics rests in order to take seriously the authority that the scientist claims.[77] We might well see this as the legacy of the modern claim that the scientist is a 'priest of nature' which relied on much the same dynamic, and also failed in its ambition to properly *reveal* non-human creation. But the solution cannot be that we exclude speech about anthropogenic loss from our common sense making, no matter how faltering the speech might be. Our speech about these things is not mere *reporting* to a willing or unwilling audience, but is, to use Arendt's language, part of making these things real.[78] It is, then, insufficient for

[74] This is not just true in the specific examples Arendt offers, but also true as a description of climate change, which is 'a crisis in the very fabric of reality – a version of "earth alienation" in which nothing appears the same for long enough to become a stable node in the network of relationships that holds together the world'. Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 144.
[75] The Covid-19 pandemic and the discourse concerning lockdowns is an obvious example of this.
[76] We might think, for example, of the history of climate scientists being deliberately removed from the political decisions of corporate fossil fuel extraction (see 'Big Oil v the World' (BBC, 21 July 2022). The inverse effect is also at work; scientific data has also been used to shield corporations against the protests of indigenous and subsistence populations who attest to the destruction that *appears* before them but are dismissed on the basis that they are 'merely' political actors (e.g., fuel extraction sites being given 'sustainable' accreditation).
[77] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 142–43.
[78] 'The world comes into being only if there are perspectives; it exists as the order of worldly things only if it is viewed, now this way, now that, at a given time.' Arendt, *Promise of Politics*, 175. And, in *HC*, 'Without a space of appearance and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality of

scientists to demand that climate change is believed. It must also be ‘lived, breathed, and acutely felt by the people in their everyday and extraordinary acts of… creating a world. We must make science more, not less, political – in this specific, worldly sense’.[79] The act of making science more political does not undermine the validity of climate scientists’ data. It rather invites climate and ecological science to take its place *in public*, at the ‘table’ of articulating what it is we hold in common, to use Arendt’s language.[80] When it does so, it is my contention that scientific researchers will also encounter the necessity of the passions in receiving the signs of other creatures and in faithfully communicating their meaning. I am not proposing that sorrow needs to be incorporated into our political communication. I am rather pointing out that it is already there, and so we need to participate in directing the narrative it follows.

Arendt had originally wanted to give *The Human Condition* the title *Amor Mundi.*[81] The idea of loving the world gets little explicit attention in the work (and Arendt specifically dismisses ‘love’ as ‘unworldly’, and even ‘the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces’).[82] And yet the task of loving the world – seeing and understanding the world as it is and thus *assuming responsibility for it* – runs in the backdrop of her concern over our alienation from the world and as such from each other.[83] In her early work *Love and St Augustine*, Arendt describes love of the world as belonging to the world, being at home in the world, and thus looking to the world as the place one must interpret good and evil.[84] World alienation precisely describes the antithesis of this relationship between belonging and interpretation; in an Arendtian frame, the effect of losing belonging is that we lose trust in our sense encounters and in our collective

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one’s self, of one’s own identity, nor the reality of the surrounding world can be established beyond doubt’. Arendt, *HC*, 208.

[79] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 143.

[80] ‘To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it’. Arendt, *HC*, 52.

[81] Valerie P. Hans, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 324.

[82] Arendt, *HC*, 242. Arendt makes brief explicit mention of *love* in relation to worldly belonging in two places. The first is in her description of ‘respect’ via Aristotle’s *philia politike*, which she interprets as a ‘kind of “friendship”… a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us’. The second is in her description of the Renaissance’s ‘new-awakened love for the earth and the world’ which falls victim to ‘the modern age’s triumphal world alienation’ (243, 264). For more on her use of ‘love’ as political/unpolitical, see Shin Chiba, ‘Hannah Arendt on Love and the Political: Love, Friendship, and Citizenship’, *The Review of Politics* 57, no. 3 (1995): 505–36.

[83] ‘At the center of politics lies concern for the world, not for man – a concern, in fact, for a world… without which those who are both concerned and political would not find life worth living… Wherever people come together, the world thrusts itself between them, and it is in this in-between space that all human affairs are conducted’. Arendt, *Promise of Politics*, 106.

[84] Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 66–67. See Ott, ‘World and Earth’, 26.

description and moral interpretation of those encounters. The antidote to such a loss of confidence in our 'common sense' is in legitimising and reinforcing our capacity to receive the signs of other creatures, communicating the signs we receive together, and offering a narrative which invites belonging rather than alienation. I am treating sorrowful speech in public as an action which takes on and attends to a plurality of voices; a form of bearing witness to our belonging which carries within it the Arendtian quality of world-making. I therefore turn now to a focused account of what sorrow in public looks like, firstly as an action for the broader body politic, and then as a vocation for the Church.

4. SORROW AS COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Judith Butler's reading of the politics of grief in *Precarious Life* and *Frames of War* is particularly pertinent as an example of sorrow as public witness. Butler describes the experience of loss and the mourning which follows as *revelatory* of the ties we have to other people, to place, or to community.[85] The experience of mourning shows us that we are 'socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure'.[86] Grief contributes to and refines our sense of being political community, revealing our relational ties and our sense of responsibility to those ties. As Arendt's description of our political world makes clear, we are also *ecologically* constituted bodies; the social and ecological constitutions are bound to each other.[87] But mourning is, for Butler, not only revelatory of our existing ties, but also a political action which teaches. She prompts us to examine which lives we have rendered 'ungrievable' because we determine that its life never counted as living at all – and to see the ways this distinction between 'grievable' and 'ungrievable' is manifest in public life. It is out of our public expression of this grief (or lack of it) that further modes of political outrage and action are formed: 'our moral responses – responses that first take the form of affect – are tacitly regulated by certain kinds of interpretive frameworks'.[88] Our expressions of public sorrow reveal these frameworks to us and direct the future of these frames. The same tacit regulation is at work in the assumption

[85] 'When we lose certain people, or when we are dispossessed from a place, or a community, we may simply feel that we are undergoing something temporary, that mourning will be over and some restoration of prior order will be achieved. But maybe when we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us.' Butler, *Precarious Life*, 22.
[86] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 20.
[87] Butler makes the same observation in Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010), 19–20.
[88] Butler, *Frames of War*, 41. For a similar political account in relation to anger, see Lorde, 'Uses of Anger'.

that anthropogenic loss must be communicated via *data* rather than in the kind of speech accessible to and generative of common sense; if a loss can only be told by a few, participation in responding to that loss is also constrained.

Our polyphonous and even heterophonous expressions of sorrow (or its lack) over anthropogenic loss must be communicated in ways which invite participation if we are to make the scale of destruction comprehensible to each other – if we are to participate in world-making, if we are to encounter reality:

> If someone wants to see and experience the world as it "really" is, he can do so only by understanding it as something that is shared by many people, lies between them, separates and links them, showing itself differently to each and comprehensible only to the extent that many people can talk *about* it… over against one another… Only in the freedom of our speaking with one another does the world… emerge in its objectivity and visibility from all sides.[89]

This means that the voices of those who occupy the majority experience of anthropogenic loss must be heard *more* to ensure our politics are genuinely making the world more and not less visible. As the global average temperature rises and climate change becomes a standard point of reference in political stump speeches, one might imagine that Arendtian politics requiring the genuine participation of differing views could act as an odd defence for protecting the presence of those who deny any need for sorrow over anthropogenic loss. And yet the most recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 27) had more representatives of the fossil fuel lobby in attendance than at any previous gathering, more than the combined delegations of the ten countries most impacted by climate change.[90] The number of women delegates present was one of the lowest concentrations to date, while the UN estimates that 80% of those displaced by climate change are women.[91] Their absence in our world-making not only represents the loss of a full account of human plurality, but also the loss of their particular capacity to receive the signs of other creatures and to interpret them in the political realm. Ephraim makes clear the Arendtian relationship between our reception of the earth's signs and the plurality of the *polis*:

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[89] Hannah Arendt, *Promise of Politics*, 128–29.
[90] Matt McGrath, 'COP 27: Sharp Rise in Fossil Fuel Industry Delegates at Climate Summit', *BBC News*, 10 November 2022, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-63571610.
[91] Esme Stallard, 'COP 27: Lack of Women at Negotations Raises Concern', *BBC News*, 16 November 2022, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-63636435.

> This law-like call to speak for ourselves and for the things in our midst is itself unspoken; the earth can only convey its demand that we act to realize plurality by appearing, in all its diversity… Reading *The Human Condition* and *The Life of the Mind* in tandem, we see that the human world is not a reality apart from the earth… Arendt tells us that common sense fits human beings into a heterogenous world, a reality only partially of our making. At the same time, she suggests that humans are the only animals to artificially enhance their common sense through work and action, thereby intensifying the reality of all things, given or made.[92]

Ephraim observes that Arendt places humans in a particular position in relation to other sign-making creatures; humans are both uniquely able to enact 'common sense' *and* uniquely able to supress that sense making and refuse the 'law-like' demands of the earth. Our political participation can either foster a renewal of common sense or further numb our capacity to attend to what is before us.

Bearing this need for renewal of common sense in mind, I want to account for the spiritual implications of our failure to participate in this political action. I therefore turn to a very similar theme which emerges in Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of prayer: his account of prayer as speech which makes the world, and the place for polyphonic and even heterophonic voices which make up our offering of the world to God. I introduce his reading of humans as *naming* creatures as one example of a world-making activity in which the Church is called to participate. The world-making activity of naming and not-naming plays a key role in making a diverse and divergent range of losses grievable (making them public) through the cultivation of attention and belonging. As a counter to the alienating scientific language which Arendt identifies, shared names for other creatures are an example of speech which creates the possibility of sense-making. The names are rooted in encounters with other sign-making creatures which we then treat as communicable. Passing on those names also invites participation in sign-receptivity. Finally, creature naming provides a *localised* example of expressing sorrow as a demonstration of what is at stake for our expression of the *polis* in our immediate contexts.

As I explore in the following, the act of naming can also be an expression of a desire to control or manage the other, and certainly interpretations of its religious significance have fallen prey to this temptation. The emerging field of taxonomy in the seventeenth century, for example, became closely tied to an emphasis on Adam's dominion over other creatures, the loss of this

[92] Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 48.

dominion at the fall, and a desire to redeem this managerial capacity through the sciences.[93] How has the development of language enabled or inhibited human dominion in the act of naming creatures? How has this influenced our naming of ourselves and the cosmic place of the human? In much the same way as I have sought to counter the enlightenment reading of the scientist as priest of nature by reframing the significance of a human priestly role, here I offer a counter interpretation of the act of naming as part of our call to receive the signs of the world and offer them to their Creator.

5. CHRISTENING THE WORLD

Writer Robert MacFarlane has paid particular attention to the political power of naming in shaping our relationship to other creatures. In *Landmarks*, he collates thousands of words describing the landscapes, nature, and weather of Britain and Ireland – alongside introducing writers who carefully describe and illuminate the land around them. *Landmarks* opens by attending to the wealth of deeply local knowledge contained in our language and its growing loss. He highlights this loss with reference to the *Oxford Junior Dictionary*'s decision in 2007 to drop over eighty creature words from their new edition, including acorn, cowslip, heron, nectar, tulip, and wren. In response to a critical open letter by Macfarlane and other authors, Oxford University Press (O.U.P.) claimed that 'dictionaries are designed to reflect language as it is used'.[94] This defence reflects an ideology which treats speech as a neutral or organic reflection of existing attention, rather than a creative activity that makes attention itself: learning names for things invites us to attend to them. As we revisit those names, commitment to this attention is strengthened. Macfarlane expresses this succinctly: 'we do not care for what we do not know, and on the whole we do not know what we cannot name'.[95] The public debate with O.U.P. inspired *The Lost Words,* a book by Macfarlane and visual artist Jackie Morris which restores to children lost names for creatures so that restored relationship might follow. As MacFarlane notes:

> Language is fundamental to the possibility of re-wonderment, for language does not just register experience, it produces it. The contours and colours of words are

[93] As Peter Harrison outlines in depth, in the early modern period Adam's call to name (to *classify*) other creatures was widely interpreted as an account of Adam as the 'first scientist', expressing a truly religious vocation. See Peter Harrison, 'Linnaeus as a Second Adam? Taxonomy and the Religious Vocation', *Zygon* 44, no. 4 (December 2009): 879–93.

[94] Alison Flood, 'Oxford Junior Dictionary's Replacement of "natural" Words with 21st Century Terms Sparks Outcry', *The Guardian*, 13 January 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/13/oxford-junior-dictionary-replacement-natural-words.

[95] Flood, 'Replacement of "natural" Words'.

> inseparable from the feelings we create in relation to situations, to others and to places. Language carries a formative as well as an informative impulse – the power known to theorists as 'illocutionary' or 'illative'.[96]

Simply knowing the words for creatures does not equal intimate knowledge or attentiveness. But the words – the signs – remind us to *look*. They teach attention. Public attention has not only turned to the words for creatures we have lost, but also to our lack of words for the experience of lost ecological stability and intimacy. Zadie Smith's essay *Elegy for a Country's Seasons* voices our lack of proficiency in naming loss: 'there is the scientific and ideological language for what is happening to the weather, but there are hardly any intimate words'.[97] It is not incidental that Robert Macfarlane, Jackie Morris, and Zadie Smith are artists, crafting words and images to shape our attention; as Arendt points out, there is a close affinity between politics and the performing arts, our worldliness sustained through telling and re-telling stories.[98] Shared names are cultural artefacts which invite other creatures into our world, and losing shared names is a symptom of and contribution to our earth/world alienation. By contrast, passing on creaturely names invites us to speak together about those places; to participate in storytelling which tells us if and how we belong.

The significance of naming is reflected in another fashion in Augustine's *De Magistro*, in which he describes the end of speaking as teaching. Even speech about learning is teaching; when asking questions, we communicate to another what it is we want to know.[99] Augustine treats speech as exterior, involving signs which point to the existence of things. Things transcend the signs we give them (our words are always inadequate descriptions of our environments), but they are necessary for attention because they tell us where to look.[100] Our attention to other creatures is in large part composed of signs telling us which things are relationally significant. But, of course, naming is as prone to sin as any other kind of speech. Colonialism has relied on suppression of local language to suppress local identity, the impacts of which can be seen across the former British Empire, including the decline of Gaelic and Welsh in Britain and Ireland. In *Thin Places*, for example, Kerri Ní Dochartaigh describes the trauma of growing up during the Troubles, and maps her childhood in, departure from, and

[96] Robert MacFarlane, *Landmarks* (Penguin Books Ltd, 2016), 26.
[97] Zadie Smith, 'Elegy for a Country's Seasons', *The New York Review*, 3 April 2014, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/04/03/elegy-countrys-seasons/.
[98] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 152–53.
[99] Augustine, *Against the Academicians and On the Teacher*, trans. Peter King (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995).
[100] James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of the Incarnation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 117–20.

subsequent return to Ireland through her encounters with wild creatures.[101] Though not a fluent Irish speaker, she carefully names each one in Irish – a conscious reframing, seeking to undermine their disenfranchisement from the ties of history, culture, and ecology. As a reflection of the political/ecological binding which creates belonging, she extends this renaming to herself; she also changes her name to its Irish spelling. Naming does not dissolve abuse, nor does it guarantee that flourishing will follow. But it remains a consistent desire in human encounters with other creatures. Human creatures are for better or worse 'name-callers, christeners', words 'grained into our landscapes, and landscapes grained into our words'.[102] We are caught between the fraught claim of belonging or *owning* (particularly in post-colonial Britain) and the persistent desire to speak with affection and intimacy about the places we inhabit.

In *The Ark of Speech*, Chrétien interprets the Genesis account of creature-naming as hospitality to other creatures – not a one-off event, but a description of the human creature's relation with, and responsibility towards, the world. The first human speech in Genesis is naming; as each animal comes 'into the light of speech… they do not leave unchanged but bearing a name that calls them'.[103] Humans, alongside all creatures, have already been spoken to by God and have obeyed. This act of naming is not dominance, but obedience to the kind of creature we are, and the other kinds of creatures God has made. We are called to obey 'the very nature of things',[104] gathering each creature under an 'ark' of generous speech, 'which shelters their being and their diversity'.[105] This observation concerning the effects of naming is close to MacFarlane's warning about the consequences of names being lost: 'once a landscape goes undescribed and therefore unregarded, it becomes more vulnerable to unwise use or improper action'.[106] If naming other creatures can guide humans to responsibility, not-naming is not a neutral state but a decisive exclusion from the kind of shelter humans can offer. Naming is also an *intra-human* gift. We do not simply name other creatures, we name each other, creating new possibilities for imagining how we belong to each other.[107] Naming together discerns and

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[101] Kerri ní Dochartaigh, *Thin Places* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2020).
[102] MacFarlane, *Landmarks*, 10.
[103] Chrétien, *AS*, 1.
[104] Chrétien, *AS*, 3.
[105] Chrétien, *AS*, 2.
[106] MacFarlane, *Landmarks*, 27.
[107] Anthony Reddie notes a similar gift in *Theologizing Brexit*: 'being human' is the gift of subjectivity, meaning making, and creating and recreating one's world. By contrast, Reddie argues, a 'fixed identity' is 'the dangerous offspring of objectification… the imposition of unchanging and unmediated forms of imposed constructions of self onto marginalised and oppressed peoples'. The response that he offers to this imposition is self-naming as a

describes truth about the world and our relations to each other – and our relations to each other as diverse *creatures*, who are tasked with naming each other to *know each other*.

As noted, naming alone is not inevitably hospitable. But hospitality for Chrétien depends on this first welcome, and it is made hospitable when offered out of humility, the product of attention to the other – or, as Chrétien describes it, 'listening'.[108] We welcome our fellow creatures in light of the speech (of God and the world) to which humans always respond. Chrétien's interest in naming reflects his wider phenomenology, which interprets human relation to the world and God as response to a call. This call is necessarily mindful of the diverse (and divergent) voices which also speak. Those who speak to each other are 'never two people: even a face-to-face conversation is heavy with a distant rumour, and even intimacy has its own wide-open spaces'.[109] If, as Chrétien's phenomenology insists, all speech responds to the diverse calls of the world and of God, the question is *what kind of speech* we respond to, and *whose speech* is accorded attention – to whom will we listen? Which signs will we follow? When a narrative of humans as priests of creation is applied to speaking together about the world, realised in the act of naming, one can confidently assert the need for the renewal of the places to which we belong – that they are being redeemed, and we are called to participate in redemptive work. We are not simply learning to report our localities as they are for the sake of greater accuracy in speech. We speak redemptively, conforming our attention to the compassion demonstrated in Christ.

Here we can return to the Man of Sorrows, whose willingness to be troubled was to demonstrate the curative nature of sorrow and its fitting expression. It is this Christ who saw the trouble which burdened his disciples and directed their attention to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field as signs of the kingdom.[110] It is this same Christ who knew the sorrow of the oppressed and reinstated an outcast woman by naming her 'daughter' before her community.[111] When, likewise, we bear witness to the shared names of creatures or communities which have previously gone unnoticed, dismissed, or *misnamed*, we are remade in the image of the Christ who saw unnoticed signs of glory and called forth those whose voices had gone unheard. The

community-forming act. Like Augustine, Reddie goes on to treat speech together as teaching. Anthony G. Reddie, *Theologising Brexit: A Liberationist and Postcolonial Critique* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2019), 97, 94, 96.

[108] Chrétien, *AS*, 9.

[109] Chrétien, *AS*, 10.

[110] Matthew 6:25-34.

[111] Mark 5:25-34.

task of expressing fitting sorrow over anthropogenic loss requires that we see this loss through the eyes of Christ and act in line with this new seeing – these new signs to which we attend. If we do so, our expression of sorrow will bear the moral authority of the one we claim to follow. Christians are not alone in this remaking work; we communicate with others who seek to receive signs in renewed ways. But our naming must come from the conviction that the priorities of God have already been announced.

Creaturely names demonstrate the power of shared speech to teach us how to belong to each other, but this belonging relies on a certain consensus of experience. While not everyone might see the *value* of learning local creature names, there is at least usually agreement about what names they should be given.[112] But I also want to consider how shared speech can incorporate divergent or conflicting creaturely experiences – and how we might do this as the Church in the public realm. To do so, I turn as Chrétien does, to prayer. Chrétien understands the call to which prayer responds as coming from both God and the world. Belonging-to-the-world offers the attention required to know what to pray, and prayer in turn teaches a new kind of worldliness, making our attention new. As with Arendt's account, this is not a personal worldliness. Chrétien describes prayer as a choral act. While all speech takes place in a wider community and history, prayer is a response to theophany (we speak because we have heard the speech of God in the world).[113] Prayer, for Chrétien, emerges from the vulnerability and contingency of praise and petition, accompanied by realising our individual inability to pray fully or well. Like all speech, prayer *teaches* the one who prays.[114] This prayer should be externalised, made public, acknowledging that we always speak in response to the call of God and the world. His emphasis on belonging-to-the-world as necessary for prayer offers a helpful starting point for considering how prayer might foster the kind of common sense which helps us make a world.

6. PRAYER AS NAMING

Public prayer – spoken prayer, with others, in a publicly accessible place – is a pertinent example of local churches curating common sense making. Public prayer is responsive to contextual changes and able to redirect attention to narratives which might otherwise go

[112] Though as previously noted, imposing language can be dominance, and resistance to colonialism includes resistance to language eradication.
[113] Chrétien, *AS*, 10.
[114] Chrétien, *AS*, 21.

unheard or dismissed. We pray for the vulnerable, marginal, grieving, downhearted, lonely. In doing so, we speak desires about the place we live, and trust our actions will be more aligned with these desires. But desires can be divergent – so public prayer often includes local prayer requests, creating collective attention by speaking them out loud. These prayer requests may not reflect the dominant narratives of a place, given their reliance on the admission of vulnerability. But, in naming them, the community creates signs which direct attention to needs or desires that otherwise may have remained unrecognized.[115] This motivates seeing the world *as it really is*. By contrast, public prayer which avoids specificity, refuses to voice requests, or focuses only on the inner life of the church has the inverse effect: the worshipping community becomes further alienated from its placed reality. I am proposing two stages to the role of speech in our world-making activity here: firstly, we (all humans) can offer and perpetuate sense-making communication as opposed to speech which alienates. Secondly, the *kinds* of speech we emphasise are narratively governed, and so the Church's offering of public speech must propose a compelling narrative which directs its participants towards speech which is revelatory of our belonging.

This second stage is not straightforward, but there is humble joy in acknowledging the complexity and diversity of creatures to which we must attend. In this act of praying aloud together, we perform a particular vision for the world. We might recall here Arendt's description of attention making in *The Promise of Politics:*

> If someone wants to see and experience the world as it 'really' is, he can do so only by understanding it as something that is shared by many people… showing itself differently to each and comprehensible only to the extent that many people can talk *about* it, over against one another.[116]

Humble speech together teaches us about the world. If this disappears, so does a full sense of our place in the world. Our speech together is a performance which constantly makes and remakes our attention. When humans offer this speech as prayer, it takes on a distinctly revelatory quality, not just regarding humans but regarding the whole of creation. As a form of anthropophany – a revelatory act which recalls our priestly vocation – human prayer takes on

[115] I am not suggesting that prayer doesn't 'work' beyond the one who prays, but that prayer also works on those who pray. Here is one place I part from Chrétien, who argues that the 'words of our speech affect and modify the addresser, and not the addressee.' In speech, *both* parties are affected – but we often neglect the ways that the speaker is shaped by their speech. Chrétien, *AS*, 21.
[116] Arendt, *Promise of Politics*, 128.

a macrocosmic weight; the significance of prayer in public is at least in part because we are not only offering our own voices but the voices of all creatures, and it is incumbent on us to do so as truthfully as possible.

Again, this leaves us with the problem of sin in speech. How can the Church live up to such a vision of naming, or sense making? Can we resist the temptation to control, define, or exclude? Chrétien insists that this resistance is made possible when our attentive desire to belong is prompted by thanksgiving, rather than ownership:

> Nothing before God belongs to us as our own, if not our ability to say thank you… the speech most proper to man is thus the speech which is turned to the other, given to the other, a speech of transmigration that crosses boundaries, a speech that is eccentric… this speech has the strength of its weakness, for the voice that praises always has something tremulous about it, knowing at one and the same time that it cannot be enough and yet that nothing other than it *can* be enough.[117]

For Chrétien, thanksgiving holds within it both an outward gaze and knowledge of limitation which ensures room is made for the other. If our attention is plastic enough that it can be remade by redirected speech, words of thanksgiving might create a receptivity whereby we are both committed to the gift received and know that our belonging must necessarily be shared. Belonging well requires attentiveness, and inattention – or misdirected attention – leads to dysfunctional forms of belonging. It is not that words alone might cure our chronic alienation, nor that our words are necessary for goodness to endure. But our speech together is nevertheless transformative. 'The world really does become a world when it comes into the light of speech'.[118] Arendt's frame of the human condition offers a helpful guide for interpreting the political implications of Chrétien's theological account. The act of naming is a world-making counter to our earth/world alienation; it transforms our perception of reality by drawing other creatures into the human 'world', making them grievable in our renewed capacity to pay attention to them – to note their absence. Another way of putting this is to describe the passion of sorrow (and passions more broadly) as narratively shaped and narratively shaping. We can transform our receptivity to the signs of other creatures and the movement of the sensitive appetite which they provoke, and a theological account of humans as priests of creation both legitimises and directs that receptivity.

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[117] Chrétien, *AS*, 123.
[118] Chrétien, *AS*, 122.

Arendt's description of world-making and communicative action offers a critical account of the twin earth/world alienations shaping contemporary political discourse on climate change and ecological collapse. Her diagnosis of the dysfunction in our present *vita activa* echoes accounts of the consequences of the nature/culture divide while adding further emphasis to the significance of human speech as remedy. In particular, the state of worldlessness can be understood as both a condition and symptom of climate collapse in the instability it fosters and in its removal of the non-human from the political and cultural realm. Meanwhile, her category of action and its relation to labour and work offers clarity to the necessary presence of non-human actors in our political speech and guides a theological description of sorrow over anthropogenic loss as polyphonous (necessarily so) but not *neutrally* so. There are voices which are more or less faithful to the signs we receive, and this pursuit of faithful bearing witness is the task of the Church. The Church's prayer and liturgical life is a participant in world-making, and the narrative we offer therefore belongs in public.

7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have drawn on Arendt's account of the human condition to trace a particular narrative of loss; dramatic changes in our imagination have led to our twin alienations from the earth and the world. In narrating the history of our changing speech about the world, Arendt makes clear that our speech together has *material* consequences. We are now profoundly aware of how devastating those consequences have been and will be. And yet precisely in identifying the power of human speech to transform (to make) worlds, we are simultaneously reminded of the possibility of change. Rooted in the human capacity for natality, the stories we tell about the world can be dramatically transformed and new things can come to be. I have therefore taken this account of communicative action as welcome framing for prayer. Prayer, too, rests in the presumption of natality: when we pray, and perhaps *especially* when we pray out of sorrow over the current conditions in which we find ourselves, we testify to a conviction that newness is possible, and even promised.

CONCLUSION

1. REPRISING SORROW

> I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death; I am not on his pay-roll.[1]

The context of anthropogenic loss demands a renewed theological reading of human encounters with non-human creation, particularly with regards to experiences of sorrow. I have interpreted the expression of sorrow over anthropogenic loss as both responding to and further facilitating our reading of the world as filled with sign-making and sign-receiving creatures, to whom we must pay attention if we wish to better grasp truth about our human condition. The Christian tradition's reading of sorrow via the passions of Christ supports my interpretation of this sorrow as a morally authoritative response; in being prompted by the presence of sin which leads to death it expresses a gap between an 'is' and an 'ought'. However, in acknowledging the variety of signs which provoke sorrow over anthropogenic loss, the sign-receiver is also confronted by its polyphonic nature; its actors and their environments are plural, and as such so must be its expression. This polyphony of voices does not belie the possibility of a governing narrative, nor does it mean that all expressions of sorrow are equally fitting. The Christian tradition's approach to the passion of sorrow and the framing of humans as priests of creation offer narrative guides which direct the human sign-receiver to offer their own sign in the language of prayer. Finally, the necessarily *political* nature of such sorrow (that it is concerned with the death of shared environments) also governs its fitting expression as necessarily public.

This clarification as to the nature of sorrow is by no means absolute: it is a pilgrim knowledge. The inner lives of all creatures remain to a certain extent mysterious to us, and it is naïve to assume that this is not also the case with humans. But the potential held in the rising tide of sorrow over anthropogenic loss for either penitent transformation or further destruction means that clarity must nevertheless be attempted. The spiritual health and material futures of many creatures may well depend on it. In closing, then, I first reprise the structure of the approach I have taken and then visit one more creature whose narration exemplifies the need for a human priestly sorrow which is expressed in public.

[11] Edna St Vincent Millay, 'Conscientious Objector', *Collected Lyrics of Edna St Vincent Millay* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 216.

The ideological framework which currently governs descriptions of human feeling in response to climate change and ecological collapse is largely composed of psycho-social accounts which employ the language of climate and ecological 'grief', 'anxiety', 'mourning', etc. Overall, these accounts struggle to offer clear moral analysis of *both* the source of these responses and guidance concerning their expression. This problem lies at least in part in reliance on the hard-to-define category of 'emotion'. As a subset of this, the language of 'grief' has been subject to extensive privatisation and pathologisation, rendering it insufficient for appropriately communicating not only the moral implications of anthropogenic loss but also the moral implications of our response to it. Descriptions of the passion of sorrow as offered in the Christian tradition offer a useful alternative, particularly in defending the import of sorrow in the moral life.

The classical Christian tradition as represented by Augustine and Aquinas proposes that if the passion of sorrow is well-governed by reason, its expression can participate in the pursuit of the good. Christ's sorrow is the exemplar for such expression, guiding the disciple in learning to sorrow over sin and its consequences while resisting the temptation to despair. However, Augustine and Aquinas' emphasis on the voluntaristic nature of his passions and the distinct treatments of his 'inner' and 'outer' pain poses difficulties for application to sorrow over anthropogenic loss, which for many is an imposed and material condition. Late medieval accounts of sorrow as participation in the suffering of Christ (prompting compunction and compassion) and the Black theological tradition's interpretation of Christ's sorrow as bodily solidarity offer a useful critical gloss on the approach taken by Augustine and Aquinas. While these distinct traditions offer different interpretive emphases, they are nevertheless consistent in treating this passion as significant for the Christian moral life. Diverse accounts of Christian sorrow share an emphasis on the language of prayer as its most fitting expression, inviting us to treat sorrow over sin as a *graced* response.

Such a reading of the fittingness of prayerful sorrow over sin still requires specific application to anthropogenic loss, which offers an essentially new moral context for theological response. The newness of this moral context does not undermine its significance for our theological anthropology, nor is sorrow over the loss of the world as we know it undermined by our awareness of cultural conditioning. Rather, the cultural variation governing this sorrow's experience and expression constitutes a reminder of the specifically human participation in the

sign-making and sign-receiving agency of creatures. Indeed, modernity's tendency to treat 'nature' and 'culture' as distinct realms communicating distinct forms of knowledge has actively contributed to contemporary climate and ecological crises and poses a barrier to an adequate human response to anthropogenic loss. Against this nature/culture dualism, a semiotic reading of the shared ontological category of creatureliness proposes that human responses to the non-human can truly receive and interpret the signs of other creatures. A Christian theological anthropology can offer the narrative framework necessary to do this well – specifically the narratival frame of humans as priests of creation.

The governing narrative of humans as priests of creation offers a vocational account of sorrow over anthropogenic loss expressed as prayer. Maximus the Confessor's theological anthropology describes the human priestly vocation as one which brings about unification where sin has created division. Along with other movements of the sensitive appetite, the passion of sorrow can be understood as a participant in this unifying work. Against the risk of seeing a priestly vocation as separating humans from the rest of creation, the experiences of mystics – particularly in the Eastern Orthodox tradition – provide examples of this vocation manifest in humans receiving other creatures as signs and responding with prayerful compassion. Likewise, Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of prayer offers an account of human priestly vocation which does not alienate humans from other creatures but further grounds our creaturely identity. Chrétien also positively accounts for the polyphonic nature of the signs we receive; they are not a barrier to proper interpretation or expression, but rather a humbling reminder of the finitude from which we speak.

In assessing the role of sorrow over anthropogenic loss beyond an ecclesial context, this plural reception and expression takes on a revelatory and even world-making quality. Employing Hannah Arendt's account of communicative action as the activity through which we both understand and make the world, the expression of sorrow over anthropogenic loss (whether or not in prayer) can be described as a form of communicative action. The *disturbing* or *disruptive* quality of this plural expression facilitates the possibility of telling new world-making stories. If sorrow is a transformative action, it not only serves as a fitting echo of the signs received from other creatures, but also facilitates the emergence of something new. This is because the expression of sorrow has a fundamentally disturbing quality – it draws often unwanted attention to the rift between how things are and how they ought to be. But in the disruption which the polyphonous expression of sorrow affords, new space is made. Rather than

provoking despair, this disturbing expression of sorrow in public *resists* despair by anticipating that something new may be possible, and that its expression might bring about that new thing (it is an action). Speech about the world around us participates in making and remaking the world's history; it can serve as both a reflection of the existing direction of our will and as a reorientation which facilitates transformation.

My account invites further analysis of the ways that the passion of sorrow might relate to the Christian virtues, and especially the role of hope at the end of the world as we know it. I want to offer a closing reflection on how expressing sorrow as prayer might participate in this resistance, and further how it serves as a unique and vital contribution to public discourse about the things we have lost and things we are still to lose. To do so, I turn now to the story of one creature, the telling of which both confronts us with the necessity of sorrowing over what we have lost and serves as a reminder of our necessary participation in a world of sign-making agents who can make things new.

2. A SHORT CUT TO MUSHROOMS

In *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, anthropologist Anna Tsing follows the nature-culture history of the matsutake mushroom – an uncultivatable delicacy which only grows in human-disturbed forests in the northern hemisphere, in turn nurturing the growth of trees in otherwise inhospitable environments.[2] Emerging in sites of anthropogenic loss, Tsing reads matsutake as a sign of the failed narrative of capitalist progress; their presence is a product of ecological degradation, and their elite consumption relies on a highly precarious chain of global supply and demand, with many matsutake pickers and sellers working outside any system of regulated labour or trade. But they also signal the persistence of life in even the most precarious environments; Tsing takes matsutake as a reminder that a dominant narrative of progress might have failed, but this does not mean that all narratives are doomed to the same fate. Rather, she proposes a counter story of vulnerability, in which the story's recipient remains open to a persistent series of transformative encounters with other creatures. Tsing thus describes her method of narrating the mushroom as *noticing* and *listening* to a 'contaminated diversity' of creatures who constantly transform and initiate the forming of new worlds; there is no

[2] Tsing explicitly refers, for example, to the 'nature-culture knot' of describing the smell of a matsutake. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 52.

independent or isolated history to map, no pursuit of 'purity' from the contaminating influence of other agents.[3] Like Chrétien's reading of the world's voices, the resulting story of the mushroom takes on a 'polyphonic' character, reframing our knowledge of the world as being like 'singing a madrigal in which each singer's melody courses in and out of the others'.[4] Tsing's account of matsutake exemplifies the disturbing quality of storytelling that I have sought to highlight, especially in her focus on a narrative which demands that the recipient confront damage and loss. In uncovering matsutake on ground formerly occupied by old growth forests, there is no story of matsutake without the story of 'greed, violence, and environmental destruction'.[5] But it is in confronting this disturbing reality that the possibility of transformation is revealed – new worlds can be made and *are already* being made in the sign-giving and sign-receiving of many entangled creatures.

The matsutake's story is also emblematic of world-making as an activity involving many creatures. We occupy 'multispecies worlds' whose inhabitants are all participants in making history.[6] Akin to McPhee's observations about the history-making potentiality of the Atchafalaya and the attempts by humans to thwart this potential, Tsing reflects that the trees and mushrooms dwelling together in pine forests in Finland are making their own kind of history – and the human response (clearing the forest floor) is an attempt to stop this making. A mushroom might not tell stories like humans do, but it nevertheless contributes to history-making because it is capable of making and remaking the world around it.[7] Here, then, is one basis upon which our sorrowful speech about the world can be offered in hope: we have disturbed and destroyed the agency of other creatures by producing conditions in which that agency cannot be fittingly expressed, and on a global scale.[8] And yet our treatment of other creatures as passive recipients of human agency does not change their *actual* agential status. If our sorrowful speech can sufficiently disturb this prevailing narrative, other creatures will act as agents, capable of making and remaking the world again.

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[3] Tsing, *Mushroom*, 27, 33, 37.
[4] Tsing, *Mushroom*, 34. This polyphonic quality is not exclusive of scientific knowledge. Tsing highlights that science is a mode of translation, and this translation is itself polyphonous: science is imagined as an international enterprise, and yet nationally specific approaches to matsutake research have emerged (217-218).
[5] Tsing, *Mushroom*, 33.
[6] Tsing, *Mushroom*, 22.
[7] Tsing, *Mushroom*, 168.
[8] The *reach* of human intervention and disruption is important. We might, for example, acknowledge that we need to manage some forests for timber, while also expressing sorrow over the unnecessary reach of our forest management, leaving very little alone as we seek to satisfy unsustainable levels of consumption.

Tsing's vision is a compelling one. And yet I have proposed that more is demanded of us than simply noticing the agency of other creatures. Certainly, I believe the account of sorrow I offer can facilitate greater hope than she imagines for the human condition. Following her desire for humans to relinquish attempts at control, Tsing's story of the matsutake places almost all her hope in the agency of other creatures. Her encounter with loss prompts her to look to the emergence of fungal life from amongst capitalist ruins as a sign of *post-human* possibility; newness will emerge out of our failures whether we participate or not. But in doing so Tsing all but abandons the sense that our encounters with loss prompt political urgency. Along the path to a post-human entanglement there remains an excess of suffering which is impossible to adequately record. There are many whose vulnerability to other creatures (human or otherwise) ends in violent death rather than in a renewed appreciation of the world or a resigned acceptance of the fall-out we have triggered but cannot control. Tsing's account of precarious entanglement comes with the temptation to fatalism concerning our capacity for noticing and narrating; it is much too easy to say that we falsely imagined we could manage and contain other creatures, and so the only alternative is to mitigate further attempts at intervention. But a priestly account of the human insists that we cannot simply limit our story-telling vocation to receptivity and repetition. If our experiences of sorrow over anthropogenic loss are disturbing in their acknowledgement that *it could have been different*, then our expression of that sorrow must also be disturbing in insisting that *it could be different*, and that *it shall be different*, and even that in our speech, it is already *becoming different*. Rather than receiving the matsutake as an invitation to retreat, we can instead receive it as a reminder of the creative potential found in our creatureliness. For humans, this potential is most fully realised when we speak together in light of the vocation the Man of Sorrows places on us.

Over the course of this thesis, I have sought to demonstrate that sorrow expressed as prayer has an interventionist quality. It is not simply a reaction to our encounters with loss but is an action which forms and informs our moral life. If, as Arendt argues, our speech about the world together is action, then the disturbing quality of sorrowful speech is in part because it emerges from the human capacity for natality; each human generation receiving the gift and the task of committing 'to intervene, to alter, to create what is new'.[9] Sorrow resists becoming despair by insisting that something new is both possible and promised. We do not need to assume that humans are the *only* creatures making beginnings in order to take seriously the *human* capacity

[9] Arendt, *BPF*, 192.

to make beginnings in our speech about the world, both in prayer, and in public. Drawing on the birth of Christ, Arendt describes natality as the 'miracle that saves the world'.[10] If we take this description as more than mere rhetorical flourish, the possibility of newness is another way of saying that there is always the possibility of grace, and it is on this that we build the virtue of hope.

As Terry Eagleton frames it in *Hope without Optimism*: hope does not entail the belief that the future will certainly be better than the present, but it does demand that we act as though the future is worthy of investment, even in the face of the most extreme forms of tragedy. In such a context, hope 'is what survives the general ruin'.[11] It persists while humans can still distinguish between what *ought to be* and *what is*.[12] Crucially, Eagleton ties the persistence of hope to the persistence of language; while we can still communicate loss and offer an account of where it might have been different, there remains the possibility of transformation. 'Hope is extinguished when language is obliterated. It is not true that language can repair one's condition simply by lending a name to it, but it is true that one cannot repair it without doing so'.[13] The expression of sorrow, then, is a hopeful act. It insists that it is worth putting into words that which has been lost, both because those losses are *meaningful* and also because the articulation of those losses resists treating the present condition as inevitable or a foregone conclusion; 'however desolate the future may prove, it might always have been different'.[14]

Like Eagleton, I want to give the final word on the possibility of hope to the work of grace. In an intriguing parallel to Arendt's category of natality, Eagleton notes that human nature contains within itself no salvation beyond being 'hospitable to its own self-transcendence'.[15] In expressing our shared longing to reach beyond the conditions within we find ourselves – to see them transformed, and to describe the kind of transformation we long for – sorrow over the loss of the world as we know it is a sign of the promise of grace, even in the midst of overwhelming sin. The world can become significant for us again.

[10] Arendt, *HC*, 247.
[11] Terry Eagleton, *Hope Without Optimism* (London: Yale University Press, 2015), 115.
[12] Eagleton, *Hope Without Optimism*, 122.
[13] Eagleton, *Hope Without Optimism,*124.
[14] Eagleton, *Hope Without Optimism,* 132.
[15] Eagleton, *Hope Without Optimism,* 126.

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