


HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

Emotion and Ethics: The Conjoined Twins of Early Modern English Culture

Linda A. Pollock 

Department of History, Tulane University, New Orleans, USA

Email: pollock@tulane.edu

Abstract

Passions and affections, notwithstanding their potential and capacity for disorder, were fundamental to the workings of the early modern world and lay at the centre of ethical life. Yet, most scholarship ignores the inseparability of emotion and ethics for early modern society. This article reviews the current state of scholarship in three fields: history of philosophy, history of emotions, and English society and governance, highlighting the assumptions and arguments which have led to the mistaken severance of affect from morality, the exclusion of ethics from histories of emotion, and the omission of emotion from studies of English power and authority. It argues that this separation is anachronistic and impairs our ability to understand governance in early modern England. This was a world of fused affect and morality which underpinned particular notions of power and authority. That governance was located within an ethical/emotive paradigm has been given insufficient attention.

Early modern philosophers, theologians, and domestic conduct book writers devoted many hours and numerous pages explaining what a good, that is moral, life looked like. Morality, a system of rules, principles, and norms that regulates personal conduct and social relations and prescribes what ought to be done and what ought not, preoccupied the major thinkers of the day.¹ Their structuring of the issues, their framing of the questions, and their answers gave feelings a crucial role. In fact, early modern authors viewed the nature of the relationship between emotion and morality as the core of human existence, placing the passions and affections at the centre of any ethical enquiry.² Their portrayals of a life well-lived was based on a system of morality, largely Aristotelian but with elements from the Stoics, that fused ethics and emotion.

¹Ethics refer to rules provided by an external source, such as codes of conduct in workplaces or professions, or to principles in religions. Morals refer to an individual's own principles regarding right and wrong. In practice, there is considerable overlap between the two.

²Joseph Duke Filonowicz, *Fellow feeling and the moral life* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 6, 8; Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis, eds., *Passions and subjectivity in early modern culture* (Farnham, 2013), p. 4; Susan James, 'The passions and the good life', in Donald Rutherford, ed., *The Cambridge companion to early modern philosophy* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 198–220.

Passions and affections held a fundamental place in moral philosophy and philosophers and moralists saw themselves as authoritative bearers of knowledge about these.³ It was not possible for most early modern authors to conceive of affections outside of the realm of morals, or vice versa. Richard Baxter in part one of his *Christian directory*, entitled 'Christian ethics', devoted a whole chapter to the government of the passions.⁴ Benedict de Spinoza allocated parts II and IV of *Ethics* to the passions.⁵ Passions and affections were examined in conjunction with morality, both by authors focused on ethics and by those writing on the passions. Long before the rise of the sentimental school in British philosophy in the eighteenth century, the passions and affections were inseparably yoked to morality. Thomas Hobbes discussed in detail the 'faculties, passions and manners of men, that is to say, of moral philosophy'.⁶ Henry More's intention in his work on morality in 1690 was to 'principally treat of the virtues and of the passions'.⁷ Passions and affections were clearly seen as the vital tools by which and with which individuals could morally inhabit society.

Until relatively recently, however, modern scholars have rarely examined how emotion contributed to leading an ethical life. The West, especially from the nineteenth century on, has had a long tradition of regarding emotion with suspicion, opposing it to the preferred category of reason, thanks mainly to the widespread influence of William James and Immanuel Kant. The study of morality and the study of emotions, for the most part, have been handled separately by different scholarly disciplines that ask different questions, and address different historiographical debates.⁸ The study of ethics is largely the domain of philosophers who disengage emotion from ethics, viewing the former as an overpowering force over which we have limited control and that undermines judgement.⁹ This perspective has seeped into other disciplines, such as history, literature, and political science.¹⁰ This means

³James, 'The passions and the good life'.

⁴Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, a summ of practical theologie and cases of conscience directing Christians how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin: in four parts* (1673), part one, ch. VII. All pre-1800 works were published in London unless otherwise stated.

⁵Benedict de Spinoza, *The ethics. (Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata)*, translated by R. H. M. Elwes (The Project Gutenberg eBook #3800, 1677).

⁶Thomas Hobbes, *Human nature: or, the fundamental elements of policy. being a discovery of the faculties, acts and passions of the soul of man* (1651), p. 160.

⁷Henry More, *An account of virtue, or, Dr. Henry More's abridgment of morals put into English* (1690), pp. 3–4.

⁸Stephen Gaukroger, *The soft underbelly of reason: the passions in the seventeenth century* (London and New York, NY, 1998), pp. 1–2. For an attempt to bring together disciplines and sources normally kept apart, see Erin Sullivan, *Beyond melancholy: sadness and selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 2016).

⁹This comment is made repeatedly in works in philosophy, political philosophy, and moral psychology. See, for example, Rebecca Kingston and Leonard Ferry, eds., *Bringing the passions back in: the emotions in political philosophy* (Vancouver, 2008); Robert C. Solomon, ed., *Thinking about feeling: contemporary philosophers on emotions* (London, 2004); Robert C. Solomon, *The passions* (New York, NY, 1976); Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro, eds., *Emotion and cognitive life in medieval and early modern philosophy* (Oxford, 2012), p. 2; Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the mind: rationality and the emotions* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹⁰Cummings and Sierhuis, eds., *Passions and subjectivity*, p. 1; Cheryl Hall, 'Passions and constraint: the marginalization of passion in liberal political theory', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 28 (2002), pp. 727–48, at p. 728; R. S. White, 'Reclaiming heartlands: Shakespeare and the history of emotions in literature', in R. S. White, Mark Houlahan, and Katrina O'Loughlin, eds., *Shakespeare and emotions: inheritances, enactments*,

that the interaction between affect and morality, especially with respect to early modern English history, remains understudied. Despite its pervasiveness, the model is not applicable to the early modern world in which values could not be disentangled from the affective comprehension and emotional enactment of them. Passions, affections, and ethics were intertwined and must be understood together: feelings enabled ethical conduct, constituted the enacted value and were often mandated obligations, while cultural norms were based on affective concepts. The anachronistic rupture of affect and morality has profound implications for the study of early modern English society and polity, making it impossible to appreciate that authority was an affect-based system. This article reviews the current state of scholarship in three fields: history of philosophy, history of emotions, and English society and governance, highlighting the assumptions and arguments which have led to the mistaken severance of affect from morality, the exclusion of ethics from histories of emotion, and the omission of emotion from studies of English power and governance. Due to reason of space, the article largely concentrates on the British tradition of philosophy and the period 1500 to 1700 with respect to the history of emotion and English society.

I

The interaction of reason, emotion, and ethics has engaged philosophers from the ancient world onwards and how writers understood emotion and its relationship to reason shaped their views on living virtuously.¹¹ The place of emotions in morality has proved a divisive issue.¹² Two competing models have battled for ascendancy: one, known as moral sentimentalism in modern philosophy, regards emotions as valuable to the attainment and practice of morality, the other, termed moral rationalism, views morality as originating in reason alone with emotions making little or no contribution to its practice.¹³ The conceptualization and interpretation of these paradigms has altered through the centuries but the core difference has remained.¹⁴ These two perspectives have existed simultaneously and have vied for pre-eminence from ancient times onwards with moral rationalism prevailing in the Western world for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The intellectual pendulum has swung back and forth between enshrining reason as the primary enabler of a moral universe or granting that role to emotions.

Greek sceptics and Latin stoics certainly emphasized the importance of reason and the value of detachment from passions and from any belief which aroused strong emotion. But other ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle considered the

legacies (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 1–14; Benedict S. Robinson, *Passion's fictions from Shakespeare to Richardson: literature and the sciences of soul and mind* (Oxford, 2021), p. 32.

¹¹Amy Coplan, 'Feeling without thinking: lessons from the ancients on emotion and virtue-acquisition', *Metaphilosophy*, 41 (2010), pp. 132–51, at p. 136.

¹²Carla Bagnoli, 'Introduction', in Carla Bagnoli, ed., *Morality and the emotions* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 1–36, at p. 1.

¹³Michael B. Gill, *The British moralists on human nature and the birth of secular ethics* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 38.

¹⁴For a good overview of the neglect of emotions in post-Second World War moral philosophy and the reasons for this, see Bernard Williams, 'Morality and the emotions', in *Problems of the self: philosophical papers 1956–1972* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 207–29; Bagnoli, 'Introduction'.

passions as significant ways of experiencing the world. For them, affect was constitutive of human life, crucial to the formation and endurance of a community and to being recognized and formed as a person, as well as being of central evaluative importance for ethics.¹⁵ Aristotle, for example, understood moral virtue as not just acting ethically but as also having the right emotions directed in the right way and to the right degree towards the appropriate objects.¹⁶ Many medieval philosophers were persuaded by the ethical discourses of Latin stoics who stressed virtue, best attained by following the dictates of reason, and moral responsibility. Others, however, were drawn to the social and emotional orientation of Augustinian humanism, which incorporated affect and will, stressing the role of love and the heart rather than abstract notions of duty.¹⁷ Augustine was indebted to the Stoic view of emotions as thoughts that could be altered: morally bad emotions, or passions, were aroused by false beliefs whereas morally good emotions were caused by accurate judgements. He rejected, however, the notion that only virtue was good. Certain emotions such as compassion or righteous anger were also praiseworthy. Emotions, moreover, resided in acts of the will and thus if the will was well directed then the emotions produced would be good.¹⁸ The availability of Aristotle's works in Latin in the thirteenth century, interpreted for a Christian audience by the most influential philosopher of his time, Thomas Aquinas, pushed Augustinianism, especially the placement of emotions in the will, to the side, but the belief in the moral contribution of emotions was not dislodged. Aquinas granted affect a major place in ethical life, even though he did not view emotions themselves as providing sufficient guidance for a good life.¹⁹

The conversion of the seven sins of medieval Christianity into the ten commandments of Reformation-era religious culture created a moral framework that was stronger on obligations than sentiments.²⁰ By the seventeenth century, some influential thinkers like René Descartes, reasserted the superiority of reason while others, like Thomas Hobbes, reduced its role. Hobbes considered the passions as powerful sources of individual rights and as indispensable elements of any life and placed them above reason. Rationality for Hobbes was limited: reason was only an instrument of calculation at the service of the passions, and moral rules were not unconditionally valid.²¹ Both Hobbes and John Locke denied the existence of virtues in the Aristotelian sense, rather, the only standard of conduct was the conflicting interests of the parties. Pleasure and pain were the sole motivating psychological

¹⁵Rosalind Hursthouse, *On virtue ethics* (Oxford, 1999), p. 119.

¹⁶William J. Bouwsma, 'The two faces of humanism. Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance thought', in Thomas A. Brady ed., *Itinerarium Italicum: the profile of the Italian Renaissance in the mirror of its European transformations* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 3–60, at p. 22.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁸Sarah Byers, *Perception, sensibility, and moral motivation in Augustine: a Stoic-Platonic synthesis* (Cambridge, 2012), especially ch. 3.

¹⁹Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the passions: a study of Summa theologiae* (Cambridge, 2009); Leonard Ferry, 'Introduction', in Kingston and Ferry, eds., *Bringing the passions back in*, pp. 3–18.

²⁰J. B. Schneewind, *The invention of autonomy: a history of modern moral philosophy* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 161; David N. Beauregard, *Virtue's own feature: Shakespeare and the virtue ethics tradition* (Newark, NJ, 1995); John Bossy, 'Moral arithmetic: seven sins into ten commandments', in Edmund Leites, ed., *Conscience and casuistry in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 214–34, at p. 217.

²¹Daniela Coli, 'Hobbes's revolution', in Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamano, and Daniela Coli, eds., *Politics and the passions, 1500–1850* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), pp. 75–92, at pp. 75, 87, 91.

factors: 'the hinges on which our passions turn' and our only way of knowing them was by experience. Locke placed passions in the imagination and thus as spurs to action.²²

Both Hobbes and Locke were accused of moral relativism and the philosophical doctrine of rationalism was created in opposition to Hobbes's views on passions and morality. In the rationalist tradition of ethics, as exemplified by the work of Ralph Cudworth, a leading Cambridge Platonist or Samuel Clarke, a highly influential metaphysicist, emotions were morally suspect: they fogged the mind and clouded judgement. Individuals should regard sentiments with suspicion, scrutinize them critically before use, and rely on as few as possible. Only reason could understand the laws of morality, defined as universal and eternal, and thus ethical decisions should be based on rational considerations alone.²³ From the 1660s on, it was increasingly believed that for morality to exist, moral categories had to be eternal and immutable and reason alone could determine truth.²⁴

The pendulum by the eighteenth century swung again. Philosophers such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, David H. Hume, Francis H. Hutcheson, and Adam S. Smith, noting that reason detached from affect could never satisfactorily answer the question: 'Why be moral?', launched the sentimental, or moral sense, school of early modern British moral philosophy.²⁵ For this school, reason could not move people to action, nor control passions, nor decide when an action was good or bad. Morality, argued Hume, was determined by sentiment: an affective sensitivity to the good along with concern for another's welfare were essential to the practice of altruism. Affect was thus a central and indispensable part of living an ethical life.²⁶ New types of rationalism from the mid-eighteenth century on, however, particularly the perspectives of Richard Price and Immanuel Kant, re-emphasized the pre-eminence of reason, insisting that feelings lacked ethical value.²⁷ Kant maintained that the rational and the moral were the same, portrayed emotions as irrational, emphasized duty, and decreed that the right action was one performed out of respect for moral law. Moral rules were eternal, immutable, universal, and obligatory under all circumstances.²⁸

David Hume and Immanuel Kant, both intellectual giants in the field of philosophy and born only thirteen years apart, arrived at very different understandings of morality, reason, and emotion. Kant viewed law, duty, and obligation as the heart

²²John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding* (London, 1694), pp. 4, 8, 113–15. On Locke, see Peter King, 'Dispassionate passions', in Pickavé and Shapiro, eds., *Emotion and cognitive life*, pp. 9–31; Amy M. Schmitter, 'Passions and affections', in Peter R. Anstey, ed., *The Oxford handbook of British philosophy in the seventeenth century* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 442–71. Locke was not consistent in his views, see Joel P. Sodano, 'Uneasy passions: the spectator's divergent interpretations of Locke's theory of emotion', *The Eighteenth Century*, 58 (2017), pp. 449–67.

²³David Irons, 'Rationalism in modern ethics', *Philosophical Review*, 12 (1903), pp. 138–62.

²⁴Stephen Darwall, 'The foundations of morality: virtue, law, and obligation', in Rutherford, ed., *The Cambridge companion to early modern philosophy*, pp. 221–49.

²⁵Filonowicz, *Fellow feeling and the moral life*, p. 4.

²⁶Gill, *British moralists on human nature*, p. 208.

²⁷David McNaughton, 'Richard Price', *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/richard-price/>, 2019).

²⁸Irons, 'Rationalism', p. 158.

of morality whereas Hume stressed personal merit, sentiments, and the character traits and motives that lay behind human actions.²⁹ Kant's philosophy proved enormously influential.³⁰ His conception of ethics as affect-free moral absolutes was widely adopted and inhibited modern society from allocating any prominent role to emotions in the attainment of a moral life.³¹ This position was further enhanced in the nineteenth century by the work of William James, conventionally seen as the founder of the discipline of psychology, who claimed that emotions were corporeal, involuntary, and non-cognitive.³² Originating in the body rather than the mind and not consciously controlled, emotions thus stood apart from, rather than being integral to, any moral judgement.

Modern ethical writers have until relatively recently largely adhered to the Kant–James model, viewing emotions as partial, arbitrary, uncontrollable, and passively experienced entities that are detrimental to ethical reasoning and moral judgement.³³ The argument over the respective importance of reason and affect in moral judgements is one of long duration, apparently unsolvable, and with intellectual repercussions. It has partitioned affect and morality, marginalized emotions' role in ethical thinking, and encouraged the severance of emotion and ethics in other fields.³⁴ In particular, histories of emotion tend not to incorporate ethics, and histories of early modern society and polity overlook affect.

II

The history of emotions is by now a huge and ever expanding field, with research centres devoted to its study, several academic presses producing a history of emotions series, and specialized journals.³⁵ It began as a field of academic enquiry with

²⁹Eric Entrican Wilson and Lara Denis, 'Kant and Hume on morality', *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (<https://doi.org/https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/kant-hume-morality/>, 2022).

³⁰David Pizarro, 'Nothing more than feelings? The role of emotions in moral judgment', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30 (2000), pp. 355–75, at p. 356; Ute Frevert, 'Defining emotions: concepts and debates over three centuries', in Ute Frevert, Christian Bailey, Pascal Eitler, Benno Gammerl, Bettina Hitzer, Margrit Pernau, Monique Scheer, Anne Schmidt, and Nina Verheyen, eds., *Emotional lexicons: continuity and change in the vocabulary of feeling 1700–2000* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 1–31, at pp. 18, 20.

³¹Justin Oakley, *Morality and the emotions* (New York, NY, 1992), p. 1.

³²William James, *The principles of psychology* (2 vols., New York, NY, 1950), II, p. 449.

³³David Carr, 'Virtue, mixed emotions and moral ambivalence', *Philosophy*, 84 (2009), pp. 31–46; Filonowicz, *Fellow feeling and the moral life*, pp. 6, 9, 12, 18, 49, 223.

³⁴The debate continues. The dominance of Kant and the downplaying of affect's role in moral reasoning was challenged by the creation of a new category of moral emotion and of a school of thought known as virtue ethics that believes in the moral significance of the emotions: Hursthouse, *Virtue ethics*; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After virtue: a study in moral theory* (Notre Dame, IN, 1981). Joshua May's recent work, however, intended as a corrective to the current trend in moral psychology celebrating emotion over reason, claims that moral judgement is fundamentally rational and not beholden to the passions: Joshua May, *Regard for reason in the moral mind* (Oxford, 2018).

³⁵Languages of Emotion Cluster of Excellence at Freie Universität, Berlin, founded 2002; History of Emotions Research Center, Max Plank Institute for Human Development, founded 2008; Centre for the History of the Emotions, Queen Mary University of London, launched in 2008; Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, founded 2011. Book series on the history of emotions by: Oxford University Press, University of Illinois Press, Palgrave Macmillan. Journal: *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, founded 2017.

the publication of Johan Huizinga's study of the life, culture, and feelings of the late middle ages.³⁶ This was followed by Lucien Febvre's article calling for a new methodology to investigate the emotional life of the past which was cemented by the reconstruction of mentalities by the Annales school.³⁷ In the same era, Norbert Elias's *The civilizing process* showed that emotions were not a biological constant and so had a history, although it was not available in English until 1969.³⁸ Despite the promising beginnings, the field languished until Peter and Carol Stearns's 'Emotionology: clarifying the history of emotions and emotional standards' published in 1985 offered a way for historians to approach a diffuse, often nebulous, subject.³⁹ The field expanded rapidly in the 1990s, mainly as a reaction to the then prevailing linguistic turn, and really took off after 2000, developing into a coherent area of enquiry, with the introduction of new topics, questions, and theoretical approaches.⁴⁰

The interpretation of emotion as disruptive of reason and judgement with little to contribute to morality discussed above structured the initial scholarly investigation of early modern affect. Norbert Elias, for example, posited a highly influential model of a civilizing process in which a pre-modern world, characterized by violence and lack of restraint, gradually developed emotional control and self-discipline.⁴¹ Taking their cues from Elias, scholarship on the history of emotions initially concentrated on the strongest and most tumultuous feelings, those seen as the antithesis of reason: the passions.⁴² These, it was argued, were experienced as an invasion from without, as frequent, powerful, and psychological disquieting tempests, against

³⁶Johan Huizinga, *The waning of the middle ages: a study of the forms of life, thought, and art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth centuries* (London, 1955).

³⁷Lucien Febvre, 'Sensibility and history: how to reconstitute the emotional life of the past', in Peter Burke, ed., *A new kind of history: from the writings of Febvre* (London, 1973), pp. 12–26.

³⁸Norbert Elias, *The civilizing process: sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1994).

³⁹Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: clarifying the history of emotions and emotional standards', *American Historical Review*, 90 (1985), pp. 813–36.

⁴⁰A good analysis of this trajectory and its implications for study of pre-modern emotions is Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about emotions in history', *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), pp. 821–45.

⁴¹Elias, *The civilizing process*. For a critique, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Theories of change in the history of emotions', in Jonas Liliequist, ed., *A history of emotions, 1200–1800* (London, 2012), pp. 7–20; Linda A. Pollock, 'Anger and the negotiation of relationships in early modern England', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004), pp. 567–90.

⁴²This focus was in accordance with the view that passions and affection were distinct conceptual terms, distinguished on moral and theological grounds. Affections were laudatory feelings, whereas passions were potentially more disturbing, an interpretation cemented by the publication of Thomas Dixon, *From passions to emotions: the creation of a secular psychological category* (Cambridge, 2003). Very recent scholarship, however, is no longer so convinced that the passions and affections were distinguishable: Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of feeling: a history of emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 7; Schmitter, 'Passions and affections', p. 6; James, 'The passions and the good life', p. 220; Bradley Irish, *Emotion in the Tudor court, rethinking the early modern feeling* (Evanston, IL, 2018), introduction, n. 1; Jennifer Clement, 'The art of feeling in seventeenth-century English sermons', *English Studies*, 98 (2017), pp. 675–88; Kirk Essary, 'Passions, affections, or emotions? On the ambiguity of 16th-century terminology', *Emotion Review*, 9 (2017), pp. 367–74.

which a person had to strive to maintain or regain control.⁴³ Those who sought to lead a moral life had to subjugate these potent sensations because to be passionate in early modern society was to be blinkered, or worse, seduced from the path of righteousness.⁴⁴ Convinced that the passions were mighty, tumultuous forces requiring constant control, scholars were primed to investigate methods of restraint and techniques of taming. An avalanche of research drew on these themes, supplying a great deal of information on when, how, and why Western society mastered emotions until criticism of the narrative of repression as progress eventually directed attention to the important role played by affect in society.⁴⁵ Early modern religious life, for instance, was intensely emotional.⁴⁶ The pious saw no contradiction between the intellectual and emotional worlds, thought God spoke to them through emotions, viewed emotions as guides to godliness, and rather than restraining feeling, actively sought to have a heart burnt with love.⁴⁷

The next wave of research, beginning with Gail Paster's *The body embarrassed*, concentrated on the body and feeling, with an interpretative paradigm supplied by Galenic humoral theory.⁴⁸ In reaction to the linguistic turn and to the fact that the elevation of reason was usually accompanied by a denigration of the body and the emotions, and in order to demonstrate how differently early modern Europeans viewed emotion, corporeality became the guiding principle to understanding the passions.⁴⁹ Emotion was 'corporally sensed, experienced, and exhibited'.⁵⁰ Scholars focused on the embodied expression of sentiment, the physical contours of affect, and the role of the humours.⁵¹ Affective life was constituted by the humours coursing through the bloodstream and saturating the flesh, making the body and passions one

⁴³Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the body: emotions and the Shakespearean stage* (Chicago, IL, and London, 2004), p. 5; Susan James, *Passion and action: the emotions in seventeenth-century philosophy* (Oxford, 1997), p. 13.

⁴⁴Susan James, 'Reason, the passions, and the good life', in Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, eds., *The Cambridge history of seventeenth-century philosophy* (Cambridge and New York, NY, 1998), pp. 1358–96, at p. 1358; Albert O. Hirschman, *The passions and the interests: political arguments for capitalism before its triumph* (Princeton, NJ, 1977), pp. 20, 27, 32.

⁴⁵Rosenwein, 'Worrying about emotions in history', pp. 827, 845. See also Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional communities in the early middle ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2006), p. 3. A good overview of the important role of emotion in medieval life is Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy, *Medieval sensibilities: a history of emotions in the middle ages* (Cambridge, 2018).

⁴⁶Deborah K. Shuger, *Sacred rhetoric: the Christian grand style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), p. 247.

⁴⁷Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013); Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The reformation of feeling: shaping the religious emotions in early modern Germany* (New York, NY, 2010).

⁴⁸Gail Kern Paster, *The body embarrassed: drama and the disciplines of shame in early modern England* (Ithaca, NY, 2018). See also, Paster, *Humoring the body*.

⁴⁹Gail Kern Paster, *Reading the early modern passions: essays in the cultural history of emotions* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004); Jan Purnis, 'The stomach and early modern emotions', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 79 (2010), pp. 800–18; Fay Alberti, *Matters of the heart: history, medicine, and emotion* (Oxford and New York, NY, 2010); Fay Bound Alberti, 'Bodies, hearts and minds: why emotions matter to historians of science and medicine', *Isis*, 100 (2009), pp. 798–810.

⁵⁰Karen Harvey, 'The body', in Susan Broomhall, ed., *Early modern emotions: an introduction* (Abingdon and New York, NY, 2017), pp. 165–7, at p. 165.

⁵¹Robinson, *Passion's fictions*, p. 34.

and giving the latter a great deal of power.⁵² The humoral paradigm of fluids and spirits became the dominant model for analysing the relationship between affections, passions, and the body, but it is increasingly challenged.⁵³ No early modern writer ever reduced the passions to an effect of the humours.⁵⁴ Moreover, the centrality of the humoral body to early modern scholarship has obscured other intellectual frameworks that shaped emotional sensation and expression.

New work takes up the challenge of moving beyond the mind–body divide and links cognition, body, feeling, and performance in novel ways.⁵⁵ Passions were psychological, cognitive, and physiological events, located in the soul and body simultaneously. Anger, for example, incorporated the spirits and imagination and was compatible with reason.⁵⁶ Lynn Enterline concurs that emotion was a deeply embodied experience, but one learnt in the schoolroom by performing the emotions in classical texts well rather than derived from medical humoralism.⁵⁷ Scholars have also attempted to get around the limitations of the printed word which offers few glimpses into how individuals lived with emotion by analysing the embodied and performative aspects of emotion, relying on Erving Goffman’s theory of performative presentation. An emotion is formed through its articulation and demonstration, ensuring that body and emotions are interconnected.⁵⁸ Affective neuroscience, which questions the separation of cognition and affect, has also offered new models. Giovanna Colombetti’s work on the feeling body calls for an enactive approach, one that entails a view of cognition as embodied and affective.⁵⁹ The anthropologist Monique Scheer merges Bourdieu’s notion of practice with neuroscience and reconceptualized emotions as embodied, cognitive practice. Emotions in this theory are cultural practices: ‘acts executed by a mindful body’.⁶⁰

Despite being physically felt and demonstrated, emotions are not solely products of biology. Understanding them, trying to feel, or containing feelings – in other words managing them – helps create them.⁶¹ Individuals learn what Hochschild terms an ‘emotional bible’: sentiments that are consonant with the ambient social

⁵²Paster, *Humoring the body*, p. 23; Paster, *Reading the early modern passions*, p. 16.

⁵³Irish, *Emotion in the Tudor court*, pp. 6–7; White, Houlahan, and O’Loughlin, eds., *Shakespeare and emotions*; Karis Grace Riley, ‘Eating, sensing, feeling: “affective studies” and the fall into ethics’, *Renaissance Studies*, 31 (2017), pp. 165–74; Linda A. Pollock, ‘The affective life in Shakespearean England’, in R. Malcolm Smuts, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the age of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 435–57; Angus Gowland, ‘Melancholy, passions and identity in the Renaissance’, in Cummings and Sierhuis, eds., *Passions and subjectivity*, pp. 75–94.

⁵⁴Richard Strier, *The unrepentant Renaissance: from Petrarch to Shakespeare to Milton* (Chicago, IL, 2011), pp. 17–18.

⁵⁵William M. Reddy, *The navigation of feeling: a framework for the history of emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 94; Alberti, ‘Bodies, hearts and minds’, p. 802.

⁵⁶Elena Carrera, ‘Introduction’, in Elena Carrera, ed., *Emotions and health, 1200–1700* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 1–18.

⁵⁷Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare’s schoolroom: rhetoric, discipline, emotion* (Philadelphia, PA, 2012).

⁵⁸Erving Goffman, *The presentation of self in everyday life* (New York, NY, 1959); Katie Barclay, ‘Performance and performativity’, in Broomhall, ed., *Early modern emotions*, pp. 14–17.

⁵⁹Giovanna Colombetti, *The feeling body affective science meets the enactive mind* (Cambridge, MA, 2013).

⁶⁰Monique Scheer, ‘Are emotions a kind of practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuan approach to understanding emotion’, *History and Theory*, 51 (2012), pp. 193–220.

⁶¹Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling* (Berkeley, CA, 2012), p. 122.

order, its norms, its ideals, and its structures of authority.⁶² Historians returned to the study of conventions but from the perspective of emotion management, the creation of norms and codes that foster an acceptable expression of affect, rather than repression. These codes built what Barbara Rosenwein, in an oft-cited model, termed ‘emotional communities’ in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value or devalue the same emotions.⁶³ Rosenwein’s later work expands on this by reconstructing lexicons – the words emotional communities emphasize – and investigating the change in human emotional expression through the ages. In each emotional community, emotions compose culturally codified sequences: one emotion elicits another in a way that is specific to a culture and a context, linked to certain emotional values and norms.⁶⁴

Sara Ahmed moved the whole field in a new direction by asking not what emotions are but what do emotions do. Emotions are not so much psychological states as social and cultural practices that create and generate meaning. They are forms of judgement, involving ways of perceiving and making sense of the world, and are relational, involving reactions towards objects rather than originating from the person.⁶⁵ Ahmed, by approaching emotions as a form of cultural politics or world making, sought to bring power fully back into their analysis.⁶⁶ The social constructionist approach that modified a model based on Geertzian culture to incorporate insights derived from a Foucauldian discourse approach, along with Ahmed’s concept of emotion as cultural politics, tied discipline and institutional structures of domination to the experience of emotions. Thus, recent work integrates power into the study of emotions.⁶⁷ Individuals do not have equal emotional liabilities, and the constitutive power of emotions significantly depends upon their uneven distribution.⁶⁸ William Reddy added the workings of power to emotional communities by introducing the concept of emotional regimes.⁶⁹ This refers to the modes of emotional expression and thought that were acceptable in particular time periods and cultural contexts. These were usually set up by dominant groups and were often obligatory, ensuring that the overarching emotional culture so created was a product of the reigning systems of power.

Research into the history of emotions has expanded rapidly in the past twenty years. Scholars in the early modern field alone have tackled affect with respect to

⁶²Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Language and the politics of emotion* (Cambridge, 1990); Catherine A. Lutz, *Unnatural emotions: everyday sentiments on a Micronesia atoll and their challenge to Western theory* (Chicago, IL, 1988); Hochschild, *The managed heart*.

⁶³Rosenwein, *Emotional communities*, pp. 15, 155.

⁶⁴Rosenwein, *Generations of feeling*, pp. 3, 9.

⁶⁵Sara Ahmed, *The cultural politics of emotion* (New York, NY, 2004), pp. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷Susan Broomhall, *Authority, gender and emotions in late medieval and early modern England* (Basingstoke, 2015). The essays in the following collections are also concerned with the mechanisms of power: Susan Broomhall, ed., *Gender and emotions in medieval and early modern Europe: destroying order, structuring disorder* (Farnham, 2015); Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills, eds., *Representing emotions: new connections in the histories of art, music and medicine* (Aldershot, 2005).

⁶⁸Daniel M. Gross, *The secret history of emotion from Aristotle’s rhetoric to modern brain science* (Chicago, IL, 2007), p. 3.

⁶⁹Reddy, *Navigation of feeling*.

a vast array of topics and issues.⁷⁰ This new work goes beyond what intellectuals have to say about emotion and investigates the relationship between texts and experience, paying more attention to the experiences of feelings and daily life.⁷¹ The most recent scholarship examining affect in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries decries the focus on negative emotions such as grief and melancholy and concentrates on ‘positive emotions’.⁷² Positive sentiments, though, seem to mainly equate with happiness or joy.⁷³ New work also aims to show how affect illuminates larger issues in social, cultural, and political history.⁷⁴ Emotion is clearly understood to be of indisputable importance for the constitution and maintenance of early modern society and community but only a few works have ventured onto the ethical plane.

III

Historians of early modern political and social history, on the other hand, have been slow to incorporate emotion into their research, notwithstanding exciting new approaches which aim to examine the inter-relationships among people, institutions, and ideas in practice rather than elucidating the workings of the state in the abstract. The scholarly focus has been on the cultural dimensions of power, with the aim of delineating the negotiations and exchanges inherent to the exercise of authority that routinely took place in all communities. Much of the recent work on governance and society in early modern England argues that authorities, rather than maintaining control by force, coercion, or unidirectional imposition, instead negotiated consent to their rule, persuading subjects of the legitimacy of their command.⁷⁵

⁷⁰It is a daunting task to keep up, although there are excellent introductions to and overviews of the field available: Jan Plamper, *The history of emotions: an introduction* (Oxford, 2015); Broomhall, ed., *Early modern emotions*; Katie Barclay, ‘State of the field: the history of emotions’, *History*, 106 (2021), pp. 456–66; Peter Stearns, Juanita Fero Ruys, Robert S. White, Grace Moor, Merridee L. Bailey, Una McIlvenna, and Kirk Essary, ‘History of emotions: where are we?’, *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 5 (2021), pp. 331–54.

⁷¹Alberti, ‘Bodies, hearts and minds’, p. 802; Michael Roper, ‘Slipping out of view: subjectivity and emotion in gender history’, *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (2005), pp. 57–72.

⁷²Irish, *Emotion in the Tudor court*, pp. 16–17. See too the chapters by Bragchi, Coodin, Lund, and Chamberlain which focus on positive emotions in Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan, eds., *The renaissance of emotion: understanding affect in Shakespeare and his contemporaries* (Manchester, 2015); Linda Pollock, ‘Compassion, love, and happiness: positive emotions and early modern communities’, *Parergon*, 39 (2022), pp. 131–44; Mark Rothery, ‘Emotional economies of pleasure among the gentry of eighteenth-century England’, *Social History*, 49 (2024), pp. 294–315.

⁷³See, for example, Sara Coodin, “‘This was a way to thrive’: Christian and Jewish eudaimonism in The Merchant of Venice”, in Meek and Sullivan, eds., *The renaissance of emotion*, pp. 65–85; M. J. Braddick, Joanna Innes, and Paul Slack, eds., *Suffering and happiness in England 1550–1850: narratives and representations: a collection to honour Paul Slack* (Oxford and New York, NY, 2017). A recent review of several works is Katrin Röder and Christoph Singer, ‘Fortune, felicity and happiness in the early modern period: introduction’, *Critical Survey*, 32 (2020), pp. 1–7. Happiness, though, is usually promised to those who live their lives in the right way: Sara Ahmed, *The promise of happiness* (Durham, NC, 2010), p. 2.

⁷⁴J. A. N. Plamper, ‘The history of emotions: an interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns’, *History and Theory*, 49 (2010), pp. 237–65. See, for example, Broomhall, *Authority, gender and emotions*.

⁷⁵Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, ‘Introduction’, in Michael J. Braddick and John Walter eds., *Negotiating power in early modern society: order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 1–42; Mark Goldie, ‘The unacknowledged republic: officeholding in early modern England’, in Tim Harris, ed., *The politics of the excluded, c. 1500–1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 153–94; Steve Hindle, *The*

English subjects were persuaded rather than subjugated, consent was negotiated rather than imposed, and compliance brought benefits.⁷⁶ English government was also collaborative. Maintaining the authority of the state could not be achieved through reliance on the landed ranks alone but also required the assistance of ordinary villagers and city dwellers. Being made a part of the system encouraged people to uphold authority and ensured that the exercise of government was more of a give-and-take between the needs and wishes of the governors and the governed rather than the issuance of commands to be obeyed.⁷⁷ With respect to the recipients of that authority, scholars have investigated how hierarchy and subordination were experienced in daily life, asking why and how people recognized the authority of those in power and consented to, or at least acquiesced in, the exercise of that power. Authority was relational and was never a given, continually enacted and modified by both the wielders and receivers of power.⁷⁸

The new approaches to governance and communities have markedly improved our understanding of the functioning of early modern English society. Collectively, these studies show that power was more widely distributed than we had thought, that multiple forms of politics existed, and that some experiences crossed boundaries. Research into how emotion shaped the concept and practice of early modern governance, though, is conspicuously lacking, mainly because of the ways historians of early modern English society have approached order and authority. The main debate is over the respective role of coercion or consent in governance. The stability and consensus model has been criticized for not being sufficiently sensitive to power structures. The much-lauded arbitration, for example, could be coercive and recognizances unpleasantly controlling. The so-called culture of reconciliation depended on the imposition of authority and not just ideals of neighbourliness.⁷⁹ The bestowal of mercy and the strategic use of pardons illustrated both shared norms of pity, justice, and culpability, and that brute power lurked behind all such negotiations.⁸⁰

The second issue is the reliance on the theories of James Scott who examined everyday forms of resistance rather than the much less frequent outbreaks of rebellion.⁸¹ Scott's model certainly offered a helpful theoretical framework to examine how the lower ranks coped with being governed, but it also slanted research in unhelpful directions. It assumes homogeneous and constant popular animosity toward authority.⁸² It privileges resistance.⁸³ It discounts collaboration, agreement,

state and social change in early modern England, c.1550–1640 (Basingstoke, 2000); Phil Withington, *The politics of the commonwealth: citizens and freemen in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 53.

⁷⁶Andy Wood, *The 1549 rebellions and the making of early modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 189.

⁷⁷K. J. Kesselring, *Mercy and authority in the Tudor state* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 22; Cynthia B. Herrup, *The common peace: participation and the criminal law in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1987).

⁷⁸Keith Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle, eds., *The experience of authority in early modern England* (New York, NY, 1996), pp. 10–46.

⁷⁹Hindle, *State and social change*, pp. 16, 34, 95–6, 112, 176; Craig Muldrew, 'The culture of reconciliation: community and the settlement of economic disputes in early modern England', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 915–42, at pp. 920, 940.

⁸⁰Kesselring, *Mercy and authority*, pp. 8, 22, 91–2, 93, 205.

⁸¹James C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven, CT, 1985), pp. 5, 10.

⁸²Andy Wood, "'A lyttull worde ys tresson": loyalty, denunciation, and popular politics in Tudor England', *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), pp. 837–47.

⁸³Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 13.

and shared values.⁸⁴ And it accords no role to emotion. The latest research does attempt to rectify some of the deficiencies of Scott's paradigm, pointing out that communities emphasized concord rather than conflict and even religious differences did not inevitably rend communities asunder.⁸⁵ Elite and popular culture need not be inevitably confrontational.⁸⁶ Rulers and ruled inhabited the same cultural universe, sharing a language, political system, and often similar values, creating a set of expectations about the proper exercise of authority.⁸⁷ Increasingly, historians have stressed the significance of moral values for the functioning of early modern English society, critiquing earlier works for failing to acknowledge their importance.⁸⁸

English society was undergirded by moral values that were usually shared across all ranks and which, even more than the negotiated exercise of authority, explain how communities functioned and held together as entities. Landed and non-landed alike prized Christian virtues, reconciliation, helpfulness, and honouring commitments.⁸⁹ Concepts of civility, just governance, and fair commerce for example were embedded in city government.⁹⁰ The economic sphere, too, despite its rapid growth from the sixteenth century on, remained a highly personal one, based on norms of trust and ethical judgements derived from humanist texts.⁹¹ Christian morality informed everyday social practices, shaping patterns of social interaction, and constructed everyday obligations.⁹² Neighbourliness was a crucial norm, a 'comprehensive category of moral obligation' which charged neighbours with upholding community harmony and being helpful.⁹³ Ethics have also been added to the investigation of authority. Ethan Shagan's study of the concept of moderation, an ethical framework that meant regulation of the passions for people, and governance of the subjects for the state, for example, emphasized the 'dynamic relationship between

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 16.

⁸⁵Andy Wood, *Faith, hope and charity: English neighbourhoods, 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 2020), p. 27; Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable hatred: tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), p. 278; Christopher Haigh, *The plain man's pathways to heaven: kinds of Christianity in post-Reformation England, 1570-1640* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 131, 218, 225.

⁸⁶Braddick and Walter, 'Introduction', p. 18.

⁸⁷Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, *Popular culture and political agency in early modern England and Ireland: essays in honour of John Walter* (Woodbridge, 2017); Wood, *1549 rebellions*, p. 196; John Walter, "'The pooremans joy and the gentlemans plague": a Lincolnshire libel and the politics of sedition in early modern England', *Past & Present*, 203 (2009), pp. 29-67.

⁸⁸Brodie Waddell, *God, duty and community in English economic life, 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 227.

⁸⁹Christopher Marsh, 'Order and place in England, 1580-1640: the view from the pew', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), pp. 3-26; David Hickman, 'Religious belief and pious practice among London's Elizabethan elite', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 941-60.

⁹⁰Withington, *Politics of the commonwealth*, pp. 12, 15, 248.

⁹¹Craig Muldrew, *The economy of obligation: the culture of credit and social relations in early modern England* (New York, NY, 1998), pp. 4, 5; Waddell, *God, duty and community*, pp. 228, 229.

⁹²Naomi Tadmor, *The social universe of the English bible: scripture, society, and culture in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2010).

⁹³Keith Wrightson, 'The "decline of neighbourliness" revisited', in Norman L. Jones and Daniel Woolf, eds., *Local identities in late medieval and early modern England* (New York, NY, 2007), pp. 19-49; Keith Wrightson, 'Mutualities and obligations: changing social relationships in early modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 139 (2006), pp. 157-94; Tadmor, *Social universe of the English bible*, ch. 1.

ethics and authority that has largely been forgotten'.⁹⁴ Affect, however, is missing from the vast majority of studies of the working of the early modern English polity, even when the focus is on an emotive concept like mercy or hope.⁹⁵

IV

I have argued so far that because of the influence of the discipline of philosophy, which has compartmentalized emotion and morality, the history of emotion has paid little attention to ethics, and the history of governance and authority in early modern England has largely excluded affect. But, as scholarship on the role of emotions in modern society in a wide array of disciplines increasingly pursued affect rehabilitation, rejecting the view of emotions as inevitably and intrinsically irrational, and emphasizing the contribution of affect to the functioning of modern society, so philosophy, too, has taken an affective turn.⁹⁶ Disenchanted with Kantian ethics in which the right action is the one performed out of respect for the moral law, and more impressed with the Aristotelian perspective that norms are founded not legalistically but on a conception of human flourishing, moral philosophers, with respect to modern society, are increasingly adamant that it is impossible to separate affect from morality and that it is a crucial component of any ethical decision-making.⁹⁷ Rather than being non-deliberative and partial and hence of little use in the moral domain, emotions are socialized modes of response based on thought and evaluation, for which we hold people responsible.⁹⁸ By serving as 'a kind of moral compass', emotions energize our moral journey, aid in focusing our attention and cognitive resources on the problem at hand, enable us to pay attention to aspects that we may not have noticed otherwise, and invest us in reaching an ethical decision.⁹⁹ In practice, emotions are 'forms of lived, engaged, human value' that help us make judgements about how to live.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴Ethan H. Shagan, *The rule of moderation: violence, religion and the politics of restraint in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 7, 8, 15–16, 50.

⁹⁵Only Wood, *Faith, hope and charity*; and Katie Barclay, *Caritas: neighbourly love and the early modern self* (Oxford, 2021), show how affect structured the functioning of society.

⁹⁶Bernard Williams critiqued the neglect of emotion by moral philosophy and called for emotion to be reintegrated into systems of ethics the importance of emotion to morality in 1966. The essay is available in a later published collection of his work: Williams, 'Morality and the emotions'. For a good analysis of the increased attention paid to emotions by moral philosophers from the mid-1980s on, see Bagnoli, 'Introduction'. Recent work in the sciences also refutes the view that emotions are at odds with rationality: Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How emotions are made: the secret life of the brain* (Boston, MA, 2017); Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' error: emotion, reason, and the human brain* (New York, NY, 1994).

⁹⁷Solomon, ed., *Thinking about feeling*; Susan Stark, 'A change of heart: moral emotions, transformation, and moral virtue', *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 1 (2004), pp. 31–50; Robert C. Solomon, *Not passion's slave: emotions and choice* (New York, NY, 2003); Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Upheavals of thought: the intelligence of emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 2–3; Allan Gibbard, *Wise choices, apt feelings* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); Simon Blackburn, *Ruling passions: a theory of practical reasoning* (Oxford, 1998).

⁹⁸Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, 'Emotions and morality', *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 31 (1997), pp. 195–212; Pizarro, 'Nothing more than feelings?', p. 70.

⁹⁹Ben-Ze'ev, 'Emotions and morality', p. 206; Jesse Prinz, *The emotional construction of morals* (Oxford, 2007), p. 13.

¹⁰⁰Michael Stocker, 'How emotions reveal value and help cure the schizophrenia of modern ethical theories', in Roger Crisp, ed., *How should one live? Essays on the virtues* (New York, NY, 2003), pp. 173–90.

Revisionists taking a new look at canonical works argue that modern scholarship has often overlooked the significance of emotion in these texts. The Stoics, for example, deemed certain emotions such as awe and forms of joy rational. Rather than disapproving of all emotion, they sought to eliminate only emotions arising from false belief.¹⁰¹ An overly narrow academic concentration on the *Treatise of the passions* has obscured that one of Aquinas's objectives was to give a balanced foundation for the study of Christian ethics, and emotion was central to his theological project. He thought virtuous passions 'imparted affective knowledge' that assisted moral decision-making, thus linking emotion and morality indissolubly.¹⁰² Those philosophers associated with modern natural law also accorded the passions more of a role than we have thought.¹⁰³ Even lauded moral rationalists such as Ralph Cudworth, Samuel Pufendorf, and Samuel Clarke did not claim that reason by itself was enough to ensure moral living. Passions supplied motivation, stirred to action, and enabled people to stay on the path that reason dictated.¹⁰⁴ An intellectual tradition praising passion rather than order, reason, and self-control flourished in Renaissance Europe and the Aristotelian amalgam of thought and feeling remained of importance.¹⁰⁵ Theorists such as Machiavelli, Montaigne, Bacon, Hobbes, and Vico questioned the superiority of reason to the passions, reconceived the passions as spurs to political action, and recognized their role in motivating human behaviour to create a new political rationality.¹⁰⁶ New studies of emotion in Kant also point out that he was not as opposed to emotion as we have thought.¹⁰⁷ These new perspectives have shaped interpretations of the past with respect to emotion and ethics.

In the past few years, the history of emotions has taken if not an ethical turn, then at least an ethical bend.¹⁰⁸ A new textbook states firmly that the history of emotions promises 'to open up a new front, analysing how morality is experienced, and the ways in which moral economies are formed, entrenched, destabilized and changed'.¹⁰⁹ Historians have begun to examine the shifting nature of connections

¹⁰¹Margaret Graver, *Stoicism and emotion* (Chicago, IL, 2007), pp. 2, 35; Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and peace of mind: from Stoic agitation to Christian temptation* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 7, 82; Simo Knuutila, *Emotions in ancient and medieval philosophy* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 166–7.

¹⁰²Rosenwein, *Generations of feeling*, pp. 162–8; Nicholas E. Lombardo, 'Emotions and psychological health in Aquinas', in Carrera, ed. *Emotions and health*, pp. 19–46, at pp. 20, 21, 25, 40.

¹⁰³Heikki Haara, 'Pufendorf on passions and sociability', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 77 (2016), pp. 423–44; Alan Brinton, 'The passions as subject matter in early eighteenth-century British sermons', *Rhetorica*, 10 (1992), pp. 51–69, at p. 55.

¹⁰⁴Elizabeth S. Radcliffe, 'Ruly and unruly passions: early modern perspectives', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 85 (2019), pp. 21–38; Gill, *British moralists on human nature*, ch. 4; Haara, 'Pufendorf on passions and sociability'; Brinton, 'Passions as subject matter'.

¹⁰⁵Strier, *The unrepentant Renaissance*; Schneewind, *Invention of autonomy*, p. 161; Nancy Sherman, *Making a necessity of virtue: Aristotle and Kant on virtue* (New York, NY, 1997); Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd, *Virtues and their vices* (Oxford, 2014); Robinson, *Passion's fictions*, pp. 68, 73, 157, 158, 161.

¹⁰⁶Kahn, Saccamano, and Coli, eds., *Politics and the passions*, pp. 5, 6.

¹⁰⁷See the introduction and chapters by Deimling, DeWitt, Grenberg, Williamson, and Wood in Kelly Sorensen and Diane Williamson, eds., *Kant and the faculty of feeling* (Cambridge, 2017).

¹⁰⁸Riley, 'Eating, sensing, feeling', pp. 8–9; Cummings and Sierhuis, eds., *Passions and subjectivity*, p. 1; White, 'Reclaiming heartlands', notes the reluctance to enter into the larger debate with respect to emotions.

¹⁰⁹Rob Boddice and Mark M. Smith, *Emotion, sense, experience* (Cambridge, 2020), ch. 8, is entitled 'Morality', at p. 192.

that were understood to exist between emotions and ethical frameworks and how these merged with sins, vices, or virtues to form a moral system.¹¹⁰ And they have looked at moral emotions such as meekness or compassion.¹¹¹ A few studies of the functioning of early modern English communities incorporate affect, arguing that love, friendship, charity, and equity played prime roles. Ordinary villagers, for example, believed profoundly in love, as in mutual amity, and understood it to form a powerful social cement.¹¹² Katie Barclay takes all of this to a new level in her study of *caritas*, or neighbourly love, in the lower ranks of Scottish society. She defines *caritas* as an ‘emotional ethic’, as a code for moral living, an embodied norm in which physical feeling and bodily practices guided the right action, implemented in the codes and practices of everyday life. It was a willingness to behave morally, to keep the peace, to uphold the social order and it was also felt as a strong passion.¹¹³

There is also a growing body of work on the importance of emotion for the early modern polity. A normative style of emotional management is a fundamental element of every political regime and thus the regulation of affect is crucial to the maintenance of authority.¹¹⁴ Love, friendship, and loyalty could be employed as forces of order to structure diplomatic transactions, shape dynastic and familial relationships, and align religious beliefs, practices, and communities.¹¹⁵ Mark Greengrass’s study of late sixteenth-century France documents how discussions of the passions and moral philosophy were a crucial part of plans for the reform and stabilization of state and society.¹¹⁶ Victoria Kahn’s work on early modern politics underlines how essential emotion was in the forging of political obligation in the seventeenth century. Affect, by forming a conscientious subject who consented to be bound, enabled subjects to commit themselves to obligation and contract rather than be externally coerced into it.¹¹⁷ Bradley Irish, by treating the Tudor court as an ‘archive of feeling’ and by exploring the affective state that drove the earl of Essex to rebellion, shows the ‘centrality of emotion to social and political action’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰Spencer E. Young, ‘Avarice, emotions, and the family in thirteenth-century moral discourse’, in Susan Broomhall, ed., *Ordering emotions in Europe, 1100–1800* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 69–84; Danijela Kambaskovic, ‘Living anxiously: the senses, society and morality in pre-modern England’, in Broomhall, ed., *Ordering emotions in Europe*, pp. 161–79, at p. 179. See also chs. 5 and 7 on the perceived importance of the moral and ethical orientation of feelings in Broomhall, ed., *Gender and emotions*.

¹¹¹Merridee L. Bailey, ‘Morality and emotions: absent and present’, *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 5 (2021), pp. 347–49; Katherine Ibbett, *Compassion’s edge: fellow-feeling and its limits in early modern France* (Philadelphia, PA, 2020); Kristine Steenbergh and Katherine Ibbett, eds., *Compassion in early modern literature and culture: feeling and practice* (Cambridge, 2021).

¹¹²Wood, *Faith, hope and charity*, pp. x, 25, 27, 38–9, 189, 199; Muldrew, ‘Culture of reconciliation’; Walsham, *Charitable hatred*, p. 231.

¹¹³Barclay, *Caritas*, p. 13.

¹¹⁴Reddy, *Navigation of feeling*, pp. 114, 121.

¹¹⁵Broomhall, ed., *Gender and emotions*, intro.; Broomhall, *Authority, gender and emotions*, pp. 2, 6, 12–13.

¹¹⁶Mark Greengrass, *Governing passions: peace and reform in the French kingdom, 1576–1585* (Oxford, 2007).

¹¹⁷Victoria Kahn, ‘“The duty to love”: passion and obligation in early modern political theory’, *Representations*, 68 (1999), pp. 84–107. Love in Ahmed’s model also enabled consent to norms that ‘do not and cannot guarantee the well-being of subject and citizens’: Ahmed, *Cultural politics of emotion*, p. 142.

¹¹⁸Irish, *Emotion in the Tudor court*, pp. 4–5, 6, 140.

All of this work asks important questions and offers insightful interpretations. We have come to appreciate that affect constituted a crucial ideological and sensory map for perceiving, understanding, and navigating human society, that moral values structured individuals and communities, and that ethics were crucial to governance. We are now much more fully cognizant of the connection between virtue and emotion, and that affect, as in *caritas*, could offer a model for ethical relations; nevertheless, even so, we still have no adequate explanation of how affect contributed to living ethically in the early modern world. Even when philosophers have sought to give affect its due place with respect to moral judgement, they have done so without problematizing the two competing traditions and so have perpetuated artificial divisions.¹¹⁹ At best, scholars have depicted affect as an ideal that structured relationships, or as assisting with ethical decisions. Most scholarship overlooks the fusion of values and emotion that was so typical of the early modern world. The few who have noted this merger do not take it very far. Thomas Dixon and Christopher Tillmouth argue that the passions in early modern England were integral to ethical thought and accord them a more prominent role in early modern decision-making and morality.¹²⁰ Dixon observed that in the early modern world affections and moral sentiments were simultaneously rational, voluntary movements of the will *and* warm, active mental states, but backed off from examining the repercussion of this.¹²¹

Affect and morality in early modern English society were inseparably connected. The language of passions and affections overlapped that of vices and virtues; the seven deadly sins were less acts and more affects. This was a world in which the correct emotional performing of the value was the value and in which affections were often required duties. Moral norms were fulfilled only if the correct emotion or affective positioning was attached, and feelings themselves were morally obligated. Repentance, to give one example, was a fusion of sorrow, regret, accountability, and reformation. Clement Ellis spelt out in detail what true repentance entailed: engaging the heart, feeling shame and loathing, identifying sins, rejecting sinful ways, and committing to moral reform were all required.¹²² It was this amalgam which lay behind the principles applied in criminal and ecclesiastical courts: confession, that is taking responsibility for wrongs, remorse, that is sorrow for the errors, and commitment to amend, invariably resulted in a lighter sentence despite the acknowledgement of guilt.

The lack of attention paid to the interaction between affect and morality impairs our ability to investigate and understand the making of early modern communities and the operation of authority. It renders us incapable of interpreting phrases like cheerful obedience or fearful love, ubiquitous in early modern English discourse, or

¹¹⁹Daniel M. Haybron, 'Well-being and virtue', *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 2 (2007), pp. 1–27, at p. 22.

¹²⁰Christopher Tillmouth, *Passion's triumph over reason: a history of the moral imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford, 2007); Dixon, *From passions to emotions*.

¹²¹Dixon, *From passions to emotions*; Rosenwein, *Emotional communities*, pp. 193–4, notes, but does not develop, that feelings helped 'to create, validate and maintain belief systems'.

¹²²Clement Ellis, *The necessity of serious consideration, and speedy repentance, as the only way to be safe both living and dying* (1691), p. 79.

answering why God loved ‘a cheerful taker’.¹²³ It leads us to ask the wrong questions, as, for example, was gratitude the emotion of gratefulness or the virtue of rendering thanks?¹²⁴ This phrasing uncouples what in practice worked together, as Isaac Barrow’s explanation of giving thanks makes clear. This entailed not only ‘*gratias agere, reddere, dicere, to give, render, or declare thanks, but also gratias habere, gratè affectum esse, to be thankfully disposed, to entertain a gratefull affection, sense, or memory*’.¹²⁵ The political world of early modern England was structured by a conflation of emotive and ethical tenets, ensuring that the operation of power was neither value free nor lacking in affect. Gratitude, as an emotive virtue, both forged human ties and maintained order. Ingratitude, disobedience, treason, and rebellion were inextricably entangled, as William Rankins laid out:

If we aske why so many Princes doo dayly exclaime vpon Trayterous and disloyal Subiects, they wyll answere, for ingratitude. If we demaund why the kinde Parent breaketh his hart with sighes, and consumeth hys dayes in sorrow, hys aunswere wyl be, for a gracelesse and vnthankfull Chylde. If wee seeke the cause why Magistrates lament theyr labour, it is for the vnthankfull mindes of lewde Cittizens.¹²⁶

Rather than anachronistically sundering morality and emotion, we should analyse the dynamic interaction of ethics, virtues, affections, and passions. It is time to reconstitute the ideological systems of early modern society and develop a more complex approach to emotional and ethical life.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

¹²³John Donne, ‘Sermon preached upon Trinity-Sunday’, in George Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, eds., *The sermons of John Donne* (10 vols., Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 2022), III, pp. 256–74, at p. 270.

¹²⁴David Carr, ‘Introduction’, in David Carr, ed., *Perspectives on gratitude: an interdisciplinary approach* (London, 2016), pp. 1–10.

¹²⁵Isaac Barrow, *Sermons preached upon several occasions* (1679), p. 267.

¹²⁶William Rankins, *A mirrour of monsters wherein is plainly described the manifold vices, &c spotted enormities, that are caused by the infectious sight of playes, with the description of the subtile slights of sathan, making them his inswordtruments* (1587), p. 14.

Cite this article: Linda A. Pollock, ‘Emotion and Ethics: The Conjoined Twins of Early Modern English Culture’, *The Historical Journal* (2025), pp. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X24000542>