

How to Comprehend Incomprehensible Love? Kierkegaard Research and Philosophy of Emotion

Claudia Welz

In his prefaces to the first and the second series of discourses in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard¹ repeatedly states that love is, even in its smallest work, essentially inexhaustible and therefore essentially indescribable (*WL* 3, 207). Notwithstanding this “restriction” due to abundance, Kierkegaard dares to offer some descriptions – not of what is beyond description, but of how the indescribable nevertheless manifests itself in describable modes.

One of these modes of manifestation is emotion. As for emotions, Kierkegaard not only offers plenty of illustrative material but has even inspired some philosophers of emotion to style their theories in accord with his writings. Theories of emotion are *en vogue*, and it is admittedly tempting to interpret love, too, as an emotion. However, to what extent is this justified in regard to love as it is described in *Works of Love*? This shall be examined in regard to two recent accounts of “emotion” and “virtue” in Kierkegaard, namely those of Robert C. Roberts and Rick A. Furtak.

1. Kierkegaard Research and Philosophy of Emotion

1.1. Roberts has done pioneering work. Already in 1984, he has published an essay on “Passion and Reflection”² with Kierkegaard’s *Two Ages* in view. He describes Kierkegaard’s ethics as “an ethics of the heart”³ that finds its criterion not only in individual action but even more basically in emotion.

Obviously, the ideas conveyed in the essay correspond to the guiding ideas of Roberts’ book on *Spirituality and Human Emotion* that was published two years earlier.⁴ In the preface and introduction, he explicitly refers to Kierkegaard’s “pervasive” influence as an “inspiration” (p. viii). In chapter 3 (“Something Eternal in the Self”), Roberts explains that the Christian emotions are concerned ways of viewing things through the “lenses” of

the doctrines and stories of the Christian tradition (cf. p. 25). The example chosen in this chapter is the yearning for eternity and the Kingdom of God upon which Christians pin their hopes. In this context, he quotes Kierkegaard's *Anti-Climacus* saying that "as a rule, imagination is the medium for the process of infinitizing" (*SUD* 30) by which a person becomes aware of his capacity to "soar in thought beyond the immediate circumstances of his life" (p. 26). However, it is questionable whether Roberts' interpretation of this "Godward side" of human nature (p. 27) is still Kierkegaardian.⁵

In his 1998 article "Existence, Emotion and Virtue: Classical Themes in Kierkegaard"⁶ Roberts summarizes the results of his previous investigations. He explicitly derives the nature of emotions from Kierkegaard's writings (cf. pp. 184f.). The most important points are the following:

1. Emotions are based on concerns (interests, passions, enthusiasms) that are constitutive of character. Roberts admits that Kierkegaard does not distinguish between emotions and concerns, but he claims that there is a difference in his usage of words such as *Lidenskab*, *Pathos*, i.e. passion, and their cognates. Roberts takes "inwardness" as a metaphor for the core of the self, i.e. its concerns and what flows from them: emotions, intentions, decisions and actions (cf. p. 181). He refers to *Climacus* (cf. p. 187), for whom faith is a "happy passion" [*lykkelig Lidenskab*], that is to say, not just the yearning and striving for eternal happiness, but a having found it (cf. *JC* 54).

2. Emotions depend on thought and spiritual outlook and are therefore to some extent susceptible to the will (cf. p. 193). As Roberts stresses with regard to *Climacus*, becoming a Christian is "pathos-filled and dialectical" (*CUP* 555), i.e. it is at once the task of developing a certain pattern of emotional receptivity and of thinking about oneself, God, and the world in certain definite ways which are expressible in propositions (cf. p. 189). Hence getting one's emotions right and getting one's thoughts right are intimately connected. In his *Upbuilding Discourses* Kierkegaard instructs us on how to think so as to have, or not to have, a given emotion (cf. pp. 190f.). Roberts is referring to the fifth discourse of the "Gospel of Suffering" (on how to experience religious joy taking tribulation as its object) and concludes that religious thoughts are the basis for a configuration of emotional responses different from the "natural" ones: where the heathen responds with anxiety, the Christian responds with calm trust. However, the fact that a person experiences a certain emotion tells us next to nothing about the individual's character. It begins to do so only if we know what concern the emotion is based on as well as the thoughts that shape it (cf. p. 192).

3. If these patterns of response become stable dispositions of the personality, they are a significant dimension of the religious virtues. Roberts takes Kierkegaard to be a virtue ethicist (cf. pp. 184, 191). In his opinion, the emotions and the virtues and vices that they exemplify are always indexible to one or another existence sphere or “stage” (cf. p. 193). Since emotions are indicators of character, the person at his or her core is not just manifested in emotion, but is somehow actualized or made present in emotion, just as in his or her action (cf. p. 198).

4. Emotions, as aspect perceptions, focus specific kinds of features of the situations they are about and give epistemic access to their moral and spiritual qualities (cf. p. 195). Emotions are immediate impressions of the way things are (cf. p. 197). They conceptualize issues of importance to a person; the worldly and the spiritual person differ in what they “notice” and in what they “look at” (cf. p. 196).

5. Moral and spiritual emotions have simulacra – ‘mere feelings’ which might deceive a person into regarding him- or herself as more virtuous than (s)he is. Kierkegaard is aware of the possibility that emotions are shallow or can be faked (cf. p. 201). In the *Postscript* Climacus distinguishes existential pathos which expresses character (inwardness, existence, subjectivity) from aesthetic pathos which is the superficial kind. Feeling [*Følelse*] can refer to a physical sensation, intuitive awareness or judgment or to the sensitivity of intuition; but more often it occurs in passages where Kierkegaard is voicing suspicions of emotions, or rather, their simulacra (cf. p. 199). *Følelse* is a perception of oneself as in one emotional state or another. Thus it can be misleading though experientially very real, while unreliable as a representation of the self (cf. p. 200).

6. Human beings have the capacity to stand back from certain emotions in resolute dissociation. In Christianity, the power of self-dissociation from one’s vicious emotional responses counts as a virtue (cf. p. 202).

I want to make only three critical comments. First, the distinction between love as an emotion and an underlying concern seems to be read into Kierkegaard’s texts rather than derived from them. Second, it is not evident to me that there is a special sort of emotion characteristic of Christians. If emotions belong to the natural equipment of human beings that must be refined and qualified by certain underlying and resulting concerns, thoughts and actions, Christians do not necessarily have *different emotions* than other people in the same situation (like, for example, compassion instead of anger).⁷ It could also be the case that Christians feel the same type of emotion as other people, but do this in a certain *modification* (like,

for example, when they fall in love – and include God in their construal of the relationship to the beloved). Third, as for *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*, it remains to be seen whether Kierkegaard is rightly called a virtue ethicist.

In his latest and most comprehensive book *Emotions*⁸ Roberts presents a well-founded and carefully revised version of his earlier heuristic paradigm for emotions as *concern-based construals* (cf. pp. 64, 284). Since he does not directly deal with Kierkegaard any more, I will only mention some points that have been added, corrected or clarified and are relevant in regard to love:

1. Roberts' "*mentalist proposal*" implies that emotions are "mental states" (p. 38), "events" (p. 56) or "episodes" (p. 64) that may occur independently of the corresponding *feeling*, i.e. the sensation of physiological states (cf. pp. 60f.). But if we feel an emotion, this is "a conscious, quasi-perceptual awareness of being in such a state" (p. 325). These putative perceptions of emotional states are sometimes veridical and sometimes not (cf. p. 327). Roberts offers a set of *truth criteria* for feelings, like, e.g., expression, action, situational fit, lack of motivation, causal normality, and survival of reflection (cf. p. 332).

2. Emotions are *intentional*, i.e. they are about, of, or for something, although not directly reflexive, i.e. about or of myself (cf. pp. 61, 66, 69). They are typically directed "outward" (p. 323), although they are self-involving in being based on some concern of the subject (cf. p. 320). In contrast to desires, emotions have "mind-to-world direction of fit" (p. 147). Emotions are "views" of situations of our life (cf. p. 155) and can move us to actions (cf. p. 162). An emotion is fully as "conative" as it is "cognitive" (cf. p. 178).

3. Roberts makes a distinction between *love as emotion* and love in the dispositional sense of an *attachment* to somebody. Roberts says in advance that loving devotion, if thought of as a disposition, will escape his account of emotions as mental episodes (cf. p. 64). An attachment as such does not have any particular emotional feel (cf. p. 286). It is "a pro-attitude or good-seeing disposition," but both positive and negative emotions can arise out of it (cf. p. 287). Whereas emotions are situational construals of the object of concern, attachment is a construal that identifies its object and constitutes it as special to the subject (cf. pp. 289f.).

4. In addition, Roberts distinguishes between *erotic love* and *agape*. Erotic love is an emotion, "an interest in an individual construed in terms of such thoughts as *she is (or can be) mine* and *she is very good* and *I am (or ought to be) the unique object of her love*" (p. 290). Full-fledged erotic or romantic

love becomes a trait of the lovers, a part of their identity: (S)He is mine and I am hers/his, and we belong together (cf. pp. 291f.). Agape is directed at God and one's fellow humans (cf. p. 292). Much of the love of God is a concern on which a range of emotions are based, but it can also be felt as an emotion, for example in adoration. Much of the love of neighbor consists in emotions like compassion, sympathy, benevolence, mercy and hope. The defining proposition for agape as an emotion is "*S is wonderful because S personifies Jesus Christ and is loved by him; may S's true interests be promoted.*" (p. 294). I will come back to this distinction in section 3.2 a).

It is conspicuous that Roberts' account of love as emotion and/or concern is formed according to the paradigm of object- or act-intentionality as inherent in perception. But is this description sufficient? On the one hand, it is convincing insofar as it grants the reference to a particularly determinable "object." On the other hand, it is questionable whether this paradigm sufficiently acknowledges the alterity or uniqueness of the other, who should not be objectified.⁹ Moreover, it is unsatisfying that only the mind-to-world-direction is taken into consideration. Roberts places the emphasis on the active (cognitive and conative) dimension of emotions but neglects the fact that, prior to all (re)actions, we are passively affected by what or to whom we are becoming attentive. Emphasizing also the affective dimension of emotions and concerns would not render them irrational or blind; on the contrary, Husserl himself, one of the main promoters of the concept of intentionality, states clearly that non-intentional experiences provide the basis for intentional experiences and that passivity is presupposed in every activity.¹⁰ Intentional experience is just the component "through which 'the being of the object for me' is first constituted."¹¹

Notwithstanding this objection, Roberts has specified a very respectable theory of emotion, although its author does not even claim to have offered such a theory. We will see whether the way he conceptualizes love is in agreement with what Kierkegaard takes as the Christian (and the truly human) understanding of love.

1.2. The title of Furtak's recently published dissertation *Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity*¹² is programmatic: Wisdom should not be seen as the rational alternative to the emotion of love, rather philosophy, the love of wisdom, ought to discover wisdom *in* love and acknowledge the rationality of emotions.

In his descriptive theory of emotion or passion, Furtak – unlike Roberts – uses both words as "near-synonyms" (p. 143 n.2); like Roberts, he char-

acterizes emotions as ways “of seeing the world” (p. 4). In contrast to mere sensations or cognitively irrelevant bodily feelings, they are intentional “perceptions of significance” (pp. 6, 12f.), which refer to external objects and rely upon “some kind of *axiological* belief” about what is of value (p. 5). Significance is defined as a property of any relation in which the perceived matters to the perceiver, who is both active and [!] acted upon by some feature of the world (s)he cares about (cf. pp. 6f.). Like Augustine, Furtak takes love, care or concern as the ground and primary condition of all other emotions, since it establishes emotional bonds to the world and in us a readiness for being affected in specific ways (cf. pp. 9-11).

Furtak accepts the Stoic epistemological claim that emotions are fallible and may be prone to distortion, bias, and excess, but he does not draw the same conclusion as the Stoics (cf. pp. 19-21). He argues that the total expulsion of passions would prohibit a person from perceiving meaning in the world, condemn to personal disintegration and lead to moral non-engagement and coldhearted indifference to the sufferings of others (cf. pp. 24, 26f., 29-31). Furtak presents an ideal of integrity without apathy, entailing the task to distinguish between trustworthy and unacceptable emotions: “The cardinal virtue of our renovated ethics would be nothing less than the readiness to be always affected in the right ways, based upon a care for the right things” (p. 36). In order to be truthful, the passions must be internally consistent and “outwardly grounded,” i.e. they should correspond to nothing less than the “objective” conditions in the universe (p. 92).

With reference to *Works of Love*, Furtak holds that the ground and necessary premise of human existence and of all significance in life is love, and that the creative source of all love, the primary love upon which everything else is ontologically dependent, is God (cf. pp. 97f., 107). When we see things with loving eyes, then we appreciate them for being what they are and trust that there is some benign significance to everything – in spite of all doubt in situations when this is not evident (cf. pp. 100, 105). He points out that love is a category through which we perceive and conceptualize the world, a key to the inner nature of particular beings that opens up knowledge of the other and is essential also to the realization of self-identity (cf. pp. 122f.). However, a person who is moved in love for other beings becomes vulnerable, susceptible to passion and can be affected by non-controllable contingent events, since what is valued might be taken away and whom I care about might hurt me (cf. pp. 108-111). That’s why suffering is love’s logical consequence. But still, although what builds us up is also

what makes us suffer, only love can suffer *and* maintain the perspective of a comprehensive acceptance of life that saves us from despair (cf. pp. 116–118). Last, but not least, a loving perspective on an imperfect world includes a sense of humor which is reconciled to its ambiguity (cf. pp. 139f.).

In agreement with other accounts of love – like, e.g., Martha Nussbaum's,¹³ Robert Solomon's,¹⁴ Robert C. Roberts' and Harry Frankfurt's¹⁵ – , Furtak has written a lucid defense of the view that being rational cannot be equated with remaining dispassionate. Nonetheless, three subject areas are in need of further clarification:

1. Firstly, to what extent is it justified to speak of 'emotional truth' that is conceptualized as *adaequatio passionis et rei*, which means that subjectivity is in accordance with objectivity and the inner with the outer world? In contrast to non-realistic accounts,¹⁶ Furtak maintains that it makes sense to talk about whether our emotions "correspond to external states of affairs" (p. xii) and argues that truthful emotional response displays right attunement to other persons and things. He opts against a community consensus theory (cf. p. 174 n.26) but for "something like" (p. 172 n.3) a coherence and correspondence theory of emotional truth, which seems to imply that only a limited range of emotions truly respond to a certain situation. Provided that no one has "objective" access to the situation "as such," what could serve as a criterion? In this respect, Roberts' internal truth criteria carry conviction: They do not exclude that another person might, with the same right, feel different emotions in one and the same situation, but they permit to test whether one's own emotions are truthful and allow a self-correction of once-experienced emotions in the course of newly gained experience of life.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether the concept of intentionality underlying Furtak's theory of emotion still allows for a strict inner/outer distinction. This distinction is also questioned by Kierkegaard's concept of love's reduplication: in itself, love goes out of itself (*WL* 280). Kierkegaard's spiritual understanding of love does not only concern an "inner" mental or psychological world that possibly contradicts an "outer" reality; rather, love is the reality of their relation. Therefore, it is worth discussing whether Furtak rightly modifies the translation of "aandeligt forstaaet er Kjerligheden Aands-Livets dybeste Grund" (*SKS* 9, 218): while the Hongts translate "in the spiritual sense, love is the deepest ground of spiritual life" (*WL* 215), Furtak changes spiritual into "mental life" (pp. 97, 176 n.46). Kierkegaard points to an additional problem regarding the ideal of subject-object-correspondence: it might prompt us to look for a lovable object, while the

task is to find the once given or chosen “objects,” i.e. the people we can see – lovable (cf. *WL* 159). True love is neither verifiable nor dependent on the behavior of the beloved (cf. *WL* 13, 16).

2. Secondly, to what extent is it justified to portray Kierkegaard as a virtue ethicist? Furtak describes love as an initially pre-individual and pre-moral force and unreliable impetus that “can be refined and developed into the religious virtue” of neighborly love that forms the heart and moral identity of a person (pp. 98f., cf. xii). Thus love becomes “*what is best in us*,” defining the self “by virtue of its love” (p. 138). Since this issue concerns Roberts as well, I will discuss it separately (cf. section 2.). This goes also for the next issue:

3. Thirdly and fundamentally, to what extent can Kierkegaard’s description of love in *Works of Love* be subsumed under a concept of emotion, be it Furtak’s or Roberts’? I am somewhat troubled by Furtak’s procedure, since he quotes only a part of what Kierkegaard is saying (cf. pp. 99, 177 n.61, 182 n.115). He quotes Kierkegaard’s statement that love is the “passion of the emotions” (*WL* 112) or the “emotional passion” [as a translation of “Kjerlighed¹⁷ er en Følelses Lidenskab”] (*SKS* 9, 165)] as well as the draft “Love is certainly an emotion” (*WL* 436) without mentioning that both sentences continue with “but...,” i.e. with a restriction or even an objection. Kierkegaard’s account of love as an “emotion” will be examined in section 3. In the next section, Kierkegaard’s notion of “virtue” in *Works of Love* shall come into focus.

2. Works of Love – Virtue Ethics?

Before turning to *Works of Love* and the characteristics of Kierkegaard’s Christian ethics,¹⁸ let me briefly recall to mind the scholastic background of the inter- and intra-confessional debate on virtue. Thomas Aquinas’ concept of virtue involves the following four points:¹⁹ 1. Virtue is, as *habit* of the soul, a certain quality of its intellective and appetitive potencies: *ordo ad actum* (cf. *STh*²⁰ II q 49) or *dispositio ad operationem* (cf. *STh* II q 50 a 2). Hence a person is at least capable of acting in a certain way (cf. *STh* II q 61 a 1; q 56 a 3), and in the case of perfection (s)he really does act in that way, which means that virtue is the *habit quo quis operatur* (cf. *STh* II q 56 a 3). 2. What is the *origin* of virtue? Thomas divides the virtues into two classes: Either a virtue can be acquired through a person’s own actions or it is infused by God (cf. *STh* II q 51 a 1, 2 and 4; q 63). 3. All virtues can *increase* and grow, but also *decrease* and be lost (cf. *STh* II qq 52). 4. Among the

virtues acquired by human beings themselves are the perfect ones, the so-called *cardinal virtues* of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude (*STh* II q 61). They are to be distinguished from and properly to be correlated with the so-called *theological virtues* of faith, hope and love, which are infused by divine grace (*STh* II q 62). It is only on the strength of those supernaturally infused virtues that those naturally acquired direct human action to the eternal destiny of humanity; and only so can meritorious deeds be possible (*STh* II q 65 a 2; q 114).

In contrast to common arguments that have been advanced against the Thomistic notion of virtue and, above all, to an *en bloc* rejection of the concept of virtue in Protestant theology,²¹ one could imagine a theory of virtue as a theory of the constitution of the author of an action, *including* certain statements on its qualifiability by habit and also on self-perfection, but *excluding* any statements about meritorious action or about the human soul as spiritual substance or incorruptible *ens per se* (against *STh* I q 75 a 6).²² This proposal is supported by the Reformer's²³ and by Schleiermacher's²⁴ ethics:

a) Luther's catechisms, Melancthon's *Loci*²⁵ or Calvin's *Institutio*²⁶ replace the double aspect under which Thomistic theology described human action, with virtue as the internal and divine law as the external principle. They concentrate on divine command and human obedience, the impossibility of obedience under the condition of sin, and on justification as the condition of possible obedience. However, the Fathers of the Reformation did not wholesale reject the scholastic concept of virtue. They insisted that no-one can *do* any good unless he *is* good – by faith – in advance. In Luther's view, creaturely virtue could be seen in proper dependence upon the capacity of God. Describing the work of the Holy Spirit, he says, "Do not imagine the life of a Christian as a standstill or rest, but as a permanent passage from vices to virtue, from one clarity into another, and from one virtue into another" (*WA*²⁷ 1, 649, 22ff.; 536).

b) Schleiermacher develops his ethics in three forms: as theory of duty, dealing with those rules which govern right action; as theory of the Good, dealing with the results achieved by right action; and as theory of virtue, dealing with the constitution and quality of the author of the action. He stresses both the freedom-involving structure of self-consciousness and the passive constitution of finite freedom that cannot be ascribed to the person receiving this existence from beyond him- or herself.

Now let us turn to Kierkegaard's description of love in comparison with Aquinas' points and see whether or to what extent *Works of Love* can count as virtue ethics. In a journal entry of 1847, Kierkegaard claims that "in

Christendom we have completely forgotten what love [*Kjerlighed*] is. We pander to erotic love and friendship, laud and praise them as love, that is, as a virtue. Nonsense! Erotic love and friendship are earthly happiness, a temporal good just like money, abilities, talents, etc., only better.” (*JP* III 2410; *Pap.* VIII¹ A 196) In which sense then is *Kjerlighed* – in contrast to *Elskov* and *Venskab* – virtue?

1. As regards the first point, the result is ambiguous, since Kierkegaard takes up the classical terms but fills them with a new meaning. On the one hand, the view of love as a virtue is supported by *Works of Love* insofar as neighbor love is called a characteristic or quality: “Love is not a being-for-itself quality but a quality by which or in which you are for others” (*WL* 223). On the other hand, Kierkegaard emphasizes that this quality is possessed in another way than wisdom, experience or sensibleness – qualities one has for oneself, even though one can benefit others with them. Love is shared and consists precisely in presupposing that others have love, too. The ability to love is not to be comprehended exclusively as a subjective disposition or virtue, since this ability is located in the intersubjective reality of recognition, dialogical interaction and communication.²⁸ The abiding of human love is called “an active work,” not an idle or inactive characteristic that love has as such, but “a characteristic that is acquired at every moment” (*WL* 301f.). So love is not just a habit but “is” only in its being done. It is not just the capability to act but that very action itself. However, Kierkegaard recommends to develop the “Christian disposition” [*Sindelag*] (*WL* 191; *SKS* 9, 191) of self-denial. This sounds as if he would cling to the classical distinction between the disposition to act and the action itself. But then we read that this disposition means giving up the “self-loving desires and cravings” and the “self-seeking plans and purposes” in order to work “unselfishly for the good,” and Kierkegaard warns us that this has no reward in the world (*WL* 192, 194). If it would find support in the world, then it would no longer be Christian self-denial: “It was in this sense that the ancient Church Fathers said that the virtues of paganism are glittering vices” (*WL* 196, cf. 268f.). These statements indicate that love in the Christian sense can be no virtue in the classical sense.

2. In how far and in which way is the theological virtue of love due to divine activity, and how is this activity related to human action? We already have seen that love has to be acquired at every moment. Does this mean that love is not divinely “infused”? Kierkegaard does not get involved in this alternative. He does not ascribe love to the human lover as an anthropological attribute that is either acquired or infused. In his view, love orig-

inates neither from the lovers nor from the situation but rather from a hidden source that is transcendent to and independent of the *relata* of the love relation and remains “between” them *as* their very relation and bond. In this sense, Kierkegaard determines God, or love, as “middle term” of the interhuman love relation (cf. *WL* 107). Love is not just “in” a person but is also transpersonal. Insofar as the loving person abides “in” love, i.e. in God, the love of this person abides (cf. *WL* 302) – but abiding is exactly the “active work” of the person. In the performance of love, God and human beings are co-workers; the origin and effect of love, however, lies beyond the human action and ability.

According to the introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety*, all ancient ethics was based on the presupposition that virtue can be realized; yet Kierkegaard’s early ethics (described in the 1843 writings) was shipwrecked on the sinfulness of the single individual, implying a moral gap between the demand on us and our natural capacities to live by it. Therefore, his later ethics,²⁹ i.e. *Works of Love*, cannot be based on the same principle but presupposes Christian dogmatics, human failure, forgiveness and being edified by God’s creative love. Human virtuousness is not excluded but seen in the light of God’s grace that enables us to love and to fulfill the commandments. This view, however, challenges not only the aesthetic/ethical concept of moral integrity in *Either/Or* but also Furtak’s attempt to incorporate Kierkegaard’s late ethics into the early scheme of stages.³⁰ Without God’s love there could be no human love: “No human being can place the ground of love in another person’s heart; yet love is the ground, and we can build up only from the ground up; therefore we can build up only by presupposing love. Take love away – then there is no one who builds up and no one who is built up” (*WL* 224). Prior to subjectivity and human action is divine activity.

3. If love was a virtue in Aquinas’ sense, it could increase, decrease or even be lost. Kierkegaard distinguishes strictly between erotic love or friendship and neighbor love. Regarding the first, he admits that love can become weary in the course of time (cf. *WL* 309), that it can be “displaced” and cease so that the connection between two persons “is broken”; regarding the latter, he insists that Christianity refuses to understand this use of language: “The point is that one cannot cease to be loving; if one is truly loving, then one remains that; if one ceases to *be* that, then one never *was* that” (*WL* 303). According to Kierkegaard, divine love and human love of God and the neighbor [*Kjerlighed*] is eternal and abides, while all other love is “perishable and merely blossoms” (*WL* 8).

4. Kierkegaard repeatedly states that human works of love are “without

any claim of meritoriousness” (*WL* 4); no person “deserves grace” – rather, “the first thing you learn when you relate yourself to God in everything is that you have no merit whatever” (*WL* 385, cf. 217). Not only does the human lover experience his or her own imperfection in relation to ideal love; (s)he also learns that love as a human action is not enabled by human beings at all. The need to love and to be loved [*Kjerlighedens Trang*] (cf. *WL* 154; *SKS* 9, 155) is rooted in human nature, implanted by God. His love does not only make it possible for us to love; moreover, it is effective also in our works of love. Does this imply that human nature is perfected by grace in being endowed with the supernatural virtue of love? Kierkegaard compares a person’s love with certain plants that must form a heart: If love is actually to bear fruit, it must form the heart *before* it can proceed from the heart: “No doubt everyone has experienced the fleeting feelings of an indeterminate heart, but in this sense to have a heart by nature is infinitely different from forming the heart in the eternal sense”; the latter is due to the eternal that gets “control over a person” so that “love in that person begins to establish itself eternally” (*WL* 12) and forms the heart. Note that it is not the human agent who naturally develops the virtue of love, nor does (s)he receive a supernatural virtue for personal use. Rather, love itself creates the lover – a lover who never has love completely under control as one of his or her own capacities. The “capacity” of neighbor love cannot be actualized apart from the relation to God, who alone *is* eternal love. Kierkegaard declares it as “unloving” to speak about our relation to the love within us, “as if we ourselves were the masters and autocrats over our love” (*WL* 255).

Therefore *Works of Love* can be termed as a “virtue ethics”³¹ only in a restricted sense, and we have to consider possible alternatives: One could, for example, refer to the discourses on love as duty and interpret the book in a deontological sense.³² Kierkegaard’s 1847 ethics includes all these aspects but cannot be reduced to one of them, since it focuses on the ethical qualification and modality not only of the moral agent, of moral actions or their results but of the whole situation and process of communication.³³ It does not prescribe *what* is to be done but describes *how* we should ideally do whatever we do, offering a normative phenomenology of the practice of loving – with God’s love as criterion.

3. Love – An Emotion?

Two questions are to be clarified in this chapter: First, in which sense does Kierkegaard speak of love as an emotion, and does this correspond with

Roberts' and Furtak's definitions of emotion? Second, which other definitions are opposed to it?

3.1. *Affirmation: Letting Oneself Be Moved*

Kierkegaard starts the first series of discourses in *Works of Love* with a deliberation about "Love's Hidden Life and Its Recognizability by Its Fruits." The title of the discourse is alluding to Luke 6:44 "Every tree is known by its own fruit." Like the tree, love "is known only by its revealing fruits" (WL 8). Love's life is hidden as such [*skjult som saadant*] and manifest in an other [*aabenbart i et Andet*] (WL 8; SKS 9, 16), that is, in the fruits that express it. Kierkegaard describes it as a need [*en Trang*] in love (WL 10) to be known and as "the greatest torment" (WL 11; SKS 9, 19) if its expression is – and be it out of love – pressed back [*trængt tilbage*] into concealment.

Love [*Kjerlighed*] can express itself in words, deeds or "visible emotion" [*synlig Bevægelse*] (WL 12; SKS 9, 20). Although it is uncertain whether these expressions are indeed a mark of love, they shall not be held back from the beloved³⁴ when the heart is full. Kierkegaard warns equally of loving "in words and platitudes" and of being ashamed of one's "feelings" [*Følelse*] (ibid.). Remarkably, he uses both an active *and* a passive term for what is translated with "emotion." The meaning of the Latin etymology of the English word, going back to *e-movere*, is echoed in Kierkegaard's Danish equivalents. He does *not* ascribe the emotional "movement" [*Bevægelse*] or rather the "being-moved" [*Bevægheden*] to the one who loves, as if it was his or her possession [*Eiendom*]. It "belongs to the other," since "in" the emotion a person belongs to the one who "moves" [*bevæger*] him or her, and its expression, love's "moving-outward," is a "debt" (ibid.) that (s)he owes to the beloved. Kierkegaard seems to agree with Lacan that to love is "to give what one does not have." We can neither give the love that is hidden to us, nor do we possess our being-moved, but we shall "give each one his due" [*give Hver Sit*] (WL 12; SKS 9, 20) by expressing love whenever we are touched and moved by it. Hence we can at least give utterance to this movement. Just for the record: In Kierkegaard's view, emotion is surely one of love's expressions – but love is more than what can be expressed of it.

Kierkegaard later assures that "goods of the spirit" like faith and love are "only in the inner being," and he paraphrases that with "only *in the possession*" [*kun i Besiddelsen*] (WL 26; SKS 9, 34). At first sight, this seems to contradict the just-mentioned account of love. In which sense can love be possessed? While worldly goods are in an external sense an actuality, and there-

fore a person can possess them although (s)he is as one who does not possess them, a person either actually possesses goods of the spirit and is not indifferent toward this possession or simply does not possess them at all: “Indeed, what would we think of a person who gave assurance that he was in love [*forelsket*] and also that it was a matter of indifference to him?” (*WL* 27; *SKS* 9, 34) Love can only be possessed in such a way that its “owner” is also possessed by love. Or, in Roberts’ terminology: love concerns the person who loves and does so to such an extent that the person is not only concerned by this event but concerns him- or herself with whom or what (s)he loves. Love is self-involving: it does not just affect a person but becomes his or her affection. In this context, Kierkegaard admonishes not to forget the originality of Christianity, namely “that it did not arise in any human being’s heart” (*ibid.*). Thus, on the one hand, the love Christianity speaks of is neither a human invention nor at human disposal, and it cannot be owned by anyone exclusively; on the other hand, love qualifies the innermost, the heart and character of a person so deeply that his or her personality would not be the same without it.

In his discourse on “Mercifulness, a Work of Love Even If It Can Give Nothing and Is Able to Do Nothing” (*WL* 315–330), Kierkegaard invents the following variation of the story of the merciful Samaritan:

“Suppose that it was not one man who traveled from Jericho to Jerusalem, but there were two, and both of them were assaulted by robbers and maimed, and no traveler passed by. Suppose, then, that one of them did nothing but moan, while the other forgot and surmounted his own suffering in order to speak comforting, friendly words or, what involved great pain, dragged himself to some water in order to fetch the other a refreshing drink. Or suppose that they were both bereft of speech, but one of them in his silent prayer sighed to God and also for the other – was he then not merciful?” (*WL* 324)

The examples demonstrate that mercy needs not to manifest itself in a spectacular deed or an especially generous gift, in “large sums that amaze” (*WL* 319), but rather in the manner *how* we do whatever we can do and give whatever we can give (cf. *WL* 327). The merciful person takes part in the misery of the other and expresses emotional participation [*Deeltagelse*] (*WL* 325f; *SKS* 9, 322), sympathy and compassion for the other. Kierkegaard defines mercifulness as “inwardness” [*Inderlighed*] (cf. *WL* 329f.; *SKS* 9, 325f.). The merciful person cannot change the situation but

can at least communicate his empathy and sensitivity. In the most extreme scenario he cannot even say to the other what he feels, but Kierkegaard nevertheless calls his sympathetic engagement, his silent attitude and prayer to God – “work of love.” This indicates clearly that neighbor love includes an affective dimension in that it requires letting oneself be moved by what happens to the other.

Provided that Kierkegaard agrees with Kant that one cannot command an inclination or a feeling, in which sense then can he understand it as a duty to have sympathy for others?³⁵ Kierkegaard sees it as a “value” that a person has not been “deadened by his own suffering so that he had lost his sympathy for others” (*WL* 325). Like Levinas, he takes non-indifference toward the other as a duty. As long as we do not even notice that someone else is in need of help, we surely cannot respond to the needs of this person. Hence, what can be commanded is at least the imaginative construal of the other’s situation, which can motivate us to help this person. Interestingly, Kierkegaard not only recommends sympathetic engagement with the other’s suffering but also with the other’s joy, happiness and success (cf. *WL* 326). Even if our actions are limited by the resources available, it is still possible to cultivate compassion. This involves not only that we let ourselves be affected by the other’s good or bad luck but also that we intellectually understand what is going on in the other’s life. The structure of compassionate love as Kierkegaard describes it comes indeed very close to Roberts’ and Furtak’s descriptions of emotions as ‘concern-based construals’ or intentional ‘perceptions of significance.’

3.2. Opposition

However, there are also passages in which Kierkegaard presents some reservations against understanding neighbor love (only or first of all) as a feeling, an emotion or passion. It is now to be examined whether he just wants to preclude some misunderstandings or whether he also raises fundamental objections.

a) The Priority of the God-Relationship: Love as Ground of Everything

The above-mentioned incomplete quotation on love as an emotional passion [*en Følelses Lidenskab*]³⁶ continues as follows: Kierkegaard adds that love is not only a relation between human beings but in this emotion [*Følelse*] “a person, even before he relates to the object of love, should first relate to God and thereby learn the requirement, that love is the fulfilling of the Law” (*WL* 112; *SKS* 9, 116). God is “the love” that commands neighbor

love *and* connects the lover with the beloved (*WL* 121). Does this mean that God himself is the emotional bond that binds them together? Note that Kierkegaard does not directly identify “emotion” [*Følelse*] with God, since this could be misunderstood as a deification of a human faculty; rather, he describes it as a mode of relating ourselves to God and other persons and differentiates between human love and its origin and criterion in God’s love (cf. *WL* 3, 8–10). He makes it clear that each person must, first of all, “be bound to God” (*WL* 148).

Although Furtak stresses that Kierkegaard sees love as a “gift,”³⁷ he does not always manage to exclude the aforementioned misunderstanding, since he defines love both as an “emotional force,” a “subjective mode of comportment,” a human capacity or state of character *and* as “divinity” and “sacred force.”³⁸ This ambiguity goes back to Kierkegaard himself (and 1 John 4). Spiritually speaking, he calls love “the ground of everything” (*WL* 224), which “is before all things, and remains when all else is abolished” (*WL* 225). As such, love is surely not equivalent with an emotion of mortal creatures. God’s love that created all things *ex nihilo* is prior to all ontological structures whatever.

Roberts’ account of neighbor love as an emotion is problematical for an additional reason: According to Roberts’ defining proposition of *agape*, a person is worthy of love because (s)he personifies Christ; however, in this case, the person is not loved for his or her own sake, but ultimately for the sake of someone else. The priority of the God-relationship in Kierkegaard does not imply that the neighbor is no more than the medium of the relation to God; rather, God himself wants us to love the neighbor according to his or her distinctiveness. As for erotic love, Kierkegaard emphasizes that it is not to be confused with “possessing the beloved” [*Besiddelsen af den Elskede*] (cf. *WL* 38; *SKS* 9, 45). Roberts’ defining proposition of erotic love – “(S)He is mine and I am hers/his, and we belong together” – is not secured against such a confusion. At this place it turns out that Kierkegaard is not a staunch supporter of the stereotyped distinction between *eros* and *agape*. Provided that his insight – i.e. the insight that the God-relationship is prior to *all* human love relations whatsoever – is taken seriously, then the doubtful distinction loses its polemical function and becomes superfluous, at least in this context.

b) The Priority of Action: Love as Fulfilling of the Law

Kierkegaard also draws a clear dividing line between the romantic feeling and the Christian work of love. If Christian love is “the fulfilling of the

Law” (Romans 13:10), “then there is not time even for a promise,” because the promise would direct away from acting, “from *immediately* beginning the task” (WL 97f.). Christian love has not to lose one moment: it is “as far from inaction as it is from busyness”; it is “whole and collected, present in its every expression” – and never finished (WL 98f.). Kierkegaard dissociates it from “that hidden, private, mysterious feeling [*Følelse*] behind the lattice of the inexplicable that the poet wants to lure to the window” and from “a mood in the pampered soul [*en Stemning i Sjelen*] that knows and wants to know no law, or wants to have its own law” (WL 99; SKS 9, 103). As he defines it, Christian love is “sheer action [*idel Handlen*]” (ibid.), not “an idle feeling” or a “shirking of the tasks” (WL 106). Kierkegaard is suspicious of *Følelse* in the sense of quietist introspection.

Used in such a way, *Følelse* does not correspond with Furtak’s understanding of emotion. Furtak has accentuated the epistemic aspect of emotions and interprets them according to the paradigm of perception, while Kierkegaard focuses on the ethical relevance of love, which does not only consist in cognitive seeing-as and a volitional *disposition* to act but in the active and actual *performance* of love, that is, in deeds done in a loving way. Furtak is well aware of Kierkegaard’s emphasis on loving as “a spontaneous activity” (p. 101) and of its religious significance as commanded love, but he leaves the reader with the question how far this goes with the before-mentioned paradigm of emotion or transcends it. By contrast, Roberts has called attention to Kierkegaard’s critique of *Følelse* in the sense of a mere feeling that does not express itself in action. Accordingly, Roberts introduces a set of truth criteria for feelings. Since one of the criteria is action, and since Roberts’ account of emotion explicitly includes their conative dimension, he does not classify *Følelse* as an emotion at all but rather as a simulacrum.

c) The Priority of Duty over Immediacy: Love Secured against Despair

In a third opposition, Kierkegaard contrasts “the play of feelings, drives, inclinations, and passions, in short, that play of the powers of immediacy” [*hiint Følelses og Driftens og Tilbøielighedens og Lidenskabens, kort hiint Umiddelbarhedens Spil af Kræfter*], be it “in smiles or tears, in desire or in want,” with Christian love as a duty and an obligation (WL 25; SKS 9, 33). Christianity commands us not to make an exception, neither of preference nor of aversion, to love all people, even the enemy (cf. WL 19). Kierkegaard derives the word “neighbor” [*Næste*] from “nearest” [*Nærmeste*] and, alluding to the commandment in Matthew 22:39 (“You shall love your neigh-

bour as yourself”), he clarifies that the neighbor should be just as near as a person is to him- or herself (cf. *WL* 21). He observes that Christ does not speak about *knowing* the neighbor but about *becoming* a neighbor oneself, about *showing oneself to be* a neighbor (cf. *WL* 22). He emphasizes that properly understood the commandment also says: You shall love yourself in the right way (ibid.). When the depressed person wants to get rid of life (and him- or herself) or when someone surrenders to despair because the world or another person has faithlessly left him or her betrayed, then this person’s sin consists in not rightly loving him- or herself. Thus the commandment can be ignored in two ways, either “in selfishly loving oneself” or “in selfishly not willing to love oneself in the right way” (*WL* 23). These two forms of selfishness correspond to the two forms of conscious despair described in *The Sickness unto Death*: desperately willing to be oneself or desperately not willing to be oneself. While *The Sickness unto Death* highlights subjectivity as self-relation “before God,” *Works of Love* focuses on the inter-subjective dimension of this self-relation *coram deo*.

How, then, can the duty to love save a person from despair? Kierkegaard defines despair as “a misrelation in a person’s innermost being,” not as an event that just happens to a person, like good fortune or misfortune; and this misrelation “is due to relating oneself with infinite passion [*Lidenskab*] to a particular something, for one can relate oneself with infinite passion – unless one is in despair – only to the eternal” (*WL* 40; *SKS* 9, 47). Despair is not “the loss of the beloved – that is unhappiness, pain, suffering – but despair is the lack of the eternal” (*WL* 41). In Kierkegaard’s opinion, the love commandment is of divine origin, and it is eternity itself that says “You shall love” – even to the person who has lost the beloved (cf. *WL* 41f.). Kierkegaard admits that this sounds almost like mockery, “to say to the despairing person that he *shall* do that which was his sole desire but the impossibility of which brings him to despair” (*WL* 42). How can this rigorous command become a comfort? The one who feels that (s)he has lost everything and has become tired of life, this person gets a new task. (S)He might also have lost the will to go on living, since the most precious in life is not there any more, and think: “Now I have nothing more to lose”; but this is exactly the turning point where Kierkegaard reverses the perspective, viewing the situation from the perspective of the neighbors of this person: “But we have something to lose – and someone whom we do not want to lose!” The love commandment lets other persons come into view, and the task to love them, too. As long as there are persons to be loved, there’s a motivation to live. In Kierkegaard’s view, “to love people is the

only thing worth living for,” and without this love we are not really living (WL 375).

Remarkably, the *duty* to love is not necessarily opposed to the *feeling* of love. On the contrary, Kierkegaard explicitly denies not only “the right to despair” but also “the right to become insensitive to life’s pain,” and maintains: “So it is with love. You do not have the right to become insensitive to this feeling [*Følelse*], because you *shall* love [*elske*]; but neither do you have the right to love despairingly [...] You shall preserve love [*Kjerlighed*], and you shall preserve yourself and by and in preserving yourself preserve love” (WL 43; SKS 9, 50). Kierkegaard takes it as the most terrible, “an eternal loss” to defraud oneself of love (WL 5f.). But he sees a danger in feeling love that is not constant. He criticizes “the transient emotions [*de flygtige Rørelser*] that become manifest immediately and therefore in turn immediately vanish” (WL 28; SKS 9, 35). While “instinctive and inclinational love” [*Driftens og Tilboielighedens Kjerlighed*] and “spontaneous love” [*den umiddelbare Kjerlighed*] in its most beautiful moment still feels a need to bind itself even more securely, the duty to love [*Pligt at elske*] eternally and happily secures love [*Kjerlighed*] against every change and despair and makes it eternally free in blessed independence (WL 29; SKS 9, 36f.).³⁹ Independence does not mean the unwillingness to bind oneself to the beloved (cf. WL 37f.) but rather the unchangingness of love (cf. WL 39). Spontaneous love can well be changed within itself, can turn into its opposite and hate the beloved (cf. WL 34f.), or it can lose its ardour, its joy and freshness over the years (cf. WL 36f.). Kierkegaard gives an explanation for why it can be changed: It “is not consciously grounded upon the eternal” [*er ikke bevidst begrundet paa det Evige*] (WL 31; SKS 9, 38) – whereas in faith, the self (and its love) grounds itself or is grounded [*grunder*] in the eternal (cf. SUD 14; SV3 XV, 74). While temporality divides within itself, only the eternal “can be and become and remain contemporary with every age”; by having become a duty, love has undergone “the change of eternity” and thus “has gained enduring continuance” (WL 31f.). That is to say, it is never changed – just as God is “changeless in love” (M 268).

This shows that Kierkegaard has no fundamental objections against feeling love as an emotion or passion. However, feelings can change, and if neighbor love was founded on changeable feelings, then it would have no reliable foundation. The duty to love the neighbor shall guarantee, on the one hand, that the heat of emotions is cooled in case that one person is loved exclusively and despairingly, and on the other hand, that the heart of the person who has become cool and indifferent towards everyone else is

warmed again (cf. *WL* 42f.). Consequently, the commandment can in one case constrain, in another case inflame passion; in any case, it shall guarantee the continuity of love. In Roberts' and Furtak's view, the continuity of love is guaranteed when it becomes a virtue. According to Roberts, love as an emotion is just a "mental episode," and that's why he seeks to complement it with love in a dispositional sense. According to Furtak, love as cardinal virtue includes "the readiness to be always affected in the right ways, based upon a care for the right things." According to Kierkegaard, we care for the right things exactly when we orient ourselves by the commandment. Does it transform the feeling of love into the virtue of love? The answer is yes only if "virtue" is understood in the sense that the virtuous person loves only "by virtue of" God's eternal love.

3.3. *The Difference in Passion*

Finally, Kierkegaard contrasts preferential love that is related to passion [*Lidenskab*] with the spirit's love (*WL* 44f, cf. 49; *SKS* 9, 51f, cf. 56). However, he concedes that to love without passion is impossible; therefore the difference must be a difference *in* passion (cf. *WL* 50). What does this difference consist in? While the poet idolizes inclination, Christianity dethrones it and sets unconditional – but no less passionate – love of neighbor in its place. In Christianity, passion shall no longer exclude the third from the togetherness of two (cf. *ibid.*). Love of the neighbor, in turn, leads back to the love for God: "Love God above all else; then you also love the neighbor and in the neighbor every human being" (*WL* 58, cf. 140). What is different is, above all, the "object" of passion, which is pluralized, so to speak. But it has also a retroactive effect on how one sees others: "*The beautiful* is the immediate and direct object of immediate love, the choice of inclination and of passion"; by contrast, the neighbor whom one *shall* love rather than *chooses* to love is designated as "*the ugly*" (*WL* 373). Like Levinas, Kierkegaard refers to a moral obligation that is prior to our choice and that questions our aesthetical judgments. In order to become able to love whom one spontaneously finds ugly, the immediate passion must be reconsidered. In a 1848 journal entry we can read that faith, the love of God, and the Christian love of one's enemy are "dialectical", "because one spontaneously hates one's enemy" (*WL* 479; *JP* III 2419; *Pap.* IX A 306). Thus, the difference in passion also entails a change of immediacy through reflection, which leads into a "second" or, in Kierkegaard's own words, a "later" [*senere*] immediacy: a new way not only of seeing others but also of feeling *with* them.

To sum up: Kierkegaard does not raise any fundamental objections against understanding human love as an emotion. However, he wants to preclude the misunderstandings (a) that God as *Mellembestemmelse* in interpersonal relations is identical with the emotional bonds between persons, (b) that neighbor love is an idle feeling that shrinks back from acting, and (c) that it can be grounded on inclination alone. Neither love as action nor love as duty contradicts love that is understood as emotional passion. Even the spirit's love can and shall be passionate. However, Kierkegaard's account of the reduplication of the spirit's love does not imply, as in Hegel, that human love *is* divine love for the other of itself – although Kierkegaard describes God's love, too, like an “emotion” in that God lets himself be moved by everything, by “the sparrow's need” as well as by “a human sigh” (*M* 268). Nevertheless, in Kierkegaard's view, a human being is, in contrast to God, never identical with love, and “love is never completely present in any human being” (*WL* 218). A human being can love the neighbor only by being in God, that is, by abiding “in love” and by acting in the spirit of God's love (cf. the opening prayer in *WL* 3f.). Love as “spirit” differs from love as “emotion” in that it is not exclusively bound to individual consciousness and can neither be attributed to a person nor to the interpersonal relation alone but rather comprises and transcends their very relation.⁴⁰ God's spirit of love can manifest itself *within* human interaction but *without* being bound to the actors, since their action expresses a more comprehensive event. When it comes to the metapsychical and metaphysical dimension of love, philosophy of emotion comes to its limits.

Notes

1. I wish to thank Michael Wassenaar for carefully checking my English, and I am grateful to Richard Purkarthofer and Rebekka Klein for commenting on an earlier version of this article.
The following abbreviations will be used for quotes of Kierkegaard's writings:
CA *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. and trans. R. Thomte in collaboration with A.B. Anderson, Princeton 1980.
CUP *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* vol. 1-2, Princeton 1992.
JC *Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est*, ed. and trans. H.V. Hong & E.H. Hong, Princeton 1985.
JP *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. H.V. Hong/E. Hong, assisted by G. Malantschuk, vol. 1-6, vol. 7 Index and Composite Collection, Bloomington/ London 1967-78.
M *The Moment and Late Writings*, ed. and trans. H.V. Hong & E.H. Hong, Princeton 1998.
Pap. *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, 2nd edition by P.A. Heiberg/V. Kuhr/E. Torsting, revised by N. Thulstrup, vol. 1-13, Copenhagen 1968-70, Index by N.J. Cappelørn, vol. 14-16, Copenhagen 1975-78.
SUD *The Sickness unto Death. A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. and trans. H.V. Hong & E. Hong, Princeton 1980.
SKS *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, ed. by N.J. Cappelørn/J. Garff/J. Knudsen/J. Kondrup/A. McKinnon/F.H. Mortensen, vol. 1-55, Copenhagen 1997-.
SKS 9 *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*.
SV3 *Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker*, 3rd edition by P. Rohde, vol. 1-19, Copenhagen 1962-64, Terminologisk Ordbog og Sammenlignende Register by J. Himmelstrup, vol. 20, Copenhagen 1964.
WL *Works of Love*, ed. and trans. H.V. Hong & E.H. Hong, Princeton 1995.
2. Cf. R.C. Roberts, "Passion and Reflection," in: R.L. Perkins (ed.), *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 14: *Two Ages*, Macon 1984, pp. 87-106.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 90.
4. In this paragraph, the page numbers in brackets refer to R.C. Roberts, *Spirituality and Human Emotion*, Grand Rapids 1982.
5. Firstly, he couples being "attached to God" with being "detached from the world" (p. 33). This corresponds to a movement toward eternity in the metaphysical sense of absolute transcendence, of eternity beyond time or being eternal in isolation from temporality. When eternity is understood as timelessness, it typically changes into the eternity of time, into its "always," which entails a hidden emphasis on the transitoriness of time (cf. A. Grøn, "Zeit und Transzendenz," in: E. Angehrn/C. Iber/G. Lohmann/R. Pociak (eds.), *Der Sinn der Zeit*, Weilerswist 2002, 40-52, pp. 41, 48-50). Accordingly, Roberts refers to "the futility of life apart from God" (p. 27), to "the flux of things" (p. 29), to happiness that is passing (p. 33) and the "emptiness of a life which is not rooted in a time-frame larger than our seventy or eighty years" and its "meaninglessness" except in the context of eternity (p. 31). Roberts does not take into consideration that *Sickness unto Death* is

about a *double* movement of human self-transcendence: The infinitizing movement aims at a sober and down-to-earth return to the finite existence it started from: “the progress of becoming must be an infinite moving away from itself in the infinitizing of the self, and an infinite coming back to itself in the finitizing process” (SUD 30). This double movement is a repetition; it repeats and affirms precisely the temporal life we live now. But its lifetime is determined in a different way: “Behold all things have become new” (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). Thus it is not only time that is changed but *us* who exist in time. In Kierkegaard’s view, this change cannot be due to human nature and striving alone; our infinitizing movement must be broken off and turned back by divine transcendence breaking into time. In this ‘moment’ time is touched by timeless eternity (cf. CA 80–91, especially p. 87).

Secondly, Roberts contrasts the “meaninglessness of a life bound-within-finitude” (p. 34) with “a forthright acknowledgment of the eternal element in us” (p. 35), “a deep-rooted longing” for the eternal (p. 36). The reverse of the medal is “a certain unreality of the present” (p. 37). While horses, dogs and porcupines are completely immersed in the present moment and cannot help taking the moments as they come (cf. pp. 33 and 36), we shall see our present existence as “provisional” and as nothing more than “a stage in an eternal life” (p. 37). Kierkegaard indeed assumes that this life is not the whole story and that it is instead to be understood entirely in its relationship to eternity. But this process of becoming oneself as ‘synthesis’ of the temporal and the eternal is located *in* time, *in* the respective moment in which this relationship is performed, that is, *in* the present. The eternal in us is not “something” but the spirit, not a time-free “eternal element” in a temporal body but the very performance of relating oneself *as* embodied mind to an eternity that is external to one’s self-relation. Therefore, the present must not be disqualified in favor of a future eternal life, as a mere “preparation” (p. 38) for a life to come. Remember that Kierkegaard characterizes Christians by means of the metaphor of ‘rowers’ turning their back to the eternity that is not yet there in order to be able to turn whole-heartedly to the tasks of the day today, to the ‘here-and-now’ where we are.

6. In the following, the page numbers in brackets refer to R.C. Roberts, “Existence, Emotion and Virtue: Classical Themes in Kierkegaard,” in: A. Hannay/G. Marino (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, Cambridge 1998, 177–206.
7. Kierkegaard, however, seems to agree with Roberts: “That a Christian would not have the same desires and passions that the world has the world cannot get into its head at all [...] why he wants to control the self-love that the world calls not only innocent but laudable; why he wants to control the anger that the world not only regards as natural but as the mark of a man and a man’s honor; why he then wants to make himself doubly unhappy: first by not satisfying the desires and next, for his reward, by being ridiculed by the world” (WL 204).
8. In the following, the page numbers in brackets refer to R.C. Roberts, *Emotions. An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, Cambridge 2003.
9. For this reason, Jean-Luc Marion (in homage to Levinas) wants to free love completely from intentionality, cf. his chapter on “The Intentionality of Love,” in: J.L. Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. S.E. Lewis, New York 2002, 80ff., especially 100. This is problematical, too, since then, strictly speaking, it is impossible to determine *who* is loved. Besides, his criticism of Husserl is not justified. If Marion would not ignore Husserl’s analyses of passive synthesis, he would be informed about the fact that Husserl does not only describe object-intentionality.

10. Cf. the *Husserliana* volumes (abbreviated *Hua*) *Hua* 4, pp. 213, 337; *Hua* 15, p. 598; *Hua* 19, pp. 387ff, especially p. 392, and the following manuscripts of the Husserl archive in Leuven: *Ms. A IV* 34; *Ms. C 3* 41b-42a; *Ms. E III* 2 12b.
11. E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay, vol. 2, London 1970, 248-869, p. 566. Non-intentional feeling-sensations are the building-blocks for the objectifying acts of perception; with the development of his phenomenology of the mood, Husserl finally abandons the sharp distinction between intentional and non-intentional experience. Cf. N.-I., Lee, "Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology of the Mood," in: N. Depraz/D. Zahavi (eds.), *Alterity and Facticity. New Perspectives on Husserl*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1998, 103-119.
12. In this chapter, the page numbers in brackets refer to R.A. Furtak, *Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity*, Notre Dame 2005. For a more detailed description cf. my review in *Ars Disputandi* [<http://www.ArsDisputandi.org>] 6 (2006).
13. Cf. M. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions*, Cambridge 2001.
14. Cf. R.S. Solomon, *Love: Emotion, Myth and Metaphor*, New York 1981.
15. Cf. H.G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, Princeton/Oxford 2004.
16. Cf. R.S. Solomon, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*, Indianapolis/Cambridge 1993, p. 143: "What we have been calling the 'object' of an emotion is in fact only its focus [...] The status of an object as an object of fear or reverence, love or anger, hatred or envy, depends upon its role and its relations in *surreality* as a whole." [italics added].
17. Furtak introduces *Kjærighed* as Kierkegaard's word for unselfish love and *Kjerlighed* as a variant spelling; however, other than suggested (cf. pp. 179 n.80; 102; 178 n.78), at least in *Works of Love* Kierkegaard consequently uses only the latter spelling.
18. It is a contentious issue in which sense 'ethics' is to be understood in Kierkegaard's writings in general and which kind of 'ethics' is presented in *Works of Love*. In contrast to Hegel, Kierkegaard does not conceive of ethics as a part of science, he does not provide an extended ethical theory as such and he rejects certain attempts to ground ethical action in rationality. He rather seems to understand ethics as a way of living, as an existential project of the individual. Cf. J. Stewart, "Kierkegaard's Criticism of the Absence of Ethics in Hegel's System," in: *Arche* 3 (2005), 47-60, pp. 54-59. In the following, I use the term 'ethical' in the broad sense of 'concerning human action.'
19. See in detail E. Herms, "Virtue. A Neglected Concept of Protestant Ethics," in: E. Herms, *Offenbarung und Glaube. Zur Bildung des christlichen Lebens*, Tübingen 1992, 124-137, pp. 125f.
20. Th. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, abbreviated *STh*, cited by standard divisions.
21. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 128-130. The arguments (or clichés) in short: 1. Virtue is conceived of as habit, which dissolves the unity of conscious intention and action. 2. Virtue implies an element of selfishness. 3. Perfection is defined as the capacity for meritorious action. 4. The implied autonomy of existence contradicts the Christian conviction that man *qua* creature is utterly dependent on God. 5. Whenever New Testament writers use the term ἀρετή, they mean something wholly different from Greek philosophy.
22. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 131. Herms stresses that we are always capable of acting differently from what we think and consciously want to do (cf. Romans 7). Therefore he does not confine moral action to conscious action in the sense of action governed by deliberate choice based on recognized motives clarified by reflection. Christian virtue is understood as the ability to act morally yet undeliberately ('by habit') with such immediate spontaneity that "the one hand does not know what the other is doing" (Matthew 6:3), cf. *ibid.*, p. 137.
23. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 128, 133f, 136.

24. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 127f, 134–137.
25. Ph. Melanchthon, *Loci communes* 1521. Lateinisch–Deutsch, transl. H.G. Pöhlmann, Gütersloh 21997.
26. J. Calvin, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion. Institutio christianae religionis*, trans. O. Weber, Neukirchen–Vluyn 1997.
27. *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)*, vol. 1–68, Weimar 1883–1999 (= *WA*) [quoted with the number of volume, page and possibly with line]. See “Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen” in: *WA* 7, 32: “Gute, fromme Werke machen nimmermehr einen guten, frommen Mann, sondern ein guter, frommer Mann macht gute, fromme Werke.”
28. Cf. U. Lincoln, *Äußerung. Studien zum Handlungsbegriff in Søren Kierkegaards Die Taten der Liebe (Kierkegaard Studies. Monograph Series 4)*, Berlin/New York 2000, pp. 104ff., 240–242, 244.
29. Cf. A. Grøn, “Kierkegaards ‚zweite‘ Ethik,” in: *Kierkegaard Studies. Yearbook 1998*, pp. 358–368; Ph. L. Quinn, “Kierkegaard’s Christian Ethics,” in: A. Hannay/G. Marino (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 349–375, p. 349 with reference to J.E. Hare, *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God’s Assistance*, Oxford 1996, p. 1.
30. Cf. Furtak 2004, pp. 51ff.: He arranges the second and third part of his study as an “ascent of love” with regard to the aesthetic, ethical, and religious forms of life portrayed in Kierkegaard. See H. Deuser, “Die Taten der Liebe: Kierkegaards *wirkliche* Ethik,” in: W. Härle/R. Preul (eds.), *Gute Werke (Marburger theologische Studien 34)*, Marburg 1993, 117–132, pp. 118f, who shows that aesthetics is not just a preliminary stage in Kierkegaard’s late ethics and that religion is not just the fulfillment of the development.
31. For an interpretation in terms of virtue see also D.J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, Cambridge 1996.
32. For a more Kantian interpretation see A. Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, London/New York 1982, pp. 241ff.; F. Hauschildt, *Die Ethik Sören Kierkegaards*, Gütersloh 1982, pp. 153ff., 166–168; B.H. Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*, Bloomington, Ind. 1990, pp. 308ff. For a position that includes but transcends the aspect of duty and focuses on the lifeworld context of actions see H. Deuser 1993, pp. 117 and 120f.: he calls *Works of Love* the special case “einer (deontologischen) Pflichtenlehre aufgrund eines idealen und bewußten Sollens verbunden mit dem Insistieren auf spezifischen Handlungssituationen.”
33. For recent discussions in Danish, English and German research see the collection of essays in I.U. Dalferth, (ed.), *Ethik der Liebe. Studien zu Kierkegaards “Taten der Liebe” (Religion in Philosophy and Theology 4)*, Tübingen 2002, for the position described above cf. the essays of I.U. Dalferth, “...der Christ muß alles anders verstehen als der Nicht–Christ...’ Kierkegaards Ethik des Unterscheidens,” pp. 19–46, especially pp. 21f.; U. Lincoln, “Christliche Ethik als expressive Theorie humaner Praxis. Zur Methode in Kierkegaards *Die Taten der Liebe*,” pp. 1–18, especially pp. 2, 14, 16.
34. In this section, I am using the term “the beloved” not only as a translation of *Elskede*, which would refer only to erotic love; rather, I use it in a wider sense for anyone who is loved by someone else, be it the child, the friend, the wife or husband or whomever.
35. Cf. M.J. Ferreira, *Love’s Grateful Striving. A Commentary on Kierkegaard’s Works of Love*, Oxford 2001, pp. 195–199.
36. Kierkegaard uses exactly the same expression in the context of the duty to recollect the dead. Here, however, *Følelse* is not translated with “emotion”: “a person means what he says, he means it in the moment he says it, but he satisfies himself and the passion of his undisciplined feeling [*Følelses Lidenskab*] by using expressions that bind in such a way that rare perhaps is the person who by this

- latter expression does not render the first untrue, although it was true at the time” (WL 348). This translation raises the question whether emotions are more trustworthy than feelings?
37. R. A. Furtak 2004, pp. 106, 132, 134.
 38. Ibid., pp. 97, 99f., 103, 108, 120f., 125. That this is a contentious issue is demonstrated by Solomon, who writes that love is “not a gift from God (much less is it God). [...] Love is an emotion, nothing else.” Cf. Solomon 1981, p. 34.
 39. At this place it is obvious that *Kjerlighed* is *not* the term reserved for Christian love and that at *elske/Elskov* does *not only* stand for erotic love but can also be used to designate commanded love. The Hongs’ introduction to *Works of Love* (cf. WL xi.xii) oversimplifies. Obviously, the Danish language opposes to the attempt at a clear separation between different kinds of love.
 40. In the same vein, Johannes Fischer suggests to refer to Christian life ‘in the spirit’ of love instead of referring to the “emotion” of love. He is referring to 1 Corinthians 16:14 πάντα ὑμῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ γινέσθω, where the Greek verb simultaneously indicates an activity or being-involved of the human actor *and* an event that happens through the actor – with him or her just letting it happen. In his opinion, the notion of spirit does justice also to the spontaneity of love that is not at our disposal and that we never “have”; love’s spontaneous action is ruled out in two cases: if love is defined as a habit or virtue that requires exercise, and if action is characterized as free and self-conscious choice between different behavioral possibilities. Cf. J. Fischer, *Theologische Ethik: Grundwissen und Orientierung*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln 2002, pp. 103, 106, 119, 125, 127–138, 146–166. However, Fischer oversimplifies when he identifies the emotion of love with “sentimentality” and dissociates neighbor love from it, since the latter allegedly does not require love that is felt and can therefore turn to persons who are not lovable too (cf. *ibid.*, p. 152). This point could be corrected by employing Roberts’ distinction between emotion and feeling. Besides, the strict alternative between love as emotion and the spirit of love can be abandoned if it is true that the Holy Spirit works *with* and *not against* human nature as it is created by God.