False Emotions

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Abstract
This article sets out an account of false emotions and focuses upon the example of false grief. Widespread but short-lived mourning for well known public figures involves false grief on the part of at least some mourners. What is false about such grief is not any straightforward pretence but rather the inappropriate antecendents of the state in question and/or the desires that the relevant state involves. False grief, for example, often involves a desire *for the experience itself*, and this can be satisfied. By contrast, real grief is utterly without hope. (We cannot have the deceased back again.) However, because false emotions involve some desire, they can be motivating and may lead us to engage in actions and efforts of discernment that can result in the emergence of the real emotion that they mimic. For this reason, they are not always unwelcome.

There is a significant difference between keeping our feelings to ourselves and acting as if we had an emotion that we do not have. All other things being equal, outright deception is not permissible but privacy is. Even on occasions when it might be wise to share our feelings, a failure to do so need not involve any moral failure. We are entitled to reticence or restraint. By contrast, expressing an emotion that we do not have seems to involve something more reprehensible, if not lying at least deception of self or others. Neither of these options look particularly attractive. We might be inclined to hold that, as a default position, acting as if we are in some emotional state when we are in no such state is to be avoided unless lying or the deception *of others* would also be justified under the same conditions.

I will argue that there is an exception to this default position. What I will call 'false emotions' (in a sense defined below) can be part and parcel of bringing about genuine emotions of a sort that we might reasonably desire but which we might be unable to bring about in a more direct manner. That is to say, there is a justification for expressing an emotion that we do not have, and this justification is independent of any reason that we might have for misrepresenting ourselves to others.

By 'false emotions' I mean genuine states of some sort that mimic familiar emotions while lacking some necessary feature of the latter. I am not concerned with mere pretence, but with a particular class of real states. The existing literature on such states is critical of those who experience them. David Pugmire echoes concerns raised

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by Stuart Hampshire about the 'sincerity' of a certain class of emotional responses and writes of 'factitious' emotions.[1] 'A factitious emotion fails to be a real example of the sort of emotion it seems to be'.[2] It is faked up. And both D.W. Hamlyn and Ilham Dilman have attempted to locate the 'falsity' of such emotions in the 'falsity of the person' who experiences them.[3] Similarly, Gabriele Taylor writes about the dangers of violating 'integrity' by embracing negative self-judgements that are couched in terms of alien standards. Her concern is that while genuine emotions flag up our true values, false emotions may involve us in sailing under false colours: 'False shame . . . or irrational guilt, exert pressures to be a self which is not the agent's genuine self'.[4]

A shared assumption of these treatments is their normative content. They commit to a background presupposition of undesirability.[5] *False emotions as well as any dispositions towards them, or any desires to experience them, are taken to be the kinds of desires, dispositions and experiences that we and others would be better off not having and/or something that we and others ought to resist or avoid.*[6]

[1] Stuart Hampshire, 'Sincerity and Singlemindedness', in *Freedom of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

[2] David Pugmire, 'Real Emotions', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54.1, (1994), 105–6.

[3] D.W. Hamlyn, 'False Emotions', p. 280, and Ilham Dilman, 'False Emotions', p. 287 both in *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* LXIII, (1989).

[4] Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 83, 140.

[5] For normative hostility to false emotions, see Hamlyn (1989), 278–9; Dilman (1989), 290–291. For Dilman, false emotions are egocentric; they cut us off from others. For Gabriele Taylor, 'the more often a person suffers from false shame, the more serious the threat to her integrity', Taylor (1985), 133–4.

[6] If we assume, with Hamlyn, that emotions resulting from transference are false emotions, then Freud also does not buy into the assumption that such states are *undesirable*, Hamlyn (1989), 275 ff. Freud allows that transference emotions (hence at least one class of false emotions) must be tolerated (but not encouraged) because they have a legitimate, even necessary role to play in the analysand's therapeutic progress towards self-knowledge, Sigmund Freud, 'Observations on Transference-Love' (1915), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XII, ed. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), 162. However, it is far from obvious that transference emotions *are* false in the relevant sense. Dilman (1989), 293–295 disputes just this feature of Hamlyn's account.

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Against this position, what follows will (i) clarify the concept of false emotion by appeal to the familiar phenomenon of public grief; (ii and iii) will advance the disjunctive thesis that what is false about at least some false emotions (including grief) is the lack of appropriate historical antecedents and/or the inappropriate orientation of desire that they involve. Finally, (iv) I will explain why false emotions of at least this sort are not always to be avoided if we want to improve the overall configuration of our desires and emotional responses. I will not assume that what follows gives a comprehensive account of everything that might appropriately be called a false emotion.

I. The Example of Public Grief

I will take it that false emotions are in play during great and surprising outbreaks of public grief.[7] These are occasions on which large numbers of people want to get in on the act of mourning and may feel left out or in some way deficient if they fail to respond in an appropriate manner. (One that situates them in line with a wave of public sentiment.) Here, we may think of the outburst of mourning for Princess Diana and, with qualification, for Pope John Paul II. By taking these as my exemplars, I do not mean to suggest that the circumstances grieved over were anything other than unfortunate and regrettable. Similarly, I want to rule out the following misinterpretations of my position: *false emotions necessarily have to be as dramatic or as public as they were in these cases*; *the grief of everyone concerned in these cases was false*; and *all public grief is false because it is public*. In both cases there were mourners (especially family, friends and colleagues) with close ties to the deceased. I will take it that their grief was absolutely real and deep.

When I claim that, as well as such genuine grievers, there were false grievers, it might be suggested that I am missing a trick, particularly in the case of mourning for Diana. We reflect with unease about it not because of its falsity but because of its genuineness. That is to say, perhaps the problem was that it was in some sense an inappropriate response for many of the genuine grievers to have. This does seem to be an attractive way to put matters. However, my contrast between genuine and false grief will still allow a limited version of this claim. I can readily accept that there were genuine grievers and

[7] For the sake of brevity, I will use 'grief' as shorthand for the grief involved in bereavement rather than grief of any other sort.

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false grievers and that among the former there were individuals whose grief was genuine but still merited disapproval on some other grounds. In addition to these cases of genuine but inappropriate grief, my claim is that there were also cases of false grief.

As well as those with an intimate or longstanding connection to the deceased, there were others, a great many of them (or us), who had not previously (and have not since) shown any *sustained* concern about those over whom they were supposed to be grieving. Fascination with anniversary commemorations falls far short of such concern. False grievers simply move on in a way that friends, relatives and perhaps longstanding admirers cannot. What is striking about false grievers is the lack of appropriate antecedents and/or the absence of an appropriate sequel.

False emotions, at least in the two cases mentioned above, were sudden and aberrant, an apparent interruption in the normal order of things. But this is not to say that suddenness on its own is an appropriate criterion of emotional falsity. It is at most symptomatic of emotional falsity and not constitutive of the latter. Emotions of a thoroughly respectable sort are often characterized by a surprising spontaneity and, if we were to follow Pugmire and Dilman, we might hold that false emotions are characterized by precisely the opposite, an *absence* of spontaneity. (Their shared claim is that real emotions are independent of the will, 'one cannot be grateful by trying'.)[8]

In cases of *real* bereavement, concern for the deceased can be (at least apparently) sudden and surprising, and not just because we did not expect the death of that particular individual at that particular time. (Although this indefiniteness about the when of death may also be true.) We may show, and perhaps even have, no great concern for a parent during their lifetime and yet upon their demise we may suddenly come to believe or to recognize that they meant a great deal. Or, we might simply come to recognize that we had good reason all along to care for them even if we did not in fact do so. What seems to be of primary importance here is not even a history of care but rather a history of reasons for care that may, belatedly and with regret, be understood and acknowledged.

In some cases, bereavement may be softened by the posthumous mythology that we have always in some sense loved the deceased. Other, perhaps more interesting, cases involve a recognition of the absence of prior care with a recognition of the value of what is lost only when it is gone, a recognition that is too commonplace to be

[8] Dilman (1989), 291; Pugmire (1994), 118–119.

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tragic. Yet even without such a dramatic awakening to personal omission, the *suddenness* of bereavement need not indicate its lack of real emotional content. It can, instead, be part of its unique awfulness.

Although real bereavement is often (and perhaps in some sense *always*) sudden, it builds upon antecedent relations of a strong sort, even in cases where these relations may have been ignored or set aside to be dealt with at a future date. These relations are bound up with, and at least partly constitutive of, our reasons for concern. (If the fact that someone cared for and cherished us during our infancy and the difficult years of adolescence gives us no reason to care for them in later years then I don't know what would give us a reason to care about anyone.) What is conspicuously absent in great outbreaks of public grief is any obvious history of reason-conferring relations between the deceased and large numbers of the mourners. In the case of Pope John Paul II, we might make sense of the grief of those whose lives have been lived, in some sense, under his guidance, but the grief of those belonging to other denominations and to none (atheists for example who were deeply moved by his final balcony scene) was not the upshot of any prior and neglected relation to the deceased that suddenly thrust itself into view. He was not everyman or everyman's father, brother or pope. I will take it that, among non-catholics, indifference was not an uncommon attitude to his pontificate both before and since. Yet many individuals responded *as if* they had some longstanding relation that gave them a reason for concern, when they had no such reason-conferring history.

II. The Antecedents of an Emotion

Given this exemplar, it may seem that the most obvious way to make sense of a false emotion is solely in terms of the lack of an appropriate history of reasons for concern. However, this strikes me as slightly too restrictive. It rules out emotional falsity on the part of those who do have the right kind of history of reasons, who show all the relevant signs of grief and believe themselves to be grieving but who are, in some fundamental way, callous or narcissistic. Other options are available. Consider the following:

(i) An emotion may only be said to be false because of its antecedents simpliciter and for no other reason.
(ii) An emotion may be said to be false because of its intrinsic (constitutive/structural) features simpliciter and for no other reason.

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(iii) An emotion may be said to be false because of both its antecedents *and* intrinsic features and for no other reason.
(iv) An emotion may be said to be false because of its antecedents *or* intrinsic features and for no other reason.

Dilman and Pugmire's concern that emotions should be *spontaneous* highlights considerations that, taken on their own, might lead us to endorse some version of (i). Whenever people 'work themselves into' a state, the state that they work themselves into will be not just shallow but false.[9] 'My emotions must be allowed to take the form they seek to take; and they must be acknowledged as authentic expressions of part of my actual valuational attitude. A certain integrity must be granted even to "bad" emotion'.[10] While it is often a good idea to resist acting upon anger, it is, on this account, always a good idea to own up to our true feelings.

Here, I have no desire to deny that there is a legitimate reason to be sceptical about some attempts to induce emotions. If I had wanted to experience a certain thrill in response to the death of John Paul II, all that I need to have done was go to Rome and mingle for several hours a day with the crowds. This might well have done the trick but the trick in question might have generated something less than real grief. Generally, if I know that I am prone to respond in a particular way when I am in situations of type x then I can place myself in just such situations but what results might be less or other than the genuine item.

What worries me about such a position is that it seems to rule out the very project of constructive emotional reform. It is not obvious that prior effort must *always* be wasted. An emotion can have a causal history which involves an agent intentionally trying to bring it about, and it can still be the genuine article. This much can be seen in the following example. It is late in the evening. My partner, Suzanne and I have just finished supper and it is time for me to go and read an hour of Heidegger. This is the last thing that I want to do. There is nothing on television and I am particularly fond of watching nothing on television. Undeterred, I plough on. I read my Heidegger, reluctantly at first. To claim more would be pretence. I am diligent rather than enthusiastic. Gradually, as time wears on, the reading becomes less of a chore. I am slowly fascinated and drawn in by the elegant, obscure formulations. I come to see the austere and demanding beauty of the text and to appreciate

[9] Pugmire (1994), 105–6.
[10] Pugmire (1994), 120.

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a little of its depth. By the time Suzanne comes to rescue me I no longer want to be rescued but to continue reading, although it may be unwise for me to do so. Under such circumstances, my emotional response to the prospect of reading Heidegger before and after the hour will have altered and it will have altered as the result of a certain kind of effort. The kind of effort in question is the ongoing sort that Iris Murdoch refers to as *attention* by contrast with *will*.[11]

In this respect, emotions are similar to beliefs. Or at least to beliefs on familiar epistemological accounts of the latter which treat them as involuntary but open to indirect alteration. I can bring myself into a position of acquiring some belief even though I do not have direct voluntary control over just what I believe. Similarly, some kinds of effort to induce a particular emotion will be fruitless or counterproductive, but others will not. Sitting in a chair and straining every muscle in order to directly *will* myself to feel enthusiasm for sections 72 through to 74 of *Being and Time* is unlikely to work. Pugmire's concern about such a Murdochian appeal to effort *of a different sort* is based around the charge that it will fail to do justice to the necessary spontaneity of real emotions.[12] This strikes me as a false dilemma. Spontaneity and prior effort are not everywhere opposed. Martha Nussbaum and other advocates of constructive emotional reform point to the example of musical improvisation to show the way in which certain kinds of spontaneity can *require* prior effort. We can only improvise within the bounds that we have prepared for.[13] In a similar way, emotional spontaneity may *require agents to be sensitively attuned to others and to what is other*. Unless we can see others *in the right way* (whatever we take this to be) we will not have the right kind of spontaneous emotional response to their predicament. And we may not be able to see others in just this way without doing work of some sort. Insofar as this is the case, whatever is false about false emotions is *not* necessarily the fact that prior effort was expended in order

[11] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, (London: Routledge Classics, 2001), 22. For Murdoch's reproduction of Simone Weil's contrast between attention and will see Margaret G. Holland, 'Touching the Weights: Moral Perception and Attention', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 38.3 (1988).

[12] Pugmire (1994), 118–122.

[13] Martha Nussbaum, 'The Discernment of Perception' (1990) in her collection *Love's Knowledge*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 74, 94, 96–7; Justin Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 136–139.

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to allow the emotion to be experienced (at the right time, in the right way, in relation to the right objects, and so on).

We are on more defensible ground when we try to provide an account of the falsity of an emotion not by appeal to the *presence* of an inappropriate causal influence, but by appeal to the *absence* of any prior history of reasons for concern. If a purported instance of grief does not have prior concern or reasons for concern for *that particular individual* among its antecedents, I will take it that no amount of effort (of any sort) to become sensitive to humans in general will make up for this deficit.

That is to say, we only experience real grief over the death of those we have known or those whose lives we have tracked and followed, or whose lives in some significant way become entangled with our own. *A shared past is required*. Having said this, at least one qualification must be drawn. Unless we are to rule that all emotional responses resulting from transference are false, we will need to allow that person x may not really be grieving for y (*they may hardly have known each other*, hence x's response may not be appropriate *to this object*) yet the grief of x may still be accounted a real instance of grief for someone else with whom x does have a shared past (and who is an appropriate object of such grief).[14] A temptation here is to construe all candidate instances of *false grief* as instances of transference. However, this doesn't quite fit with the intuition that at least some of the apparent grief on occasions such as the death of Diana can be set down as false rather than just misdirected.

That is to say, I will take it that there are cases of false emotion that are not explicable in terms of transference and accept that this is a claim for which further argument might reasonably be required. All other things being equal, and in the absence of any suggestion of transference, the *lack* of appropriate antecedents *on its own*

[14] Here, we might opt for one of two rival formulations: (1) *x's false grief for y is an instance of real grief for z*; or (2) *x's grief for y is not false but it is grief for z*. Against the first option we might consider Gabriele Taylor's appeal to *false shame* as a matter of evasion (in at least some instances): the substitution of a lesser fault for a greater one. In *King Lear*, Gloucester flaunts his *shameful* fathering of a bastard as a way of evading his behaviour towards the latter whose fortunes he now seems intent to advance. (Albeit a bit too late to defuse the plot.) Taylor (1985), 82–83. Taylor's point is that Lear's false shame is all about evading the appropriate but less bearable emotional response (even in a disguised form). While I am inclined to endorse formulation (1) an appeal to Taylor's example may be less than conclusive and with a little care, either formulation could perhaps be used to do much the same work.

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is enough, in at least some cases, to give us grounds for asserting that an emotion must be false. But if this is the case, it rules out options (ii) and (iii), both of which require us to make some judgement about the *intrinsic features* of a candidate emotional response before making any such claim. In at least some cases, any such appeal to the intrinsic features of an emotion will be unnecessary. Once we know that something essential is missing from the historical background, we know all that we need to know. A corollary of this is that extreme distress, of a sort that in another context we might readily put down as an instance of the grief of bereavement, will not count as real grief if it is merely induced by messing around in someone's brain with electrodes and does not take place against a background of their prior familiarity with the person they believe to be deceased. It is best seen either as false grief or as distress of some other sort.

Here, there may be occasions on which an alleged case of false grief is in fact a real case of some other familiar emotion (e.g. grief for Diana as *weltschmertz* about things in general or regret and sadness about the state of the nation). Indeed, I will take it that some candidate cases of false grief just are cases of misidentification and 'false grief' is appropriate only as shorthand for 'the emotional state of people who seem to be grieving, believe themselves to be grieving, but who are not in fact grieving'. However, it is not obvious that *all* cases can be accounted for in the familiar terms of misidentification. That is to say, we may need something like a distinct concept of false grief as well as the concepts of misidentification and transference, because there is a real state which may share some features with familiar emotional states but which coincides exactly with none of them. An instance of false emotion x is not always going to be the same as an instance of some other real emotion y.

We can rule out option (i) for rather different reasons. Too great a burden is placed upon appeals to the history of an emotion if we claim that an emotion may be said to be false because of its history simpliciter *and for no other reason*. Having the right kind of historic connection and history of reasons for concern about the deceased does not *guarantee* that our grief will be real. A relative with every good reason to grieve might turn out to be far more concerned with their inheritance, or more concerned with their own problems than they are with the demise of their relation.

If we accept the above and we remain committed to the idea of false emotions then we are left only with the disjunctive option (iv) *An emotion may be said to be false because of its antecedents or intrinsic features and for no other reason*.

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III. The Falsity of False Grief

While the concept of an *emotional state* may be a cluster or family resemblance concept, I will take it that its extension will include a large cluster of instances where the state in question has cognitive, affective and connative constituent features. (However these features are related to each other.) This is not to deny that there may be exceptions to such an analysis of emotions, but rather to treat them as such and to allow that for such cases a special and different account of emotional falsity may be required. When someone is in an emotional state (in the sense that will be my concern) we may truthfully attribute to them some combination of belief/construal, feeling and desire. Those who prefer to talk in terms of *intentionality* and *pro-attitudes* or *dispositions*, rather than *desires*, may have to translate at least some of the following into their own preferred terms. (This will not obviously alter the crux of the argument.) In combination with (iv) above this yields the following claim. Whenever a defensible attribution of emotional falsity does not depend upon an appeal to its lack of appropriate antecedents it must depend upon an appeal to these constituent features. To draw out which of these features, singly or in combination, account for emotional falsity, I will proceed by simple elimination, beginning with the possibility that a candidate emotional state may have some cognitive flaw.

(a) Cognitive Flaw

I will take it that what is cognitive about an emotional response may be flawed in two quite different ways. The belief/construal that it involves may be false or it may be false that we are genuinely committed to it. As Hamlyn points out, the former option is unattractive because real emotions are often bound up with being quite wrong about how the world is.[15] Othello was wrong about the events that unfolded around him, yet his jealousy was entirely real. We need not opt for a thoroughgoing stoicism to recognize that real emotions are frequently implicated in cognitive error. If I mistakenly believe that I am to blame for someone's death then my sense of guilt will be genuine, even though it will be misplaced.

If it is objected that there is something deficient about emotions that involve false beliefs then I would agree. However, this *something deficient* can be understood in terms of their lack of depth, which

[15] Hamlyn (1989), 277.

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is not to be confused with a lack of genuineness. An emotion may be utterly shallow without thereby being anything other than the emotion that it purports to be. It is attributions of emotional depth or profundity that we must subject to the externalist constraint that they involve veracity. (Or at least identification with deeply rooted social practices rather than mere personal idiosyncrasy.) In defence of such an externalist constraint upon the depth of emotional response, Pugmire argues that had Anne Frank been merely paranoid, had no-one been out to get her, the emotions that she experienced and expressed could not have been *deep*. 'The sting lies in the recognition that such things should actually be happening. They are not just taking place in a hateful script or in morbid imagination'.[16]

Such a paranoid person could experience and express *real* anguish, fear and hope even though we would rightly hesitate to treat these as *deep* or *profound* instances of such emotions. Similarly, with Othello, we might say that the depth of his emotional response is bound up with his genuine recognition of the precariousness of his standing given the social conventions which made that standing anomalous. (Outside of the context of a prejudiced society, Othello's jealousy *would* have been the shallow stuff of paranoia and not of tragedy.)

Consider now the possibility that an emotion may be false by virtue of being cognitively flawed in the second way, by involving only a pretence of belief or construal. A case may be made for such a position by appeal to our emotional response to fiction. If we understand fiction as necessarily involving something like *an invitation to pretend* (it is after all fiction, and not reportage) then it is plausible that an emotional response, such as the reader's shock at the sudden death of Petya Rostov in *War and Peace* may be a false emotion, in the relevant sense. (And here false emotions may be what Walton calls quasi-emotions).[17]

Although contingent upon a certain view of what literature does, this approach would give a direct and convenient way to argue that false emotions are not always morally undesirable. We might reason as follows: *at least some emotional responses to fiction are morally desirable, i.e. there is such a thing as the education of the emotions and attention to fiction can play a part in it; the relevant emotional responses to fiction involve only the pretence that their intentional objects have a real existence; the relevant emotional responses to fiction do not involve*

[16] David Pugmire, *Sound Sentiments*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 61.

[17] Kendall Walton, 'Fearing Fictions', *Journal of Philosophy*, 75 (1978).

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real belief hence they are false emotions; therefore, there is at least one class of false emotions some of which are morally desirable. Here, I am inclined to say that while this result is favourable to my ultimate position, it is also won rather too cheaply. Accordingly, I will make no appeal to the falsity of praiseworthy emotional responses to fiction. (I will remain neutral on this issue.)

My grounds for caution include the following: it is not immediately obvious that the pretence involved in an attentive engagement with fiction is quite the same kind of pretence as that which is involved in false grief. The latter involves something akin to self-deception whereas the former need not. (Although it *can* do in the case of fantasists as opposed to ordinary imaginative readers.)

What then of the option that we might *home in* on the falsity of a false emotion by specifying that it must be cognitively flawed by virtue of involving pretence rather than genuine belief/construal *and* that the pretence in question be of some particular self-deceptive (and not merely imaginative) sort? Here, I am inclined to say that this may be right, but our self-deceptive pretence is a cognitive flaw that involves treating a false emotion as the real thing. That is to say, false emotions can be accompanied by a misidentification of our emotional state but this misidentification is not itself a sufficient criterion for an emotion's falsity. We can have such misidentification *without* having a case of false emotion. A young and bored child with no experience of real grief might fill out his time by mimicking the mourners at a funeral. As time goes by, he might come to believe himself to be every bit as grief-struck as the inconsolable adults. Yet his understanding of grief could be too slight to allow his emotional state to count as false grief.

(b) The Absence of an Appropriate Affective Response

What may make the absence of an appropriate affective response a poor candidate for the falsity-maker in a false emotion is the familiar presence of thrills, chills, giddiness, racing pulses and so on, even when our responses are faked-up. But here it may be asked whether we experience these affects with the same *intensity* and *durability*. Consider the question of durability. Whatever its antecedents, some cases of apparent grief at the death of John Paul II vanished long before any real bereavement would normally have done. However, real emotions such as terror, or euphoria, can also be short lived. Genuineness cannot be gauged simply in terms of duration. Brevity seems at best symptomatic of emotional falsity and

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even then perhaps only so in the case of some emotions rather than others. A false love may go on for years sustained by enduring habit, familiarity and convenience; conversely, it is conceivable that real love may be rapidly uprooted by the disclosure of terrible truths.

However durable they are, I will take it that the affects involved in false emotions may still be real enough *and experienced to whatever degree*. (Up to and including intense mass hysteria of a sort that did *not* dominate the cases of mourning for Lady Di or the Pope.) Those caught up in mass mourning may really feel their pulses racing and no chemical analysis of their tears need disclose a difference from the tears of the genuinely bereaved. Secular holidaymakers who arrived in Rome at the right time may well have felt a certain real excitement when they went to St Peter's Square and tried to hold their position in the crowd as the cameras flashed and the cell-phones were held up to capture the passing bier. While their sudden grief (if they felt any) may have been false, their bodily and psychological affects, the drama and the excitement of the moment, may have been real enough. *Indeed, it is precisely because the affective responses involved in false emotions are real that they are able to grip and deceive moral agents in the way that they do*.

(c) The Orientation of Desire

By elimination, this leaves desire, the connative constituent of emotion, to carry the burden of falsity in cases where it does not depend upon the absence of an appropriate history of reasons for concern. Someone who is genuinely bereaved will wish that their loved one was still with them. They will want (desire) to have them back again and not just to be reunited in some afterlife but to have them back in the here and now. It is the sheer hopelessness of this desire, the awful impossibility of its realization, that is part and parcel of the helplessness of grief.[18] In such situations, we know what we want and we know that nothing we may say or do will help in any way to secure it. Nothing helps. Although a genuinely bereaved person can be consoled in various ways, we understand well enough why they (or we) are spoken of as inconsolable. Although any one of us may become caught up and entangled

[18] This is not to say that the distinction between real and false emotions can be made in terms of the impossibility/possibility of realising the desires that they involve. Impossible desires figure only in some emotions, such as grief.

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in grief so that we reach the point where we might not extricate ourselves even if we could, real grief is so dreadful that it is not something that any rational agent would opt into. (If we could choose to have it then we would not do so.)

For at least some grievers, the aftermath of the Pope's death was quite different, marked as it was by a significant *opting in*, by an action-guiding *desire for the emotion itself*, for the excitement, the sense of community and the rectitude of response.[19] That is to say, where those involved experienced false emotions we may attribute to them no strong desire to be reunited with the deceased (they were never united in the first place) but (a) a first-order desire for the thrill of strong emotions and/or (b) a desire to be the kind of person who responded in a particular way (and we might be inclined to classify this as a second-order desire but my case will not depend upon this).[20] Accordingly, we can say that displays of apparent grief at the loss of John Paul II, in the case of those who thought his influence unimportant, or even malign or at least dreadfully misguided, were not primarily *about* him. And where it was not some form of transferred grief (or transferred emotion of any other sort) that people wished to share with others, we may say that it was false grief. In these latter cases, the intentionality of the desires involved was of the wrong sort to allow the emotional state of these mourners to count as genuine grief for the Pope or for anyone else.

An advantage of this approach is that the misplaced or misdirected intentionality of desire helps to account for the absence of grief's dreadfulness in cases of false grief. Compared to the real thing, it is shallow even though this shallowness is only symptomatic and not constitutive of its falsity. If real grief is like living in another country, false grief is more akin to emotional tourism. There is not the same kind of despair partly because the desires of false grievers *can* all too obviously be satisfied. It is not at all hopeless. The

[19] Hamlyn writes about someone who *intentionally* and with luck 'somehow brings about in himself' the false emotion, Hamlyn (1989), 281. Dilman writes of a disguised 'choice', Dilman (1989), 289. I have reservations about the adequacy of choice as a way of capturing the phenomenology involved in being guided by unconscious desires. Instead, I use the formulation of *opting in* to try and avoid any suggestion that there is anything like a precise moment of decision.

[20] Someone with a strong second-order desire for (a) might be called a *sentimentalist*. They will desire emotional thrills and also value being that sort of person. On the account given here, someone who experiences a false emotion could be a sentimentalist, but they need not be.

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moral agent *really can* get what they want (or at least seem to do so) if all that they want is a thrill or satisfaction at their own rectitude of response. In the case of real bereavement (with or without transference) unless there has been some dreadful mix-up of identities, the desire to have the deceased back again is utterly unsatisfiable. The real grief sets in when we realize that we do not have to rush to their bedside. Hope is antithetical to bereavement.[21]

Against any objection that the above account might not take the grieving response to Pope John Paul II's death seriously enough *from a religious point of view* (however defined) I will point out that there is a plausible religious reading of events that is consistent with my approach (although not entailed by it). The outpouring of public grief *may* be read as a symptom of a spiritual hunger that was not ultimately about the individual on whom it was focused. (Indeed, this strikes me as an insightful reading of events.) As a figurehead, he was replaceable in a way that the dead individuals with whom our lives have become enmeshed are not. By contrast with false grief, real grief involves a recognition of uniqueness, hence *irreplaceability*, and in the case of John Paul II's death, such a recognition of uniqueness *can* readily be attributed to devout catholics and to close colleagues. But it cannot so readily be attributed to tourists, cameramen and remote viewers of an impressive spectacle. For some apparent mourners the pontiff was a special kind of religious celebrity. But to view someone in this way cuts across any hopeless central desire to have them back again. It is precisely the nature of viewing someone as a celebrity that we see them as interchangeable with others who may come and go. If I see x as a celebrity then I see them as replaceable and *not* as unique. To say this, and to suggest that some individuals, perhaps even some non-devout catholics, viewed John Paul II in just this way, is not to say anything that should disturb those who are devout but rather it is the identification of what may plausibly be regarded as a moral/spiritual danger.[22]

[21] The opening chapter of Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) presents an illuminating and very personal account of the disappearance of her own residual hope as she raced to be at her mother's bedside *after* the death of the latter. Death is not in the fullest sense accepted, i.e. believed, until all hope is gone.

[22] Although I will go on to argue that false emotions *can* be morally desirable, my use of the examples of mourning for Pope John Paul II and Diana are intended only to clarify the concept of false emotion. I make no claims about the desirability or otherwise of false emotions in these two cases.

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IV. False Emotions and their Real Counterparts

So far, my account of false emotions has departed from Pugmire, Hamlyn, Dilman et al. primarily on matters of detail. There is agreement about the existence of false emotions and divergence about just what their falsity involves. However, there is a supplementary wrinkle that I want to put into the body of my account to the effect that there may be no great boundary between false emotions and their real counterparts. The former can sometimes serve as a stage on the way to the latter. They may even be *the price we have to pay* for certain kinds of ingrained emotional responsiveness of a desirable sort. Take some generally desirable emotional response such as compassion. There are occasions on which it is inappropriately directed, but by and large, compassion is an admirable emotional response in a way that envy is not. I want to suggest that real compassion can have a history that involves a more faked-up emotional response, a fake concern for others, a false compassion. To develop this point I will draw again upon the kind of emotional progress set out by Iris Murdoch and directly criticized by Pugmire.[23]

Murdoch sets up the case of D and M. A mother (M) finds that her son has married an apparently thoughtless and flighty young woman (D). She holds, initially, that he has set his sights too low. The girl is plainly unsuitable, she lacks propriety and manners. Nevertheless, M wants to be fair-minded and attempts to combat her own jealousy. She decides to *look again*, and does so effortfully. She searches for D's better qualities and finds a good many of them. By the patient sustained work of effortful attention *and not by any sudden effort of the will*, M arrives at a revised view of D. Her emotional responses are changed. Pugmire cites M's alleged progress as one which involves precisely the kind of constructive emotional reform that he wants to rule out. However, he neglects the important Murdochian distinction between sudden efforts of *will* (by which emotions cannot be altered) and gradualist efforts of *attention* (by which emotional change can be brought about). A focus upon choice and efforts of will can miss something important, a sense in which someone *can* become more compassionate, and even grateful, by trying.

It is perfectly acceptable that, from a Murdochian standpoint, what M initially wants *could* be her own moral rectitude, or at least the warm self-satisfaction of the person who believes themselves to be fair-minded. Nevertheless, in the course of attending to her

[23] Murdoch (2001), 16 ff.

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daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law may discover something that genuinely is worthy of her love. What Murdoch grasps (and in this respect she is thoroughly Platonic) is the *trickster* nature of desire, the way in which desire for one thing often leads us into activities and an improved discernment that results in desire for something else. In the pursuit of *a*, we come to see the value of *b* and to desire it accordingly, in the pursuit of *b* we then come to appreciate the value of *c*, and so on. Hence, we can be gradually moved towards desire for that which we do not initially care for in its own right. *But if this is so, then we may, on some occasions have a false emotion whose falsity consists in the inappropriate orientation of the desire(s) that it involves, but which also leads us to engage in actions and efforts of discernment that are liable to result in a shift in our pattern of discernment and in the ultimate emergence of the real emotion which they mimic*. We can start off with a false emotion and end up with the genuine article.

This process is perhaps better illustrated in Murdoch's novels than in her philosophical texts. In *Henry and Cato*, Murdoch charts a crisis of faith undergone by a young seminarian called Cato Forbes.[24] When he entered the priesthood Cato believed that he loved God and religion and that he had real compassion for others. Matters were rather more prosaic. What he really desired was a romantic ideal of religious life, the realization of a familiar fantasy that was mostly about himself. While his initial emotional responses to the prospect of becoming a priest were not what they seemed to be, his experience of the religious life nevertheless opened up a real opportunity to improve his discernment. When the novel opens, the drudgery of the religious life has already begun to take its toll and his initial romantic imagery of God, as a certain kind of flattering ideal spectator looking on approvingly, has eroded. But in the course of this dull routine Cato has had opportunities to encounter real suffering, opportunities that he might never otherwise have had, and with them the opportunity to develop a more genuine loving compassion. First comes the fake emotion and then, perhaps, may come the real thing.

One of the many things that may seem objectionable about this account of a movement from one desire to another, and from a false emotional response to a real emotional response, is the great many uses of 'may' which allow that much can go wrong or at least otherwise. This is just what happens in Murdoch's novel. Cato's warm egocentricity triumphs over the emergence of a more real loving compassion for the other.

[24] Iris Murdoch, *Henry and Cato*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976).

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Nevertheless, even if it is fraught with the risk of personal failure and vulnerable to the operations of moral luck, what the example may help us to appreciate is the possibility of a passage from a false emotion to its authentic counterpart. Such a route to a real emotional responsiveness is all the more important given that we cannot simply, with success, *will* ourselves to have those emotional responses that we deem to be morally desirable. The default wrongfulness of at least some instances of false emotions can be mitigated if they have a role to play in the formation of genuine (morally desirable) emotions that cannot be *willed into existence* in some more direct manner. While this may not show that we can defensibly, and without paradox, desire that we ourselves should have false emotions in even a motivated sense (there may after all be psychological constraints upon rational agents that prohibit the formation of such desires) it does provide support for the view that we can at least desire that *others* should experience false emotions as an unavoidable part of their process of developing the real thing. And this gives us enough to qualify the background normative assumption of existing accounts of false emotions. When they are seen as part of a larger process, it is no longer true to say that *false emotions as well as any dispositions towards them, or any desires to experience them, are the kinds of desires, dispositions and experiences that we and others would be better off not having and/or something that we and others ought to resist or avoid*.[25]

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