

All Souls, transferred to 3rd November 2025

Something eternal is going on here. A man is raised from the dead and restored to his mother. An act of love: 'felt sorry for her' is a rather weak way of expressing Jesus's deep concern; compassion comes somewhere near it. At the risk of venturing into uncharted territory, Wittgenstein may give us a clue as to how totally Jesus embodies human experience – I put it that way to lessen the detached dualistic stance that a supposedly scientific approach may encourage. We look at life and death, of others and ourselves, from the outside – we are detached in its worse sense of seeing ourselves as at one remove from the troubles of others, from the experience of whatever it is that is the object of our study in order to be 'objective', and to provide a balanced, well thought out response. This is reason I would suggest as a defence – a reading of emotions but not our engagement with a person without whom the emotions have no meaning

'Wittgenstein showed that human relationships are of a practical and a finite nature. They are lived and experience and need acknowledgement rather than justification and proof.....'

'The body is expressive of the emotions, but it is not the bodily movements that are the emotion. We respond to the person, not the body, and he or she is seen in a context and timing that weave into its significance.'

(from a short reflection on 'Wittgenstein and Psychoanalysis' by John M. Heaton, p 32, 33.)

When Jesus steps into the life of that young man and his mother he literally enlivens them by his presence. He gives them life because he embodies them. In the Hebrew scriptures this is done by Elisha in a very graphic manner by his lying on the body of the Shunammite widow's son '*putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes to his eyes, his hands on his hands*' seven times over and the child revives. Jesus only has to speak for the son of the widow of Nain to revive but this is significant not of a detached stance but of one so wholly engaged with us that the word which Wittgenstein is so wary about can signify and be effective as that of the creator God who brings and keeps all things in being. This gives hope for us all, living and dead – all souls intimately known and acknowledged by God. There's no before and after here but only presence. We cannot manipulate God we can only live in God's presence.

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