Three Most Important Points re: Imagination and Affectivity

1. Human knowledge is stored in the brain in the form of images. (Images = the primary language of the brain.)
2. These images carry emotional content. (Images dispose us to feel associated emotions.)
3. We can shape and direct these images and their emotional content through practices, e.g., Ignatian contemplation, NLP, and training our two selves to work in harmony (Gallwey).

Points 1 and 2 help us to see why and how Christian tradition affirms that living a good life requires good imagination and properly channeled and appropriately sensitive emotions. Neurologist Antonio Damasio speaks of images as “dispositional representations” because they tend to dispose us to experience once again the feelings associated with the experience that gave rise to the image.

Item 3 points to the importance of habituation through intentional practices. Practices habituate and, if firmly integrated into our character through the cooperation of our reason and will, dispose our imagination and affectivity in helpful or harmful ways.

Three Roles of Emotion in the Moral Life (C&M)

1. Signal value/importance (starting point for moral reasoning)
2. Carry the moral wisdom of the stories and relationships that “school” them
3. Energize us for action (and thereby affect how we act, i.e., our actions are imbued with the particular emotional energy that drives them)

On the one hand, healthy moral reasoning cannot exclude emotion altogether. On the other hand, it cannot limit itself to emotion. Instead, good moral reasoning
1. starts with emotional responses and then critically examines them;
2. tests emotions against normative stories and important relationships to assess how well they fit the circumstances; and
3. sorts out how to channel emotional energy most fruitfully.

Temperance & Courage: Cardinal Virtues of Emotion

The cardinal virtues of temperance and courage are both dispositions toward well-balanced and well-channeled emotion. In other words, both virtues are dispositions toward emotional responses and states that achieve a reasonable mean that enables us to fully flourish.

Temperance is a disposition toward right desire or appetite (especially with respect to gratification of the senses). It steers the balanced course between overindulgence and an unhealthy denial of desires.

Courage is a disposition toward appropriately fearful or aggressive emotion (or the mean between unhelpful fear and fearlessness or a false sense of grandiosity). It steers a fitting course between cowardice and recklessness by responding appropriately to danger and risk.
With respect to the Three Roles of Emotion in the Moral Life (above),
Role 1 focuses on a disposition toward right emotional sensitivity and responsiveness (to desire or danger)
Role 2 focuses on a disposition toward emotional energy that makes us ready to act appropriately
Role 3 focuses on how stories and relationships dispose our emotions and imaginations so that we feel and imagine “according to the story” or according to a good relationship

**Questions To Consider**

Explain how experience and community provide two checks on moral imagination (C&M, 188)
How can emotions distort or interfere with moral reasoning?
Give an example of a helpful and harmful emotion
How does following a model require imagination?

**Imagination (Timothy O’Connell)**

- **Neurolinguistic Programming** includes two techniques to “program” or dispose the language of the brain, i.e., images:
  1. Association with positive images and dissociation from negative images
  2. Reframing—place an image into a more fruitful context/perspective (frame) that recognizes the good sought and seeks to find a better way to achieve it. Stories are an important frame for our images (example: General Woundwort could reframe).

- **The Inner Game of Tennis**: Timothy Gallwey’s describes two selves. Self 1 provides a running commentary on the performance of Self 2. Whereas Self 2 performs the actions. He suggests that we need to condition our mind (similar to Self 1) to trust our body (similar to Self 2) and, through liberating imagery, allow it to do its best. We must use images to communicate with the body.

- **Ignatian Contemplation**
  A practice of prayer that engages the whole person—particularly her imagination, affectivity, and body (through its five senses).
  An example would be imagining oneself as a participant in a scripture passage, feeling the feelings and sensory stimulation that arise from this experience, and letting the encounter with scripture take you wherever it leads. This practice “schools” or trains one’s imagination and emotions according to the images and feelings encouraged by the story. In a sense Ignatian contemplation uses some aspects of NLP and the Inner Game of Tennis in one’s spiritual life. Note that Ignatian contemplation can also be done without scripture when one prays to God with vivid imagination and affectivity.

- **Gesture is the body’s first language**
  Words come second after physical expression and presence (gesture).
  Ritual = a patterned form of action that expresses, celebrates, and reinforces values and structures social interaction (and renews solidarity). It is the child of gesture and gives us a shared body language (and somatic vocabulary). Ritual makes meaningful spontaneity possible. The ideal is a harmonious joining of predetermined ritual and spontaneous gesture.