THE EDUCATION AND CONTROL OF THE EMOTIONS

T. S. HENRY

Western Michigan State Normal School, Kalamazoo, Michigan

It is coming to be recognized more and more clearly that the native tendencies and capacities of the child furnish the raw material which it is the function of education to work over and to make available for the needs of the individual as an efficient member of society. In the past, the school as an educational institution has devoted its energies almost completely to the cultivation of a selected portion of this native equipment of tendencies and capacities, namely those which are concerned in the processes of cognition—the intellectual processes The emphasis in the work of education has been put upon the development of the "mind," and has stressed such factors as memory, reasoning, abstraction, generalization, and the like. To that portion of the native equipment which includes the affective side of life, made up largely of what are known as the feelings and the emotions, comparatively little attention has hitherto been paid.

The school's neglect of this large and important part of our native equipment has been due to three reasons: (1) a mistaken conception of the school as an institution adapted primarily, if not solely, to the training of the intellectual "powers and capacities," and the inculcation of knowledge in the shape of information; (2) a lack of comprehension of the value of the emotional side of life; and (3) the absence of any method or system which might be applied to the training of the emotions in the same way that method is applied to the intellectual subjects. All three of these reasons have continuously been operative, although of course not always with the same degree of influence. The school has been narrowly intellectual; the emotions have been undervalued, even to the extent of being looked upon, with only a few exceptions, as detrimental and fit only for control by repression; and so complex is the question of their origin and nature that very few principles relating to their education can be laid down, to say nothing of any systematic method. Difficult as it has been to develop a method for the education of the intellect, it is a still more difficult task to formulate a

systematic method which may be applied to practical use in the education of native capacities of whose real nature we are so ignorant as we are of the emotional tendencies.

But these reasons for the neglect of the emotions in both the theory and practice of teaching are beginning to lose their cogency. The school is taking on a broader life, and is no longer content to leave the development and training of the emotions entirely to outside influences. Educators of the present day realize the necessity of making use of all the capital afforded by original nature, for they have come to see that the mind is not composed of intellectual and emotional faculties set over against each other, but that there is a very vital connection and interplay of thoughts with feelings. A saner understanding of moral questions has accompanied the growth of the idea that original nature cannot be essentially "wrong," and we have come to understand that features of the emotional life which have heretofore been looked upon as fit only for repression, need only control and redirection to become of the greatest value; and that we cannot at all afford longer to leave them out of account in our educational scheme. We are also making progress in our knowledge of how to control and educate the emotions. The great and increasing interest which psychologists are showing in topics connected with the nature and origin of the affective states has led to a better understanding of them, and has given us practical suggestions as to methods of their control. It is true, as I have said, that nothing like a system, in the pedagogical sense, has yet been formulated, and that as yet most of the literature upon the education of the emotions is devoted to a discussion of the end that should be reached, rather than of the methods by which the desired result may be accomplished. But what we have serves at least as a beginning, and it is not too much to hope that some day, and not so very far distant, we shall have a practical method for the development and control of the emotional life.

Although this topic has suffered such neglect, it is one which is of the greatest importance. The school wishes to know how to provide for the proper development of the right kind of emotional life in its pupils. Individuals wish to know how to favor the development of the good emotion, and to call it into being; and, more often perhaps, how to inhibit the expression of injuri-

ous emotional states A knowledge of how to influence the feelings of others, of how to produce a desirable emotion or discourage the appearance of an undesirable one, would be of the utmost value to any teacher in the work of imparting instruction, as well as in the attempt to develop a well-balanced emotional life in his pupils. Nothing more than a few hints is as yet available for guidance in this kind of work, but meager as our information is, it is of great practical value, and any teacher who makes a really serious effort to apply it will secure important results.

The training of the emotions, as the training of all the instinctive tendencies, involves the encouragement of the useful ones, including provision for their exercise; the careful direction of those which either good or bad, according to the nature of their objects; and the discouragement, by inhibition or redirection, of those which are positively harmful. In this latter case, inhibition may take place by direct repression or by substitution. Probably no more common or characteristic device for educating or training the child's emotional reactions is used by adults than direct repression. Many parents have the habit of saying "Don't' 'to almost everything which the child has a mind to do. This sort of repression may be effectual in subduing at least a part of the outward expression of the emotional state, but as a means of control it is incomplete, because it does not go back to the source or beginning of the emotion; and it may result in actual damage because of the repression of the outward act, while the emotional stress goes on under the surface just the same, although denied its natural outlet.[1]

Of course, the general rule by which a teacher may be guided in his effort to develop good emotions is to provide every opportunity for the origin of such emotions, and then to see to it that the proper expression of the desired feeling is rewarded with pleasure, so that a definite connection may be set up between the emotional state and the pleasurable consequences. Conversely, in case of the harmful emotion, as far as possible every situation which tends to call it forth should be avoided, and unpleasant consequences should be connected with its expression.[2] This use of pleasant or unpleasant results is only an

[1] BURT, C. "*Psychology and the Emotions.*" School Hygiene, May, 1916.
[2] THORNDIKE, E. L. *Principles of Teaching.* P. 198.

application of Spencer's "doctrine of natural punishments." Its value here lies in the fact that experience, which involves the natural force of individual and social consequences, is a great molder of emotional life.[3]

Among educational writers a favorite prescription for the training of the emotions in connection with the work of the school is to use to this end art and literature, including biography and history. Horne, who has made a definite attempt to formulate a pedagogy of the emotions, places much emphasis upon this point, saying that art, literature, and history are the most effective instruments in educating the feelings;[4] and Bagley makes history, religion, literature, and the various forms of art the chief media for the transmission of emotions.[5] The psychological basis for all this is in the law that to arouse any emotion, we should arouse ideas which have gone with that emotion in the past.[6] If the child has not sometime experienced the desired emotion in connection with the ideas which are presented to him by the work of art or literature, or which come up by association, he will not feel it, except in the possible case of a situation so vivid as to arouse an instinctive response. It may be possible for the teacher, however, by presentation of different ideas, finally to call up the emotional state which is sought. The difficulty in doing this will depend, of course, upon the nature of the particular emotion or sentiment, and especially upon the frequency with which it is found to exist among children of the given age. It must be remembered, also, that the situation as presented in a picture, for example, does not call up precisely the emotion that would accompany the actual event. What we actually have in such a case is an aesthetic emotion—what Thorndike calls a "pseudo-emotion"—which does not cause the same strain as an actual emotion. But these emotions contribute much to the richness of life, and their reactions are not nearly so fatiguing as are those of the real emotions, which, in general, should be aroused only for the sake of action.[7]

A method of arousing a given emotion in a given situation, which is somewhat analogous to the teacher's use of art or liter-

[3] READ, M. S. *An Introductory Psychology.* Chapter XIII.
[4] HORNE, H. H. *Psychological Principles of Education.* Part III.
[5] BAGLEY, W. C. *The Educative Process.*
[6] THORNDIKE, E. L. *Principles of Teaching.* P. 199.
[7] THORNDIKE, E. L. *Principles of Teaching.* Pp. 200–202.

ature, is the communication of it through imitation. "If the teacher and half of the class are thrilled with admiration for a member of the class who has honorably confessed his unfairness toward a classmate, the rest of the class will be more likely to admire him also."[8] This is only a particular case of suggestion, or the influence of the "strong idea," which may also sometimes be used by one individual over another, for the "spread" of an idea or sentiment, which may go on to completion in an overt act.

As an outgrowth of the James-Lange theory of the bodily origin of the emotions—although the principle was acted upon before that theory was announced—we have the insistence upon the bodily attitude of the expression of a given emotion as a means of furthering the development of that emotion. This method of emotional control is perhaps more frequently mentioned than is any other. James says that, within the limits of verification, experience corroborates rather than disproves the statement, correlative to his theory, that the voluntary arousal of the so-called manifestations of a special emotion ought to result in that emotion itself. Panic is increased by flight, grief is increased by giving way to its outward symptoms, melancholy is induced by a moping posture, and cheerfulness is the outcome of deliberately cheerful conduct. In his investigations, he finds that about one half of the actors questioned upon this point experience the real emotion to which their art gives external portrayal, and he accounts for the other half by saying that in them the visceral and organic part of the expression can be suppressed, and that it is probably on this that the chief part of the felt emotion depends. According to James, then, when we wish to cultivate a certain disposition, we should go through with the movements which make up the outward manifestation of that disposition.[9]

Thorndike follows James in stressing the value of assuming the characteristic bodily response in order to arouse a given emotion, or to establish a desired attitude or disposition. In illustration of how this may be done in practice, he writes:

"Let the frightened one walk steadily toward the enemy, looking him square in the eye, shouting in a loud voice, 'I'm not afraid of

[8] *Ibid.* P. 199.
[9] JAMES, WM. *Principles of Psychology.* Vol. II, Chap. XXV.

you, I'll eat you alive,' and brandishing his weapon as if about to knock down an elephant—and fear may be replaced by courage. If the kindergarten teacher who feels disgust at a dirty misshapen baby whose face is covered with sores and pimples will treat him just as she would a dainty, red-cheeked picture of health and cleanliness, take him on her lap, pet him, smile at him and caress him, she will often find disgust giving way to tolerance and even to affection.

"This * * is indeed the surest way to secure the presence of an emotion. In the long run our feelings grow into harmony with our conduct. Greed cannot live unsupported by greedy acts; the manifestation of love begets it; get pupils to act as they would if the emotion was felt and they will feel it, or, if they do not, will not need to. For in any case they will have the really valuable feature of the emotion, its influence on conduct."[10]

Münsterberg says that the feelings are essentially motor reactions, and that it is therefore possible to educate and train them through voluntary control of the movements in which they express themselves. The control of emotion, then, lies in the control of appropriate movements. To get a child to appreciate a picture, for example, put him before it and have him assume a "liking attitude," and the movements of this response will set up the emotion.[11] While it is impossible to say to just what extent one can control his emotions and feelings by assuming appropriate bodily attitudes, there must be something in the principle that, in order to cultivate a certain disposition, one must act as if he already possessed that disposition.

In order that the emotional life may be sound and healthy, the same conditions must be true for the body. Bodily health and activity make for a normal and happy emotional life. The emotions should have serviceable outlets, through right motor expressions. Burt insists upon the need of an "emotional hygiene," which shall include exercises in emotional expression, of some such nature as the system of eurhythmics developed by Dalcroze Other means of physical outlet may be provided by sports, games, and plays.[12] Support is lent to the argument for provision of these outlets by the recent work of Cannon, who finds that the "coarser" emotional states are accompanied by an increased secretion of adrenalin with its resultant physiological effects.[13] Crile says that the vitalizing fluids which are

[10] THORNDIKE, E. L. *Principles of Teaching.* Pp. 199–200.
[11] MÜNSTERBERG, H. *Psychology and the Teacher.* Chap. XXI.
[12] BURT, C. *"Psychology and the Emotions."* School Hygiene, May, 1916.
[13] CANNON, W. B. *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage.*

thus released may cause physical injury unless they are consumed by action, and that an unexpressed emotion is measurably relieved by muscular activity. For furnishing such relief, the value of games, especially such as take the form of a contest, is apparent.[14]

According to Pillsbury, the only real control of emotions is that which is effected at the source, and this is available only to some degree. His recipe for emotional control is to classify, and thus control, the situation which calls the emotion forth. The control of emotion, or of emotional expression, therefore, is chiefly in terms of the attitude which one takes toward the stimulus. This attitude is to a considerable extent under one's control, at least when falling outside that class of fundamental instincts which are most closely linked with their stimuli. Sensations and stimuli which are capable of being classified in different ways arouse different emotions upon the basis of that classification. For instance, a chance remark may be classified as an insult and arouse the emotion of anger, or the same remark, coming from a friend, may be classified as a jest and arouse an emotion of an entirely different sort.[15] This "control of attitude" is a sort of all-inclusive expression which covers several principles to which various authors have given different names. It really implies the inhibition of emotional expression by the application of the judgment,—the "intellectualization" of the situation, so to speak. It involves, as Thorndike says, learning to judge the situation objectively by the facts, not subjectively by the feelings about those facts; and then following the judgment rather than the feelings.[16]

If the emotional situation involves a personal stimulus, this application of judgment may have the effect of changing the stimulus from a personal to an impersonal nature, so that when the personal elements are once taken out of the stimulating situation, the emotional reaction loses its "zest" and rapidly fades away.[17] Since feelings can thus be reached indirectly through ideas and actions, it is possible sometimes for a teacher to relieve an over-emotional state in a child by counseling and

[14] CRILE, G. W. *Origin and Nature of the Emotions.*
[15] PILLSBURY, W. B. *Essentials of Psychology.* Chap. XII; *The Fundamentals of Psychology.* Chap. XIV.
[16] THORNDIKE, E. L. *Principles of Teaching.* P. 96.
[17] BURT, C. *Psychology and the Emotions.* School Hygiene, May, 1916.

reasoning with him. Explanation of the situation in all of its bearings may change the object of the feeling and draw it off into harmless or, it may be, even into useful channels.[18]

Another way in which the expression of an emotion may be prevented is by "directing the attention" to something else, until the occasion for the emotion is past. A person who found himself in a situation normally provocative of anger, and who did not wish actually to become angry, might be able to turn his attention to something, inside or outside of the situation, of such a nature as to make it possible to "keep his mind," as we say, off the particular factor which would otherwise stir up the emotion which he was seeking to inhibit.[19] In effect, this is but another application of the principle of bringing about a change in the stimulus, without necessarily involving "reclassification."

Of those emotions which are good or bad only as they are directed to objects which are proper or improper, the method of control involves simply proper direction. Ambition, pride, anger, and other similar emotions, have their uses and are too valuable to be lost, but unless directed toward the proper objects, they are not only useless, but positively harmful. While hate, for instance, is entirely wrong if directed toward anything or anybody that is not the proper object of that emotion, it is, on the other hand, a matter of great importance to be able to hate aright,—to hate the things toward which that emotion has its proper direction.[20]

This method of control by direction is very closely allied to what is known as *sublimation*. The Freudians use this term exclusively in connection with the sexual instincts and the emotions connected with them, but by a somewhat similar interpretation it may be made to apply equally well to other emotions. It means the "long circuiting" of the instinct or emotion by associating it with other and better sentiments.[21] Colvin and Bagley, in their *Human Behavior*, define it as "the method which attempts to lift a strong feeling bodily out of the instinct to which it naturally belongs and to fasten it firmly to another

[18] READ, M. S. *An Introductory Psychology*. Chap. XIII.
[19] PILLSBURY, W. B. *The Fundamentals of Psychology*. Chap. XIV.
[20] THORNDIKE, E. L. *Principles of Teaching*. P. 199.
[21] BURT, C. "*Psychology and the Emotions.*" School Hygiene, May, 1916.

object and to an entirely different process."[22] A rather commonly given illustration of this operation is the development of the sentiment of chivalry at about the time of adolescence as a sublimated form of the newly awakened sexual emotions. Colvin and Bagley give two excellent illustrations which I quote:[23]

"A very good illustration of an effective attempt to 'sublimate' a primitive instinct is to be found in the success of the Salvation Army. Here we see a military organization with innumerable suggestions of actual physical combat enlisted in the service of the most peaceable of ideals. The Boy Scout movement (as it has been developed in America) makes a similar use of the feelings connected with several of the primitive instincts, attaching them to other objects and insuring responses that are only *symbolic* of the actual primitive responses."

All of this means that an effective mode of emotional control lies in the formation of attitudes, ideals, and sentiments, by attaching appropriate ideas to the original emotion as a core. Much may be done in this connection by deliberate resolution to develop the appropriate attitude. Thus suppose one decides that he does not wish to give way to anger in a certain situation in which he often finds himself. Let him then make a deliberate resolution to avoid that situation as much as he possibly can, and thus give the emotion the fewest possible occasions for being aroused. Let him further resolve that, if he does find himself in the provocative situation, he will by no means allow his temper to get the better of him, that he simply will not become angry, that he will follow his judgment and change the stimulus; and he will have gone a long way toward the accomplishment of his purpose, and started upon a method which will become more and more effective as he continues to practice it.

[22] COLVIN AND BAGLEY. *Human Behavior.* P. 159.
[23] COLVIN AND BAGLEY. *Human Behavior.* Pp. 159–160.