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The Emotional Element in Religious Education

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Definition of emotion in the light of psychology.

According to the intellectualistic view of the emotions we first have an intellectual perception of some fact which gives us certain characteristic feelings that we call emotions and that these emotions may initiate certain actions. The voluntaristic view, in this country associated more particularly with the name of Professor James, connects the emotions with instinctive reactions. According to this view emotions are organized feelings which go with characteristic instinctive responses, the emotion being the feeling side, the instinct the active side, of the same psychophysical process. This is the explanation of James' at first startling assertion that we do not act because we feel but we have emotions because we act.

This linking of the emotions with instincts, giving them an inherited basis, associates them with characteristic bodily states. And some psychologists define the bodily substrate of the emotions more specifically as the visceral as contrasted with the muscular system. The emotions are accordingly regarded as physiologically conditioned by impulses coming in from the viscera, which constitute the returning wave of outgoing instinctive responses. Mercier distinguishes between the conscious states associated with the muscular system which he says lie at the basis of our consciousness of the external world and those conscious states associated with the viscera, heart, lungs, digestive system, organs of sex, which underlie our consciousness of self. The comparatively late functioning of the organs of sex, for example, gives a distinctive addition to the volume of incoming currents to which the nervous system has for years accustomed itself. These strange, unrecognizable impulses form a marked increment to the emotional life, at times threatening the equilibrium of the self.

THE EMOTIONS AND CONDUCT.

Emotions in the evolutionary process are coincident with instinctive reactions. They are not ends in themselves. According to the biological view of life conscious states are preserved

because they fulfill some function. They give better reactions or they lead to some protective reaction. And emotions belong to this class. Anger, for example, leads to a strong, and therefore, protective response. But human beings, having evolved processes of introspection and abstraction, isolate certain phases of their experience from their concrete setting and sometimes make them ends in themselves. Thus the fighting instinct, together with the emotions coincident with such responses, was, in the evolution of the race, a necessary protective form of response, but the modern prize-fight is a selection and idealization for purposes of vulgar sport and mercenary returns of a primitive, defensive instinct. Nature intends that these emotions, one and all, shall serve as stimulants to certain types of response necessary to the largest life of the individual and the race. When man's reflective will for certain schematic purposes separates these emotions from their natural motor activities a divorce arises between this ideal, imaginary world and the realm of actual conduct; and a question of paramount importance for religious pedagogy is the problem of restoring these emotional experiences to their original and proper function as elements of real life. The emotions are reservoirs of inspiration to activity. Love, hate, envy, pride, sorrow, joy, etc., are the mainsprings of life. The intellect in all its forms is but a tool in the service of the fundamental feeling-attitudes of the human mind. Hence to isolate an emotion from its setting and treat it as an end in itself is to disregard its natural function and, therefore, to do violence to the living unity of experience.

The singing of hymns of praise merely as a venting of sentiment which leads to no definite activity tends to produce cant. To see the deficiency of such hymns we have only to compare them with work-songs in which the emotional coloring of play transforms the daily toil of life into music. Here we see the true function of emotion. The emotional elements can be torn away from their setting in the unity of experience in the field of religion in precisely the same way as in other fields of experience. And the result is just as damaging. We have noted the place which the viscera play in the consciousness of self. Especially is this true in the case of the organs of sex whose functioning at early adolescence adds tremendously to the volume of the

emotional life. Now comes the awakening and development of a genuine sense of self with all its implications of a social and a divine life. To emphasize and bring external pressure to bear on this already abnormally heightened sense of self is a pedagogical crime. What is needed is a wise religious pedagogy which shall follow the inner development of adolescent life by way of interpretation rather than an attempt to force its experience into preconceived or adult moulds. What is desired is not the over accentuation of this sense of self but the wise drafting off of its overflowing energies into outgoing objective activities.

THE EMOTIONS AND THE INTELLECT.

That the emotions are deeper than the intellect is clearly seen in animal, racial and child psychology. The intellect is comparatively a new addition in the development of mind. Through the process of natural selection, it has been grafted on the active and feeling phases of experience because it served the purpose of control. Its elementary form is memory which reinstates images of past states of consciousness. Then as the imagination becomes more and more developed general ideas are built up and preserved because owing to the uniformity of nature they serve as tools of conduct in that they foretell what may be expected in the future on the basis of the past. But all the while the original stuff out of which actual experience is woven is to be found in the primordial feelings which accompany the activities of the living organism. In the brain we meet pictures, images, symbols for control. Knowledge gives relations between facts of experience but the elemental facts of experience are themselves the immediate, first-hand feelings and emotions coincident with motor activities. Animal and child psychology is abundantly clear on this point. The world of sensations, images and ideas is our changing external world, that of our inner feelings and emotions is the more or less permanent background of our sense of self. Which is more vital for conduct is apparent.

The way in which this process of intellectual control is brought about is through the selection of one native response or habit for another. Reason never creates a single native reaction toward any object. Thinking regulates, gives meaning to, establishes connections between, brings to light the causes of, the

facts of experience. It deals with the transitive phases of experience, but the immediate, substantive facts are deeper down. That A should love the particular individual B is determined by A's reason but that he should love at all is an original impulse of his nature which his reasoning process finds but in no way creates.

But because the emotions are on a deeper level than the intellect is only saying that they are immediately associated with inherited motor responses. Neither the intellect nor the emotions are by nature ends in themselves. If the emotions are deeper than the intellect it is no less true that it is the intellect which raises experience to the conceptual, that is, to the human, level. We have emphasized the fundamental nature of the emotions. Let us here emphasize the essential function of the intellect as one of control over the emotional and instinctive phases of experience. Even to-day an emotion when it is associated with religion has to many people an element of sanctity about it which puts it above intellectual control. This is a survival of the primitive notion that emotional possessions are the gateway of the divine into the human world. In this notion there still speaks the primitive, uncontrolled, pre-civilized type of experience. The sentence which Ingersoll puts in the mouth of the popular deity at the judgment in admitting the believer is this: Give him a harp! We need some pioneer work done in our hymnals and responses as well as in our sermons. Many of our hymns voice the moods of world-sick souls which can have no place in a militant, progressive, creative, world-transforming religious energism. We need more hymns on God like Holmes'

Center and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!
God in nature as seen in Addison's
 "The spacious firmament on high;"
Christ as depicted in Whittier's
 We may not climb the heavenly steeps
 To bring the Lord Christ down;

Christian activity such as we find in Gladden's "O Master, let me walk with Thee; the conception of Christ in Parker's "O Thou great friend to all the sons of men,"—these are concepts which appeal to the modern mind.

Emotions on the conceptual level are just as real emotions as those on the racial or instinctive level. It is a fact that if the scientific man could take his full-orbed cranium in good working order along with him he would more often be found at religious services. Many students who in the next generation will be leaders in the world's thought and action are practically excluded from active association with religious organizations because of this lack of coordination between the religious instincts and emotions and the ruling concepts of present day science. When we accept the evolutionary point of view that the feeling-attitudes are the mainsprings of life and conduct and that the function of the intellect is a regulatory and not a creative one, we will be in a position not only to tolerate but to invite and stimulate the utmost freedom of intellectual discussion in theology being firmly assured that religion has its sources in those levels of experience which are deeper than the definitive and exclusive currents of individual opinion. The emotions are racial, instinctive, common to all; the intellect is individual, voluntary, a synonym of individuality. Both are necessary to development. The only requirement is that the intellectual forms be expressive of actual, concrete experiences. And the way they work in practice is the only test of validity.

The emotions, accordingly, have an absolutely fundamental place in experience. The instinctive reactions with their characteristic emotional experiences constitute a level of experience far more fundamental in the life of the race than that of the intellect. This being so the emotions have a fundamental place in the education of the individual. The eye makes possible a world of color and form; the ear, a world of sound and music; the eye and hand create the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture. The level of emotional appreciation is deeper in the race and, therefore, in the individual than the level of intellectual analysis. The fundamental emotions are common to all and their education makes us democratic; the intellect individualizes and its development makes us exclusive.

What is most needed in society, without any exceptions whatever, is the educational method. The Religious Education Association stands for this educational method in the field of religion. In the long run most people will do the best they can. This

is the only hope of democracy. And what is needed from the churches is a form of training which will enable people to live in accordance with their religious aspirations. To condemn pride, anger, love of money, to preach asceticism is negative preaching. To transform pride into self-respect, to convert anger into courage, to teach the lover of money what to do with his money, to build upon the sex instinct as the basis of family life and therefore of the highest civilization, is to deal with life constructively. And if the reply be made that we are saved through Christ and not through education we need only answer that these two things are not exclusive. We are saved through Christ not as a theoretical construction of theology but as an actual incarnation of the divine in human life, and to reach this ideal all our practical energy, æsthetic appreciation and intellectual powers are needed.

James Herron Eckels

At the last meeting of the executive board of the Religious Education Association the following resolution was passed and placed on record: "Whereas, From the organization of the Religious Education Association until the day of his death, on April 14, 1907, Mr. James Herron Eckels was the treasurer of the Association, and during that time gave willingly counsel, support and faithful attention to its work, the executive board of the Religious Education Association desires to express its appreciation of his splendid and valuable services and to place on record their deep sense of loss through his death. To accept the office of treasurer at the beginning of this organization and to continue in it through the years of experiment and difficulty required a faith and devotion for which any words of praise are inadequate."