

FEELING, THINKING, AND THE FREE MIND

by Arthur E. Morgan

My application of the term "emotion" does not fully conform to the most customary technical usage. In that usage the word refers to a quick, perhaps explosive, response to some stimulus. I have more in mind, to use technical language, "a constellation or system of emotional dispositions," which is the psychologist's definition of the term "sentiment." However, in everyday usage, and increasingly in the language of psychology, the word "emotion" better fits the case, and I shall use it.

Some elements of our personalities may be much influenced in their development by the process of logical thinking. Other elements are emotionally, rather than logically, determined. For instance, a sense of fellowship or of brotherhood, though it may be approved and given greater status by reason, does not have reason for its source of origin. Whether its origin is in the cultural inheritance or is genetic, it usually comes through the channels of emotion rather than through those of logical processes. A very intelligent and learned man may lack a sense of brotherhood and an unlettered and simple-minded man may have it strongly developed.

In case of either high or low intelligence, whether a man has developed this trait usually will depend on whether he has experienced the emotional quality of fellowship in his associates and has responded to it with like emotion. In some degree that contact may be indirect, as through books, but unless there is a spark already present, a book probably will not start it. Once initiated, an emotional quality such as fellowship may grow by its exercise, by further experiencing the fellowship that others are feeling, or by the encouragement of logical thinking. But it is primarily an emotional, not a logical, phenomenon.

We come by emotional experiences not through reason but through revelation, if I may use a theological term for a natural, though mysterious, occurrence. When one experiences the love, respect, and trust of another, these traits may mysteriously come to exist in oneself. The

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biblical expression is technically sound: "We love him because he first loved us." The same is true of traits we designate as evil. We hate largely because we are hated; we are antagonistic because we are antagonized. Probably there is genetic predilection for most or all emotional traits, whether beneficent or malevolent, but usually there must be an emotional stimulus from outside to cause the traits to appear. This dependence of emotion upon stimulus for its original appearance seems to be the case even among animals. The bears in Yellowstone National Park, not having experienced serious hatred or antagonism, are embarrassingly unafraid.

Reliance of life on emotional control has had a continuity of many, many millions of years, far longer than that of the human race. The logical reflecting characteristics of men have existed for probably less than 1 per cent as long and are much less deeply rooted in our make-up. Little by little the reasoning processes are providing more of the information which directs our lives, but emotion is still the necessary motivational power. Not only does emotion determine most action, but it must provide the motivation for intellectual effort and for all purposeful living. Reason may appraise and criticize emotional traits, it may help arbitrate between conflicting emotions, providing information in favor of one against another, but it cannot displace emotion, or exist without it.

Intelligence can give direction to life but cannot give it motion. I often have likened a man's life to a ship, which has a rudder and a power plant or a sail. Intelligence may serve as the rudder and determine direction, while emotion is the power plant which drives the propeller, or the wind which fills the sail. Of course, the navigator uses a little energy of a special kind. He must have motivation to look at his compass and to turn the wheel. The motivation of the navigator may be a part of a much larger motivation, such as that of the shipping company which supplies the ship and fuel and determines the destination. However, looking at the situation on the ship solely as one of physical mechanics, the navigator uses enough energy to operate the helm but not enough to move the ship. It is the wind or the engine power that moves the ship.

The rudder that determines the direction in which it will travel is effective only if the ship is moving with respect to its medium. A ship in the Gulf Stream may be drifting several miles an hour, but if the ship is not moving in its medium, then the rudder is useless.

I am always suspicious of analogies, for one of their common uses is

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to switch the mind off a true course. Yet this analogy intrigues me, and I am going to pursue it further.

TOTAL LIFE PURPOSE

Human motivation is like that of a ship. Unless the life as a whole is moving against its medium, that is, unless it is purposeful, the process of inquiry, so far as giving direction to life is concerned, will tend in the long run to be neutral, except for adventitious effects of the inquiry. (It is the prospect of such adventitious results which may justify public support for "pure science.") For instance, intellectual inquiry in the field of ethics will not necessarily result in more ethical living.

We may illustrate inquiry which is not motivated by total life purpose from the life of the philosopher of ethics G. E. Moore. He has been called the greatest philosopher of a half-century. His most important writing was done near the beginning of this century while he lived a comfortable, sheltered, socially privileged life at Cambridge, at a time when English agricultural labor was sorely exploited and lived little better than cattle, and when much of English industrial labor was in little better plight. Moore could scarcely help being aware of these conditions, yet one finds little or no spirit of protest against them in Moore's writings on ethics.

Cambridge at that time was a place of intellectual freedom but also of social privilege. It had been much influenced by Aristotle's teaching that the highest experience of which man is capable is inquiry as an end in itself, without regard to any practical results. "Pure science" and "pure scholarship" shared this tradition. Moore's purely theoretical writings on ethics are characterized by that freedom and have genius, but when he came to write about the ethics of living he seemed to have little to offer. He held that, since in practice it is largely impossible to change things, one does well to take things as they are. If one lives in a society where stealing is customary, then he may as well follow that custom, for he cannot do much about it anyway.

Both in his free intellectual inquiry and in his practical acceptance of things as they are, was not Moore just drifting, as a ship might in the Gulf Stream? Lacking the emotional motivation of purposefulness, his ethical inquiry made little difference in his life. His way of living determined his thinking on practical ethics, rather than his ethical philosophy determining his way of life.

If intelligence does not rule the emotions through purposefulness, then the emotions will warp the intellectual processes and will determine the conclusions reached by reason. One's inner life strives to

achieve harmony by a sort of mental and emotional homeostasis. The more inflexible element may remain unchanged while the more flexible changes to correspond with it. If the intellectual life is an expression of strong purposefulness, then habit and emotion will be altered to produce internal harmony. If habit is strong and purpose weak, then the reasoning process will be warped until it harmonizes with the prevailing pattern of attitude and action.

In contrast to G. E. Moore, John Wycliffe was an intellectual inquirer whose impulse to inquiry was part of a larger motivation of purposefulness which governed his whole life. Not many men have pursued free inquiry to move further than he did ahead of the thinking of their day, or against more strenuous opposition. His free inquiry was perhaps like that of a judge whose passion for justice leads him to guard against prejudice in trying his cases. Wycliffe's thinking gave direction to purposeful action. He emotionally and intellectually transmitted that sense of purposefulness to his Lollard preachers, and they went to the villages and hamlets of England, sharing the life and burdens of the people, and transmitting Wycliffe's outlook and purpose. After withstanding two centuries of persecution and attempted extinction by the powers that be, that spirit still lived strongly and gave to England the relatively free and aspiring spirit of Protestantism, with outlook and method which naturally led to yet larger freedom. Wycliffe's Lollards and their successors substantially influenced the course of history, especially through the spirit transmitted in the settling of Pennsylvania and New England.

The far greater part of men's experience, interest, attention, and commitment relates to emotion rather than to intelligence. Emotion underlies all intellectual activity. The scientist would not inquire but for the emotion of curiosity, the craving to know. His science would be of small import but for his emotional commitment to scientific integrity. It is a major requirement of free inquiry that the inquirer free himself from emotional bias; but he achieves that freedom not by the absence of emotion but by his strong emotional commitment to the truth.

This dominance of emotion is imbedded very deeply in the nature and life of men. By and large, men judge other men by the quality and orientation of their emotions, and only secondarily by their intellectual conclusions. It is the import of that fact which is the gist of what I have to say here.

One of the most memorable occurrences of my life came when, more than seventy years ago, I listened to a talk by H. Dharmapala of Ceylon,

who later was recognized as the foremost Buddhist of southeast Asia. He had come to America to attend the First World Congress of Religions at Chicago. This was my first experience of meeting a fine intelligence and personality of a very different culture. The great freedom of mind and spirit which he seemed to possess, and which he pictured as at the heart of Buddhism, made a deep impression on me.

As I thought over his talk during the months and years which followed, there remained one problem that was not easily resolved. Dharmapala had told of the great days of Buddhism in India, when thought was free and inquiry was the spirit of the time. Women were on the same social and intellectual level as men, and in the Buddhist universities they debated with each other on the great issues of life.

What puzzled me was how that great and free culture came to disappear in the land of its birth, leaving India a region of ignorance, ethical and religious primitiveness, and squalor. The assumption had existed in my mind that, if once the barriers of mental and emotional servitude should be broken and inquiry should be free, that would be the beginning of a new age for men, with progress henceforth unbroken and accelerating. My dominant interest was not in personally having the thrill of freedom but in furthering, in however a small degree, the time when free minds and spirits, committed to the general good, would be characteristic of men. What was the reason, I asked myself, that in India that spirit of freedom and of human dignity so nearly disappeared?

Then later I learned that the Muslim world had taken much the same course. There was a time when Islam gave intellectual leadership to the world. During some of the dark days of Christianity it was, I understand, the Muslim world that preserved the treasures of Greek thought and passed them on to Europe. Then a shadow came over that great culture, and it largely passed into intellectual night. Early Christianity also had its day of ranging inquiry, when men asked themselves fundamental questions about life. Then again came an age of closed dogma and intellectual darkness. Free inquiry in Greece had a somewhat similar course.

Why have not such periods of intellectual freedom and inquiry been the precursors of new and enduring cultures on higher levels? Of course, there is no sole reason. The various theorizings of historians and anthropologists have made that evident. Nevertheless, I am going to present what in my opinion is a key reason why periods of great intellectual freedom have tended to be evanescent.

A few years ago I was interested in visiting the site of the great In-

dian Buddhist university of Nalanda, which once had an extensive plant and ten thousand students. One small item of history gave me a hint as to why free-thinking, inquiring Buddhism disappeared in the country of its origin. Along with freedom and inquiry, Buddha taught human fellowship and humility. One statement attributed to him is that if he were entirely prepared for Nirvana and should find a single human being in travail, he would feel compelled to forego Nirvana and share the lot of that man. But Nalanda University seems to have become primarily a place of intellectual activity. One item of its worldly possessions was an "endowment" of two thousand villages. Assuming a population of only two hundred and fifty persons per village, here were half a million serfs bound to the support of ten thousand students in their glorious process of free intellectual and spiritual inquiry, or whatever kind of inquiry had superseded it. When a horde of Mongols came through the country and, not knowing of the existence of such a thing as a university, took this to be some kind of military installation and slaughtered the entire university population, there had been no seeds planted among the common people which could grow again. How different was the course of events which followed Wycliffe's life.

WHERE LIBERALISM HAS FALTERED

The combined memberships of all religious fellowships in America which are committed to free inquiry, including the Unitarians, liberal Friends, liberal Jews, Ethical Culturists, Humanists, and a scattering of others, amount all together to less than one per cent of the membership of all our religious fellowships. Why is this number so small? (There are many others whose freedom is not that of intellectual and spiritual achievement but of intellectual infancy, and there are still others who have a somewhat longer theological tether than their forebears and call it freedom.)

It is not uncommon for members of these liberal fellowships to justify the small numbers and to compliment themselves by holding that it takes a high quality of intelligence to free man from the bondage of tradition and to appreciate the significance of free inquiry. I believe that is an inadequate explanation.

As I have become acquainted with many members of these various fellowships committed to free inquiry I have not been impressed by a general level of intelligence so distinctive as to constitute a separate class. While there are many members who personally have achieved freedom from conventional religious thinking, and have won intellectual and emotional freedom largely by their own deliberate efforts, yet

I have an impression that a majority of the members of these groups have their liberal alignment because of conditioning by their environment. They grew up in liberal families and continued the pattern, or while in a state of unconditioned innocence, perhaps of unconcern, came under the influence of a dynamic person or liberal group committed to free inquiry. I have known a number of simple-minded and largely uneducated men who, never having been conditioned otherwise, had the habit of thinking from cause to effect without mental or emotional bias in a way that would be representative of a free mind. My point is that a spirit of free inquiry is not antagonistic to human nature, at least so far as we are dealing with normal mentality and motivation, and that it does not require an especially superior intelligence to appreciate intellectual and spiritual freedom. It is not such a requirement which has limited the fellowship of free inquiry. (Doubtless some minor part of the population by its genetic constitution is insensitive to the distinctions between freedom and conformity. Whether these people constitute 3 per cent or 30 per cent of the population, I do not know.)

What, then, does limit the spread of intellectual and emotional or spiritual freedom? I believe it is largely the absence of strong emotional motivation on the part of free minds. We face an inherent and persisting human dilemma. On the one hand, true inquiry must of necessity strive constantly to keep free from emotional bias. Even where inquiry is a means to a more inclusive end, as when sociological inquiry is consciously a means to better government, this necessity for freedom from emotional bias is no less imperative. *As inquiry* it must not be enmeshed with living, or objectivity may be lost. In the fields of science and of other scholarship this freedom from emotional bias has been highly productive. Among its fruits are the world of scientific achievement and a vast growth of human insight and understanding.

But in the effort to free critical inquiry from the contamination of emotional bias there sometimes is what amounts to the repudiation of emotional motivation as such; a tendency, if we may be popularly idiomatic, to live in the head and not in the heart. In a fellowship where that attitude prevails, the total emotional resources of life may actually grow less. People of free mind may become emotionally parochial, limiting their fellowship and interests and identification to their own group and failing to achieve a feeling of identity with the universal humanness of the great body of mankind.

Sometimes among men of free inquiry both emotion and free, disciplined intelligence are strong but quite unharmonized. A person

may be impeccably objective in critical thinking in his field and yet in other respects may be governed by crude, primitive emotions. For instance, even great scientists have been known to be subject to strong professional jealousy. Every possible combination of emotion and free inquiry may be met with. Optimum living calls for active coincidental maintenance in good relation of these seemingly mutually exclusive traits of strong emotional drive directed by free critical, objective inquiry.

I repeat: the reasoning abilities of men are relatively young and immature and, among the mass of men, are not held in very high repute. The mass of men feel much surer in their judgment of emotional relationships, whether or not their sense of sureness is justified. One emotional relationship men rely on most and prize most highly is that of identification and fellowship. By "identification" I mean the sense of unity which may come to those who in some significant way have shared their lives and their lots. When men are fully certain of the identification and fellowship of any person or group of persons, then they tend to accept, often uncritically, any other accompanying cultural traits. If identification and fellowship are lacking, then any other elements of cultural pattern probably may not have deep or lasting acceptance.

In political life we see tawdry pretense of identification and fellowship, as in the candidate who is adept at shaking hands and kissing babies. This is especially the case where personal contacts are few and mostly at long range, so that judgment must be based on slight acquaintance.

Mahatma Gandhi, walking on foot for months and years, from village to village in India, learning to know his fellows and sharing life and fate with them, led them to be deeply convinced of his real identification with them and of his fellowship with them. As that assurance became nearly complete and without reservation, his influence became fabulous. He had earned that confidence. He held it in respect and endeavored not to betray or exploit it. The people sensed his integrity of personality. If Gandhi had been a sincere religious conservative, holding inexorably to the faith of the fathers, the people probably would have followed him in that. If he had repudiated the traditional religion, they probably would have gone far with him in that course. The sense of his identification with themselves probably would have overcome any reticence in other respects.

The great cultural traditions of common life—those by which men have been transformed from competing animals to neighbors, friends,

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and fellow citizens—from the time of their ancient origins have had unbroken continuity through many channels. But always these traditions are part of a total complex of emotional inheritance. They are transmitted from generation to generation by intimate contact, as one torch lights another.

One finds these continuities in the forests of Africa, in Indian villages, among the Eskimos, and in our own social groups, associated with a great variety of life philosophies and with many religions. Commonly they are associated with some unlovely traits. I lived for a time adjacent to a fellowship of extreme fundamentalists, some of whose ceremonials might have had a common origin with those of the whirling dervishes. The ancient cultural inheritance of this fellowship included traits of mutual helpfulness, integrity, courtesy, and open dealing. Persons joining this group were infected with those traits by intimate and repeated contact with them and frequently acquired them as part of their controlling motivation, along with what seemed to me to be an irrational and incongruous theology.

Whether intellectual freedom survives and spreads over the world, or whether it fades again and nearly disappears, may depend chiefly on whether it is associated with the emotional state which I have described as identification and fellowship. If free inquiry is an end in itself, as a game of chess may be an end in itself, then the rank and file of men will see it as something foreign; they will not associate themselves with it, and it may again prove to be an evanescent phenomenon.

In campaigns of political reform in New York, the reformers sometimes have been from among the elite. They were ready to correct the political evils in the interest of themselves and of the average man, but they were not ready to identify themselves with the life of the average man and to share life with him. The ward boss did go through the form, at least, of identifying his life with that of average people. Between these two possible loyalties, neither of which was ideal, the people so generally chose the semblance of identification exhibited by ward politicians that reform administrations in the past generally were short-lived.

Liberal religious fellowships usually have been associations of the elite. Liberals sometimes have been so concerned with the processes of intellectual inquiry, or so impressed by their own intellectual freedom, that their desire for identification and fellowship has not been strong enough to determine their way of life. The mass of the people, who appraise human relations by the degree of identification and fellowship they find, will not be moved in large numbers to cast their lot with fel-

lowships which have primarily an intellectual base but lack an adequate emotional basis. This, I believe, is a chief reason for the small following of liberal religious groups.

No mere strategy of identification will long succeed. Unless men of free minds are actually sharing their lives and identifying their lives with that great majority of the people who crave identification and fellowship, they will continue to be numerically a very tiny fraction of the whole of the people. The extent to which this intellectual and spiritual freedom is not just "self-expression" but a living religion can perhaps be measured by the degree to which this identification is desired and achieved.

In my opinion there is no inherent aversion on the part of the great majority of the people to freedom of inquiry. I believe they would gladly accept that way of thinking if it were intimately associated with the emotional relationships of identification I have referred to.

Such identification, such sharing the common lot, I repeat, must be real and not just a matter of strategy. It does not call for concession to mediocrity. The identity which Gandhi established with his people was not with their mediocrity or their gross nature. It was not based on acceptance of their orthodox conformities. It was with their fundamental humanity. Few men have called for more from those to whom they appealed or have offered less in the way of unearned felicity. The people believed, and I think that they were right in believing, that he did not ask of them more than he demanded of himself. Because the people believed that his identification with themselves was real, they gave him their loyalty. His identification was not just with themselves personally, but with the universal humanity in them. When he took a spectacular course, as in his salt march to the sea, he was not enacting a clever ruse to gain popularity but was focusing attention on an element of servitude and oppression. I am not an unqualified admirer of Gandhi, but I believe that in his real, unsimulated identification with his people he provided a valid illustration of a relationship which is fundamental.

Of course, not everyone should aim at a career like Gandhi's, on a large or small scale. The world needs housekeepers, physicians, research scientists, mechanics, and scholars, as well as public figures, but the quality of identification with humanity can be common to all.

THE FUNCTIONS OF FREEDOM

I have a strong passion for freedom—freedom from the grip of authoritarian beliefs, conventions, mores. I want freedom of mind to ask

ultimate questions and emotional freedom from the somewhat unrecognized bonds that make one fear to depart from conventional ways. I want freedom from the grip of obsolescent or untamed genetic drives and from the grip of inappropriate custom. As a ship without a rudder would have small chance of reaching a distant goal, so it would be with the life of men without reflective reason, and without the expression of intelligence in free inquiry. So rare is that freedom, and so much in popular disrepute, that it is a precious experience to experience the companionship of those who have it, or who seek it. The careful, disciplined, persistent work of scholarship, which clears away accumulated cultural debris and builds a foundation for understanding and mastery of the world and of life, seems to me to be one of the greatest possible services to men. Unless good intent is so implemented it may be futile.

Yet intelligence of itself does not move men, nor sustain in a man's life a sense of total unity of its many diverse elements. The over-all sense of unity within a man is provided by an emotional quality, and the over-all sense of unity among men, the sense of identity and fellowship—of community—also is an emotional quality. If we do not recognize that fact, are we scientific in that respect? If we do not act on that knowledge, are we not impractical?

The function of intelligence—of free critical inquiry—is to discipline and to sublimate what I have roughly called emotion, to give it direction, but not to ignore it or supplant it. The ruling force of life is not intelligence but the inner drives that I have called emotion. It is to the emotions, using the word in this sense, that mankind as a whole gives its attention and its over-all loyalty. Intelligence, guided by the drive or emotion of purposefulness, can refine, discipline, inform, and direct emotion, which, except for primitive genetic drives, has no self-direction. Man differs from the lower animals perhaps chiefly in that his drives or emotions can have this directing. But always, in the large, the function of reason is that of guiding and directing and not of supplanting emotion. To act as though reason has a right to a separate existence apart from emotion is to condemn reason to isolation and relative ineffectiveness and, in the long run, to partial extinction.

Liberal movements have tended to enlarge the function of reason and to minimize the function of emotion, until contact is largely lost between reason and that vast drive of emotion which we might call the heart of mankind. I believe that among the greater part of mankind there is no inherent disharmony between the nature of man and free, critical inquiry. Insofar as common men find that men of free inquiry have unsimulated identification and fellowship with the common life, in

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emotion and in fact, and not just in theory and superficial sentiment, then most men will accept free inquiry. The small membership of free religious associations occurs not so much because of incompatibility between human nature and intellectual freedom as because the intellectually elite have quite generally failed to identify themselves with the full life of mankind. The world is open to the religion of free minds, but the price is high.