

Emotions Rampant

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In another interesting article from the regular bulletin of the American TFP (Tradition, Family, Property, January 4th edition), John Horvat observes and criticises a widespread phenomenon of modern society – emotions running out of control, and dominating people’s lives. Again (cf. these “Comments,” 590 of Nov. 3, 2018), from a Catholic point of view, the international TFP may be open as an organisation to more or less severe criticism (notably for by-passing the true Church), but its American bulletin has many thoughtful yet accessible articles for today’s Catholics having to live in a godless world. *How Wisdom helps People Destroy the Dictatorship of the Emojis* by John Horvat is one of these articles.

An “emoji” is one of those small digital images or icons used to express an idea or emotion, especially the tiny smiley or frowny faces freely available on computers and easily inserted in a text to express any one of a variety of emotions. Horvat uses emojis as a concrete example of the frequency with which emotions figure in today’s society. He argues that emotions are not bad in themselves, but they are presently playing too large a part in daily living, with disastrous results for the whole of society. When people do not want to face the reality of a world that includes hardship and suffering, then feelings prevail over facts, says Horvat, and instead of thinking they emote, so that, for instance, raw emotions fuel the anger politics that are rocking the world. Where it hurts to have to think, in order to work out why the world’s problems are as they are, on the contrary emotions make me feel good, and so I prefer to emote. But emotions have a necessarily incomplete grasp on reality. Here is why many a good wife has valuable instincts and intuitions, but she recognises that these need to be subordinated to the normally higher reasoning of her

husband (not to his tyranny). And here is why our emotive politics of today are so crazy. And why the Newchurch of Vatican II and its Conciliar priests are so effeminate.

So why is reasoning superior to emotion? Because reasoning belongs to the higher part of man, to his mind and will, whereas human emotions belong to his higher and lower parts, to his passions and will. Certainly Our Lord and Our Lady had emotions. Our Lord wept over the grave of Lazarus (Jn. XI, 35). Our Lady suffered intensely when she lost her 12-year old Boy (Lk. II, 48). But just as by her reason she submitted her motherly grief to His mystery (Lk. II, 50), so He submitted 21 years later His human agony in the Garden of Gethsemane to the will of His Father in Heaven (Mt. XXVI, 39). For whereas all animals have sense appetite or passions, responding to sense stimuli from outside them, only the rational animal, man, has also the higher faculty of will which responds to intellective information fed to it by his mind. This intellective or rational dimension of man is wholly lacking to all the non-rational or brute animals.

Now nobody in his right mind accuses any non-rational animal of committing sin. At worst it is only following its instincts. This is because right and wrong are perceived only by man's mind and performed as such by his will. That is because only by having mind and will does man have a conscience aware of sin (Jn. I, 9), making him able to sin. That is why man's will must follow his higher reason and control his lower emotions, neither crushing them too tightly nor letting them completely go, but harnessing them in accordance with reason, with what his natural reason (Jn I, 9) tells him is right and not wrong.

It follows that if men want to sin, they will begin by dulling or obscuring their conscience, and they may well finish by denying that they have reason at all, and by affirming that animals are just as rational as they are. Anywhere in between they will let their emotions loose so that they no longer have

to think, but are free to wallow in their passions. Horvat does not go this deep, but in fact this modern unleashing of emotion is part and parcel of modern man's total war on God. God has only to get out of His own universe so that man can take His place, and do with it what he likes. Dear God, have mercy upon us!

Kyrie eleison.