

Editorial: Ethics according to Feelings?

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DOI 10.25784/jeac.v2i0.287



Dear readers,
“Although many of us may think of ourselves as *thinking creatures that feel*, biologically we are *feeling creatures that think*,” writes Jill Bolte Taylor in the book *My Stroke of Insight*. As bodily creatures, feelings have always accompanied people and directly trigger physiological processes: Joy often expresses itself in dance or leaps of joy, grief can cause tears to flow, anger sometimes shake the whole body. Do these emotions stand in contrast to ethical reflection, since they often trigger action devoid of initial, critical thought? The ancient Christian thinker Clement of Alexandria in this sense sketched the ideal of the perfect Christian, whom he considered “free from all emotions of the soul.” “Because [Christian] knowledge brings about self-control, and self-control brings about an attitude of absence of emotion: ... the fruit of the complete eradication of desires ... as well as of good affections” (*Stromata* 6.9.74). Or do they not perhaps behave quite differently? Do not the “good affections” have their own place and their own task precisely in ethical reflection? Are they not an indispensable part of the perception of situations that are fundamental for ethical decisions? Can or must ethics therefore be oriented “according to feeling,” or does it come “after” the human response of emotion? In any case, human decisions and thus ethical decisions are always related to the emotional situation of the one making the decision. They can be influenced or even motivated by them, but also consciously suppressed for the purpose of the decision. People, however, can also be “overwhelmed” by their emo-

tions and act “in excitement.” Such reactions are often individual and therefore difficult to generalize. As difficult as it seems to convey emotions with reasonable judgement, ethical reflection cannot take place without a consideration of the emotions.

This is precisely what this issue of the “Journal of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity” investigates. Biblical conceptions of emotions will be discussed as well as ancient philosophy and theology dealing extensively with human passions. The ancient world makes room for reflections about ethics, since here various considerations are made about the relationship between emotion, ethics, and other forms of human interaction. The following issue offers insights on this topic from various disciplines and positions (which must not necessarily align with the views of the editors). Some contributions take a closer look at emotions such as gentleness, wrath, zeal, anger, and fear. The editors hope that the reading may provoke positive reflections, and perhaps also “good impressions.” Should this provide stimulus for further thought, it would be a pleasure for the editors to receive offers for contributions in all categories of the journal (articles / miscellaneous / dialogue / theses / reviews).

We wish you an enjoyable read!

(Translated by Andrew Bowden)