



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 9, 2020

Our Age of “Feelings” Is Leading to Violence and Tyranny

“Passion governs, and she never governs wisely,” wrote Benjamin Franklin in 1775. It was a simple and sage warning, as true now as it was 245 years ago. Yet even this fundamental truth is under assault in our age of feelings. And with the rise of “[COVID Internment](#)” and the “[Mask Empire](#),” writes commentator Jack Newkirk, it should be clearer than ever that kowtowing to emotionalism brings consequences.

They’re apparent all around us. Even when there’s video proving police acted in self-defense in shooting a black suspect, riots still now ensue. It feels right, and that’s enough. It has long been known that the Wuhan virus poses less a threat to children than the flu, but schools are nonetheless closed. There’s no evidence that a person can change sex just by willing it, yet it’s now *de rigueur* to consider a boy a girl if he thus “identifies.”

Of course, there can be other motivations for the above phenomena, such as pushing destructive ideas as a means to achieve power. But not only is this immoral motive itself often emotion-fueled (seeking power can “feel right”), there also are millions who embrace the destructive ideas purely out of passion and in defiance of reason.

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Yet since it’s easy to get sidetracked focusing on specific manifestations of emotionalism (e.g., “transgenderism”), Newkirk reminds us that the deeper problem is the deification of feelings itself. “Feelings in and of themselves, divorced from reason and the sensitivity to contextual considerations, undermine the God-endowed dignity of the human person by diverting the mind away from truth,” he writes.

“Just because a person *feels* this or that most definitely does not mean, as the feelers among us assume, that their feelings are *infallible*,” he continues.

Of course not. Our feelings, by definition, *feel right* to us, always; they’re most alluring. But they can be the result of “a warped understanding of reality,” as Newkirk puts it; or of an “erotic attachment” to vice, as Plato might have said. Such is partially the result of a universal human experience: an imperfect upbringing in this imperfect world in which exist only imperfect parents.

Yet deifying emotion is even more dangerous than the above suggests. Consider: “It is critical thinking that is a selfless activity, for the engagement of critical thinking is a mode of self-transcendence,” Newkirk also writes.



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“The critical thinker seeks to trade in a universally human currency,” he later added. “Moreover, because critical thinking, like the language in which it occurs, is always, inescapably, *interpersonal*, the critical thinker seeks to make of others joint enterprisers in the search for truth.”

“The feelers, on the other hand, can’t get beyond themselves,” Newkirk continues. “Far from welcoming discourse with others, they are conversation-killers; they render intellectual intercourse with other human beings impossible.”

Some of you may now be nodding knowingly, thinking about a certain ideologically defined group whose members, to paraphrase Jonathan Swift, cannot be reasoned out of a position because they never reasoned themselves into it. And here’s the point: Relativists have often claimed that “absolutism” leads to violence because it breeds inflexibility. The reality is exactly the opposite:

It is only *the objective that can unite us*.

Truth (absolute by definition) is universal. Everyone, whether in Bhutan or Belgium, France or Fiji, can perceive principles such as that murder, theft, and rape are wrong. But a set of feelings is unique to a person. I cannot experience your feelings and you cannot experience mine — ne’er the twain shall meet.

This brings to mind a social-issues conversation I had years ago with an acquaintance and her son, which ended with her saying, “That’s just the way we *feel*, and you’re not going to change our minds.” Oh, our parting was amicable, and we went on our merry ways.

Yet the larger issue is that the matter we were discussing and others — from abortion to sexuality to policing to civil rights — must be settled in society and laws and social codes created. Disagreements must be ironed out. How can this be accomplished peacefully?

A certain “mediator” must be recognized: the objective — Truth. You and I may disagree; our feelings may diverge. If we’re willing to jointly seek and yield to Truth, however, we can find common ground. Our intellectual inquiry may reveal that one of us is wrong or that both are.

Submitting to Truth and reason, one or both of us will then alter our positions so that we’re finally of one accord. Oh, upon departing the resolution still may not *feel* absolutely right, as “the heart is slow to learn what the swift mind perceives at every turn,” as poet Edna St. Vincent Millay put it. But we’ll at least know that the resolution *is* right, objectively.

What can be done, however, if one or both of us won’t seek and yield to Truth? If we each stubbornly adhere to the subjective, our feelings, we then become like [Dr. Seuss’s North-going and South-going Zaxes](#), refusing to deviate from our emotions’ prescribed and conflicting paths. All we can do is butt heads. For if people cannot talk things out, they’re left to fight them out.

Of course, people won’t seek and yield to Truth if they don’t even believe in it. This is why our age’s prevailing relativism is so destructive and why I write so much about it. Why should I tame my instincts, my feelings, if there’s nothing above them dictating they’re wrong? Upon believing there’s no objective with which to measure the subjective, the subjective holds sway.

This is our actual problem today, the philosophical rot underlying the irrationality plaguing us. A nation of emotion-driven, stubborn people blind to Truth and worshiping their own lies cannot be at peace.

It’s only getting worse, too, as the attack on the objective intensifies. Years ago already, logic was dismissed as “white, male [and] linear,” and now some call “objectivity” a white norm. Even math is under assault, with the [recent claim](#), à la 1984, that 2+2 can equal 5.



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So it's no surprise that many people today are *unreasonable*. Reason isn't an answer, but a method by which answers are found. But if there's nothing objective, no Truth, then there are no answers to be found — and, hence, no reason for reason.

If you want to know where this leads, just remember that dispensing with reason yields unreasonableness — and unreasonable people fight more than they talk.



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