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Book Reviews

Feeling and Healing Your Emotions

Conrad Baars

Logos International, 201 Church St., Plainfield N.J. 07060, 1979. 277 pp., \$7.95.

Feeling and Healing Your Emotions is another in a series of books by the late Conrad Baars attempting to popularize psychiatry from a Christian perspective based on an interpretation of Aquinas by a Dutch psychiatrist, Anna Terruwe, and Dr. Baars. Other books by the author, including *Born Only Once* and *Healing the Unaffirmed*, provide a prelude to the primary importance given to the emotions in this book.

Although the author professes to be a Christian psychiatrist, he maintains that the human will is not free in certain circumstances. By not acknowledging that the primary reason for the fall of man was his will, he does not appreciate the primary action of the will in man's emotional life. Thereby, emotions are considered not only to originate on their own but also are pitted against each other without the influence of one's will. Not only is a child's behavior devoid of will but an adult masturbator also "does not even know that his will had been inoperative in the repressive process."

Denying the influence of the will in emotional life, or as often giving lip service to it, leads to various shortsighted views. The author assumes that a person fearing a sniper in the jungle "know(s) exactly what he is afraid of, and yet (is) not able to eliminate it at will." However, the predicted breaking point may relate more to guilt feelings for possible past murderous inclinations not acknowledged. There is little appreciation of how man inflicts suffering on himself by his evil inclinations which are not accepted as his own. Dr. Baars is more concerned with telling his patients their guilt feelings have no foundation than with looking beyond the alleged crime for the real act for which the person does not readily accept responsibility and which manifests itself in a subtle form.

Although Dr. Baars cleanses psychiatry of certain terminology like the id, ego and superego, he does not recognize the major philosophical position of Freudian psychology and all subsequent modern psychology, psychic determinism. In fact, Dr. Baars falls prey to this determinism — "... proof of the fact that the person's will has been eliminated from dealing with the repressed emotions. That person is incapable of utilizing his free will in the area of repression."

He is also caught up in the diagnostic process which he strains so to simplify for the layman that he fails to recognize the basic un-Christian motives for using psychiatric labels. They have always been used to write off certain individuals as hopeless cases not worthy of one's attention. Dr. Baars continues his tradition by so branding psychopathic personality disorders. Failing to see that a released thief may steal again to return to his customary home in jail, Dr. Baars can offer as an explanation only the patronizing hope that "a brain defect will be discovered soon." Freud maintained a similar hope for those branded psychotic. Whereas the early environment, i.e., parents, cause neuroses in the traditional psychiatric view espoused by Dr. Baars, the "psychopaths are born that way. For some yet unknown reason there is a constitutionally determined lack of control of the emotional life by the intellect." Dr. Baars has carved out a special niche for himself in the so-called neurotic disorders expanding the obsessive-compulsive to

include anxiety, depressive and phobic neuroses while relegating dull-witted hysterical neurotics to the psychoanalysts. Besides treating his and Terruwe's own discovery, the "deprivation neurotic" who was deprived of love when young and cowers in order to gain love as an adult, Dr. Baars is generous in reclassifying certain individuals preoccupied with their bodily processes and homosexuals as neurotic in order to bring them under his special purview. A truly Christian healing approach, on the contrary, welcomes all without pinning perjorative labels on people.

The diagnostic process is little more than a scapegoating process which always limits true understanding. Given Dr. Baars's special focus on the emotion of anger, his attributing his survival in a concentration camp to an unabated constant anger at his captors, and his oft-repeated Biblical dictum "Be angry and sin not," might we not expect more of an explanation of why a particular woman patient repeatedly made him angry than diabolical possession? Why could not Dr. Baars practice what he preaches in this instance? In spite of his frequent advice to others to consult professional psychiatric help, he consulted a priest in this case and all concerned seemed satisfied with the explanation that anger in this situation was an evil spirit which was subsequently exorcised.

By focusing on the individual treated instead of the relationship between the counselor and client or between the client and his family and friends, the diagnostic label isolates the person from his social relations or allows him to use them as scapegoats much the same as the person's emotions have been isolated from the will and intellect which are scapegoated. A long self-report of an avowed obsessive-compulsive attributes all his problems to an overbearing mother. His sexual fantasies allowed to run their course in Dr. Baars's emotion-acknowledging therapy are dismissed by Dr. Baars who compassionately replies that it is "sad you had to suffer unnecessarily." What about the father in this man's life and how was Dr. Baars related to the father image? There is no mention of father by this cured man "who face(s) anger with a fierce will." While Dr. Baars repeatedly claims will power is insufficient and even counterproductive in feeling and healing emotions, his star case has managed to face his emotion of anger "with a fierce will."

In this review which so far has been a diatribe against psychiatric determinism and diagnostic labeling, there is a need for a more positive balance at this time. The author's practical advice is usually wise, qualifying him as the effective psychiatrist he claims to be. His advice to acknowledge and resolve anger so as to avoid physical symptoms, depression or bitterness is valuable, especially complemented with the Christian message of forgiveness which allows one to forget the insults and not suffer adverse effects from such insults and a vengeful response to them, acknowledged or not. His warning to parents not to spoil their children and thereby deprive them of the development of the emotional life of desire and joy gives sound reason for this common sense approach. His recommendation to give thanks and praise to God for the beauties of nature, if not for the insults suffered by man, is a welcome acknowledgment of the spiritual dimension of human healing. His criticisms of sex education as isolating genital behavior from its meaningful context, assertiveness training as forcing emotional expression prematurely, T-groups as exploiting the need for expression of the pleasure emotions indiscriminately, are perceptive and pointed. He is not as familiar with the growing appreciation of couples in the Marriage Encounter movement with the benefits of natural family planning. Nor does he appreciate that the success of self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and Recovery Incorporated is due largely to their rejection of professional help and reliance on will power rather than in spite of them, given the deterministic, atheistic, and perjorative biases of the mental health professions.

A return to a more critical appraisal will conclude this review. Dr. Baars has had the apparent misfortune to spawn affirmation agencies, all of which he

emphatically unaffirms, or rather, disclaims as truly affirming agencies. Why no avowed professional followers of Dr. Baars are worthy of his affirmation, and, on the contrary, have prompted legal action on his part against such pseudo-affirming disciples, is tragic. Those in desperate need who read this book are likely to be referred to his other books or self-help tapes. The suicidal person is quickly requested to buy *Healing the Unaffirmed*. How many people on the verge of suicide will respond to such counsel? Those troubled with the suggestion they acknowledge sexual expression and that it is "not bad to feel this emotion" will also have to invest more money to find out how to do this with a clear conscience by buying more books and tapes of Dr. Baars. One of many contradictions in the book is the author's early admission of the greater impact of the pleasurable emotions, particularly those associated with the generative function, followed later by attributing the predominance of genital pleasure solely to pedagogic preoccupation with it. The postscript especially ranks as one of the most self-affirming pieces one may ever find in print with direct solicitation for his professional services provided one sends a self-addressed stamped envelope — a long envelope — to the identified address.

Baars's conviction that he has helped many people is not so much a credit to the soundness of his theories of mental and emotional health as to the magnificent capacity of man to rise above his suffering, whether caused by himself or another. He wills to be affirmed as a child of God Who loves him unconditionally whereas no one else, not even Dr. Baars, can. Such a love Dr. Baars insists is necessary for a person to be a healthy person who can bear the cross Christ gives rather than one self-made. One's promised happiness in this and everlasting life will then be fulfilled.

— George Maloof, M.D.

Ethics Teaching and Higher Education

Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok, Editors

The Hastings Center Series in Ethics, Plenum Press, N.Y., 1980, 315 pp., \$19.50.

This scholarly volume contains much of the research on teaching ethics in higher education in the United States which the Hastings Center produced with the help of grants from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Carnegie Foundation of New York. Although 11 of the 12 chapters are individually authored, their work reflects two years of intensive study by a pilot group of about 20 persons who met frequently and made use of some 30 papers and independent studies commissioned for this project.

Such a professional and thorough analysis of an issue of increasing importance — integrating ethics into American higher education and allowing ethics to integrate higher education — cannot be ignored by anyone interested in higher education. Much of the book's content will reinforce what readers already know, for example, the increasing interest in college courses in applied ethics, the intriguing efforts of contemporary psychology to uncover the process of moral development, and the wide variety of approaches to ethics as a discipline, to methodologies for teaching ethics, and various ways of evaluating ethics courses.