ART'S EMOTIONS

Ethics, Expression and Aesthetic Experience

ROUTLEDGE

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Contents

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Acknowledgements

At the Royal Wedding in 2011, the Bishop of London remarked, "As the reality of God has faded from so many lives in the West, there has been a corresponding inflation of expectations that personal relations alone will supply meaning and happiness in life." The occasion, and the sentiments expressed, would have appealed greatly to my friend, the late Peter Avery, an orientalist and Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, who had devoted his life to Persian poetry, and in particular to the works of Háfiz of Shíráz. As I was unbuttoning Peter's waistcoat after taking dinner in Hall at King's last night, it occurred to me that the present work's underlying idea, that art allows us to reconcile ourselves to the world in a way that personal relations cannot, was central to Peter's life as much as it was to his passionate study of Háfiz.

This book has its origin in a doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Professor Raymond Geuss, of the Faculty of Philosophy in the University of Cambridge, and the shadow supervision of Dr Hallvard Lillehammer, now of Churchill College, Cambridge. The extent to which I have succeeded in refining my chaotic thoughts into some sort of argument stands as testimony to my debt to Professor Geuss for forcing me at every turn to confront their initially inchoate nature. What will be less apparent is my debt to him for the forbearance with which he faced instalment after instalment of my "appalling prose". I am also indebted to Dr Lillehammer for his periodic assessment of the direction in which my work was developing, and for his suggestions and encouragement – not least for encouraging me to commence Chapter 1 in Aramaic, which he confirmed was possibly the only ancient language that Professor Geuss does not read. If so, it is certainly the only occasion on which both Jesus and I will have one up on Professor Geuss. Whereas I am grateful for the conscientiousness with which my supervisor and shadow supervisor discharged their obligations, my gratitude to Professor Derek Matravers, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, is of another order. He was under no obligation to read my work, and I have benefited not only from

the close attention he paid to the final draft, but from his insights into the popular overestimation of the value of happiness. This has reminded me of the persisting influence that Professor Richard Wollheim has had on both of us. It is an influence best summed up in Professor Wollheim's own words when explaining the influence that the aesthetes of the past had on him: "In one way I can clearly recognize [his] continuing influence: in an impatience I have after a little while with any form of culture that turns its back on history, or complexity, or melancholy."

We have Steven Gerrard to thank for the removal of the Aramaic and insertion of subheadings, which he assures me render the work eminently more appealing to discerning readers. But more importantly, we have him to thank for the very fact of publication. This is a fact only because of his commitment to publishing new authors – a rare and precious trait in contemporary publishers. In revising the manuscript for publication, I had the benefit of most perspicacious observations about the shortcomings of my PhD thesis in the reports of my examiners, Professor Malcolm Budd and Professor Sebastian Gardner, of University College, London. Once revised, Kate Williams undertook that most thankless task of attempting to iron out such flaws as have passed by the eyes of so many before her prior to publication.

But what would any of this matter, were it not for my mother? Would that I were able adequately to acknowledge my debt to her. Perhaps she knows it. I doubt it.

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Pembroke College, Cambridge

Is this so-called philosophy of art a mere intellectual exercise, or has it practical consequences bearing on the way in which we ought to approach the practice of art (whether as artists or as audience) and hence, because a philosophy of art is a theory as to the place of art in life as a whole, the practice of life?

R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*

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Introduction

The three perfections

In China, art that combines poetry, calligraphy and painting is known as a work of the three perfections.[1] The three perfections have long been regarded as the highest arts on account of their expressive qualities, and Shih-t'ao (1642–1707) was regarded as a master of all three expressive arts.[2] His masterpiece, *Returning Home*,[3] is a book of twelve pairs of leaves, each consisting of a poem written in calligraphy on one leaf and a painting on the facing leaf.[4] A pair of leaves such as "Gathering Lotus Flowers" is conceived of as a single entity.[5] What makes this a single entity? What is the sense in which the poetry, calligraphy and painting are unified to form a whole? The curators at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art would have us believe that this unity comes from the sense in which the three elements complement one another: the painting illustrates the poem; the calligraphy imitates the brushstrokes of the painting; and the poem is written in the calligraphy that imitates the painting that illustrates the poem.

This reading meets with several problems. It is not clear that the painting actually illustrates the poem: the poem speaks of fields of flowers and leaves, a boat gathering flowers, and bits of lotus floating on the water; whereas the painting is a simple line drawing – in the blank-outline style – of a single flower and several leaves. There is clearly some loose connection, but the painting is not an illustration; it is not an attempt to render into visual form the subject of the poem. And while it is possible to point out how the brushstrokes of the calligraphy resemble those of the painting, this is inconsistent with the history of the development of the three perfections. Painting was the last of the three arts to be elevated to the status of the perfections, and it acquired this status at the moment when painters mastered the ability to express their inner condition through their paintings in the way that poets and calligraphers had long been able to through their art forms.[6] So if there

is any imitation, we should be looking for how the painting technique imitates that of the calligraphy.

An alternative way of understanding the relationship between the elements of this work of the three perfections attends to each element's status as an expressive art in its own right. Each element expresses an emotional condition through a different artistic medium. I suggest that what gives unity to this work is not that each element complements the others by illustrating or imitating them, but that each in its own way expresses emotion. What gives unity to the work is that the expressive power of each of the poem, painting, and calligraphy operate in concert to offer a special experience of emotion. Shih-t'ao's achievement is to create this "harmonized" affective experience through his command of each of the three perfections.[7] This interpretation, I suggest, allows for a deeper understanding of the unity of *Returning Home* as a work of the three perfections, one that draws on its components' common status as expressive arts. If we are to understand it in this way, however, the natural question to ask is: what is this special emotional experience that we have when we engage with each of the three perfections?

An emotional experience of art

While there may be a number of possible readings of *Returning Home*, any satisfactory reading will have to provide an adequate account of the relationship between its three elements: the poem, calligraphy and painting. We might try to understand the relationship by studying the techniques that each element employs and how these have been manipulated by the artist so as to complement each other. We might try to understand why the critic employs similar language to describe each of the three elements and try to understand what is similar about the way he uses language in his response to each of the three elements. But neither of these endeavours would help us to understand what is fundamental to the genre. The genre is fundamentally an expressive one that brings together three expressive arts. We need to understand what it means for the three elements of the work to offer its audience a harmonized expressive experience.

The reading that I have offered of *Returning Home* maintains that what is fundamental to its unity is the way in which the experience of each of the poem, calligraphy and painting are "harmonized" in order to provide a special emotional experience. This places phenomenology at the core of an appreciation of the work. If the phenomenology of the experience of a work of three perfections is fundamental to understanding the genre of the three perfections, we need to understand what this special experience is and how to give an account of it.

What do our experiences of poetry, calligraphy and painting have in common that is distinctive and valuable about them as experiences of the expressive arts? There is something that the experience of reading a poem about a man in a boat has in common with the experience of looking at a painting of a lotus flower, but which is lacking in the experience of actually seeing a man in a boat. Understanding the expressiveness of the three perfections is a matter of understanding what our experience of the painting of the flower has in common with our experience of the poem about the man, and which distinguishes both of these from the experience of seeing the actual man. In other words, there is something about the emotional experience of art that differs from other emotional experiences, and it is this difference that we must analyse in the following chapters.

Understanding this special emotional experience is not merely the key to understanding the genre of the three perfections. It is also the key to understanding the philosophical problem of the expressiveness of art. The three perfections are each expressive arts, and what unifies a work that employs all three is the relationship between the expressiveness of each element. What is fundamental to understanding their expressiveness is the emotional experience that each offers. The philosophical problem presented by the expressiveness of art is fundamentally a question about the nature and significance of our emotional experience of art, and so it is this that we must investigate.

A distinctive experience of art

Given that we seek an account of the emotional experience of works of art, how ought we to go about giving this? There are two questions that we should want to ask about such an experience: what is distinctive about the emotional experience of art; and what is valuable about this distinctive experience?

We can determine what is distinctive about a particular kind of emotional experience by placing it in the wider context of our other emotional experiences. We begin with a survey of emotional experiences, and consider the sense in which they are similar and the sense in which they differ from one another. This enables us to determine the different kinds of emotional experience that are possible and the components of such experiences, so that we can identify which components account for the distinctiveness of each kind of experience. We can then determine the sense in which our emotional experience of art is continuous with our other emotional experiences, while also isolating what, if anything, distinguishes our experience of art from other emotional experiences.

This approach appears to be in sharp contrast to that adopted by John Dewey in *Art as Experience*.[8] Dewey wants us to see that aesthetic experience does not need to be conceived of as something fundamentally different from ordinary experience. In this way, he departs from the Kantian tradition, which seeks to characterize the aesthetic nature of aesthetic experience by pitting it against ordinary experience as a distinction between interested and disinterested attention to an object.[9] Dewey argues that aesthetic experience is not a variety of experience to be distinguished from ordinary or practical experience, but rather is distinguished by the way in which the affective and perceptual parts of the ordinary experience are unified in a way that they are ordinarily not unified.

What is interesting about Dewey's approach, for present purposes, is the sense in which ordinary experiences are thought to shed light on artistic experiences, and vice versa. Dewey regards all experience as having a uniform structure, and while aesthetic experience is continuous with ordinary or practical experience, what distinguishes it is the sense in which it is an exemplary instance of the ordinary experience. This suggests both a similarity and a difference between Dewey's approach and that which is developed below. Whereas Dewey argues that all experience has a uniform structure, we shall see that the emotional experiences of our ordinary life have different structures. The emotional experience of art is not continuous with the emotional experiences of ordinary life because it shares their same structure: how could it be when the other experiences do not all have the same structure? Rather, it is continuous with the other emotional experiences because it incorporates them into a single experience. So there is a distinctive way of experiencing emotion in art, but it is not a way that is additional to our ordinary experience of emotion. It is a matter of having an experience in which each of the ordinary ways of experiencing emotion are combined into a single way of experiencing emotion. Thus, just as Dewey emphasizes the sense in which aesthetic experience is to be understood in terms of ordinary experience, so we find that the emotional experience of art is to be understood in terms of the variety of other emotional experiences.

A valuable experience of art

Does the emotional experience of art have any particular value on account of its distinctiveness? In order to answer this question, we need to determine what would give value to such an experience. The measure of value that I shall suggest is relevant is what contribution, if any, such experiences make to human flourishing. Why would we prefer a life in which the emotional

experience of art is a possibility to a life in which it is not? If the experience does have some special value, it will have to be a value that it has in virtue of what is distinctive about it. Given that the distinctiveness of the experience is derived from the way in which it combines ordinary experiences, it is this combining that will have to be shown to make a valuable contribution to the good life.

Just as we determined what is distinctive about the experience by comparing it with other experiences, we can now determine how this distinctive experience enriches our lives by asking why we should prefer this distinctive emotional experience to other kinds of emotional experience. So the way to understand the expressiveness of art is to understand the emotional experience it offers, and the way to understand what is distinctive and valuable about the emotional experience art offers is to understand this kind of experience in the context of the variety of other kinds of emotional experiences that are possible. We shall find that there is a contribution that the emotional experience of art makes to the good life that other emotional experiences cannot make. By combining other kinds of emotional experiences as aspects of a single emotional experience, the experience engages the agent's emotional condition more completely than the other experiences do. This, we shall see, meets a deep need for emotional engagement.

This approach to value is also very much within Dewey's tradition. Dewey regards value as serving some need that helps the organism to cope with its environment. For him, aesthetic experience is valuable because it engages the individual more fully than any other experience does. The emotional experience of art that we shall consider below, it will be argued, engages the perceiving agent's emotional condition more fully than any other emotional experience, and in this way it is able to allow for an experience that alleviates emotional isolation through emotional engagement with the world in which it perceives emotion. As in Dewey's aesthetics, the experience is valuable for the contribution that it makes to our practical life. This places it in sharp contrast to the Kantian tradition, which characterizes aesthetic experience as something separate from practical life.[10]

Overview of the argument

The account of the emotional experience of art developed in the following chapters moves through four distinct phases. First, we shall require an account of emotion that can be used to analyse our experience of art. Second, we shall consider illustrations of different kinds of experience that involve both perceiving emotion and the perceiver's own emotion. Third, we shall analyse the emotional experiences that have been illustrated, and in

doing so we shall determine what is distinctive about the emotional experience of art. Finally, having developed an account of what is distinctive about the emotional experience of art, we shall enquire into the significance of the distinctive emotional experience of art.

So we begin by considering the nature of emotion. Chapter 1 opens with a discussion of an experience of fear, and the senses in which the experience involves both a phenomenological state of being in fear and a fear-disposition – or an impulse – that gives rise to various mental and bodily phenomena, including the phenomenological state. As we see in William James's classic account, a proper analysis of the experience should account for both of these components. Such an approach allows us to consider all the aspects of the non-artistic experience and ask whether they are present in the experience of a work of art, and if so, in what sense they are part of the experience. The theory that is developed to account for this is an account of emotion as an economy of mental dispositions and mental states, and this is contrasted with Jenefer Robinson's theory of emotion as a process.

The stage is then set for Chapter 2's account of experiences of emotion in the world. We have experiences of our own emotions, as discussed in Chapter 1; for example, we feel sad. We are also aware of the presence of emotion in the world around us, and we have experiences in which we perceive this; for example, we perceive somebody else to feel sad. More often than merely perceiving emotion in the world, however, we have an emotional experience of the perceived emotion; for example, we feel sadness, or pity, or joy, or nothing at all, when we perceive somebody else to feel sad. In such experiences, there is an interaction between the perceived emotion and the perceiver's own emotion. It is this interaction that we need to investigate. In doing so, we must consider how such investigations into perceptual properties relate to the debate about the reality of aesthetic properties that Frank Sibley's work has spawned, and which continues in response to Jerrold Levinson's defence of this position. But, primarily, understanding the interaction requires an account of how the perceiver comes to perceive a psychological property – such as emotion – in the world.

There are, I shall suggest, two ways in which we can perceive emotion in the world around us. First, we might conceive of what we perceive as a subject that possesses a psychology. In this case, our perception of emotion is the perception of the externalization of what the perceived subject is feeling. This is the sense in which a baby's cry externalizes or expresses how the baby feels. Second, we might not conceive of the object as possessing a genuine psychology, but we might conceive of it as being appropriate to project our own emotion onto. In this case, we can perceive the object to possess a projective emotional property. This is the sense in which Wordsworth might be thought to have perceived the daffodils to be jocund. In some cases, only one

of these two forms of perception is possible; in other cases both are possible. The difference between perceiving externalized properties or projective properties, or both kinds of properties, gives rise to the variety of emotional interactions that we shall investigate.

Chapter 3 provides an account of the different experiences in which the perceived emotion and the perceiver's emotion can interact, and discusses the relevance of externalized or projective properties for such experiences. The first of these interactions – "infection" – is an experience in which the perception of an emotional property is attended by the perceiver's feeling an emotion identical to that which he perceives. The second kind of interaction is that of "communication", in which the perception of emotion is not attended by the perceiver's feeling the same emotion, but by his feeling some other emotion in response to that which he perceives. This is the experience that most commonly occurs in human interaction when, say, the perception of another person's fear is experienced by the perceiver with his own feeling of pity. The third kind of interaction is "articulation". In this case, the perceived emotion does not prompt the perceiver to feel the emotion he perceives or any other. Rather, it encourages him to comprehend for himself the nature of that emotion. The perception of an emotion does not necessitate that the perceiver comprehends it: to comprehend an emotion is something distinct from perceiving or feeling it. So we need an account of what it means to comprehend a feeling, and the experience in which a perceiver is prompted to do so.

These different interactions are treated as discrete experiences in Chapter 3. They might also, however, form aspects of a single experience. Chapter 4 provides an account of the kind of experience that combines all three interactions, an experience I call the plenary experience of emotion. It is at this point that a theory of artistic experience emerges. We find that, in the case of works of art, we can perceive both externalized properties and projective properties in the same object, whereas we can only perceive externalized properties or projective properties in other objects of perception. For this reason, all three interactions can form aspects of an experience of a work of art. This creates the possibility of a distinctive kind of emotional experience, one that only occurs when we engage with a work of art.

It is not enough, however, to identify a distinctive kind of experience, unless we can say what is valuable about that experience. In Chapter 5, we consider why the possibility of having a plenary experience of emotion makes a valuable contribution to human flourishing and, hence, why art, as the object of such an experience, is intrinsically valuable to us. It is the intrinsic value of the experience of art that is linked, by Malcolm Budd, to its artistic value. So the plenary experience of emotion will count as an artistic value if its value is shown to be intrinsic to the experience of the work of art.

Roger Scruton connects the idea of feeling at home in the world with the value of art through his account of beauty. I suggest that it might also be connected to art through the emotional experience offered by art. The argument developed in Chapter 2 makes use of the idea that, in addition to having our own emotions, we are able to perceive the presence of emotion in the world. In Chapter 5, certain consequences of these two capacities are investigated. In particular, it is argued that a creature capable of having an emotional response to the world needs to be able to respond to the emotions that he perceives in the world if he is to feel at home in the world. Failure to respond in this way will result in emotional isolation. The desire to escape emotional isolation provides the basis for understanding the value of the plenary experience of emotion.

The different interactions that form part of the plenary experience each involve an engagement with different parts of the emotional economy. Drawing on the idea of a characteristic mixture of activity and passivity that Naomi Eilan developed in relation to perception, and which Peter Goldie has suggested might be applied to emotion, Chapter 1 argues that, although we are either active or passive in respect of each part of this economy, the emotional economy can be understood in terms of its characteristic mixture of activity and passivity. Unlike the discrete experiences that involve a single interaction, the plenary experience is an engagement that involves both emotional activity and passivity. This engagement with the whole emotional economy enables us to escape emotional isolation. Because art alone offers us the plenary experience, it is uniquely positioned to offer us the requisite emotional engagement for escaping from emotional isolation. In this way, our emotional experience of art offers a unique contribution to the good life. In proposing such a link between the emotional experience of art and ethical life, it is necessary to consider how this claim relates to the relationship between art and morality as this has been understood by other theorists, such as Berys Gaut, in his work on the ethical criticism of art.

Wollheim's influence on the argument

The ideas and general philosophical approach of Richard Wollheim are frequently to be found beneath the surface of this argument.[11] There are four aspects of his philosophy that have exerted a profound influence on my own. First, his interest in art and emotion rejects any attempt to focus on linguistic concerns.[12] Rather, he characteristically begins his analysis by considering features of our experience. This is the second influence: a contemplation of some aspect of the phenomenology of an aesthetic or affective experience that the philosopher's intuitions suggest holds the key

to explaining the experience.[13] Third, the explanation of the key aspect of the phenomenology of experience often involves having recourse to a depth psychology not commonly consulted in analytic philosophy.[14] For Wollheim, this means the hypotheses of Kleinian psychoanalysis. Within the more generous conception of mind accommodated by the depth psychology, Wollheim is able to explain highly sophisticated activities, such as aspects of artistic appreciation, in terms of much more basic – or archaic – mental functioning. This introduces the fourth influential aspect of his approach. Once features of the mind's primary activities are identified (whether these form part of the depth psychology or ordinary psychology), Wollheim seeks to show how aspects of the remarkable breadth of human experience can be explained in terms of the redeployment of more basic features of our primary experiences in ways that give rise to highly sophisticated secondary experiences.[15] So, for instance, projection is primarily a defence mechanism in psychoanalytic theory. But Wollheim attempts to demonstrate how it is possible for this capacity, once in place, to be redeployed in a way that accounts for our more sophisticated capacity for expressive perception.[16] While I do not always agree with the way in which Wollheim argues that mental functioning is redeployed, the idea that the features of ordinary experience can form the basis for more specialized experiences is at the core of my account of the ways in which we perceive emotional properties in works of art.

What makes this a legitimate philosophical approach is Wollheim's conception of the philosophical project and the nature of philosophical explanation. In the introduction to *On the Emotions*, Wollheim explains that his work is an exercise in applied philosophy, and he identifies three features that distinguish applied philosophy from pure philosophy.[17] First, whereas the method employed in pure philosophy is conceptual analysis understood as linguistic analysis, applied philosophy supplements linguistic analysis with whatever else will serve its needs, for example observation, experiment, common usage, and even traditional lore. Second, applied philosophy does not aim at conceptual necessity, but at the lower standard of theoretical necessity: it aims at giving an account of how things happen to be, rather than how they must be in all possible worlds. Finally, applied philosophy studies the more general features of this world or a fragment thereof, whereas pure philosophy is concerned with giving an account of things as they must be anywhere. Like Wollheim, I am inclined to think that the study of emotion, art and the deeper parts of the mind benefits from such an approach, and I conceive of this study as an exercise in applied philosophy. I shall not endeavour to argue why this is the best approach, but any headway that the project makes will stand as testimony to the value of studying the subjects in this way.

So this is a study of the possibilities that our emotional nature holds for our interaction with the world, and of one possible experience that art offers on account of our capacity for these different emotional interactions. My account is not intended to explain what actually happens whenever we attend to a work of art. Rather, I have tried to explain what might happen, and why it is important for human flourishing that this is possible. It is, then, a study of human possibilities: of what we are capable of, and of how this enables works such as *Returning Home* to enrich our lives.

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> the flesh. We are made to feel their pain with our eyes. And pain is the protest of the body.
>
> Just as Picasso abstracts sex from society and returns it to nature, so here he abstracts pain and fear from history and returns them to a protesting nature … Picasso appeals to nothing more elevated than our instinct for survival.[6]

Berger speaks of the painting prompting us to feel pain *with our eyes*, and of the painting engaging with an instinct. At this point it is unclear to us what it would mean for us to perceive such emotion in the painting. But it seems clear that Berger takes for granted that this is what happens, and that in some way this perception engages with certain emotional states and instincts or dispositions. Exactly what it would mean for this to occur requires philosophical analysis.

We would want a philosophical account of our experience of art to explain what it means for Rembrandt to create an image in which the spectator sees fear, and for this to engage with the spectator's fear. And we would want the same analysis to account for how Picasso's very different painting can achieve a similar effect in which the spectator sees suffering and this engages with the spectator's suffering. Such an account would explain how the artists seek to engage either or both of the spectator's emotional states and emotional dispositions. The analysis of emotional experiences of art in terms of the engagement with emotional states and emotional dispositions enables us to compare the experience of looking at *Belshazzar's Feast* with that of looking at *Guernica* by identifying what they both aspire to, and evaluating which is more successful. Armed with this theory, we are able to explain why Picasso's picture might be regarded as more successful than Rembrandt's, if it is better able to engage with both our emotional states and dispositions. It also allows us to compare how fear-states and fear-dispositions attend our experience of looking at *Belshazzar's Feast* with how fear-states and fear-dispositions might have attended Belshazzar's own experience of the hand writing on the wall at the feast. Indeed, it shall be a recurrent theme of mine that we can only properly understand the emotional experience of art when our analysis allows us to compare the experience of *Belshazzar's Feast* with both other artistic and non-artistic experiences of emotion.

This suggests that what is required is an analysis of fear-experiences in terms of fear-states and fear-dispositions and an account of the different ways in which these mental states and mental dispositions attend artistic and non-artistic experiences. A quite distinct project would begin by asking which of the components of Belshazzar's fear-experience we should identify as the fear-emotion. Are we able to say whether his fear-emotion is more fundamentally the fear-state or the fear-disposition that gives rise to the

emotion in any of these three ways. Critical attention has focused on Chapter 25, "The Emotions". This has led James's interpreters to locate his full analysis of a fear-experience in the analysis he offers of emotion in terms of the felt experience of a bodily state. On this reading, James argues that one component of the experience (the fear-state) is fundamental to the experience and all that is required is the proper analysis of this component. However, when we appreciate that the preceding Chapter 24, "Instinct", deals with another aspect of experiences such as fear (the fear-impulse), it becomes apparent that James might be read as identifying two components of the experience and offering a discrete analysis of each. If James does identify two components of the experience, we might then wonder whether a better interpretation would not involve reading the two chapters together as providing a unified account of two components of a certain kind of psychological experience, rather than as two discrete accounts of distinct psychological concepts.

When James is read as providing an account of two discrete psychological concepts, Chapter 24 is concerned with instinct as an impulse to action and Chapter 25 is concerned with emotion as the feeling of a bodily change. For James, instinct is the faculty of acting to produce ends without foresight of those ends, or without previous education. Instinct is a reflex action: an impulse. However, these impulses are not blind. An individual's early experience of the impulse creates expectations that either reinforce the impulse or inhibit it. In this way, action is a function of instinct as modified by the life that the individual leads, and the impulse can be seen to evolve over the course of an individual's life history. To suggest that impulses are reflexive is also misleading for another reason. Contrary instincts might act upon the same object, and the resulting conflict might block one of the instincts, thus diminishing the predictability of the reflex. Instincts can also be inhibited by habit. Partiality to the first specimen might make an agent unresponsive to subsequent specimens. Furthermore, some instincts are transitory and, having matured at a certain age, fade away unless a habit is formed. What all of this tells us is that the impulses that determine how we respond to situations are instinctual; but they also run a course that is influenced by the vicissitudes of the agent's life.

In Chapter 25, James provides his famous account of emotion as the feeling of bodily changes. He argues that "the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion".[9] In making this claim, his principal concern is to refute the commonsense intuition that bodily changes are consequences of emotions. Thus, although we think that we weep because we are sad, in fact we are sad because we weep. It is a fact, for James, that a pre-organized mechanism enables perceived or imagined objects to excite bodily changes, and every one of these changes is felt when it occurs. That these feelings are