

## Emotions, Emotional Development and Protosystem Thinking by Thérèse Woodcock



As we have seen from the exposition of Protosystem Thinking, the nature of its working is very powerfully bound up with the emotions. The question may now be properly asked

Why do we have emotions?

What function does emotion serve within the total psyche?

What do we mean by emotional development?

To answer these questions, I would like to suggest that we look at two aspects of what we generally mean by emotions. One is DESIRES; the other is FEELINGS.

Today, I can only touch upon these two aspects briefly. But I hope to give you a sufficient idea, for you to go thinking about them for yourself.

### **I would like to take DESIRES first**

Desire is what Lowenfeld, when speaking about children, called 'the wish life of the child'. Now the wish life of the child is not fundamentally different from that of an adult and is intrinsic to the psychic life of people. It is Desire which sustains us towards the goal of survival and continuity, the psychic aspect of which is immortality; it is the energy, the E, of Desire which takes us forward, through our lives. Perhaps this is why we often hear people say 'She died because she no longer wished to live.; In ordinary life, we would probably know it as Motivation.

Of the number of desires mentioned by Lowenfeld in relation to the child, I will now only speak of three: that of the Desire for Knowledge, the Desire for Power, and the Desire To Be Looked At. I will also be including one of my own: the Desire for Relationships.

(1) First then is CURIOSITY, the Desire to Know, which is the basic energy behind the drive to know through patterning. Without curiosity we would be living in chaos. Curiosity is the hallmark of our Desire to Know, it is the primary requisite for maximising our adaptive potential. So this Desire for Knowledge is essential for our survival.

We can readily see in Curiosity a direct link between E and Protosystem Thinking. There are many ways of knowing; and all these can be developed, some more consciously than others. For instance, Western society at present day sees a value in developing our capacity to communicate in language, verbal language. That is, our society channels our curiosity, our drive to know, into a specific kind of learning, to develop a specific way of knowing through the pattern of language.

(More and more, however, this channel has been widened to include the language of computers, possibly a more universally accessible language, since it's based on only two

numbers – zero and one – although for social intercourse, it is still inextricably linked to verbal language.)

In this country, laws are promulgated to ensure that every child attends a school for eleven to twelve years of its life; certain standards are set and ways and means are devised, like examinations, to see how far someone has attained those standards. There is a move towards giving primacy to verbal language at an ever younger age. The latest National Curriculum requirement for numeracy in young children is not so much an understanding of, for example, the pointedness of cones, but in the word used to describe it. Answering “spikey” or “pointy” would give the child no marks at all, and as far as the inspectors are concerned that child would have failed.

Thus such basic notions of “what we become interested in, what kind of questions occur to us, are profoundly influenced by the culture in which the questions are being formulated. If we look back in our cultural and intellectual history, we can see that only certain ideas are developed and others not. Conversely, one can also see that other ideas had been present all along but had lain undeveloped and neglected until it became possible for them to be at least thought about further. So, for ideas to become accepted in the originator’s lifetime, the timing of their exposition is crucial. Lowenfeld’s ideas is a case in point.

Taken from another point of view, however, at the beginning of a life, the kind of questions we ask are clearly not formulated in words. They are perhaps not even formulated in the sense we understand the word “formulation. Equally obvious is the fact that “answers”, again not in the sense we usually understand the word “answer”, have been found, but in the sense that we gain increasing knowledge and understanding of the world about us as we grow and develop. So how do we begin to learn about ourselves and the world around us.

Learning, in Lowenfeldian terms and in this case, would mean that we use the whole of ourselves, our Protosystem Thinking through our senses, our bodies energised by E, motivating us through curiosity, to understand the world around us and develop a “picture” based on the totality of our own sensorial experiences and the emotions these arouse in us. To begin with, an infant is merely aware of its sensations and trying to make sense of the experience. However, as we grow older, it is the awareness and valuing of our ignorance, allied to curiosity which brings forth the fruit of knowledge.

Let us see if we can find an ordinary example of thinking multidimensionally through the use of our senses: How do we know that the person walking towards us is a stranger or a friend? How do you know that it is I sitting here? This is clearly a different kind of knowledge from the kind of knowledge required for knowing whether the piece of furniture before you is a stool or a table. But they all have one thing in common, such knowledge is multidimensional and apprehended through our senses.

From this point of view, the idiosyncratic nature of our individually gained knowledge may very well conflict with the knowledge which society has deemed to be true facts. Here is a

fundamental source of potential conflict and misunderstanding which could bedevil. Our relationship with the children in our care. Have you ever come across children, who have been deemed naughty by adults, but who feel quite outraged and indignant about the allegation, who truly feel unjustly accused?

(On a different tack, it may be interesting to note that young children usually use "Why?" positively, and it is only gradually that they begin to ask "Why not?". Is it only my fancy that at the what is commonly called "terrible two" stage, children will say "No" but not "Why not?" For a child that age, all things are possible. It is only gradually that a child acquires a knowledge of a sense of limits to possibilities. Our observation that children test out limits is part of this process, and is not simply a matter of rebellion against adult authority. To the adults, the latter is the negative aspect of what should be regarded as a normal process of learning about the world we live in.

For those of you who keep up with neonatal research in the field of cognitive psychology, I would like to ask whether you have noticed what seems to me to be the case, that research in this area relies mainly on the baby's "curiosity factor: looking at or looking away = interest or boredom" to tell the researcher what's happening in the infant's mind.)

To return then to "Curiosity": The moment you hear said that a child isn't curious about anything or even more subtly: "O she learns very well, but she isn't curious about anything" (Lowenfeld), you know that the channel for this Energy, the channel for true learning, is blocked in some way. In fact, I expect we have all experienced this. How many of us can remember all that we had *learnt* to pass our school examinations?

It is however, a much more serious question I wish to address. I want to know where original ideas come from. Not just out of curiosity, but because I think we seem always to be dealing with the present or even planning for the future, based on past experience.

This means that in spite of our secondary system (using words and based on linear logic) thinking, which allows us to think and plan ahead, our reference point is in the past. So it seems to me imperative for human beings as a whole, to understand, harness and promote our abilities for original thought. That is why I want to know where original thought comes from. And this is why I think the concept of Protosystem Thinking is important. It is the idiosyncratic nature of protosystem thought which makes it possible for new insights to be gained, for new juxtapositions of facts and ideas, for a fresh view.

(In the twentieth century, theories derived from quantum mechanics: the Uncertainty principle, together with Einstein's Theory of Relativity, have led the way into a less linear or causal view of the world and I think that Lowenfeld's contribution can now take its rightful place. However, the ideas of Darwin, for the biological; Marx for the political, historical and social; Freud for the psychological, all of which were proposed from the middle to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are still very much part of current thinking. Perhaps we should first give up the idea that school learning and examinations are our best means to achieve new and original

thought for life in the twenty first century, My own feeling is that learning geared to examinations which require students to regurgitate known facts and arguments is inimical to original thinking. cf Quality Control Agency, the National Foundation for Educational Research > marking system.)

**This brings me neatly to the second desire I wish to talk about.**

(2) The second Desire I would like to mention is the Desire for POWER. Lowenfeld says that, and I now quote, *“Every small child is in the position of being pathetically helpless, and its helplessness enrages it, .....if the child is to develop harmoniously, there must be a development of the sense of power.”* (my emphasis). We have all no doubt heard of the “terrible twos” when children around that age are said to respond to every suggestion with an emphatic “No”. Perhaps that is the age when children first become aware of their “helplessness” and at that age, their only power lie in their power of refusal.

Lowenfeld suggests that the way to help the m to develop their own sense of power is *“to put within the child’s reach things over which it can exercise control.”* I think this applies at every stage of a child’s developing powers. If this has been done well enough, a child will develop a natural self-confidence. (This has implications for the individual child, whether it be brought up in a residential setting, with adoptive or foster parents, or with its biological parents.)

If, however, the child’s helplessness is accentuated, if the attention of the child is constantly drawn to its own powerlessness (e.g. being overprotected, constantly being told its too small or too young or being always in the company of adults, without the experience of peers), the child becomes discouraged or enraged. But, according to Lowenfeld, the desire for power does not disappear. It may disappear from sight; then, Lowenfeld says, *“you get the child who is said to be lifeless and uninterested, but who actually spends the greater part of its time in fantasies of power.”* (cf David Copeland: the recently convicted “London nail bomber” – a Lowenfeldian explanation might be just as valid as what has been proposed by psychiatry.) Or, if the child is actively engaged in fighting for it, you get the child who tyrannises his parents, but then becomes terrified of the seemingly limitless power it seems to be able to exercise when the parents submit.

I do not wish to leave you with the impression that helping the child to develop a sense of power is entirely in the hands of its carers. The contemporary culture may be a prime mover in either encouraging or hindering certain developments. Just like Curiosity, empowering children in the development can be affected by educational, social and economic factors. From the developmental point of view, however, there seems to be a natural drive towards self-mastery.

Let us consider for a moment a fundamental physical development, the natural development of our ability to move with our legs. Psychologically, it is our first move towards independence, when we can decide to move away or towards something by our own volition. Our ability to

do this also involves E being delivered to those limbs at the appropriate level of physical maturity when we can begin to learn to control and refine the control of those movements.

But the pace of life in Western society is such that no one has time to think about actively supporting the child's efforts in using these legs, exercising them in the natural course of daily living. In fact, in all walks of life, throughout all strata of society, the pushchair or carseat for the baby or young child have become ubiquitous items of family life. No-one has time, everyone is in a hurry. From the perspective of a pushchair, I wonder what impression this gives to an infant or toddler? I don't just mean the view, I mean what does it say about growing up, about the world's appreciation of its growing sense of independence? As soon as one develops the use of one's legs, one is strapped into immobility. What might the infant think about the world it inhabits?

Would it be too far-fetched to suggest that here might be where the first conflict with society could begin, between what the physical development in the child urges upon it and what his environment seems to be doing its best to prevent it from doing, that is, to develop his power of self locomotion, his first foray into self-motivated independence.

So properly developed, the desire for power, this desire for control will enable the child to achieve master – mastery of things around her and mastery of her own impulses, mastery of her E (e.g. concentration) which will ultimately enable her to achieve and fulfil her potential.

(3) The third Desire is the Desire to BE LOOKED AT. At first glance, this seems to be a peculiar thing to say. But think of the energy devoted to how we present ourselves to others, to image-making, how we wish others to see us. The whole of the fashion and cosmetics industries are tapping into this wish of ours. We all get dressed in the expectation that we will be looked over. This desire is the E used to answer our need to have the Self being confirmed, it is a way of knowing oneself through our presentation being reflected back to us. This is true even at the beginning of our lives, as Trevathen's work with mothers and babies shows. (the billing and cooing between mothers and their babies, the concentration on the facial expressions). The latest brain research has now shown that the Gaze is "the biggest trigger for brain growth", the most powerful factor in influencing the early development of neuronal connections in the brain (cf Mary Sue Moore).

There seems also to be an unstated moral dimension to how we look: that if we look good we have a good nature. How often are truly disappointed or shocked to learn that a handsome exterior masks an ugly nature. The converse is also true – cf Wilde: The Picture of Dorian Gray. There is also an associated belief: that if we behave well, people will think well of us. We should we believe this when it is patently untrue? From international to family relations it is probably truer to say the opposite. For children, however, Lowenfeld believes that when either the confirmation of the Self is not forthcoming or inadequate, the n you are likely to get the 'attention seeking child' or even the 'truculent child'. I am sure you have no difficulty in finding adult equivalents to both those descriptions, (the wrong kind of attention?)

It must be acknowledged that human beings have complex natures: this complexity is mostly unknown to us – that is we are unaware of it, like we are mostly unaware of the functioning of our autonomic system, the workings of our digestive system, or our protosystem thinking. And one of the ways of knowing oneself is to observe how others react to us. This is where our sense of awareness, our consciousness comes in. Because our consciousness is influenced by our protosystem thinking, inevitable difficulties arise, both in our observations and our interpretations of the appearance and behaviour of another.

The fourth is the Desire for RELATIONSHIPS. Most schools of psychotherapeutic thought regard RELATIONSHIPS as of primary importance. Although I have not read or heard Lowenfeld talk about relationships to any great extent, I regard what I have to say today, as thinking in the Lowenfeld manner and so within the Lowenfeld tradition. But the thinking is my own. In fact, from now on, all that I speak about I have to take full responsibility for.

Now the reason I think that human relationships are important is not because we have what is called ‘a gregarious instinct’. If anything it is the other way round. For if we have a gregarious instinct at all, it is because it serves some purpose. And this purpose includes the idea of group cohesion for the survival of the greatest number, thus enhancing the survival chances of the species. (cf Robin Dunbar)

But I wish to suggest another fundamental reason for this Desire for Relationships. This Desire, is a social desire; it is the desire which enables us to accomplish our goal of survival, it is a desire which is expressed and satisfied through co-operation between and among persons.

At birth, our survival depends on our ability to enlist the cooperation of adults, chief among whom is our mother. It comes as no surprise then to learn from research, that a smiling baby always tugs at our heart strings and the smile is our first social response. But the smile still comes second to the Cry, which is our first signal for help (and co-operation) in the baby’s survival attempts. At each and every stage of our lives, we need to cooperate with others and to this end we need to acquire direct knowledge of personal interactions. If our relation with the people we first form relationships are found to be largely helpful, we are likely to be more confident in our ability to make appropriate moves towards the formation of peer relationships and ultimately move to adulthood.

So the need to co-operate is the key to our desire for relationships. The quintessential adult human relationship to demonstrate this need for co-operation, is that between a sexually mature male and a nubile female in order that our species can continue. So far in human history, each has to persuade a member of the opposite sex to “co-operate” (either willingly or against the wish of one of the party) in this enterprise. (In this connection it will be interesting to see how IVF and genetic engineering will be resolved. It may also be relevant to think about the implications of the latest finding that in Britain, one in six girls now reach puberty at eight years of age.)

There are three major kinds of relationships: the first is family relations. Family relations are a “given”, that is one has no choice in the matter, one is simply born into an existing setup. It may be that we would disrupt or blend in to this setup, for good or for ill, but whichever the case, we cannot change the biological facts, nor the need for care in the long road to maturity. Modern life, however, has complicated matters in this respect. We have always had single parent families, and the confusion and pain of stepfamilies and blended families were not unknown when maternal death at childbirth was common and our expected lifespan was much shorter. We have now, however, moved on from Test-tube babies to IVF babies, where our ancestry becomes highly problematic and shrouded in mystery. The definition of family has also become less clearly defined, more problematic.

The Nuclear family is only one model of family life. It is a recent model, aided in this society: firstly, by the use of contraceptives to control the timing and size of families or not to have a family at all; secondly, starting with the granting of the right of women to own property legally during the 19thC, and more recently, through women acquiring the possibility of economic independence through universal education and state welfare. (These developments and measures may have made the extended family less necessary. However, the development of communications, mobility through cheap public transport and telecommunications have made it easier for family members to keep in touch as well as move away from each other.)

In a different society, say a nomadic society, we are likely to encounter a very different lifestyle, but the notion of family, however different, the notion itself will remain. I do not know of any society where family relationships are not recognised.

Let us now take one of the most fundamental of family relationships, the primary dyad of mother, however one defines the term “mother”, and her baby. Do different societies or the same society at different historical periods, have different attitudes towards this relationship and does this difference in attitude have any psychological impact on the two people involved in this relationship?

Consider the question of legitimacy and the questions around abortion and illegitimacy. (Legitimacy is important primarily because the father’s acceptance of paternity is paramount in the matter of inheritance. Abortion is now sanctioned as a matter for the mother’s decision.)

Psychologically, all this is important, because the motive with which one does something imparts itself to the other. That is, what adults do together and the circumstances in which they do this, whether that act in those circumstances is or is not sanctioned by the society in which these people live, has an emotional impact on the father as well as the mother and her child. If this is an act the meaning of which is accepted by that society as a whole, then the parents’ actions will be supported by this acceptance. In fact of course, historically, a bastard of the king or aristocrat was viewed differently from such a child of a commoner. Culturally speaking, at the present time, a mother bringing up an illegitimate child would be viewed

quite differently a hundred years ago, and the consequent psychological impact would also be different.

This is but one example of what I mean by this desire for relationship being a social desire. Thus, how we view even our most fundamental relationship, our primary family relationship, depends on the social mores of the time.

The second kind of relationship comes from Work, and I use the word “work” in the broadest sense of the term. It includes every activity which makes the continuation of our lives possible wherever human beings find themselves: lives lived in the mountains, in the desert, in the jungle, on the river; lives lived at sea, in cities or as nomadic herdsman. The lives of housewives or Society wives, the lives of miners, of the lives of shop assistants.

Irrespective of whether it is a hierarchical relationship, such as that of a soldier to a general, where duty is or should be owed in either direction, or a partnership, where people share power and responsibility equally, such as a relay team of runners, the key is in the co-operation amongst the various people involved for the task at hand and the acceptance by all parties of the roles within each of the relationships. Without the co-operation, the enterprise is unlikely to succeed. Thus this kind of relationship is task specific as well as task orientated. (cf problems at retirement, particularly for men can be more difficult, if their lives had been lived almost totally within the realm outside that of the home.)

The co-operation maybe one which has been imposed or exacted through coercion or necessity, or it may have been freely entered into. But however it came about, without the co-operation, the task could not be accomplished. There would certainly be no ward if people were to refuse to co-operate.

For ordinary people, self-determination, self-satisfaction and personal achievement, to live outside our role and station in life, is a very recent idea. And herein lies one of joys as well as our troubles. For with the recognition of our individuality, of personal achievement, comes personal responsibility, in particular, the responsibility for decision making, which for most of us is sometimes a fearsome, and often an intolerable burden, not helped by the bewildering choice we can now be faced with.

It is the responsibility which our children, and even ourselves often find unbearable. Perhaps the statistics of increasing numbers of suicides and suicide attempts, especially among children, bear terrible witness to that.

The third kind of relationship is Friendship, and friendship is entirely personal. Here we have a choice, we can and do choose. Cultures across the world have, one time or another, valued friendship above all other relationships (cf Plato). Friends confirm our worth in the external world, the world of our peers as well as that of our elders. And a true friend is a truer reflector of our inner worth than for instance, admirers who have no or only slight personal acquaintance. (Is this the reason why fame becomes ultimately hollow, devoid of emotional



satisfaction?) More importantly, friends do not impose on us the hopes and expectations of our parents on whom we had so much depended for our survival. This is why it is important for a child to have friends.

Whether a child has friends or not, and the quality of the child's relations with his peers than are ways of assessing how he is regarded by his peers. And it should be remembered that after a child has grown up and leaves home, it is largely with his peers he will have to live the remainder of his days. But this too has not always been the case.

Before the days of universal education, which is very recent history indeed, children grew up within a mixed community. Mixed not in the sense of mixed ethnicity as we would now probably think of it here (for, of course, it is only true in a minority of cultures that a multicultural society exists), nor in the sense of a broad mix of lifestyles or among the social strata, but in the sense that the social group normally has a wide age range, but is comparatively small in membership so that a child can have a more or less total view of a life span – a view of the shape of a life.

Within this community, life is lived much more in the public eye and group approval or disapproval was much more important to people than individual preference and choice. Perhaps this is why rites of passage and strict codes of conduct were developed by these societies. Thus in present society, it becomes imperative for our psychic health that, because we no longer have communally recognised roles, someone like ourselves, at least one of our peers, should find us attractive, likeable, worthy and wants to be our friend.

Relationships with other thus enables us to know ourselves. But it is a particular kind of knowing, it is the knowing of ourselves in a real setting, in the social context which defines our role in the home, at work, our status and position within a particular society at a particular time in history as well as in a particular geographical space. There is a physiological analogy in the cells of our body – how they develop and what they develop into is intimately linked to their position. So, relationships provide us with a sense of belonging, a sense of our status in relationship to others, as well as a sense of who we are. This is, of course, where the Homeostatic Principle comes in and is why STABILITY in relationships is so important, which is also why relationships need time. Time is required to build up a team for team work to be effective. Time is required for status to be established, whether within a family or in the realm of work. Time is required for friendships to mature and deepen. Thus it is in relationship which gives us a sense of our worth in the round. This is why a child's relationship with her parental figures (and here I include all adult figures who have intimate relations with the child – as, for instance, teachers as well as adults within the extended family, that is, our primary relationships) is so important.

Whilst the parental figure of the same sex as the child shows the child what to aim to become: that is, the mother of a girl conveys to the girl what it is to be a woman; the parental figure of

the opposite sex in its relationship shows the child how he/she is valued: that is, how the father treats the mother of a girl, shows the girl how Woman is valued.

So if a daughter finds her mother spends most of her time in intellectual pursuits, the daughter may get the impression that that is what she should aim to do when she grows up, especially if this picture is not modified by any contact with women who pursued a different, but still considered positive, way of life (dancer, nurse, secretary). And if the father constantly denigrates this girl's mother's intellectual achievements or interests (for instance, telling her she is not sufficiently feminine, that she thinks too much, that she should socialise more, etc – nothing brutal you understand, simply subversive of her confidence in her own achievements or interests) the girl is likely to surmise that intellectual women are not valued by men. I have simplified the picture to make the point, but even so, already you can see how one kind of internal conflict can arise.

It is why divorce and how that divorce is handled between the parents is so important for the children. Equally, it is why single parents have a difficult task, not only because the parent has no one to share the task of parenting, but the children will have to look further afield for that valuing which a two parent family can give, especially if the child is the son of a single mother. (children of homosexual couples?)

In a society, where divorce is becoming a common experience, where the extended family (except in some ethnic minority groups) is becoming a rare experience (mainly because of the push towards individuality and the nuclear family), where families are composed of different combinations (stepfamilies, blended families, single sex parental couples), this way of self-understanding and finding our individual worth is fraught with peril as well as confusion.

But this is a dynamic situation; it changes. The child acquires new relationships, its sense of its own value is not static, it is capable of change, it develops. The child may meet all kinds of people and form helpful relationships both with peers and other adults. There is above all the personality of the child, the experiences of the child's life and what sense she has made of it, to be reckoned with. So that, even in the most seemingly unhelpful circumstances, the child may yet win through.

In summary, in relationship we have Status; we have a sense of value as well as a sense of belonging, and without relationship we are lonely and stand alone, we are isolated and beyond the pale.

### **Now I come to EMOTION AS FEELINGS**

We all know about feelings, warm feelings, friendly feelings, feelings of gratitude, shameful feelings, guilty feelings, indifferent feelings, hateful feelings, angry feelings, fearful feelings, feelings of sorrow, feelings of frustration, feelings of elation, feelings of despair, all manner and degrees of feelings.

I wonder why he have feelings. We all have them, even tiny babies have them. If anything babies seem more ready to show them. When did you last cry lustily with frustration? At a guess, who are much more likely to have sworn under your breath So it must be rather important for us to have feelings. Equally telling is our judgement that if someone shows no feeling at all, ever, there is something fundamentally wrong. cf Damasio.

Let us see if we can approach this from another angle People ascribe positive connotations to rationality, to rational thinking and thinking in general as somehow a good or even mature response to a situation. People tend to say that someone who is being emotional, that is showing feeling, as irrational, and that being emotional and thus irrational is somehow bad, inferior and should be discounted. Its best to wait for that someone to calm down, to become reasonable. That someone, however, is usually someone else. If it is ourselves, then that feeling is always felt to be true and justified. Why is that, we may wonder?

Now I think there is one way of looking at feeling which might just explain all this. I think, with Jung (in "Psychological Types" p433f), that FEELINGS have to do with our JUDGEMENT. Whereas Jung describes the relation between feeling and judgement in the mature adult, I am here going to speak about the development of judgement out of its emotional origins. In fact, I think it is through our feelings that we express our protosystem thought. That is, judgements made through protosystem thinking are expressed as feelings. From a neurological perspective, Damasio seems to have arrived at a similar conclusion.

Judgement is what a new-born baby needs most. It needs to know what is good for it, and perhaps more importantly, what is bad for it, so as to know what to avoid. Perhaps this is why so much energy goes into describing, looking at and considering our negative feelings? So to begin with, babies tend to be quiet when all is well, and to cry, with varying degrees of urgency, when things are not well. So if a baby either cries all the time, or not at all, there should be and usually is concern. Gradually, we develop more ways of conveying our different judgements and as we become more discriminating, so our expression of feelings becomes more refined and diverse.

Thus the first kind of judgement conveyed by Feelings is of the "what does this state of affairs mean to me" or of the "how do I rate this situation" kind. Is it good or bad for me? Is it useful or useless? Is it hopeful or hopeless? That is, my feelings tell me the significance of what I'm experiencing. But as our situation changes, there is continual modification in our judgement; and if we are fortunate in our circumstance the development of our judgement will be sound – that is appropriate.

This where being comfortable with our own ignorance, appreciating the value of ignorance as opportunities, is so important for the development of judgement. This is why children should be encouraged to know the value of making mistakes. A child's mistake is a gift to her teacher, if the opportunity is used to illuminate the many ways of thinking, the many ways of arriving at an understanding of the problem. It is through mistakes much true learning begins.

Feeling is what ultimately drives the decision process, leading to action. Let us just for a moment try to imagine what it would *feel* like if we were unable to make a choice, if we were unable to say we prefer one thing to another, if we cannot decide what would quench our thirst or satisfy our hunger or if we were unable to decide whether to move or stay put? Look at it another way, what does it mean when we say “I feel like an orange juice or a banana?” or “I feel like a walk or a lie down.” Somewhere from within us, comes a prompting to what is required to meet our present needs. Furthermore, often we use the word “think” instead of “feel” but if one were to reflect upon this, one would realise that the thought and the feeling has been used interchangeably, and the feeling usually precedes the thought. Cf Damasio again.

Another aspect of the function of feeling is TIMING. Thinking, that is rational or logical thinking, secondary system thinking, may tell you what to do; it analyses a situation and comes up with a solution. (*Knowing how to do sums means you know that two plus two makes four; but it does not tell you when or whether it is appropriate you should do this sum*). But Feeling not only tells you whether its right for you to be doing it, it tells you when you should be doing it. The stronger and more definite the feeling, the clearer the message. If the feeling is weak or ill-defined, then it could suggest ambivalence or unreadiness: it surely means that its not quite the right time to act. If there is conflict and the conflicting emotions are strong, this will emerge in various ways, depending on what feelings are involved (that is, it depends on the overall value placed on a judgement as well as the relative strength of the several judgement involved.)

At its highest level of functioning, developing and attending to our feelings is how we develop our moral sense. It is also how we develop our prejudices. Fundamentally we are moral beings, and our morality is founded on our Feelings.

This personal feeling/judgement applies particularly to our protosystem thinking. As you know, ‘feeling’ is a component of protosystem thought and protosystem thinking can be highly charged with emotion. Remembering that personal experiences are grouped according to the similarity of the feeling identified with ae experience, it seems to me to follow that our protosystem thoughts can be expressed through our feelings. Since knowledge of the conclusions drawn from our protosystem thinking is not accessible in any ordinary way except through our feelings, it becomes vital that we have knowledge of these feelings before we act – it is equivalent to think first, act later.

The interplay between the personal value system and the social value system, given the idiosyncratic nature of the personal system and the vast array of social values an individual can now key into, provides the ground for developing our sense of discrimination as well as our diverse views. By discrimination, I mean both that which produces racism and sexism and all kinds of ISMS, and that which, for instance, people call good or bad taste.

When there are stable social values, based on shared assumptions of the world, people know where they stand and it may be easier for an individual to find its place within this society. Here again you will have to take into account the operation of the Homeostatic Principle. It is this principle in operation which makes it much more difficult for those whose protosystem view is at odds with their contemporary social values. No matter how much a society proclaims itself free and tolerant of different points of view, the struggle for that individual remains, because it is a matter of the struggle between the individual homeostasis and the corporate one.

The suffragette movement in this country is possibly a good example of the strength of the personal view against the equally strong opposition of Society. The issue of "Votes for Women" crystallised all the discontents felt by these women into the single issue of "Votes". That is, what was an emotional force drawn from diverse feelings about a variety of situations, became a single political force and was framed into an issue of "Votes for Women". Woman was thus first recognised in Her own right through a legal and political process. The timing is also of interest regarding the resolution of this particular issue: voting rights were granted to women after the first world war, when it had to be recognised that it was the women who kept the country running whilst the men were at war and that, the huge number of casualties during this war meant that women had to continue to do what had formally been done solely by men.

It is also why schisms are inevitable in the larger context of the major belief systems in the world which have spread to large groups of people, as in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, to name but three.

At present, we are faced with society in the crisis of transition all over the world. Even in China, where its culture might be said to have ossified through the previous four centuries, conscious changes are being introduced. There is now not even a more or less agreed moral attitude in our relations with each other, or the world at large. We are entirely dependent on ourselves, to define our own moral stance. For support we have to actively seek out people of like mind or like heart. Perhaps this is why there such a proliferation of interest groups. This also means, however, that children are faced with parents who are not supported by a general consensus of values from which they could derive their moral authority or emotional support.

Parents who have the slightest doubt (and which one of us is not sometimes plagued with doubt) can no longer relate their doubt to a firm value outside themselves. They are inevitably thrown back onto their protosystem view. Indeed we are encouraged to do so – we are urged throughout our school years, for instance, to find our individuality, to discover what we want to do, what we want to become and to be "true to ourselves". Just as this is a freedom, it is also a responsibility, a responsibility not a few of us find frighteningly burdensome, often intolerable and surely awesome. It also encourages some towards Inflation – i.e. the belief that their own values are valid for everyone else, and should be universally applied. It is this

polarity which makes it so much easier for the latter group to grasp and retain power in all walks of life. It is also why the opposition is so fragmented and thus weak.

Such feelings in the parents will invariably affect their children: the child will feel less secure. Take teenagers, for example, and the so-called adolescent rebellion: just at the moment when they begin to question themselves and all around them, just when they are ready to broaden their views as they prepare to step into the wider world, when they begin to ask “Why not?”, there is nothing strong and definite for the young person to rebel against or attach their minds and hearts to. No one can easily tolerate their uncertainties since the adults are so vexed with their own, and these young people, being uncertain themselves, their energies may become dissipated or inappropriately channelled. For such young people, the opportunities to manipulate will abound, setting up a vicious cycle, because, of course, such a person is much more likely to succeed when confronted by doubt in the minds of the adults in charge of it, and that very success will make for a further sense of insecurity.

So that far from Feelings being just irrational and to be “worked through” (I actually don’t know what that really means in terms of real people in real situations, they have an importance very different from rational, secondary system thinking. Without Feeling, we will have no means of knowing the judgements our protosystem thinking has led us into formulating. Without Feeling we will not know what value to place on a thought, we will not know how important the thought is to us. Without Feeling, we will not know when to put thoughts into action. Without feeling, we are seriously disabled.

This is where a child’s life may be handicapped, when its feelings are not acknowledged, when its feelings are not valued, when the child is not helped to develop its sense of judgement. For, abstract thought without judgement, the exclusion from debate of both the Desire behind the thought and the Feeling about the thought, can have dangerous consequences. And it is perhaps more urgent now than at any other time in the history of mankind that we should understand WHY our Feelings are important to us. It is particularly important for us to know the LIMITATIONS inherent in our feelings, our judgements – that is that personal feelings ARE personal and bear the limitations inevitable of personal prejudices and biases. If we can truly know this, then there is a chance for people to develop not necessarily understanding, but recognition and tolerance of another point of view.

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