

THE BANNER OF A SENSATE CULTURE:

“Don’t think, trust your feelings!”

The Exchange of Truth for Emotions

Why is Morality in Decline in Western Culture?

~ adapted from *What We Can’t Not Know* by J. Budziszewski (Dallas: Spence, 2003), 176-81.

MORALISM:

The drug of moral feelings: Sympathy, duty, self-control, and fairness are identified and reduced to moral feelings.

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ROMANTICISM:

The drug of intense ecstasy/feelings; abandoning the mind for ecstatic pleasure.

1

TRANSGRESSIVISM:

The drug of forbidden feelings, the fascination with morbidity, that which is focused on opposite of nature; it is the inversion of values.

2

DETERMINISM:

The drug of irresistible feelings (e.g., hormones, neural circuitry) “So I feel, I can do no other.” “The attitude gives us an excuse for whatever we want to do, for ‘I can’t help how I feel, and I feel I have no choice.’” (pg. 178).

3

HEDONISM: The drug of pleasant feelings; “We want only that which feels good”... “If it feels good, do it.” “If it feels so good, it can’t be bad.”

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SPIRITUALISM:

The drug of religious feelings; the focus, pursuit, and aim is the exaltation of feelings in touch with the Divine.

AESTHETICISM:

The drug of higher feelings; There is a qualitative difference between higher and lower pleasures; lower feelings are vulgar; pleasant feelings are noble.

5

In Conclusion, J. Budziszewski states:

“I hope no one will accuse me of considering feelings unimportant. Our emotions give charm and energy to our lives, and even the inconvenient ones give information. The problem is that their charm is not self-evaluating, their energy is not self-directing, and their information is not self-interpreting. Virtue certainly includes feeling the right desires and emotions, but at the right times, toward the right people, and for the right reasons. Another way to view this problem is this. Our feelings are certainly part of our inbuilt moral design. What the moralities of feelings try to do is make sense of the design in terms that are alien to design. Rather than asking what place feelings have in the big picture, they make feelings themselves the big picture. We should not be like the Stoics, sad men who took council with each other to rid the souls of feelings. But neither should we bow to our feelings as masters.” (Ibid., 180-81).