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The Function of Emotions and *The Arts and Missions*

David R. Dunaetz
Azusa Pacific University

Abstract: The January 2025 issue of Evangelical Missions Quarterly focused on "The Arts and Missions." Several authors noted that mission leaders are not enthusiastic about the arts. However, the arts, via emotions, can motivate action and problem-solving, which are likely to be valued by mission leaders

Common themes in the January 2025 issue of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* focusing on the arts and missions include the arts being associated with emotions and organizational leaders often having difficulty seeing how emotions relate to the mission they are trying to accomplish (Krabill, 2025; Montero, 2025; Ntankeh, 2025; Roberts, 2025). This problem can be addressed by understanding the functions of emotions (that is, the reasons for which God has endowed humans with emotions), a topic alluded to in Hreniuc and Harris (2025). This topic has been studied extensively for several generations by social and cognitive psychologists (Clore et al., 2012; Fredrickson, 2001; Hatfield et al., 1993; Schwarz & Clore, 1996).

One of the functions of negative emotions (as may be created by theater, film, and the visual and literary arts) is to cause people to focus on a problem that needs to be solved. Negative feelings tell us that something is not right, providing information on what needs to be changed and motivation to act to bring about these changes (Schwarz & Clore, 1996). This function is important for getting people to work together to accomplish what God has called us to do.

One of the functions of positive emotions (as may be created by music or most any other form of art) is to provide us information that the current situation is safe or contributing to our goals or well-being (Schwarz & Clore, 1996). When experiencing positive emotions, people are willing to take greater risks (e.g., stepping out in faith to act on promptings of the Holy Spirit), they are more creative in problem-solving, they blame others less for their problems, and they are more flexible when facing changes in their environment. Such phenomena are essential for a healthy church trying to respond to the needs of its community and seeking to resolve its internal problems effectively (Dunaetz, 2008).

By emphasizing the utility of creating specific emotions that contribute to fulfilling the organization's goals, promoters of the arts in mission are more likely to gain the necessary support from church and mission leaders.

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