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# GOALS OF LIFE

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# GOALS OF LIFE

For Students of Psychology and Ethics

by

H. D. JENNINGS WHITE, M.A., Ph.D.



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# GOALS OF LIFE



## Chapter I

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

#### §I. IS THE FRUIT OF WISDOM—IGNORANCE?

At the very outset of our journey through the domain of ethics we meet with a difficult question. Can we ever know what is good? Will it be in vain that we search for the solutions to ethical problems? Some may say the answers are beyond the wisdom of man and can only be found when the riddle of the universe has been solved, and that man will never solve. Such folk are sceptical about the whole study of ethics; they think it is useless to form our lives to any plan unless we first know the plan of the universe, and since we can never know this plan, any attempt to direct our own lives on a basis of reality is doomed to failure from the outset.

The well-known *Rubá'iyát* of Omar Khayyám (about A.D. 1100) 'solves' the problems of ethics in this way.

You remember the two verses :

Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument  
About it and about: but evermore  
Came out by the same door where in I went.

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,  
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;  
And this was all the harvest that I reaped—  
I came like Water, and like Wind I go.

and also the lines:

There was the Door to which I found no Key;  
There was the Veil through which I might not see.

Because we can never know what the universe is all about, Omar says we ought to live without worry from day to day. Thus he writes:

Perplext no more with Human or Divine  
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign.

There is a paraphrase in the New Testament of the very same ethical maxim, "Take no thought for the morrow" (*Matthew* vi, 34). Omar says definitely, take no thought for the past either. He strikes "from the calendar unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday." This is an ethic based upon the futility of thinking about ultimate problems. It is not a completely sceptical attitude, for he does not say that we can never know anything about anything. There is one thing, he says, we can be sure about; and that is the fact of death.

On the other hand it is possible to take into account all the facts that Omar puts forward as a basis for his day-to-day ethic, and yet not come to the same conclusion as to the best way of life. For example, Thomas Wade (A.D. 1805-1875) in his sonnet on Cranmer says the true martyr is he

Who works, all-knowing works futility;  
Creates, all-conscious of ubiquitous death;  
And hopes, believes, adores, while Destiny  
Points from life's steep to all her graves beneath.

This ethic, the way of life of the true martyr, is, however, advised *in spite of* ubiquitous death; while Omar's ethic of "wine, women and song" is advised *because of* ubiquitous death and the inevitable destiny of the grave. They cannot both be right: either Omar did not find the key when there was one all the time, or Thomas thought he had one when he couldn't have had because there isn't one.

If what we think to be a Door is only a blank wall, the outlook is indeed blank. Searching for a key under those circumstances would be a little futile. Suppose at the end of our search we have found nothing; suppose after all our labours we are no wiser at the end than

at the beginning; suppose, like Omar, we shall come out at the same door of ignorance as that by which we now go in. Is it really true that we have achieved nothing?

At the beginning we have a thirst to know, we have unresolved questions in our minds. At the end, it is true, the questions may be still unresolved; but what if we have stopped asking them? Is that not a result? To stop looking for something that no one will ever find. To cease striving for the goal of knowledge, because ignorance is the only fruit of wisdom. Should we not have leisure to pursue other goals with greater hope of finding satisfaction and reward?

Now the result of Omar's research appears to have been that he could drink with a good conscience.

You know my friends with what a brave Carouse  
I made a Second Marriage in my House;  
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,  
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

Maybe there were no children because Omar did not know how to use Reason aright. Defeated in his search for ultimate knowledge he took refuge in the pursuit of the more sensuous pleasures. And here we must leave him awhile, for we shall not pursue pleasure ourselves until we come to Chapter III.

Are there not other results to be gained from the pursuit of knowledge even though Knowledge itself elude us in the end? For instance, if you tour round England in your car, what have you achieved? You have created nothing, and you have spent some money; but have you not acquired varied experiences and also a set of memories? Anyone who sets out to find the truth about morality can also achieve as much. He may not find out the truth, but he cannot be as ignorant as when he started off. He will at least make the

acquaintance of a number of erroneous views. Moreover these views will constantly be met with throughout his life in one form or another; and he will no longer be influenced by them because he will know why they are false. Therefore, even to the sceptic, the study of moral philosophy may be regarded as worth while, since it provides him with more views to be sceptical about.

## §2. TABOO

Even if the knowledge of the purpose of the universe were possible for us, perhaps it would not be good for us to know. Ought we, then, even to attempt to know? If we draw back the veil, will not the truth be more terrible than Medusa's head? Will those who disobey the command to remain in ignorance see something so appalling that they are driven mad? Can a man look on the Face of God and live? Maybe it is possible to know the Truth; yes, but woe betide him that knows. "If, outside of Christ, you wish by your own thoughts to know your relation to God, you will break your neck. Thunder strikes him who examines." Thus spoke Martin Luther. That's the risk you run. If you do happen to get what you want, it may not be good for you, nor anyone else either. If you want to pluck and eat from the Tree of Knowledge you may be prepared to take the consequences, to count your courage as a virtue and your curiosity as divine: but brave Prometheus stole fire from Heaven and his reward was endless torment. Your courage and curiosity may land you likewise. Not merely may the result be bad for you, it may be bad for others also.

## §3. THE IMMORALITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Do those who acquire knowledge thereby acquire goodness? Are the manly virtues to be won by thinking? How much study makes a good man out of a bad man? In fact is it not far more likely to have the opposite effect? To what use is science being put? To poison gas, bombing aeroplanes, and the miseries of either worse wars or worse unemployment. Science appears to lead not to good but to evil. Not merely to evil, but also to unhappiness. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," wrote the poet Gray after recounting a catalogue of tragedies lying in wait for the schoolboys of Eton. "Regardless of their doom, the little victims play." A knowledge of the calamities about to befall a man is not likely to increase his happiness. \*

The pursuit of knowledge! Does not the gaining of knowledge imply cruelty and pain? Are not the very processes by which man tries to get at the truth essentially immoral? As Wordsworth wrote,

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings about;  
Our meddling intellect  
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things:  
We murder to dissect.

Scientists are not, however, deliberately pursuing evil; they are pursuing what to them is a good; their virtue is not to be distracted from their goal by unhappiness and cowardice, difficulties and dangers. To see the results of their labours as vicious, for example to see the research into contraceptives as an incitement to sexual vice, is not to see all that there is to be seen. Perhaps it is only a little knowledge which is so dangerous, so immoral, so evil, so maddening.

Shrinking from this little knowledge as from knowledge herself, how can a man ever know what is right

and what wrong? For that men, however ignorant, judge the right from the wrong is a matter of common observation.

( راست واقفیت ) direct cognition  
 §4. MORAL INTUITION

If the pursuit of knowledge does not lead to morality, how can we explain the ability of everyone to pass moral judgments? This ability is sometimes explained by supposing that we are all endowed with a moral intuition which infallibly tells us what is right and what is wrong without any need for thinking. Some writers have called it a moral sense. They say, if white and black are qualities of objects, if high and low are qualities of sounds, then are not right and wrong qualities of acts and as immediately perceived as sights and sounds? Just as we have a visual sense for distinguishing between colours and an auditory sense for distinguishing between sounds, have we not also a moral sense for distinguishing between acts?

People, however, do not on the whole disagree as to whether an object is white or black, or whether a note is in the treble or in the bass, but they often disagree most profoundly as to whether an act is right or wrong. Assuming the theory, we can only conclude from these discrepancies that the moral senses of many persons are diseased and are not infallible guides. In the case of colour blindness there is some physiological basis to support the judgment that the eye is diseased; but there is no known sense organ to perceive the qualities of acts. If two persons pass diametrically opposed moral judgments, there is seldom any observable physiological disease to account for it. What we can say is that the differences in their ethical views can be traced to differences in their early education, and in their experience, and to differing constructions placed

upon some of their experiences which are common.

No doubt moral judgments are often intuitively presented to consciousness; but then often they are not: and reflection upon such intuitions may prove them to be false. These intuitive judgments arise from habits; some of them are spontaneous, some imitated, others the outcome of past reflection upon similar situations requiring judgment.

We may conclude, then, that moral intuitions are inevitable and are often a good guide to conduct, but they are not always so and it would be incorrect to adopt them all uncritically on principle. They should, when challenged, be open to conscious reflection and the processes of thought. But it would be absurd and a great waste of time always to subject every intuition to intellectual criticism. We should then be thinking all the time and every action would become an intolerable burden.

## §5. MORAL SKILL

Let us now look more closely at what precisely we do when we use our intelligence upon moral problems instead of acting intuitively. Aristotle (340 B.C.) wrote, "Anyone can give money away or spend it; that is quite easy. But to do these things to the right person, at the right time, in the right manner and with the right aim, this is not what anyone can easily do." It would seem, then, that the object of thinking about moral problems is to develop skill in doing what is right.

Is this moral skill acquired in the same way as any other skill? There are many things that men can accomplish without taking much thought about them. If a child falls into deep water, it may kick about enough to save itself: but that kind of 'swimming' is

very different from the skilled technique which wins races. The primitive kind of swimming may be enough to save the child's life and nothing more: we call it instinctive and impulsive. On the other hand, the champion swimmer is not all the time occupied with consciously controlling his arms and legs and breathing. A long course of attention has intervened between his first efforts to swim and his present skill. The results of this long course of training have become automatic and in a sense, intuitive, and his attention is probably concentrated on conserving his strength and on comparatively minor points of technique. Similarly, a study of ethics should provide us with a guide to conduct; and long practice should make moral behaviour automatic in the main, while attention need only be devoted to minor technical points.

Is not this, then, the answer to Omar Khayyám's scepticism? It is perfectly true, of course, that experts disagree, and that neither swimming instructors nor moral philosophers teach the same methods; but what would you think of an athlete who gave up training because instructors disagreed? One might give up drinking wine for the same reason, because there are so many varieties of it and no one agrees as to which is the best.

## §6. THE NECESSITY OF ERROR

It is the unsettling effect of having to face so much criticism and counter-criticism which underlies the warning against meddling with such a dangerous hobby as moral philosophy. It is alleged that to think about right and wrong leads to the criticism, abandonment, and destruction of the traditional sanctions on which all moral values are based. The result of being torn from all moorings, of losing faith, abandoning hope, seeing life as signifying nothing, can only end in disaster to the individual, a disaster which may be infectious and spread to the race. Therefore, the argument inevitably runs: philosophy is a kind of disease, its teaching should be prohibited, philosophers put to death and the race thereby saved from nihilism, scepticism, atheism and all the other nasty isms.

Now, it is perfectly true that if a child is brought up to be obedient in all things and never to think for itself but to take everything on trust, then the first result of thinking must inevitably lead to questioning all the traditional dogmas and rules. The fault lies not with the thinking child but with the autocratic system of education.

The swimmer who thinks out the mechanisms and physiology of swimming for himself is bound to be critical of some trainers whose theories are deficient. He is also liable to make mistakes and get a mouthful now and then. But one would not thereby accuse the swimmer of not swimming. Whereas the man who takes the trouble to think out moral problems for himself is liable to be accused of immorality—and as a matter of fact the charge may sometimes be true. Trial and error are inseparable from first-hand experience and the curiosity which impels a man to learn the truth for himself apart from what he is told, is

bound to land him in error sometimes. He continues not for the sake of the errors but for the sake of the ultimate truth. He is too often judged by the errors that can be seen and not by the goal which is unseen.

### §7. THE BENEFIT OF DECEPTION

After all, if we are going to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we must necessarily taste the evil besides the good. The real error consists in thinking that the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge are either wholly bad or wholly good.

If we believe them to be wholly bad, then we are led to the obverse belief that all moral people are both ignorant and stupid.

Perhaps people ought to be stupid. Paradoxically, it would appear wiser to be stupid. Are not illusions necessary for life? Religion may be an illusion; but without it, would there not be chaos? Is it not better to hide away the terrible truth about reality that force and cruelty are in fact dominant, that no loving God exists, that nothing is the end? Hide all the horror behind the veils of illusion; that so men may live a happier life, that so men may live at all. If life is just war and conflict, the knowledge of it must end in destruction. Since evil, cunning, deception are inherent in life, there can be no basic immorality in using lies and deceptions to make men not merely happier, but to provide them with life itself. Therefore the lies of religion are justifiable. Give up thinking, only believe: and you will be happier than you ever could be by destroying these deceptions.

Who are we, anyway, to challenge the vastness of the universe? It is all beyond our ken. Had we not better fall back on our ignorance and blindly believe that somehow the Purpose of the Universe is benevolent:

that somehow, in spite of all this manifest evil, because we are one with the race-soul and the race-soul is one with God, we are being used for ends greater than we can ever know?

If we take this line of giving up thinking we are faced with two alternatives: either we must obey "God" according to His revelations handed down by tradition, or we must obey "God" according to His direct operations through us. Unfortunately for the method of sticking to tradition, traditions not merely vary, they contradict one another. The only way is to be absolutely thoroughgoing, choose a church and become a complete sheep. There is no guarantee a sheep will not be slaughtered, but for compensation there may be won a crown of martyrdom.

### §8. THE AMORALITY OF THE LIFE-FORCE

The other method of abandoning thought about morality, letting 'God' do his stuff through our poor mortal vehicles, is also open to the objection that impulses may be contradictory.

C. E. M. Joad, in his book on *Commonsense Ethics* is a modern apologist for this view. He contends that we ought to obey our impulses because they emanate from the Life-force. This Life-force is much wider and bigger than our intellectual formulations of morality, so that if we desire to be truly moral we should allow the impulses of the Life-force free play to express themselves through us.

The difficulty with this view is that of distinguishing between good and bad impulses; for even Joad has to admit that the Athenians who put Socrates to death, and the Romans and Jews who crucified Jesus, were also emanations of the Life-force.

This problem was put by Ibsen in his lengthy

historical drama *Emperor and Galilean*. On behalf of the Emperor Julian, the philosopher Maximus raises from the dead the spirit of Judas Iscariot. He wishes to know why Judas betrayed Christ. There is no satisfactory answer to this question: Judas acted according to his nature, which was given him by the Life-force and without which Christ could not have come by his glory. Ibsen sums up the problem by quoting the phrase "Some vessels are fashioned to honour and some to dishonour."

Dishonour then is as valuable to the Life-force as honour. The very idea of honour would seem to be a subjective delusion on our own part. Judas should have as much 'honour' as Jesus. But the ideas of honour and dishonour cease to have any real meaning if we take this view. If we obey all our impulses, we are assuming that somehow they are all good. This may be a pleasant delusion, hiding the reality of evil away from our consciousness; it is also the abnegation of morality.

### §9. ARE THE GOOD STUPID?

A refusal to pluck the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge, because they are believed to be all evil, leads inevitably to an identification of goodness with stupidity and ignorance. Learning is sometimes regarded as a definite impediment to the spiritual life. "He who is gifted with the Heavenly Knowledge of Faith", said the Council of Trent, "is free from an inquisitive curiosity"; and also from the sin of intellectual pride.

The view that anyone can be good without thinking makes a natural appeal both to the poor and to the stupid. By it the depressed classes feel that they are on an equality with the rich and the wise in this matter of goodness—not only equal indeed, but superior. It is

written in the scriptures that for a rich man to enter Paradise is as difficult as for a rope (Aramaic version)\* to go through the eye of a needle. Is it not, however, an advantage to the priests to keep their flock in ignorance, and to devise and preach an ethic which despises learning, knowledge, power and riches?

Some illusions, then, may not be so necessary for one's own life, but very advantageous to the lives of others. The more folk are stupid enough to believe the fairy stories of religion, the better it is for the priests, into whose hands wealth and power then inevitably accumulate.

#### §10. ARE GOOD AND EVIL SUBJECTIVE?

What are the naturally cunning and intelligent to do? If the knowledge which they can acquire is branded as evil, to pursue it is to run counter to the requirements of morality. They can, of course, become priests, keep their knowledge to themselves and teach the people illusions for their own benefit. But, to the intelligent, knowledge does not appear as evil, it appears as good. It is only to the stupid that knowledge appears to be wholly evil: unable to acquire it themselves, they see it wielded by others, into whose possession power and wealth fall as a natural consequence. The result is entirely bad for the stupid; therefore they exalt the morality of equal sharing as their principal weapon or life.

Inevitably we are led to the view that the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge taste differently to different people. What one person calls good, another calls evil.

\* The Aramaic word "gamla" means both a camel and a rope. In the context it clearly means "rope." But when the original Aramaic was translated into Greek the wrong meaning was given to the word; and the mistranslation has continued.

Is there any sure way out of the endless arguments, conflicts and disputes about what is good? Must we acknowledge all moral judgments to be like judgments of taste—every man to his own opinion?

Here let me retell the fable of the elephant and the blind boys. Once upon a time five blind boys were taken by their master to learn the nature of the elephant. The first boy touched the side of the beast and exclaimed, "Why! the elephant is like a great wall!" The second caught hold of the tail and said, "No! the elephant is a kind of rope." The third, feeling a tusk, shouted, "You are both wrong; for the elephant is round and smooth and pointed like a spear." The fourth investigated the trunk and more modestly gave his opinion. "The elephant seems to me to be a species of snake." The fifth felt a leg and said, "I disagree with the lot of you; the elephant is more like the trunk of a tree than anything else." The only way of reconciling these views is for each to place himself in the position of every other. Only by combining all the individual views can anyone approximate to the truth.

Does the same principle hold good for us? Life is seen by different people in different ways. If we could combine all these partial views, could we not obtain a more accurate understanding of life and of our own place in the scheme of things?

Suppose we are as blind as the blind boys but far more numerous; we have no master; and the nature of the universe is more complicated than that of the elephant. Shall we run from the deafening clamour of conflicting creeds—"I believe this", "I believe that", "I believe something else"? Or shall we face up to the chaos with faith in an ultimate verity, with hope that we can attain a still nearer approximation to it, and with love for those who see only their small part of the stupendous whole?

## §11. THE BIOLOGICAL GOALS OF LIFE

If we study actual human beings, and not merely the reasons they give for their behaviour but also the behaviour itself, as we would observe animals, then what do we find? A number of conflicting behaviours, a number of mutually incompatible wishes; display and humility; power and weakness; the desire to live for ever and the desire to die soon; envy of neighbour's goods; lust, gluttony, and greed; the wish to be a film star, a great writer, or a millionaire; the wish to escape responsibility and to sin without being found out and so on.

Is there any sure thread through this maze? What kinds of behaviour are necessary for life? Certainly some kinds of behaviour are essential, like eating and drinking; while other kinds are not essential, like smoking and playing cricket.

If there is any kind of purpose in an organism to live at all, there are certain things it must do. To eat and to avoid being eaten, to breathe, and to move, or rather adapt to changes in the environment: procreation is the next essential. These appear to be all that are absolutely necessary and in speaking of them we do not use ethical terms like 'ought.' We do not say to each other, "You ought to breathe"; it is taken for granted that we just have to breathe. But we can say, "You ought to breathe in such and such a manner." Similarly, we are all agreed that we have to eat and drink; but we are not agreed as to what we ought to eat, how much we ought to eat and how frequently.

So long as we talk in the most general terms we can approximate to a general agreement. But such talk has little or no practical bearing. Directly a philosopher tries to be useful, he must descend from the safe altitudes of the highly abstract and endanger his

reputation for wisdom by giving concrete advice in the real situations of individuals in everyday life.

It is merely useless to give out platitudes like "mankind ought to eat" or "love one another". The only useful thing is to become an expert dietician or psychologist, and deal with the actual problems of real individuals. The sermon is being replaced by the scientific lecture: and prayer by the scientific experiment. The monk has given place to the research worker; and the priest to the practitioner. But ethical judgments will remain for ever.

In all ethical judgments as to what we ought to eat or drink, or how we ought to behave, there are ambiguous terms. The conditional sentence is elided; that is, taken for granted. For example, if Mrs. Jones says "Tom, you ought not to drink so much," the sentence elided may be "if you wish to keep your job (or wife)." So long as we are in doubt as to what the conditional sentence is, so long is the ethical judgment capable of different interpretations and hence liable to arouse disputes. It is important, therefore, to insert the conditional sentence if the goal or meaning of the behaviour is to be elucidated. Mr. Jones may have felt certain of keeping his job, but have wished to get rid of his wife. Then drinking too much might not have been the best way of achieving his end. And, if Mrs. Jones wished to stop her husband drinking, nagging may not have been the best way of achieving her end. Clarifying these goals of behaviour, and increasing the skill of the individual to obtain them, is an important aspect of psychological education.

If the moral philosopher turns scientist, is not all his work mere patchwork? Is it not merely lessening a little pain here, assuaging a little misery there? Does it really matter if some individual's life is prolonged by a few months or a few years?

The biological goals of life are not of our devising. They are given for us. All our knowledge about them merely reveals what is given. Does not science reveal that life is evil? That desire more often than not is frustrated? That to live at all is bestial?

Beat or be beaten,  
Eat or be eaten,  
Be killed or kill;  
Choose which you will.

Is that our only choice?

Is that the kind of life we would choose for our children?

Religions hold up the phantasy of a next life as the goal; for them this life is but a means. That many aspects of this life are evil is patent: the next life offers a solution to all evils. Without such a solution can we stand up to the evils of existence? But who are we? We did not create ourselves. Have we any power to achieve our desires? Even if we could "grasp this sorry scheme of Things entire", what strength have we to "shatter it to bits—and then Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire?"

Is not even our heart's desire made for us? Is not even our inmost thought forefated by the immense mechanism of the universe?



## Chapter II

### DETERMINISM VERSUS FREEWILL

#### §I. ARE YOU AN AUTOMATON?

What was it made you open this book? Possibly you had a choice of things to do and you said to yourself, "Come what may, I am determined to find out what Dr. White has to say about Freewill."

Now the problem before us is this: Were you determined by all your past habits and actions, so that although you felt you took up this book on a free choice, and could have done something else, as a matter of fact all your desires and motives and the strength of each had been determined already, so that you could not have chosen other than you did?

Or, on the other hand, were you determined by what you wished to be in the future? Were you determined by ultimate purposes, by ideals, by wishes, from a number of which you could freely choose; but, once having chosen, did this particular desire issue into the activity you are experiencing now?

Are you acting like an automaton that has been wound up? Or are you acting like a free moral agent, doing as you please, or what you *will*?

Now, suppose you had just one other alternative, to read a novel by your favourite author, and that this other alternative was equally as attractive as reading this book. Which *ought* you to do? Which *would* you do? And how would your choice be determined?

Suppose the two alternatives were of such equal value that you were unable to choose; would you sit looking at the covers unable to make up your mind which . . . until the time for reading had passed by?

Now this problem was stated by Dante thus: "Between two foods, equally distant and equally attractive,

a free man would die of hunger before he got his teeth into one of them." And Jean Buridan, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Paris (about A.D. 1300-1359) maintained that if an ass were placed equidistant between two bundles of hay alike in all particulars, it would be unable to choose either and would therefore starve.

I have already asked you to place yourself in a similar predicament where one bundle of hay is represented by a novel and the other one by this book, the result of such equal pulls being that you metaphorically starved. Now, such conflicts of equally attractive possibilities are not uncommon in reality. Situations of that kind do occur where the choice is so equal and so difficult that the individual eventually cannot choose either and loses both.

For the sake of a simplified illustration, however, we can use Buridan's ass and ask what exactly *ought* the beast to do? We should say that he ought to take either the right hand one or the left hand one first, and he had better make up his mind which.

Imagine yourself, as a representative of the animal homo sapiens, saying to the ass, "Now this is how we intelligent folk deal with situations like this. You may be confronted with this same problem many times in your short life, so you don't want to think it out every time. All you have to do is to make a rule, 'Whenever there is an equal pull, always go to the right.' In time you'll get a habit of always going to the right and then the choice won't arise, for you will choose the right every time automatically." In psychological terms we have given the ass a 'set' to go to the right by suggestion.

But now suppose our ass comes upon two bundles of hay, the one on the left larger and of a more luscious texture, the one on the right smaller and less appetising.

What does the ass say to himself? "It's all very well this going to the right, but I'd much rather go to the left. I know I *ought* to go to the right and keep up my good habits, but it would be much nicer to go to the left. This is a very awkward moral problem. I'd better consult a wise man about it."

Our ass is really in the same predicament as before, only we have complicated his choice by introducing what amounts to the Moral Law as a third factor in the situation. Suppose, too, the ass never questioned that it ought always to go to the right. It would then be a kind of automaton which we had predestined always to choose the right first.

## §2. PREDESTINATION

We can now turn to the doctrine of Predestination. Calvin (A.D. 1509-1564) held that to be saved it was necessary to receive the grace of God. Man could not acquire grace by his own efforts because, being in a state of original sin, he could do nothing right by himself. God predestined some persons to be elected to grace and heaven and all the other persons to sin and hell. It was not possible always to tell which was which on earth, but when you did spot a sinner you could give him hell in this life. The doctrine of Predestination enabled persons so minded to inflict torture upon others without any feelings of sympathy or humanity, since both the righteous and the sinners had been predestined by God for their fate.

In asinine terms, the doctrine means that all asses who have been predestined to turn to the right first are allowed to torture all asses who have been predestined to turn to the left.

Suppose indeed that your object in reading this book is to learn how to lead a better and more satisfactory

life, a purpose for which the continued enjoyment of your favourite author was just not a sufficient counter-attraction; and suppose that you now believe that all your actions have been fated or predestined from the beginning of time. You might well ask yourself, "What's the good of trying to be better if whatever I do is not in my power to choose? I might just as well lean back and let what happens happen. It is useless to study ethics if that study is not going to make any difference to the inexorable decrees of fate."

### §3. FATALISM

Now the fatalist believes that human actions are controlled by an external fate; that whatever a man may desire he cannot escape his fated destiny. Each man is fated to die at a particular moment and whatever he does cannot alter that moment. Therefore the fatalist will not get out of the way of a car if he is in danger of being killed, because he believes if he is fated to die then something else would kill him immediately; and if he is not fated to die, then he will be miraculously saved.

Similarly you might say, "I am fated to lead either a good life or a bad one. In either case I will not bother to read Dr. White because he won't make any difference to my predestined fate."

### §4. DETERMINISM

Whereas the fatalist believes the result will happen whatever he does, the determinist believes the result will happen because what he does is determined. The determinist does step out of the way of the oncoming car and finds that he has been determined to live longer. The determinist does study ethics and finds

that he has been determined to a wider appreciation of life and more skilled behaviour.

The doctrine of Determinism asserts that all our actions are determined by invariable and unalterable laws of cause and effect. When we have a choice between two or more actions the result of that choice could have been predicted beforehand. Although we experienced conflict and appeared to choose, nevertheless the feeling of freewill was merely an illusion.

The determinist has to explain on his theory, since he maintains that every effect has a cause, why and how the feeling of spontaneous choice arises. What is it that determines our feelings of free will? The determinist appeals to a simple scientific experiment in post-hypnotic suggestion.

#### §5. POST-HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION

A man was put into a hypnotic trance. It was then suggested that he would later on take an umbrella and lay it on the ground. At the same time that the suggestion was given verbally, it was also written down on paper. When the man was awakened out of the hypnotic trance he was told, "Do as you please. Act of your own free will." He took the umbrella and laid it on the ground, believing that he was making a spontaneous choice of something to do. He was then greatly surprised to read his action written down on the paper beforehand. His feeling of spontaneity had been an illusion based upon ignorance.

Again, think of our old friend the ass in *his* predicament, suppose we hypnotise him and give him the suggestion, "Always choose the right." Later on the ass will be able to 'choose' the right, but only because we have determined his actions by suggestion. If his actions are not so determined he cannot choose between the bundles of hay and will starve.

Are our actions determined by the suggestions of adults when we were children, suggestions which we have by now forgotten? Psychological research has discovered any amount of evidence demonstrating that apparently free and spontaneous behaviour is determined by incidents and suggestions experienced in childhood and long since forgotten.

Aldous Huxley in his book *Brave New World* elaborates this idea into a system of education which indeed is half parody on what is current social practice to-day. All but a few alpha plus men and women are educated as automata. But we are bound to admit that the alpha plus persons do not fit into the general scheme of determinism. They appear to make spontaneous choices.

Similarly, the mere fact of a man being under hypnosis is an admission that he has given his will into the hands of another, but was not that original giving a free choice? The fact that nine out of ten men are slaves obeying the will of someone else certainly indicates that some men are not free. But it does not prove that free will is impossible to the tenth; and it does not prove determinism if determinism can be freely chosen.

## §6. UNIVERSAL CAUSATION

The determinist deduces that no men are free from the principle of universal causation. The great seventeenth-century determinist Spinoza (A.D. 1632-77) wrote, "The illusion of free will is nothing but our ignorance of the motives which determine our choice."

Certainly we cannot tell why a cork is left by the tide at a particular place on the seashore, but nobody would deny that it has been determined. If we look at a cork being tossed about by the waves it is easy to

imagine it being alive and moving of its own volition, simply because we cannot perceive all the forces determining its behaviour.

We can perceive many forces determining our own behaviour and we do not always claim that we act as free agents. The determinist maintains that we *feel* free when we do not know all the causes which determine us; and furthermore, when we experience the feeling of an act of will as distinct from mere spontaneous action, the action is merely one that is harmonious with an image of ourselves. This is a fact which anyone can verify for himself by introspection. When we feel driven to do some actions in spite of ourselves, that is to say, when our actions are not in harmony with this image of ourselves, then we try and disown responsibility for them. But when our actions agree with our image of ourselves we gladly accept responsibility for them and say that we have willed them.

### §7. THE IMAGE OF AN IDEAL SELF

This image of ourselves is, of course, determined by our experience. We may burden our ass with yet another illustration. Suppose we gave him the suggestion in this form: "You are a fine and noble animal; you always choose to go to the right." What happens? We have suggested into the mind of the ass an image of a fine and noble animal which he may call his ideal self. When he chooses the right hand bundle his action becomes consonant with his image of himself. But if he went to the left he would deny that he chose to go there; he would say, "The temptation of external forces was too strong for me."

Similarly most of you probably believe you made a free choice in reading this book; but the determinist would point out that this image of yourself (whatever

it may be, acquiring knowledge, or being good, or what not) has determined your choice in default of a more determining temptation to do something else.

In the psychological analysis of acts of will, the determinant of action, when there is a choice of paths, has been found to be the calling up of some dominant self to take sides in the dispute.

### §8. SELF-DETERMINATION

It is in this sense that we can use the word self-determination. Our actions are determined partly by external stimuli and partly by ourselves. But if it is said that we are free to determine ourselves we should have to make certain exactly what we mean by ourselves. Introspection reveals not one self but many selves, and these selves are represented by images derived from experience in different environments. They appear to be as much causally determined by prior events as any other item subjected to scientific investigation. THE self means a unification of partial selves, thus making behaviour more consistent throughout.

In fact, the problems of morality can be shown to be due to the conflict between these partial selves. There is a state called pathological doubt, in which persons faced with a choice are completely unable to make up their minds. They are like the ass in between the bundles of hay. But their problem is more complicated because the conflict is not merely between external stimuli. The conflict is also between images of themselves. Suppose you tell the ass it is a fine and noble animal because it always chooses the right, and someone else gives it this suggestion, "If you want to be a clever, valuable and well-nourished beast you will always go to the left, because all the other asses are

being told to go to the right." Now the ass has two nice images of himself as a superior being; unfortunately he cannot be happy with both. If he goes to the left he is being clever, but not being good; if he goes to the right he is being good, but not being clever. As you can easily see, all his brays about his actions and his doubts are only complicated effects of the original determinations from without. His ways of explaining his behaviour would be only rationalisations based upon ignorance of how he came to be what he is.

Suppose, for example, the ass is not given the suggestion from outside that he is clever, but simply falls to the temptation to go after a more luscious bundle on the left out of pure greediness. He may disown the motive of greediness, and only believe himself to be clever, and maintain that his motive is purely altruistic, so that all the asses who go to the right have more hay for themselves. You can imagine that such an ass is unlikely to desire his original motive to be brought into consciousness. He would prefer to believe, because he desires others to believe, that he himself is motivated by sheer unadulterated altruism. That is why any psychology based on determinism comes to be disliked; it threatens to reveal the true sources of behaviour and to destroy the sham rationalisations with which human beings attempt to deceive one another and themselves.

### §9. THE DETERMINIST CHARACTER

To believe that not only our actions but our very selves are rigidly determined, is to some people a blow at their pride and a challenge to their belief in their own importance. A belief that we are all determined by inexorable law destroys the feeling of personal responsibility, and takes the meaning out of such words

as merit and guilt. Why should one person be rewarded and another punished if we cannot hold them personally responsible? If a person's actions are subject to the universal law of cause and effect, he cannot merit praise or blame for anything that he does. The determinist can only answer that rewards and punishments are part of the scheme of things whereby character and personality are determined; that our natures are such that we mete out rewards and punishments. We are back again in the same position as the belief in Predestination. The determinist cannot escape from the consequences of the effects of his belief. He is only a slave obedient to law. We are only puppets, pawns, the mere playthings of destiny; if we live, if we die, if we strive, if we relax, whatever we do invariably fits into the cosmic scheme, predestined in the infinite past to weave its inexorable pattern into the infinite future.

The laws which determine the weaving of the biological part of this cosmic carpet are pleasure and pain. By the rewards of pleasure and the penalties of pain the inevitable destinies of all creatures are worked into the fabric of time.

Wrote Omar: We are

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays  
Upon this chequer-board of Nights and Days;  
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

The effect of this belief in man's utter impotence—the belief that whether man wills or not, God or Nature or the Universe drives on, in and through him without any free co-operation on man's own part, determines many persons to seek nothing but pleasure and to give up anything that we are accustomed to call morality.

But this is not the only ethical result of a belief in

Determinism. The determinist who feels himself to be a cog in a machine, a speck of dust at the mercy of the elements, feels it is futile to strive and be anxious about the results of actions. He becomes imbued with a constant serenity, is neither troubled by difficulties nor fearful of consequences, but accepts adversity with resignation and adapts readily to changed conditions in the environment. If religious and an optimist, the determinist may say that he has faith in the inscrutable laws of God. If more pessimistic he may resign himself to the forces of nature which are obviously inconsiderate of the welfare of the individual.

While his characteristic virtues are patience, obedience, forgiveness, resignation and serenity; his vices are quietism, indolence, acquiescence in slavery and a denial of the fighting qualities that make life possible. He tends to lack the driving forces of determination. It is therefore a doctrine that suits a weak man, a man who does not feel himself strong enough to change circumstances, a man who does not fight but submits. From this point of view the determinist might be charged with the immorality of aiding and abetting a decadent and effete method of life ending in atrophy.

The only escape from this charge would appear to lie in believing the individual human being to be the instrument of God or the Life-force, and it then becomes difficult to see how God or the Life-force is determined by other events. It appears then necessary to conceive of God or the Life-force as exercising free will. Responsibility for free will is then simply shifted from the shoulders of the determinist on to some hypothetical Personality or Force of which he is the slave.

## §10. ONLY AN INSTRUMENT OF THOUGHT

Another difficulty in the doctrine of Determinism is in the nature of causation itself. For example, a cork bobs about in the waves not from one cause but from several, the consistency of the cork, the composition of the sea water, the force of the wind, etc. There is not any one single cause to any one effect. When we speak as if there is, it means that we have fixed all the variables but one, as in properly conducted scientific experiments. That one variable may be the determining cause of some other variable effect, but it is not the sole cause. To any one effect there is always a plurality of causes, and to any one cause a plurality of effects; so that we are inevitably led to the view that every item is ultimately determined by the whole cosmos—a conception of causation which robs it of all practical significance. For practical purposes causation means only a sequence of phenomena which in our experience is invariable. As such, it is a great weapon for our life purposes.

Since any event has a multiplicity of causes, the change of any one of them alters the event. If we argue that our effort to change events is determined, and therefore whether we make an effort or not is of no consequence, we are turning an instrument of our thought into the master of our lives.

Without a belief in causation we should be like persons who cannot see much without spectacles. We look at the world through the mental spectacles of causation and live the better for the results of science. But we are not the spectacles.

Causation enables us to understand the past. What of the future? Even if we could see the future in the same way as we can see the past, that alone would be useless to us. Life does not demand understanding,

but action to gain ends, movement to change the course of events. Understanding the past, wresting the secrets of causation from the mysteries of nature; all that is but a tool with which to shape events.

But is not this very urge to shape events determined? Determined by some Purpose evolving through us?

### §11. THE CONFLICT IN TERMS OF EVOLUTION

As to the fundamental nature of evolution, there are two opposed schools of thought. The determinist believes in Emergent Evolution, life emerging at a certain stage out of matter. Life is simply a complex form of matter based upon the instability of carbon compounds. On the other hand, the libertarians believe in Creative Evolution. They hold that life is the central fact of the universe and that matter is but the dead deposit of life.

The view that matter is inert and does not move of itself, but has to receive an external force before it does anything, leads inevitably to the idea that life or spirit must be the originator of the movements of matter, because, by hypothesis, matter left to itself would not begin moving.

### §12. THE BIOLOGICAL ATTACK ON DETERMINISM

This leads us to the modern philosophy of Vitalism, which is founded upon biological facts, in opposition to the crude materialism of the last century. Recent experimental research into the behaviour of living organisms has shown that some behaviour cannot be satisfactorily explained by reference to events in the past, but is more easily explainable by what is intended shall happen in the future. If an embryo sea-urchin is cut into two or three pieces the result will not be

parts of one sea-urchin, but two or three sea-urchins, smaller, it is true, but nevertheless complete in every detail. Again, if a part of the brain is destroyed, the function that it undertook is entirely destroyed *only* for a time; then the function is resumed by some other parts of the brain, showing that physiological tissue is so plastic that the crude conception of materialistic determinism is inadequate to explain the facts, while the conception of a goal or purpose to which the life of the organism is directing itself, using what matter is at its disposal for its own ends, does explain the facts very easily.

### §13. ADLER VERSUS FREUD

This great metaphysical controversy has recently shown itself to have an important practical bearing in the realm of psychotherapy. Adler adopted the teleological view in his opposition to the determinism of Freud.

Adler attacked the determinism of psycho-analysis as follows: It is quite true that the past has an effect upon us, but it only has that effect which we want it to have. We use the past for our own purposes; the past does not use us. Shocking experiences do not determine our character. It is what we make of those shocking experiences which matters. Therefore the way to cure neurotics is to discover their false goals or wrong purposes and then to give them better ones.

The answer of the determinist is that these goals or purposes are but reflections of past events. We desire not to get burnt by fire because we have once been burnt and the memory persists as a negative determinant, which we interpret as a part of the general desire for security. If we say we have the moral goal of temperance towards which we strive, it is only

because we have experienced excess in some concrete form like over-eating and found it distasteful; and if we say that co-operation is the final goal of morality it is only because we have suffered from the neglect of others to co-operate with us. To the psychological determinist, every positive goal or desire is but a memory of unpleasure at the experience of its opposite. The ideal of Liberty which has stirred the activities of our great political and religious leaders for centuries is but the memory of slavery endured in the home, in the school and in the daily task. The libertarian is one who has made an abstraction out of truancy. Similarly, however, the desire for a dictator is founded on memories of personal incapacity. Even the adoption of determinism is motivated by the desire to be free of personal responsibility, to shift one's burdens upon the shoulders of God, of Fate, of Destiny, or upon the blind impersonal workings of natural Law, because such an individual has painful memories of 'self-will', 'wilfulness' or 'obstinacy'.

#### §14. SUPERMAN VERSUS ETERNAL RECURRENCE

The conflict received a strong and striking formulation in the writings of the German philosopher Nietzsche (A.D. 1844-1900). Just as men are to apes, he argued, so will supermen be to the men of the present: that is a deduction from the theory of evolution. From it Nietzsche built an ethical doctrine that he, and a few other enlightened folk like himself, ought to hasten the advent of Superman. This hastening is to be brought about by *willing*. This is the typical free-will position. The stimulus to it, in Nietzsche's case as in others, is the experience of the all-too-human failings of ordinary men, in a word discontent, that which makes us strive for something better.

Later in life, however, in contradistinction to the Superman, Nietzsche preached the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. He argued that if the Universe were made up of a finite number of parts, however many, there could only be a finite number of their permutations and combinations. Given endless time, these configurations would have to repeat themselves in due course; hence the Universe is like a clock that goes on eternally revolving through the same cycles. We have, therefore, lived countless times before just as we are now; and we shall live again and repeat our lives in exactly the same way an infinite number of times. The ethical deductions from this view are typically determinist. In Nietzsche's maxim *amor fati*, the goal of life is to love fate, to enjoy whatever happens.

#### §15. THE CHARACTERS OF THE DETERMINIST AND THE LIBERTARIAN CONTRASTED

All determinist views inevitably make the greatest good to be looking on and adapting to circumstances. The chief aim of morality can only be 'understanding'.

The stimulus to the determinist position comes from the failure of the human will to get what it wants. Determinism as an ethical doctrine, not as an instrument of thought, is a rationalisation of impotence, a sign of defeat, a mask of inferiority, an escape from disaster.

On the other hand, the believer in free will is essentially a man of action, a leader and creator, a man who dominates events and determines the course of history, a man who refuses to be defeated, a man who by the force and strength of his character naturally commands the obedience of others, and who by the endurance and pertinacity with which he holds to those visions of the future which he alone may see,

inspires and impresses upon us that which cannot be deduced from the study of past events, at least not until the present itself has become the past.

### §16. EPILOGUE: THE TWO ASSES

Suppose two asses and one bundle of hay: suppose they are on opposite sides of the hay and between each ass and the hay are two separate sheets of glass. Ass number one comes up against the first sheet of glass, can make no headway, sits down discouraged and brays piteously from starvation and frustrated desire. After a while it dawns on this ass that everything is determined, therefore braying piteously won't help; it is better to make up one's mind to *understand* the nature of the universe, to *contemplate* the situation which cannot be changed, and to *endure* starvation.

Ass number two likewise can make no headway, but being obstinate and also feeling strong, charges at the glass, smashes it . . . and gets through. Ass number two comes up against the second piece of glass. What does he think about it? Is it any use going on through all this discomfiture only to be frustrated in the end? Would it not be better, instead of getting cut about and frustrated like this, to sit down and understand the nature of the universe, to contemplate the situation which cannot be changed, and to make the best of enduring starvation? No; ass number two said the magic formula, "I will or die in the attempt", charged the second lot of glass, and ate up the hay. Whereat the first ass repeated also his magic formula as he gently expired of starvation, "Kismet. Thus it is fated." But the second ass is growing fitter and fatter, and feels more full of will than ever.



## Chapter III

# THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE

### §1. PSYCHOLOGICAL HEDONISM

The word "hedonism" is from the Greek "hedonē"—pleasure. Psychological hedonism is the theory that the only determinants of action are seeking pleasure and avoiding unpleasure.

First we must distinguish between pleasure and pleasures. Pleasure and pain are feelings which are abstracted from experience. We cannot feel in a vacuum, but only in relation to objects. Therefore we can only seek objects and experiences which give pleasure (and avoid those which give unpleasure). In short, the only way to seek pleasure is to seek 'pleasures', and that means ultimately to seek certain objects, ends or activities which we have reason to believe will be accompanied by certain feelings in ourselves.

If we were to try and make a list of such pleasure-inducing activities, we should find that the same activities gave some people pleasure and other people unpleasure, and even had these opposite effects on the same person at different times. So when we speak of 'pleasures' we do not intend the customary social use of the word in such a phrase as "a round of pleasures." It is possible to go to a dance, or a bridge party, or a theatre and be bored and miserable.

Now, do people in fact seek what gives them pleasure and avoid what gives them unpleasure?

Sir George Aston writing to *The Times* on Wednesday, 2nd November, 1932, on the death of Lord Methuen, reveals the aims of that soldier's life. The first phrase is a statement of fact. "We are not sent into the world to study our own comfort." The second is from his

speech in the House of Lords, February, 1931. "No greater work could be done than to support your country and your God." It is typical of soldiers that, to support each other and the aims for which they fight, they will suffer hardship. They do not seek pleasure; they seek the welfare of their regiment, their country and their God, more or less regardless of their own comfort.

Do lovers seek their own pleasure? It is notorious that they do not. A portrait of the lover, willing to bear any circumstance and any pain for the sake of the beloved, was painted by Petrarch in a sonnet:

Set me in high, or yet in low degree:  
In longest night, or in the shortest day:  
In clearest sky, or where clouds thickest be:  
In lusty youth, or when my hairs are gray:  
Set me in heaven, in earth, or else in hell,  
In hill or dale, or in the foaming flood;  
Thrall, or at large, alive whereso I dwell,  
Sick or in health, in evil fame or good,  
Hers will I be . . .

Again, mothers often sacrifice themselves for their offspring, regardless of their own pleasure or welfare.

The plain fact is that people seek ends which do not minister to their own comfort. Regarding ourselves as animals, we are driven by instincts, herd, sex and parental, to achieve certain ends regardless of our own individual comfort or discomfort.

If it be argued that the ends we desire are just the activities or states that give us most happiness, it is either plainly not true, or if true it means nothing more than whatever we desire is pleasant just because we desire it, and that begs the question. Moreover, there would be no point in an ethical doctrine that people ought to seek pleasure and avoid unpleasure if in fact they could not avoid doing so whatever they did.

It is not true, then, that pleasure and unpleasure are the only determinants of action (but it is certainly true that pleasure and unpleasure partly determine our action).

## §2. ETHICAL HEDONISM

The doctrine of ethical hedonism is devised to change all that and to make pleasure and unpleasure the sole determinants of action. It consists of two propositions.

The first is a statement of fact: it is true that in fact people do not follow pleasure but an infinite variety of objects, some only of which give pleasure.

The second is a statement of duty based on value: people ought to follow those objects which give the maximum pleasure. Or it can be phrased perhaps better in this way: people ought to follow objects in such a way as to increase pleasure.

## §3. THE FOLLIES OF DUTY

As a matter of fact one has only to look around to verify it. We find most husbands dissatisfied with their wives, and still more wives dissatisfied with their husbands; we find most parents dissatisfied with their children and more children dissatisfied with their parents. It is difficult to find anybody in the job he likes: the schoolteacher would prefer to be a doctor, the doctor would prefer to be in business, the business man would prefer to be a politician, the politician would prefer to be a novelist, but the cry is always, "Anything rather than what I am." Always distance makes the prospect fairer; pleasure is round the corner or over the next hill, it is never on the spot in the present. Everyone is miserable and chiefly occupied in drowning his misery by various sorts of drugs.

What is at the bottom of this universal misery?

It is the accumulation of unnecessary duties and obligations: it is the fight to be proud and thought well of, and to take the first place in the sight of other people. It is the absurd idea that we ought to strive to be better than other folk. We must work to win a speed record or an endurance record, never mind what at; we must reduce our golf handicap, or be better than our neighbours at cards or billiards or drinking. We must have a better car or know better people or change our clothes more or spend more money—anything to be superior. And what does it all amount to? Just a lot of fuss and bother, anxiety and overwork, care and misery. For what? Just to excite envy in the breast of Mrs. Brown next door or Mr. Smith over the way. Just to prove to ourselves how much better we are than some other people. The hedonist maintains that what people are striving after is just vanity, and all they get is dust and ashes, misery and ruin, and that's what they deserve for being such fools.

The hedonist turns his back on the follies of the world and proceeds to enjoy life.

Why should we do such a lot of things if they make us unhappy? Cut them out. Throw your duties overboard and have time on your hands for the things worth while. Leisure is the prelude to pleasure.

## §4. HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF PLEASURE

And how do we set about obtaining pleasures? There are the pleasures of the senses, the 'gross' physical pleasures. If we take eating as an example, it is obvious that the more we eat the less pleasurable does the activity become. Food tastes nicer on an empty stomach. It does not matter which sense we choose, pleasure belongs only to the beginning of an experience and fades out with its duration, to be replaced by unpleasure. So that we have the simple maxims "nothing long", "no excess", on which is founded the law of the Golden Mean. All the vices are simply those behaviours which end in unpleasure through excess: like gluttony, sexual excess, gambling, drunkenness, etc.; while virtue is identified with temperance, the middle course.

It is obvious, too, that having stopped a pleasant experience because it has become unpleasurable, after a pause the same experience may become pleasurable again. So that we can easily deduce the general law that pleasure is maintained by rhythm.

Moreover, the pleasures of rhythmic experience are heightened by the satisfaction of anticipation. The organism acquires a habit of expecting the experience at stated intervals and prepares for it. Regular habits, then, would appear to be conducive to pleasure, not so much, however, that they should become monotonous. In order to extract the maximum pleasure it is probably advisable to lengthen gradually the pauses in between the experiences. The greater the tension of need and desire, so much the greater will be the pleasure of satisfactorily removing the tension. Some unpleasure, then, appears to increase our capacity for pleasure.

The same rules apply to the intensity of experience.

A too low intensity hardly thrills the body into a state of pleasure; a too high intensity goes over into unpleasure. The law of moderation again applies, that the intensity of an experience should be neither too much nor too little, nor should it remain constant, but vary if possible in a rhythmic fashion.

There is also a relation between intensity and duration such that the more intense the stimulus, the longer the organism takes to recover the capacity to receive the same experience pleurably.

There is one further aspect of sense experience, and that is extensity, which means the number of experiences that we can appreciate at the same time, or, if you like, the extent of experience. If you take a hasty lunch alone at a counter you have had the experience of lunch, but if you lunch at one of London's fashionable hotels, with a close friend whom you have not seen for some time, your experience of lunch is a very different thing. At the counter you are probably aware of your food and your thoughts, and vaguely of your surroundings. In the restaurant you are appreciating the presence of your friend, the topics of conversation, the taste of the food and liquor, the sumptuous appointments, the other plutocratic lunchers, the excellence of the music and so on, all at the same time. Your experience is much fuller.

Now it is obvious that our of a total experience of this kind, not all the items may be pleasurable. You may, for example, feel you can't afford it. You may dislike the piece of music the orchestra plays. You may have a slight headache; or your favourite dish may be too much done or too underdone. But you might say after lunch that you had *enjoyed* the experience. The rule is that if the general setting of an experience is pleasurable, unpleasant items which fall within it are tinged with the general pleasure feeling. The pleasure

attached to the whole overflows on to all the parts of which it is composed.

In virtue of this fact we are able to see how some unpleasurable experiences can be endured or ignored. By paying attention to the total situation the painful items can be ignored, because the pleasure of the whole distracts attention from them. The martyr attends to his faith and his vision of Heaven, and these distract his attention from the flames and the torture. Unpleasure can even be regarded as pleasurable if viewed as an essential necessity of the total experience. The martyr may, in anticipation of joys to come, even welcome the pains of death by torture.

As an example of the pleasures of anticipation overcoming the pain of present reality, Dr. Bousfield has reported the following case:

A child took delight in throwing off his bedclothes in order to experience the pleasure of covering himself up again. While he was uncovered and feeling cold he would imagine how pleasant the warmth would be when he covered himself up. The pleasure of anticipating warmth was passed over to the discomfort of feeling cold, till at last being cold and waiting to be warm became itself a pleasurable experience. The pleasure attached to this situation of anticipation spread to all other situations of anticipation, so that the man was constantly placing himself in situations of anticipation. He would delay and procrastinate, however, to such an extent and in so many ways that life became unbearable from the reality point of view. For example, he would stutter at the ticket office to delay catching the train. He was continually putting himself in uncomfortable situations because he had acquired a habit of obtaining pleasure in this way, and although the secondary discomfort arising from his inefficiency in life quite obliterated any pleasure of anticipation,

the habit was so strong that it continued in spite of his rational will to overcome it.

In the above case the essential aspect of pleasure lay in the mind. It was the image of warmth which he found to be pleasurable.

These images have certain characteristics which make them superior to sensations as purveyors of pleasure. Firstly, they can always be called up, whereas the objects which give the pleasant sensations are not always easily acquired. We may not always be able to enjoy eating an apple; but we can always enjoy imagining ourselves to be eating one. All the painful possibilities associated with real apples are conveniently eliminated. The skin is neither blotchy nor bitter, the taste always comes up to expectations and there are no maggots in the middle. We may be too poor to afford an apple; or if we have money the greengrocer may have already sold the really nice apples to other people. The tree may be too difficult to climb and the apples unshakable. But in our minds there are permanent apples, luscious and perfect, which we can enjoy at our own pleasure at any time.

The hedonist, then, who seeks pleasure, is inevitably led to regard the pleasures of the mind as of a more enduring and satisfactory quality than the pleasures of sensation.

Although at first sight this tendency to retire into one's own mind for pleasure appears to intensify the subjective character of hedonism, in fact, it may tend to its socialisation through the projection of these mental pleasures in the form of art.

We cannot all eat the same apple. The pleasures derived from the senses are private and personal. The ideal apple, however, we can all enjoy. We can paint it and write poetry about it. We can all enjoy the painting and the poetry in a more durable way than we can enjoy the actual apples.

It is probable that Dante got more positive enjoyment out of his images of Beatrice than he would have obtained from a real Beatrice living as his wife. Although the reality gives pleasure, it gives pain and unhappiness also; and these discomforts are eliminated by imagination. Moreover, by putting the lady into verse, everyone else is able to join him in loving his image of her.

The practical value of Christian Science is founded simply upon this psychological fact. The Christian Scientist fixes her mind on certain images of Heaven; by continual practice these images can be made more or less permanent. When any material pain or discomfort appears, the mind is at once switched to the imaginary world of Heaven where pain and discomfort do not exist.

Christian Science is essentially a hedonist philosophy in which the pleasures of the mind are utilised to escape from the pains of the body. It leads to complete subjectivity, except where there are other Christian Scientists who enjoy the same mental pictures of the ideal state of consciousness, and who express their mental pleasures in the same terminology.

The chief discomfort of the mind is fear. The hedonist has to devise means for removing anxiety and fear. All fears ultimately boil down to the fear of death. If a man does not fear death, death can become the ultimate means of escape from any situation however terrible, which means that no situation can any longer really inspire him with an ultimate fear.

The absence of the fear of death has been regarded as essential by most hedonist philosophers. The fear of death can generally be ascribed to the religious teachings about a God who punishes sinners in the eternal torment of Hell. Many hedonists (for examples, the author of Ecclesiastes and Lucretius) therefore deny

the existence of an after-life. Death ends personal existence. It is a nothingness, an obliteration, an eternal dreamless sleep from which there is no awakening. This thought is the ultimate solace for all pain and unhappiness.

### §5. THE GREATEST HAPPINESS OF THE GREATEST NUMBER

The modern development of hedonism is mainly a product of English thought in the nineteenth century. The two chief leaders were Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mill. The goal at which all men should aim they held to be "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

What is the difference between pleasure and happiness? J. S. Mill had no doubt at all that the difference, if any, was negligible. He wrote:

"The creed holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is meant pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure."

It is partly a verbal difference. Happiness is a quality of the subject: we seldom speak of objects being happy; if we do, we recognise a metaphorical use of the term. But we do talk about objects being pleasant and nice, meaning that they give us pleasure. Some objects may give us pleasure even though we may be unhappy. Pleasure is a feeling which we feel, happiness is a state in which we are. Possibly a good definition is this one: Happiness is that state in which the sum of present pleasures outweighs the sum of present unpleasures.

## §6. CAN PLEASURE BE MEASURED?

The idea of adding up pleasures and subtracting the unpleasures is one, however, that cannot be put into practice, at any rate by the intellect. We cannot give mathematical values to our feelings—at most we can say vaguely that one pleasure was greater than another. But many pleasures cannot be compared. They are definitely different in kind. The pleasure connected with playing a game of football is so different from the pleasure of hearing a favourite symphony that one cannot compare them. Even if we tried to rely on the rough comparison of their money value, and rated experiences by how much we would be prepared to pay for them, we should find that our rating would vary from day to day and from hour to hour.

It is possible, looking back at our past experiences, to give some sort of mathematical magnitude to our feelings in this way; but how can we judge what our feelings will be in experiences that are to come? We cannot; but this does not invalidate the argument that we ought to aim at happiness whether we get it or not. It does, however, make aiming at the greatest happiness a task of very great difficulty. And all the more so when we are asked to aim at “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” Left as a vague sort of ideal, it sounds a rational sort of thing to do. But once we go into details we find that the use of the superlative “greatest” involves us in impossible calculations.

The whole notion of adding pleasures and subtracting unpleasures will not bear the test of experiences of extensity. Provided that the total experience is pleasurable, a certain amount of pain by heightening one’s consciousness or stimulating one’s appreciation of being alive actually heightens the pleasure of being alive. If you compare two games of football, the one

you win by a walk-over of, say, thirty points to nil, the other being a keenly contested game, full of excitement and thrills, which you lose by, say, eight points to nine; we have no hesitation in saying that the score of thirty and the score of minus one do not represent the pleasure value of the games. The pleasure resided not in the easy win, but in the excitement, danger, and even pain, of an exhausting struggle. It is the same in life; the greatest pleasure is often so mixed up with unpleasure that pleasures and unpleasures may nearly balance. To talk about adding and subtracting pleasures and unpleasures may reveal a fondness for mathematics; it certainly reveals an ignorance of life.

#### §7. THE SUBJECTIVITY OF PLEASURE

In what, then, does happiness consist? Does it consist in making other people happy? But if we all spent our time trying to make other people happy and being miserable ourselves, everybody would be miserable. If then, recognising that everybody knows his own happiness best, we seek our own happiness regardless of other people, we should soon find that the opposition of the said other people would put a stop to that.

The great difficulty with the theory arises on consideration of the fact that many persons feel pleasure, and, indeed, very great pleasure, when they give other people pain.

This difficulty did not worry Bentham who admitted that he was a selfish man "whose selfishness happened to have taken the form of benevolence." But everybody is not like Bentham, though possibly they ought to be; and although Bentham may have intended that everybody ought to be like himself, what he wrote was, "Quantity of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good

as poetry." Most boys, anyhow, would maintain that the quantity of pleasure was not equal, that poetry gives less pleasure than pushing pins.

And if the utilitarian falls back on democracy and the right of everyone to pleasure and to the absence of unpleasure, it is regrettable that J. S. Mill cannot find a better argument than this. "No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person . . . desires his own happiness. Each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness therefore a good to the aggregate of all persons." I think most people would agree with that at first sight—it looks so reasonable. But in the first place, the argument that because all men taken separately are mortal, therefore the human race is mortal, is obviously fallacious; and if we add to that logical fallacy the undoubted fact that the pleasure of one person is often the unpleasure of another, difficulties arise in putting the theory both to the test of logic and to the test of reality.

### §8. THE FLIGHT FROM UNPLEASURE

For example, Lucretius thought as follows:

When storms blow loud, 'tis sweet to watch at ease  
From shore, the sailor labouring with the seas:

Because the sense, not that such pains are his,  
But that they are not ours, must always please.

Sweet for the cragsman, from some high retreat  
Watching the plains below where legions meet,  
To await the moment when the walls of war  
Thunder and clash together.

He finds it pleasant to look on and watch other people do the work. Let other people do the fighting, while he gets out of harm's way and enjoys the fun, fun for

him, but not necessarily amusement for the exhausted or wounded soldier.

Further:

But more sweet,  
Sweeter by far on Wisdom's rampired height  
To pace serene the porches of the light,  
And thence look down—down on the purblind herd  
Seeking and never finding in the night

The road to peace—the peace that all might hold,  
But yet is missed by young men and by old,  
Lost in the strife for palaces and powers,  
The axes, and the lictors, and the gold.

His goal is peace; he shuns the strife of the world.

Oh sightless eyes! Oh hands that toil in vain!  
Not such your needs. Your nature's needs are twain,  
And only twain: and these are to be free—  
Your minds from terror, and your bones from pain.

Unailing limbs, a calm unanxious breast—  
Grant Nature these, and she will do the rest.  
Nature will bring you, be you rich or poor,  
Perhaps not much—at all events her best.

He wishes to remove himself from fear and pain. He seeks a state of calm untroubled peace, which he hopes to find close to nature.

What though no statued youths from wall and wall  
Strew light along your midnight festival  
With golden hands, nor beams from Lebanon  
Keep the lyre's langour lingering through the hall,

Yours is the table 'neath the high-whispering trees;  
Yours is the lyre of leaf and stream and breeze.

The golden flagon, and the echoing dome—  
Lapped in the Spring, what care you then for these?

Sleep is no sweeter on the ivory bed  
Than yours on moss; and fever's shafts are sped  
As clean through silks damasked for dreaming kings,  
As through the hood that wraps the poor man's head.

Note here the essentials of hedonism: the flight from pain and fear which leads away from a life of action to one of contemplation and of looking on: the flight from work, and war, and politics, from display and from riches, into a life close to nature, to simplicity and to relative poverty.

We can turn from this great Latin poet, who lived exactly 2,000 years ago (he died about the time Julius Cæsar invaded Britain), to a modern exposition of exactly the same style of ethical doctrine, *In Defence of Sensuality* by J. C. Powys, published in 1930.

Mr. Powys writes as follows:

"The secret of Life is not 'Beauty' or 'Truth' or 'Goodness.' It is not any one final Beatific Vision. It is not to grow wiser or better or more complete. It is not to improve ourselves or to improve the world. These are *what it is not*. Let me weigh my words more carefully as I come to what it is. It is to enjoy life in a certain way, and with a certain quality of enjoyment. All enjoyment—or it would not be enjoyment—has a measure of it; but in its essence it is only a *certain kind of enjoyment*" (p. 28).

"I advocate a life-worship of static contemplation in direct opposition to all the activities of our time" (p. 9).

"The saint is one who holds the view that compared with happiness nothing is of any importance at all. Compared with happiness, fame is nothing, ambition is nothing, work is nothing, progress is nothing" (p. 63).

How does Mr. Powys find his particular variety of happiness?

"The more childish and unworldly a person's disposition is, the more happiness he gets from such simple things as air, water, sun, earth-mould, sand, leaves, bread, butter, honey, or the still more primeval sensation of a certain delicious drowsiness in his own limbs" (p. 40).

It is not a mere chance that Mr. Powys finds such pleasure in rest and drowsiness. It is inherent in, hedonism.

Epicurus, the most famous Greek hedonist, who lived 200 years before Lucretius, maintained that pleasure is to be attained by the mere removal of pain or disturbance, and that the greatest pleasure could be found in the simplest means. The ideal is to be undisturbed by pain, a state which he described as "ataraxia", which means untroubledness. The hedonist therefore escapes from the troubles of falling in love, of parenthood and of political life. He will obey the laws and act so as not to excite the hostility of others. Friendship thus becomes a means to avoid pain and trouble rather than a good in itself; although in the case of Epicurus it seems to have been a positive pleasure, for he certainly had a gift for friendship and founded a community of friends or school of hedonists, where a life of leisure and pleasure could be realised in practice.

It is one of the difficulties of hedonism that those who seek pleasure are in reality only shirking unpleasure. All the apparently positive maxims of the hedonist are in reality methods of avoiding trouble.

The author of Ecclesiastes wrote:

"Then I commended jollity, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry" (viii, 15).

These sound positive enough, but one only eats with satisfaction to get rid of the pain of hunger, and one only drinks with satisfaction to remove the tension of thirst, and one is only merry to avoid the troubles and discomforts of the world.

What did the Ecclesiastical preacher notice? That "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of

understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all" (ix, 11).

He concludes then that acquiring swiftness or strength or understanding or wisdom or skill may not lead you anywhere, so why bother to acquire them? Avoid everything that may lead you into trouble, behave yourself and enjoy the simple pleasures, not the round of busy engagements which society calls pleasures. He tried all that; he kept up a big establishment and went in for pleasures properly, but he found that as far as he was concerned they were only vanity. Instead of trying to be magnificent persons he counsels you and me to be nonentities. Fade into the background, he says, don't be over righteous, don't be over sinful, just fade out into very ordinary persons and enjoy what you can with what chance happens to give you.

Modern hedonists are more precise in describing the means by which happiness for everyone is to be brought about: firstly, by what has been called the natural sanction, by means of the physical laws which punish us for over-indulgence and give us pleasure if we obey them; secondly, by the legal sanction, by which is meant the rewards and punishments meted out by law; thirdly, the social sanction, the feeling of the approbation or disapprobation of others.

Are these sanctions in any way moral? Is a man acting on moral principles because he fears pain and punishment and ostracism? Do we not regard as truly moral precisely those persons who persist in their way of life in spite of pain, in spite of punishment, and in spite of ostracism?

The soldier who advances towards the enemy for the sole reason that if he retreated he would be court-martialled and shot, is not advancing because he is a brave fellow; he is really running away from the greater of two discomforts. His action is motivated not

by bravery, but by cowardice; and cowardice is essentially the motivation of all hedonists. In their efforts to obtain the feeling of pleasure they may look brave, they may go to some lengths to arrange their environment to give them pleasure, but at bottom they are only shrinking from unpleasure, and the mistake they make with their sanctions is in imagining that the sole motivation of anyone is running away from pain.

### §9. PROBLEMS OF PAIN

It is curious that some hedonists hope to increase the general happiness by inflicting its opposite upon those who violate the laws. No hedonist would violate any laws himself, except he preferred the pleasure of a mental image of general happiness to his immediate discomfort. An egoistic hedonist *might* well take pleasure in inflicting punishment; nor would such a person necessarily desire death to end all, so long as he could look forward to an after life spent as an angel torturing or watching the torture of the wicked in Hell.

There are actually, too, persons who take pleasure in being tortured because they feel they are acquiring merit which will be counterbalanced later on. A miserable life in this world, they believe, entitles them to a ticket for Heaven in the next.

There are others, too, who identify themselves with the person who gives them pain: they suffer pain because they get a reflection of the pleasure it gives someone else to hurt them. Admittedly we may, if we like, regard such persons as abnormal; but if "pushpin is as good as poetry" the pleasures of unpleasure must be seriously considered.

Suppose we seek unpleasure instead of pleasure. Shall we not learn more about the universe than we ever should if we followed pleasure? Is it not pain that

educates us, unpleasure that gives us knowledge? It is not happiness that develops our soul, it is unhappiness. What is the difference between a great-hearted man and a little-hearted man? It is the difference in their attitude to unpleasure. The great man does not shirk discomfort; the little man does. The great man welcomes trouble, he wrests its secret from it. The little man runs away and learns nothing.

Only those who have suffered can help others. Only those who have despaired can help those in despair. Only those who have conquered unhappiness and not run away from it are in a position to help those who are in distress.

The determinist philosophy which sees us as the blind playthings of chance dealing out pleasures and pains to which we all react like automata, is not the philosophy of strength, but of weakness. It is the man, confronted with loss and misery and ruin, who says "I will", who turns back into the struggle to learn his mistakes and profit by them: he it is who reaps the reward of life.

The way of life lies through the endurance of unpleasure and not through the seeking of pleasure. Those who seek pleasure and shun unpleasure are heading for sloth, regression, sleep and finally death. In the desire to escape unpleasure one can only give up an active life; and finally, the one sure escape is death. Many persons who regard their own pleasure or happiness as an end in itself, once they attain a state of such happiness wish to die there and then, because they feel that never again will life offer them such happiness. They can only look forward to relative unpleasure, and since their goal of life is to escape from unpleasure, death is preferable to life; so some actually do commit suicide at the time when they have experienced a state of very great happiness. When life

appears to offer more unpleasure than pleasure the hedonist is robbed of his only motive for living, so he succumbs in various ways to an earlier death.

What is this difference between the man who shuns unpleasure and the man who goes to meet it and to conquer it? Is it not the difference between strength and weakness? It is the tired one who retires to bed to feel the pleasurable sensations of his body. It is the weary one who sits on a height and watches other people work. It is the unpleasant sensation of fatigue that makes us find pleasure only in the simple things of nature.

It is significant that Mr. Powys cannot see the pleasure that exists in cruelty. The thrill of killing, the lust for blood, the primitive satisfaction in taking life: he runs away from all this. He identifies himself with the victim, not with the victor. The victor may see the same episode with very different eyes from the vanquished. Even more differently is the same experience valued by the weak and by the strong. To the strong, pain, discomfort, loss, obstruction, ruin, all these are stimulants. They call out action; they call out life: they increase the feeling of power and the lust for battle and conflict.

To the weak, pain and discomfort lead to flight, flight into the seductive imaginations of pleasures which the weak believe to be religion or art, flight into the drug of drinking which the weak think to be manly, flight into the hypnotic comfort of someone's embrace, which the weak mistake for love.

## §10. THE END OF THE PLEASURE-SEEKER

And what is Mr. Powys's love for God, though he calls it a longing to commune with the First Cause? "It is a craving to set our lips where the breasts of the great mother hold the fountains of all sweetness" (p. 277). If that isn't regression, what is? He is completely selfish, because he has no feeling *for* the great mother and no sense of identification with the universe. His magic formula is "Enjoy—defy—forget." Enjoy the universe, defy God, and forget the evil in God which is the cause of all suffering. The only bits of the universe, however, which he can enjoy appear from his account to be projections and symbols of his own little innocuous self. When the other aspects of the universe present themselves, it seem to me that he either metaphorically flies into tantrums or buries his head under the bed-clothes.

It is perhaps not a mere coincidence that drinking takes such a prominent place in the minds of all pleasure-seekers. "Drink, for once dead you never shall return" counsels Omar—possibly a wise thing to do if that premiss is correct. But is that premiss correct? It is only a half truth.

Wrote Swinburne in his *Hymn of Man*: "Men perish, but man shall endure; lives die, but the life is not dead." It is just this realisation of something valuable outside ourselves with which we identify ourselves, something with which our own personal feelings of pleasure and unpleasure have nothing to do, which is the answer to hedonism. At bottom it is a question of the bigness or the smallness of ourselves. The soldier's self does not stop at the surface of his skin; it includes his regiment and his country. The lover's self does not end with his own delicious sensations; it includes the whole welfare of his beloved. The mother's self does not end

with ministrations to her own welfare; her children are in one essential sense herself. The hedonist has a tiny self, compared with the selves which we regard as great.

## Chapter IV

# SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

### §I. THE GOOD-IN-ITSELF

What is a good-in-itself? When we use the word "good" we nearly always mean "good for something." A good train is a fast train. Trains are good because they move us from one place to another quickly. A good ship is one that does not leak, or one that does not roll, pitch or toss, as much as others. A good car is one that does not give us trouble—it is good for us. A good boy or a good girl is one that does not give grown-ups trouble. A good school is one to which parents can send their children and forget about them. A good country is a rich country; crops are plentiful, minerals are plentiful: it is good for exploitation.

Most people believe wealth to be good. No one, however, believes that the mere possession of wealth is a good in itself. Hunks of gold on a desert island are just irony. Money is no good unless it is good for something. Even poverty has been held to be good, but good for spiritual growth or the enjoyment of simplicity, not good in itself.

Mere health is good, but is it a good in itself? If we did nothing but live for being healthy, what should we be like? As a matter of fact a number of people do. They go from doctor to doctor in the pursuit of health; they collect remedies and live on treatments. Nobody looks upon them with admiration because they are pursuing the one great ultimate good in life. The healthy are busy pursuing other goals for which their health is only a means to an end. To one who is pursuing spiritual growth or cultivating endurance under all circumstances, even disease may be a means to some good. Everything seems to be good for something

which is not itself. Look where we will, the good that is a good-in-itself is not so easy to find.

## §2. THE GOOD OUTSIDE OURSELVES

The goods above mentioned are all good because they minister to our personal comfort. Is our own happiness and comfort the supreme good, or are we but a means to some other end? Do we exist not for the sake of our own personal existence but for something else outside ourselves? When we ourselves are good, does it only mean that we are good for something? Does it mean simply that we do not trouble our neighbours, that we sink into the background and innocuously pursue our own personal comforts with good friends, good food, and a good time?

As we read in the last chapter, the self that goes in for personal pleasure is a little self. A great self is one that is identified with something very much larger than our own persons; something of which we are but parts; something for whom it is our duty to live, and if necessary, sacrifice ourselves. And because we have identified ourselves with something greater and more enduring than our own lives, our value does not cease at our own deaths. It continues in so far as we have contributed to that greater existence which was before us and which will live on after us.

The supreme good of the pleasure-seeker is his own feeling of comfort and happiness. It is not easy to see in what way this universe is designed to give individuals happiness; but there was a time in the lives of all of us when the universe did appear to minister to our own personal comfort, the time when we were infants and the whole household put itself out to make us comfortable. We had only to squall and someone would come and attend to us. Our own personal pleasure appeared

to us all in the beginning as the supreme object of the universe, such as we knew it. Growing up, then, consists in having a smaller and smaller idea of ourselves in relation to the universe. The arrival of the next baby is usually the first real eye-opener in the matter of our own relative unimportance; and that process continues. Finally, death snuffs us out, a certain reminder that not even our personal existence let alone our comfort, is the supreme and eternal end of anything outside ourselves.

The belief in personal immortality, for which there is no scientific evidence, reflects the desire that we ourselves should be important to the universe. The desire for an immortality of some kind underlies the belief that some part of the individual lives on in the race by such methods as procreating children, contributing social reforms, scientific inventions or works of art. In this sense the individual achieves immortality through children, through contributions to social welfare, through the body of science or through the heritage of art. The individual by identifying himself with these greater things outside his own person lives on so long as they last.

### §3. THE GOAL OF SERVICE

To achieve this identification with the race, the individual must fit himself to serve. Duty lies in the performing of some function for the welfare of the race. The goal or supreme end of the individual becomes on this theory the right performance of his social duties, conceived in the broadest sense.

On each man, then, is laid the duty of acquiring sufficient skill to take his place as an efficient member of society. He has to be trained to take his place in the social fabric; he must keep himself fit and efficient by

continual practice and exercise of his acquired talents. This is the original meaning of the word "asceticism" which comes from the Greek verb "askain"—which means to exercise the body and to practise a trade or art.

In acquiring some skill, say carpentry, our own pleasures or unpleasures are not relevant to the end sought, which is to provide society with tables and chairs and cupboards. Our own pleasures and unpleasures are only relevant to the way in which we acquire the skill. They may be relevant to the teacher whose job it is to turn out an efficient carpenter as soon as possible. If the novice is put to work greater than his capacity, the result may be painful and a retarding of his graduation as an efficient carpenter. Society is not interested in private pleasures and unpleasures. Society wants tables and chairs; and if carpenters have to be trained, then teachers are necessary. But the teachers are not an end in themselves; they are only a means to the efficient supply of efficient carpenters. Nor are efficient carpenters ends in themselves. Carpenters are only a means to the production of tables and chairs; and if machines are a more efficient means of producing tables and chairs, then carpenters are scrapped.

In truth, skilled efficiency becomes as mechanical as possible. Pleasure and unpleasure are felt during the learning process; they are incidents of error and of the moulding of the physical organism into a particular groove. Whether the period of learning has been more unpleasant than pleasant is beside the point. Once we can turn out what is demanded of us, once we are functioning efficiently, we feel neither pleasure nor unpleasure. Our skill goes on its settled employment more or less automatically.

It is only when our action is impeded that emotion

arises. A man who is successfully evading danger does not feel fear; he feels fear only when he is in danger of being caught. A student who knows he can pass an examination does not feel anxiety; it is only the unskilful and the ignorant who feel anxiety. It is the frustrated man who is emotional. Once activity has a clear run of purposeful performance, feeling and emotion disappear. Therefore, if the goal of life is to be efficient in the service of society, the way to aim at it is not to wallow in emotion but to get on with doing things, and to do things in the light of rational skill. If anything goes wrong, then emotion turns up as a sign of faulty adjustment. Hence all emotion is fundamentally caused by an error of judgment. We attempt something which does not turn out successfully; our adaptation to the environment is faulty.

This is the theoretical justification for the strong, silent Englishman, and it was the goal of life for the ancient stoics. They held that the state at which we should all aim is "apatheia"—apathy, feeling no emotion.

#### §4. STOICISM

The thought of ancient Greece is typically one that assigns pre-eminence to knowledge and wisdom. It is rather in the extreme negative aspect, in the neglect of or even hostility to the emotions, that we find the essential element of stoicism.

The name "stoic" comes from "stoa" which means a porch; because Zeno (340-265 B.C.) the founder of the movement, used to address his disciples from a porch.

The rational background of the stoic tradition was developed by the Romans, particularly Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, from which it passed into Christianity.

The foundation of the stoic attitude to life is a belief in the pre-eminence of reason. With one accord they proclaim, "Man is a rational animal." Marcus Aurelius wrote, "My nature is rational and social." In that phrase the two chief goods of stoicism are mentioned, the good of reason and the good of the community. The early Greek stoics put reason pre-eminent; it was through the operations of reason that the good of the community came to be valued. In Roman stoicism these two goals more or less shared the honours, but in Christianity the welfare of the community came to take a higher place than the pursuit of wisdom.

The difficulty in assigning ultimate value to wisdom is well illustrated in this age-old poser; "Is Socrates better than a pig?" Put like that there is no answer. We have to ask the further question, "Better for what?" Obviously Socrates is not much good for bacon, but he is better than the pig for arguing. The dilemma is justified, for some Athenians would have preferred the pig. They put Socrates to death: in their opinion he was not good for them.

If we try to compare any two things, we can only do so by reference to some third thing which we can use as a standard. If we take bacon as our standard, pig wins. If we take arguing, Socrates wins. Suppose we take the universe as our standard. Does it matter to the Infinite whether in a particular place Socrates is discoursing on ethics or a pig is grunting on garbage? The universe does not appear to mind, and it is not clear what the universe would do if it did mind.

All our standards are man-made. We measure everything by man. A thing is good because it is good for us, and when we say "us" we do not usually mean a coloured tribe on a South Sea island, nor the Spaniard, nor the Frenchman, nor the German. We do not even mean our neighbours, and seldom the members of our

family. What we usually mean by the word "good" is "good for our very personal selves, our rights and the ideas to which we assent." This ends up in our own personal comfort. But the universe is obviously not designed to minister to everybody's personal comfort. If the standard of good for us is us, there are probably other standards of good for every other item of existence. All goods are therefore subjective and relative and goods must conflict with goods.

The stoic does not feel this dilemma. Marcus Aurelius wrote: "Everything is harmonious to me that is harmonious to thee, O Universe; nothing is too early or too late for me that is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me that thy seasons bring, O Nature; from thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return."

The reason of the stoic dictates that adaptation to whatever circumstances may come is the best way of life. Best for what? Seneca wrote: "I will look upon death or upon comedy with the same expression of countenance. I will submit to labours however great they may be, supporting the strength of my body by that of my mind. I will despise riches when I have them as much as when I have them not. Whether fortune comes or goes, I will take no notice of her. I will view all lands as though they belong to me, and my own as though they belonged to all mankind. I will so live as to remember that I was born for others and I will thank Nature on this account, for in what fashion could she have done better for me? She has given me alone to all, and all to me alone."

The stoic identifies himself with a greater being outside himself, and by so doing is able to endure whatever fate brings, treating pains and pleasures with the same equanimity of soul, ready at any time to give up his life if that should appear necessary. Like all

ethics based upon reason, the tendency is to accept determinism and to live a life of resignation to the laws of the universe.

Epictetus wrote, "Dare to look up to God and say, 'Deal with me as thou wilt, I refuse nothing that pleases thee.'" In this attitude of resignation the good of oneself, personal aggrandizement, profit and luxury, have no place. The stoic does not strive for the things that easily pass away and must at any rate cease with death. The good of the stoic is not himself: it is something more permanent than himself of which he is but a part. His only value consists in feeling himself as an *essential* part in this larger being. The ultimate larger being is the universe or God, the more proximate larger being is society in its various aspects.

Let us hear Socrates on his duty to society when he is taunted by Antipho with his frugal way of living, and with the absence of all pleasures from his life. Socrates concludes his reply in these words:

"If there be occasion to help our friends or our country, which of the two will have most leisure to devote to these objects, he who leads the life which I am leading now or he who lives, as you think, in happiness? Which of the two will adopt a soldier's life most easily, he who cannot exist without expensive dishes, or he who is content with whatever comes to hand? Which would the sooner give in under siege and beg for mercy, the man whose wants are difficult to satisfy or the man who is pleased with whatever is easy to come by?" Here, notice that the aim of Socrates is to be an efficient friend and soldier of his country. It is in the cause of efficiency that he keeps himself fit with exercises and a frugal method of life. A true asceticism, therefore, is based upon an appreciation of the fact that to live at all means to fight, in the broadest sense. The 'Spartan' way of life is built upon realism.

According to this view "Fight or perish" is the fundamental truth about existence.

### §5. SOCIOLATRY

This view leads inevitably to the exaltation of the community and to the debasement of the individual. The supreme good for the individual is to be useful to society.

It is the community that matters. Personal life is not a good in itself. Man was not born for himself but to maintain the traditions of his family, the honour of his school, the efficiency of his profession, the dignity of his city, the renown of his country and the welfare of mankind. He must be diligent, obedient and virtuous. To this end the Englishman worships team games. Every match is a religious ritual. The teaching which this ritual inculcates is the subordination of the individual for the side or team.

The worship of the community just because it is a community is correctly termed sociolatriy. It is, however, difficult to make out any better case for the mere existence of a community as an end in itself than for the mere existence of an individual.

Consider the bees. Is there any special virtue in a beehive? There is. We can the more easily rob a community of bees than we can rob single bees. A beehive is better for us. Is it better for the bees? Ninety nine per cent of the females do not experience the pleasures of sexual intercourse and the joys of maternity. The males live a life of inanity and are then cruelly done to death. All in the name, so to speak, of the community. It looks as if bees would be better off if they were not so co-operative.

Or take ants. Is an ant-heap or ant-community any good? As far as human beings are concerned, it is not

much good. If each little ant had its own little home, would anyone object, except perhaps the ant-eater?

There appears to be no special virtue in a community as such. We think beehives are good because they produce honey for us, for some larger being outside themselves. What, then, are we as a community good for?

For the people in this country, the British Empire is the community for which we are sometimes asked to sacrifice ourselves. To be sure, nowadays this ideal is not quite so unassailable as it was. Our generation is not so ready to believe that "It is a nice and proper thing to die for one's country" (*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*). Was not the Great War an example of the sacrifice of the individuals for their societies? Everybody was sacrificed for the alleged good of his own particular state. What is the good of a state anyway? What kind of a state is worth the sacrifice of individuals? The value of a community does not consist in itself; it does not consist in the sacrifice of the individual. There is no virtue in sacrifice for its own sake. A community is only valuable in so far as it benefits the individuals which compose it.

Throughout nature, communities of animals are generally composed of weak individuals. The survival of such species lies in the quantity of the mass rather than in the quality of the individual. Compare the eagle with the sparrow; the shark with the herring; the lion with the sheep.

Ought we, then, to aim at being like eagles, sharks and lions, having strong, dominant, powerful personalities in our own right? Is the greatest thing in life to confront the universe standing on our own feet, fearless and mighty?

## §6. THE GOAL OF POWER

Is power the goal of life? In order to exercise power an individual must possess strength. How is strength to be acquired?

What is it that causes one child to be strong and another weak? Is it not the chances of the environment? To one there is the chance of abundant food, activities which bring success, and the skill to overcome obstacle after obstacle. To another there is the chance of scarcity, lack of opportunity, and the memory of past failures. To the one, life gives strength; to the other, life gives weakness. But to both the goal of power may beckon, although the means that each must use may differ.

The weak desire to level down the differences between individuals in order to minimise their weakness. The weak strive for the fictions of democracy, equality, and brotherhood.

The strong desire to increase the differences between individuals by raising themselves above others through their superior strength, skill and ability, by means of which they can progressively dominate their environment and enslave more and more to their own uses and to the satisfaction of their own desires. But the more they lust to dominate, the more must they hide their real aim; in order to protect themselves from rivals and from the attacks of the weak who, isolated are inferior to them, but united against them are superior. Hence the strong must at least pay lip-service to the goals of the weak and dominate them by the only possible method—by being their leaders.

Moreover, if a man is to rule and lead men, he can only do so by cultivating character-traits which are precious and valuable to those he leads: and, if his character does not ring true, sooner or later his inferiors

will refuse to be led by him and follow some other leader. No man can afford to neglect the friendship of his fellows and their good opinion. What are these qualities of a man which make him valuable to other men? They are the virtues.

### §7. THE VIRTUES

Plato maintained that these virtues are four: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Of these wisdom is the most fundamental; indeed, the others can be deduced from it.

According to Plato, only the wise man can be truly courageous, for only he *knows* what things to fear and what things not to fear. It is the foolish and ignorant who are liable to rashness on the one hand and cowardice on the other, because they do not understand the real relations between cause and effect. Courage is pugnacity trained by wisdom into skill and efficiency.

Temperance also is the submission of the other instinctive functions, like hunger and thirst and sex, to the dominance and control of wisdom. While justice is a harmonious working together of all the elements so that no one part has a more excessive expression than any other.

Plato conceived of the powers that make up the individual and the functions that compose society in the same terms. Wise men were to lead the state: the soldiers and the traders were to be subordinate to the wise men, and every one was to be inspired by the harmony of justice.

## §8. THE GOAL OF HARMONY

The object of the wisdom of the wise men is to lead the state into harmony. It is not essentially to make the state grow. A bigger state is not necessarily better than a smaller state. The criterion is the harmony of the parts. Is not a Big Empire where injustice and disharmonies are rife worse than a small state where all things are ordered by justice and moved by harmony? Yet the Big Empire might annihilate the small state. What is the use of happiness and harmony on a South Sea island if a strong tribe blows up one day in its war canoes, massacres or enslaves all the inhabitants, and proceeds to live on the island in noisy disorder? What is the use of benevolence and harmony, if those who practise them can be easily snuffed out by the stronger and more powerful?

Such questions can only be based on a superficial understanding of both harmony and strength. A Big Empire can neither become nor remain a Big Empire unless its parts are functioning harmoniously. Anything grows and acquires strength simply because of the harmonious development of its parts. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Wherever there is a weak link disaster is not merely possible, but, sooner or later, inevitable. The neglect to develop one or other aspect of anything must lead to disaster and death. Whereas the care and cultivation of the weakest links must lead to health and to life.

Harmony is not merely a heavenly ideal to be approached only through a mystical trance: it is the essence of all wordly success, the very basis of life itself—and also the infallible recipe for beauty which alone makes life desirable.



## Chapter V

# THE GOODNESS OF BEAUTY

### §I. THE OPPOSITION OF ART AND MORALITY

Many people believe that art and morality have no relation to one another: they believe that the pursuit of beauty is one thing and the pursuit of goodness something else. For example, Ruskin wrote of the artist: "Does a man die at your feet—your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips; does a woman embrace her destruction before you, your business is not to save her, but to watch how she bends her arms."

According to this view, we may, if we like, pursue beauty exclusively or goodness exclusively, or now one and now the other: or we may, perhaps, in the same activity manage to pursue both at once—helping the man and at the same time noting the colour of his lips; but nevertheless the two ends are different, goodness is not beauty and beauty is not goodness.

We may be reminded of the sonnet by Dante (A.D. 1265-1321), in which he distinguishes between art and morality, and yet holds that we should pursue both as if they were complementary to one another:

Two ladies to the summit of my mind  
Have clomb, to hold an argument of love.  
The one has wisdom with her from above,  
For every noblest virtue well designed:  
The other, beauty's tempting power refined  
And the high charm of perfect grace approve:  
And I, as my sweet Master's will doth move,  
At feet of both their favours am reclined.  
Beauty and Duty in my soul keep strife,  
At question if the heart such course can take  
And 'twixt the two ladies hold its love complete  
The fount of gentle speech yields answer meet,  
That Beauty may be loved for gladness sake,  
And Duty in the lofty ends of life.

Not everyone, however, finds beauty and duty to be complementary. Many people, especially puritans, find them definitely antagonistic. For example, Solomon Eccles, a musician, was converted to the Society of Friends (A.D. 1667) and gave up his music because he came to see it as sinful. He records: "It was hard to flesh and blood to give it up, for it was not only my livelihood, but my life was in it"; and further, "I was sitting alone with my mind turned in; the voice of the Lord said, 'Go thy way and buy those instruments again thou lately soldest, and carry them to *Tower Hill* and burn them there as a testimony against that calling.'"

It is no longer customary to banish beauty and her aids to hell by burning her (as a witch) and them (as the trappings of Babylon). But something of the same spirit of persecution still persists, and there are other ways of destroying besides committing to the flames.

The right to persecute is bolstered up by the general inability to understand the nature of artistic genius. This is sometimes regarded as innate or inborn; so that, whatever happens, it cannot be altered. Artists are predestined to be artists. Moralists are, therefore, not only powerless to help, but they can also neglect with a good conscience and leave artists to die in poverty. In support of this method of treatment, it is sometimes held that artists thrive on failure, poverty and misery. Unless they suffer they cannot produce great art; like canaries blinded on purpose so that they may sing the better. Naturally there is some foundation for this view. A man of settled and comfortable habits may lack the experience to produce work charged with emotion and dealing with 'the realities of life', but he may produce excellent art for all that. For beauty does not reside merely in what is depicted, but also in the way in which it is depicted. And it is just this

point which arouses the ire of moralists. Artists persist in depicting evil and calling it beauty.

Artists, however, are not necessarily concerned with the morality of what they depict. They are primarily concerned with the harmonious relations of various parts which they compose to form a unified whole.

If the moralist maintains that beauty is only an excuse for indecency, the reply is "Decency begins where Beauty ends"—an aphorism which divorces either beauty from morality, or, to be more enlightened, decency from morality.

Ugliness, according to this view, is the chief cause of the pursuit of virtue. The vituperations of the virtuous merely express their jealousy.

There can, however, be more in the disapprobation of moralists than their jealousy. There can be an appreciation of the differences in beauty. The superficial beauty of form is only one aspect. Is there not also a deeper beauty, a beauty of spirit that is far more valuable than the harmonious relations of sensuous qualities?

To hark back to the Greeks once more. They called the beautiful "kalos" from the verb "kalein", which means "to call". The beautiful calls to the soul, calls out the soul. To them beauty and goodness were the same; if anything was beautiful it was also good. The greatest good was to be beautiful, but not a mere external beauty, a beauty composed of honour, courage, justice and friendship, designated by the word "kalokagathia" which is "beauty-and-goodness".

Listen to this prayer of Socrates: "Beloved Pan, and all ye gods who here abide, grant me to be beautiful in the inner man, and all I have of outer things to be at peace with those within. May I count the wise man only rich. And may my store of gold be such as none but the good can bear.

"Phaedrus, need we anything more? For myself I have prayed enough."

And Phaedrus says, "For me, too, pray the same."

## §2. THE ESSENCE OF BEAUTY

In what then does this inner beauty consist? And how can it be cultivated? Let us first get a clear conception of the essential characteristic of beauty.

Coleridge maintained that "The safest definition of Beauty, as well as the oldest, is that of Pythagoras: 'the reduction of the many to the one.'" That is to say, beauty consists in the unification of separate parts to compose one entity or being. For anything to be beautiful every part of it must be essential to the thing as a whole.

Goethe wrote, "A perfect work of art embraces all the qualities that are elsewhere encountered only separately." Here, again, the essential idea consists in the union of separate parts to form a being which is greater than the parts taken separately. Perfection would consist in the union of *all* the possible characteristics.

A further defining of the essential nature of beauty is contained in J. C. Hare's definition. "Beauty is perfection unmodified by a predominating expression." That is to say, no one of these separate characters that go to make up the whole should be in excess.

Possibly a symbol for such abstract beauty might be the circle (or the sphere). What are the characteristics of a circle? It is unified about its centre. Its separate qualities can be regarded as the radii, or, more accurately, the space between two radii. If, then, we were to suppose the circumference made up of straight lines, they would be infinite in number. The spaces between the radii bounded by the parts of the circumference would be triangles; and they, too, would be infinite. The circle can then be regarded as composed

of an infinite number of triangles none of them predominating. Such a circle, however, differs from a work of art in that all its parts are similar triangles; whereas a work of art is composed of parts which are not all exactly the same.

Now, in any particular picture it is a matter of taste whether we think there is, for example, too much red or too little red. Wagner was accused of using too much brass in his orchestration. Of most artists we can point to some predominant quality which makes them stand out as unique. From an ideal standpoint it follows that they fall from the perfect expression of beauty by their uniqueness. But viewing any art as a whole the unique contributions of individual artists may be conceived as necessary to the complete fabric. Nevertheless, the fact that perfection, as above defined, is difficult of realisation by any one individual, does not detract from its value as an ideal at which individuals should aim.

### §3. THE GOAL OF PERFECTION

It is this very same ideal which many ethical writers have held up to us as the ideal of goodness at which we should aim in the realm of character.

For example, Hadfield writes: "Every organism is impelled to move towards its own completeness. Fulness of life is the goal of life; the urge to completeness is the most compelling motive of life. . . . In physiology we call this completeness 'health', in morality 'perfection', in religion 'holiness', in psychology we shall call it 'self-realisation'.

"The completeness of the self can only be produced by the harmony of all the sentiments and complexes into one whole, the attainment of which we call self-realisation, and the affective state of which we call happiness."

Here, then, is a goal of completeness, or perfection, or harmony, at once æsthetic and moral. A goal, moreover, which is not an imposition from without, but the very aim and purpose of all our natural strivings when properly understood. In making conscious what is our deepest motive, we do in the realm of art no more and no less than the greatest artists do with nature—not striving against it, not attempting to impose the unnatural, but working with natural law that nature may surpass herself by herself. Now let us see what it means to treat our lives as if they were the medium for æsthetic creation.

#### §4. THE ART OF LIVING

The very word “culture” means the process by which nature is improved. To cultivate ourselves is to treat ourselves as if we were, at least potential, works of art.

What is the meaning of the phrase “the art of living”? It means that art is not confined to the Fine Arts; but wherever human personality can come to expression there is art, there is the possibility of creating beauty. In whatever medium we work or play, we are expressing ourselves and impressing some form upon the material world, and also upon ourselves.

Is not the whole life a self-expression? Is not the art of living the widest and most fundamental of any art? Every biography testifies to our appreciation for a man’s life as a whole, and do we not admire those men who have achieved many things, attempted many things, been many things? It is the man who combines in his own person those qualities encountered elsewhere only separately, he it is who compels our admiration.

It is from such biographies and from the example and teaching of those around them that many attempt to mould their own lives. But how few see their lives in

this fashion as material for the work of themselves as artists!

How few consciously lay hold of their lives and their characters and steadfastly build the structure of beauty on their ideal pattern, pursuing their art not only in spite of adverse circumstance, but forcing all circumstance to contribute to their design!

How few determine to be whole men and women with all the various aspects of humanity developed in harmony! Look around on people and you will see many psychic cripples and many mutilated minds. Few realise to what extent they are living but a small part of that rich life they might be living. Consider how many lack musical ears: they may live in a world of colours, but for them the worlds of song and symphony are mute. Others live in a world of sound and are blind to the beauties of colour. Others have no liking for the exquisite perfumes of flowers and food. Some treat every meal as if it was a penance that had to be gone through so many times every day regularly; but the significance of eating, the taste, the aroma, the life-feeling, all this they never experience. Some have no conception of the pleasure possible from the movement of their own limbs; they may have even lost all consciousness of having a body. There is no sense so wonderful as touch, the most primitive and powerful sense of all; but to many the differences between handshakes, the pleasures of the caress, and the more intimate ecstasies of lovers are a closed book.

Following on a conscious attention to the sensuous qualities of experience, there naturally develops a richer store of images and memories within the mind. Here, too, is a field for organisation and the creation of harmony which is too often neglected. There are many who flee from any kind of inner life; they attempt to live wholly in the external world. Extroverts they are

called. They may have failed to assimilate some of their experiences and wish not to be reminded of the past; so they run from their thoughts and their memories, distracting themselves with 'reality', living only in the external present.

The opposite type, the introverts, find the present unattractive in comparison with their memories of the past and their hopes for the future. They dream their lives away, shunning the pleasures and excitements of action in the world. Perhaps they have tried and failed; perhaps they desire the impossible; perhaps they have already enjoyed an experience so much that they think no further joy is possible.

What can be done to help those who are missing so much in life? Merely to pity those who are failing is not enough. They have not known how to master their experiences, and how to mould them into a pattern of beauty. Can they not be helped in the same way as a teacher helps his students?

### §5. THE MASTERY OF LIFE

Should not the practical moralist be a master of life, a teacher of the art of living? Should he not be able to detect the deficiencies in his pupils and to prescribe methods for making them good?

He would need to possess a clear conception of an ideal character as a standard on which to measure the characters of men.

Such an ideal can be conveyed by a study of the lives of those who have most approached it. And this is the first method of moulding character, by imitation of the characters of others—people we know and the great characters of history. Most artists have begun their careers by imitation of the great masters who immediately preceded them. But they cannot themselves

become great until they supersede all the images of the past by an ideal which is eternal and imperishable, that cannot be touched or seen or heard, but only conceived—the ideal, of which all images are but the reflections. Then the artist in life, meeting his circumstances with the power which direct contact with an eternal ideal alone can give, creates in his own right masterpieces which may become treasured by others as images to be imitated in their turn.

### §6. THE GOAL OF ALL EXPERIENCE

What is this ideal of completeness? It is recorded that, while chance travellers together over the St. Gothard, Mazzini imparted to Nietzsche Goethe's maxim: "*Sich des halben zu entwohnen und im Ganzen, Vollen, Schonen resolut zu leben.*" "Wean yourself from half-measures and live resolutely in the Whole, the Full, the Beautiful."

What just does this imply? If it means concentrating our attention thoroughly on what we are doing; if it means not half-doing, but doing anything properly, completing what we start, and so on—very true, too true, trite!

But it looks as if it might mean something else, everything else in fact. It positively looks like aiming to have every possible experience in the effort to fill one's life to the brim. Not content merely with the virtues, do not the vices also go in? . . . The world is full of injustice, of lust without love, of injury to the innocent, of loss to the thrifty, of craft and of cunning, of brutality and of the pleasures in destruction. How can a life be properly experienced to the full without a taste of these? Ought not the artist to paint into his life cruelty and lust, disloyalty, treachery, meanness and every conceivable sin in his search for combining

in himself that which is elsewhere found only separately?

Suppose he were to start out in the attempt. In order to complete experience must all the ten commandments be broken? Must murder be committed in order to live to the full? But there are different kinds of murder. Must one kill by strangling and by steel and by poison and by slow starvation? Must one kill a man and a woman and a child? The vista of possible experiences stretches to infinity. A man will never be done if he attempts this goal until he is done in.

To broaden one's experience by deliberately choosing to do evil has certain results. It is a little difficult to see how, if a man is known to be vicious sometimes, he can ever be fully trusted. You would never know where you were with him. And he would be in doubts as to where he was himself. There would be little cause left for preferring one experience to another. He would have robbed himself of the power to select, since everything that happens must be a part of all experience and exactly the same experience never recurs.

The result is, then, not merely that the more credit is piled up for the experience of evil the less credit accrues for virtue, but that no credit accrues to virtue at all. We may hesitate to regard as moral a man who, on being asked for alms, refuses on the ground that he wished to experience being selfish. But a man who gives to a beggar only because the experience of giving is necessary for his complete development is still as egocentric. Moreover, to complete one's experience by posing as a beggar could hardly be regarded as a moral act. To aim at "self-realisation," at "perfection," at "holiness," or "health" may not be such a fine thing after all. These may be but other names for egoism. Once we begin to differentiate between the kinds of self to be realised, the goal of all experience is abandoned. Only a certain kind of self is to be realised and brought to perfection.

Although the mere accretion of experience is no more than a narrow egoism and automatically bars out all those experiences based on sympathy and disinterested service, nevertheless we are not born conscious of the plenitude of beauty and goodness, but have to make our way thither by our own efforts. May it not be, then, that in our early efforts to reach the goal of life we must inevitably taste the bitterness of false goals? Perhaps good cannot be appreciated unless evil also be known. If our aim is to achieve both beauty and goodness, may it not be that some experience of their opposites is necessary while learning?

Thus wrote Ruskin:

“To order the pursuit of this beauty rightly, our great painter must not shrink in a timid way from any form of vice or ugliness. He must know them to the full, or he cannot understand the relations of beauty and virtue to them.”

“To the full” perhaps means only enough to understand beauty and virtue. Even that may be too much. While a man is pursuing ugliness and evil he is not at the same time pursuing beauty and goodness. Although rightly shirking the impossible task of experiencing evil and ugliness to the full, the difficulty is where to draw the line. That too is an impossible task.

Evil and ugliness can, however, be experienced without aiming at them. Unless a man sees vice as virtue, what repels as what attracts, he has no business with them—if he wishes to live well. His mistakes as such are irredeemable unless he can see them redeemed as parts of a larger pattern; the pattern perhaps of his increasing growth towards harmony and perfection.

To achieve beauty, then, a man must not shrink from what others label as “vice” and “ugliness,” so long as he sees in them virtue and beauty. But whoever aims at beauty does not flatter himself on achieving

ugliness, nor he who aims at virtue swell his experience with vice. Whoever wishes to measure anything does not pride himself that the figure is widely different each time he reads the tape. The result is not a fine bag of measurements, but a sign of incompetence.

Virtue may not be measurable in figures, but it is comparable to applying a measure correctly to an object. An action should be correctly applied to a situation so that it does not err on the side of either excess or defect. Because one type of action is evil, its opposite is not thereby rendered good. Although excess is a vice, abstinence is not thereby rendered virtuous.

### §7. THE GOLDEN MEAN

This was Aristotle's teaching that "virtue is the habit of choosing the relative mean" in any given concrete situation. It is not merely that the virtue of courage is the mean between the vices of cowardice and rashness; that temperance is the mean between abstinence and over-indulgence; that truthfulness is the mean between overstatement and understatement, and so forth: but also that the same external act may be in one situation good and in another situation evil. This is simply a reflection of the general law of adaptation that an instinct fulfils itself through diverse operations. In face of an enemy it may be right at one time to run away, at another time to attack, at another time to hide. How can we tell at any one time which of all the innumerable possible actions is the right one?

## §8. EQUILIBRIUM

Virtue does not consist in the mean between *two* extremes, but in the mean between all the conflicting forces operating at any one moment. Given a situation, all the aspects of it must be taken into consideration, and all the habits and desires which make up the total personality. If the total personality reacts to the total situation the action can be said to be psychologically correct. This was Spencer's view; he wrote:

"The truth that the ideally moral man is one in whom the moving equilibrium is perfect, or approaches nearest to perfection, becomes, when translated into physiological language, the truth that he is one in whom the functions of all kinds are duly fulfilled." And again "that which was physically defined as a moving equilibrium we define biologically as a balance of functions."

An equilibrium or balance of functions implies that no factor is relatively in excess of any other factor. The equilibrium or balance moves because life is movement, a movement to adapt to the environment. The technical aim for action, then, is a balance of opposing forces, an equilibrium of dynamic potentialities, which issues into a serene controlled action perfectly adapted to all the circumstances. This serenity is not the negative serenity of stoic resignation, and is certainly not to be confused with mere endurance, and still less with renunciation. It is in fact the outward sign of success, of triumphant mastery of life.

## §9. SYNTHESIS AND SEPARATION

This mastery of life does not consist in labelling some actions as evil and other actions as good, and in only sticking to the good ones. It consists in seeing all actions as potentially evil or good. The evil consists in isolation and separation, in the absence of relations. The good consists in the combination of what in isolation is evil.

For example, a chair is made up of legs, seat, back and arms. The arms can be taken away and it is still a chair. But take away the back and it is no longer a chair, but a stool. If we now take away the legs, the stool also has disappeared. The very same bits of wood isolated are useless, in combination are useful. Similarly isolated behaviour trends are evil, but the very same trends, simply by virtue of their combination, are good.

Has goodness, then, no real existence? Is virtue simply the name we give to a number of vices in a certain combination, that combination in which the maximum number of vices have the maximum amount of simultaneous expression? Is goodness like white light, having no real existence in itself, corresponding to no wave-length, but caused by the combination of all the wave-lengths? The real opposite of goodness would then be darkness, sheer negation, the absence of any activity, of any life. Pure white is not merely not a negative state but *the* most positive state. It is not an absence of colour, but the presence of all colours. Moral purity, similarly, is not something negative; it is not innocence or ignorance or inability. It is the very opposite of these. A man is morally pure who is motivated by the most opposite and diverse tendencies, and who acts in accord with the equilibrium of these, giving preference to none of them and just expression to them all.

But a sheet of white paper or a plain canvas, equally

reflecting all the colours, however wholesome, is not a work of art; it is only the background which the artist obscures, using now red, now green, now blue. And also, in Shelley's oft-quoted, because incomparable, phrase, "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity." So the colours of life are not to be all mixed up in a kind of synthetic purity. If all the instruments in the orchestra were to play all the notes at the same time the result would be far from beauty, however matched in perfect equilibrium. But the composer ought to have all the notes on all the instruments available from which to select his sequence, or movement. Similarly no one can maintain that a person should sit, stand, sleep, eat and walk all at the same time. These functions must be *duly* fulfilled in their season: the equilibrium must move in response to . . . what? Not merely to the environment, for that would be unadulterated determinism: but also to a conception in the mind of the artist—a conception which does not necessarily require *all* the elements for its expression, since a picture in few colours, a song in one key, can still be a work of art. So that although it may be useful for the artist in life to be equipped with the full range of biological potentialities as an artist is equipped with the full range of colours, even this potential fulness and wholeness is not absolutely necessary to achieve beauty and goodness.

What, then, is absolutely necessary? The composer selects the contrasts of discord and harmony. The artist selects the contrasts of light and shade. Is not contrast essential? Should not the artist in life select the contrasts of good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong? Are not good and evil relative terms, the one implying the other like small and large, loud and soft, light and shade? Are not both necessary to the perfection of the whole?

## §10. THE PRINCIPLES OF AESTHETICS

On the contrary, moral good corresponds to a good work of art and moral evil to a bad work of art. A good work of art embodies, illustrates or expresses the principles of aesthetics more than does a bad work of art. The principle of contrast is not an absolutely essential principle, yet it is more likely to be present in a good work of art than in a bad one. It is precisely virtue which is more likely to exhibit contrast. Vice tends towards monotony. Evil by definition is that which is isolated. To introduce contrast at all is to introduce a relation which is itself good. The contrasts of the artist in life are not composed from good and evil, but from such opposites as pleasure and unpleasure, activity and rest, failure and success. It is the failure to use these contrasts which makes the bad life.

The Principle of Contrast is only a special application of the Principle of Integration, in that the items which are integrated are but two and they are opposites. The Principle of Integration is absolutely paramount in everything beautiful, in everything good.

To every work of art there must be a focus or climax about which the parts are integrated. A life that is to be a work of art must be integrated around a single focus, a major climax, or a central theme. Vocation in its widest sense is the central aim or purpose in the design of an individual's life. By means of it the selection and rejection of experiences can take place. In every choice that which does not further vocation should be rejected; in this way the Principle of Economy (or Simplicity) is maintained. That which furthers vocation should be selected: in this way the Principle of Repetition of Similarities, the principle which underlies all art-form and even rhythm itself, is maintained.

We should not, therefore, aim at fulness of life but at integration. For whereas the integration of a few elements is to that extent beautiful, however many be the parts that are not integrated, the result cannot truly satisfy.

### §II. THE GOAL OF INTEGRATION

It is a fact that between different parts of a person's life, exist relations which he has never realised. This is often the first part of psychological education—the linking up of conscious memories and experiences which had never before been seen to have any connection with one another, for example, smoking a pipe and sucking a thumb. The connections appear to have existed all the time but were not conscious.

Similarly phenomena in the world have relations, whether we perceive them wrongly or perceive them more truly. The stars go their ways intimately related to vast designs, whether we are conscious of those designs or not.

The growth of an individual should be towards the conscious appreciation of the harmony that exists, both in his own life and outside himself. To appreciate the laws which operate in the shaping of his own behaviour and the laws which operate in the shaping of external phenomena; this is the true culture of the individual.

In this aim the three major goals of ethical thought are integrated about a single focus. The function of wisdom is to plan and seek out harmony; the function of power is to create and achieve the harmony that wisdom has sought out; and the function of happiness is to contemplate with delight and satisfaction the goal of harmony whether in conception, construction, or in final realisation.



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