

CHAPTER II

HAPPINESS OR JUSTICE

EVERY structure of any organism and the corresponding functions which these structures subserve bear some relation to the needs of the organism. The evolution of the structure proves the corresponding function to be an adjustment of the organism to the conditions under which its life must be carried on. The non-fulfilment, in normal proportion, of any function, therefore, causes the organism to fall short of the complete life which is possible to it. If the discharge of any function is neglected, the structure receives an insufficient supply of blood, which, if long continued, causes atrophy; the consequent loss of power of the particular structure being accompanied by a corresponding deterioration of the organism as a whole. If the discharge of function is excessive, the increased waste is at first made good by an increase of blood-supply and corresponding hypertrophy of tissues. These compensatory movements, however, being limited in extent, further excess, leading to uncompensated waste, impairs the efficiency of the structure and injuriously affects the entire organism.

During the evolutionary process, pleasurable sensations and emotions have, necessarily, become the concomitants of the normal discharge of functions; while painful sensations and emotions have become the concomitants of deficient or excessive discharges. For adjustment to environment, subserved by the evolution of functional structures, could not have been achieved by organisms which habitually underwent painful sensations from normal

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discharge of functions, and pleasurable sensations from their abnormal discharges. Likewise, organisms which experienced no sensations from the discharge of functions, normal or abnormal, could not have discharged their functions as efficiently, and would, therefore, have been less likely to survive than organisms whose discharge of functions was regulated by corresponding sensations.

Every species, however, is subject to derangements of these relations through changes in external conditions. Normal discharge of particular functions, though pleasurable, may under these new conditions lead to the destruction of the species, while defective or excessive discharges, though painful, may become necessary conditions of survival. Such derangements are, however, temporary; for unless the normal relation is sooner or later re-established by such modification of structures as will lead to corresponding sensations being derived from the due or undue discharge of functions, the species will cease to exist.

Mankind, no less than inferior creatures, is endowed with this relation between sensations and emotions on the one hand and the discharge of functions on the other. Nor is mankind exempt from the disturbance of these relations through changes in external conditions. On the contrary, as the change of such conditions has been exceptionally great and involved during the passage from savagery to the civilised state, the relation between sensations and discharge of functions has undergone exceptionally great disturbances in the case of civilised man. That his adjustment to the conditions of social life is not yet complete, is shown by the, as yet, incomplete relation between his sensations and the discharge of functions which the social state imposes upon him. In many cases actions which must be performed yield no pleasure, and actions which must be avoided yield no pain. Nay, in some cases, necessary acts actually cause pain and injurious acts cause pleasure. But with the further progress of man's adaptation to the social state these incongruities must diminish as they have diminished during like progress in the past, and with complete adaptation they must disappear.

The sum of pleasurable sensations and emotions which

arise from the normal discharge of all functions constitutes happiness. Or, in other words, happiness arises from the due exercise of all the faculties. For the only happiness we know of arises from the satisfaction of desires both self-regarding and other-regarding. Desire, however, is but the need for some pleasurable sensation or emotion, and pleasurable sensations and emotions are producible only by the due exercise of some faculty. The satisfaction of desire being thus dependent upon the due exercise of some faculty, happiness, the satisfaction of all desires, consists in the due exercise of all the faculties. The first requisite of happiness, therefore, is freedom to exercise all the faculties.

In the social state, however, the sphere within which each can exercise his own faculties is limited by the spheres within which others must exercise their faculties. If every man is to realise the greatest possible happiness, mankind must be so constituted that each of them finds due exercise for all his faculties within his own sphere, without encroachment on the spheres of others. This complete adjustment to social conditions does not yet prevail, inasmuch as occasionally painful sensations arise from limiting activities to one's own sphere, and pleasurable sensations from encroaching on the sphere of others. It results from this mal-adjustment, that men are not yet capable of the full degree of happiness otherwise open to them. Nevertheless is it true that the greatest aggregate sum of happiness can only arise from a strict limitation of the activities of each by the like activities of all others. For whenever pleasure accrues to one through encroachment on the spheres of others, the resulting increase of happiness to the aggressor is less than the corresponding decrease of happiness to those aggressed upon. To their loss of positive pleasure, there is added the pain arising from the feeling of injury. Not only is the aggregate of present happiness thus reduced, but there results also a decline of future happiness. For every such encroachment disturbs and delays the further adjustment of character to social conditions, upon which the attainment of complete happiness depends. The fixed condition, under which alone the greatest aggregate sum of happiness

can be attained in the social state, therefore, is freedom of each to exercise all his faculties, limited by the like freedom of all others to exercise their faculties, *i.e.* justice, the recognition of equal natural rights.

These considerations show that happiness is not something which the State can distribute among its members. For no action of the State can endow every one of its members with the appropriate organisation which makes pleasurable sensations and emotions the concomitants of necessary actions, and painful sensations and emotions the concomitants of deleterious actions. Hence, any attempt to distribute happiness would produce deleterious results in various directions. By disturbing the balance between sensations and actions it would prevent the necessary further adjustment of men's organisation to the requirements of social life. As the notion of State distribution of happiness necessarily implies the non-exercise of faculties otherwise exercised by individual men in procuring their own happiness, the happiness of each must be diminished to the extent to which these faculties remain unexercised, *i.e.* the attempted State distribution of happiness would result in a diminution of the aggregate sum of happiness. And further, as disuse of faculties tends to their deterioration and ultimate disappearance, State distribution of happiness, if possible, would result in a diminution of individual faculties, and, therefore, in a reduction of individual capacity for happiness.

Moreover, the idea of the State distributing happiness necessarily implies the further idea of proportionate distribution. What then is the proportion of happiness to be distributed to each? If the answer is, that happiness is to be distributed in equal parts, the impossibility of the project is obvious. For nothing that the State can do can procure the same happiness for the antagonistic as for the sympathetic; for the passive as for the active; for the lethargic as much as for the excitable temperament. If, on the other hand, happiness is to be distributed unequally, the question arises, By what rule is the distribution to be guided? Is it to be according to merit or to demerit; or are the distributors to form an exact estimate of the capacity

for happiness of each member of the State, and then to apportion the available quantity of happiness accordingly? Whichever of these courses is chosen, the impossibility of any distributors making even an approximately correct apportionment is obvious.

There remains yet another difficulty. What is it that is to be distributed? Happiness cannot be cut up and distributed in parts, nor can it be measured as cloth is measured by the yard. What then is meant when the claim is made that the State shall distribute happiness, as it is made in the socialistic contention that the State ought to be guided in its actions by nothing else than "the balance of social advantages," *i.e.* the measure of happiness which results from them. The only meaning which can be imported into the proposition manifestly is, that the State shall secure for its members the greatest means to happiness.

Here again, however, it has to be recognised that no possible distribution of the means to happiness can secure the greatest sum of aggregate happiness. For if the distribution of means is to be made in equal parts, as Socialism proposes, differences in age, sex, constitution, activity, and mental organisation, would result in some receiving more and some less than their greatest possible happiness requires. As a consequence, there would be a loss of aggregate happiness; the sum of available means could procure a greater sum of aggregate happiness if it were distributed in some other way. If, on the other hand, it were contemplated to distribute the means to happiness unequally, the same impossibility of making the apportionment conform, even approximately, to any rule which may be adopted, is as manifest as it was found to be when a like distribution of happiness itself was considered.

Seeing happiness itself cannot be apportioned; seeing also that the distribution of equal means to happiness fails to secure the greatest possible aggregate sum of happiness, while no other distribution can be made; it follows, once more, that considerations of happiness or social advantage offer no guidance to the State. The question, however, still remains, How can the State secure the greatest sum of

aggregate happiness? Manifestly there remains but one way: the State must secure to all the conditions under which each may obtain for himself the greatest amount of happiness, *i.e.* it must secure to all equal opportunities for the exercise of their faculties. Each must have as full freedom for the exercise of his faculties as is consistent with the equal freedom of all others. Therefore, once more we find, that not considerations of happiness, not "the balance of social advantages," but justice, the recognition of equal natural right, alone can guide the State so as to secure the greatest aggregate sum of happiness to its members.

The same conclusion will be found to be inevitable when the question is approached in another way. Men have different standards of happiness; not only men differing in race, not only men differing in degree of civilisation, not only men of the same race and civilisation, but even the same men at different periods of their lives. The qualities of external things as apprehended by us are relative to our own organism, and, therefore, the feelings of pleasure and pain which we associate with such qualities are also relative to our own organism. This is true in a double sense, for these qualities of external things are relative to the structures, as well as to the state of the structures of our organisms. Not only, therefore, is it true that "what is one man's meat is another man's poison," but also, that what is pleasurable at one time is painful at another to the same individual. The painfulness of exercise, otherwise pleasurable, when the body is in a state of exhaustion; the distaste for food, after a hearty meal, which would be keenly relished when hungry; the agreeableness of a cold bath in summer, which in winter is shrunk from; as well as the pleasure derived from a fire in winter, which in summer is oppressive, are but simple examples of this general relativity of pains and pleasures to structural states.

All these circumstances render it exceedingly difficult for any individual to estimate the conduct which will ensure the greatest happiness of himself and of the members of his immediate family. Individuals, therefore, more

and more, allow their conduct to be guided by ethical considerations, in the sure expectation that conduct so regulated is more conducive to happiness than conduct aiming directly at happiness. This difficulty of the individual, however, is infinitesimal compared with that of a governmental agency undertaking to determine the actions which will ensure the happiness of all the members of the State and of their descendants. Even when the latter element is disregarded—though it is obvious that the happiness of future generations is largely affected by present actions of the State—even when the happiness of living men and women alone is considered, the difficulties are insuperable.

For the organisation of every individual differs in innumerable ways from that of all others and from that of the persons composing the governing agency. Therefore the kinds and degrees of actions which will ensure the greatest happiness of which each of them is capable, differ from those which will ensure the happiness of all the others, inclusive of that of the regulators. Nevertheless the latter must be guided by their own feelings in determining the kinds, degrees, and sequences of the countless acts, the totality of which constitutes the happiness of the innumerable persons, all differently constituted from them and from each other, the happiness of whom they endeavour to ensure.

While the difficulty of determining the conduct which will conduce to the greatest aggregate sum of happiness is thus insuperable, the like difficulty is seen to exist when the agencies by which such conduct must be applied are considered. For the object, individual happiness, and the agencies by which it can be attained are simple when compared with the infinite complexity of the object, general happiness, and its requisite agencies. Aiming directly at general happiness, the State would require numerous subordinate agencies, each composed of a graduated body of numerous officials, most of them unknown to and unseen by the ruling agency, and acting upon millions of differently constituted individuals, equally unknown to and unseen by the rulers. Not only would the

conduct determined upon be coloured and deflected in its passage through these various agencies in ways which could not be foreseen, but its ultimate application would again be determined by the character of officials and of each of the individuals on whom it is enforced. Therefore, even if it were admitted that the State could better determine what is conducive to each individual's happiness than each can for himself, it would yet be impossible for the State so to shape its acts as to secure that happiness to each.

Therefore, it is again seen, that the only conduct by which the State can procure the greatest aggregate sum of happiness, is to secure to all its members equal opportunities for the achievement of their own happiness, *i.e.* equal opportunities for the exercise of their faculties; that is, the State must be guided by no other consideration than that of justice.

In further confirmation of this same conclusion, the consideration may be cited, that justice is a more intelligible aim than happiness. For justice is a question of quantitative measurement. Whenever an infraction of justice occurs, as when, in a case of individual theft or of that general theft which arises from monopoly, a benefit is taken while no equivalent benefit is given; or when, as in breaches of contract, obligations discharged by one side are not discharged or not fully discharged by the other; or when in the case of violence one assumes a greater freedom than the other; or when the State itself confers privileges upon some of its members which cannot be equally conferred upon all,—the injustice always consists in the disturbance of an equality and can be measured quantitatively.

When, however, the object aimed at is happiness, no definite measure is available. Not only is the measure of quantity indefinite, but, differing from justice, a quantitative measure also is required and is equally indefinite. As an end to be achieved, happiness is, therefore, infinitely less definite and less intelligible than justice.

Finally, the theory of "the balance of social advantages" implies the belief that the State can secure the greatest sum of aggregate happiness by methods framed

directly for this purpose, and without inquiry into the conditions from which happiness arises. If it be held that there are no such conditions, one kind of action would be as effective in securing happiness as any other kind of action, and, therefore, no balancing of advantages could be necessary or beneficial. If, on the contrary, it is admitted that there are conditions on the compliance with which happiness depends, then the first step toward happiness must be to ascertain these conditions, while the remaining steps required consist in compliance with the conditions ascertained. To admit this, therefore, equally condemns the balancing of advantages as a possible guidance, and admits that not happiness itself, but compliance with the conditions which ensure happiness, must be the immediate aim of the State, *i.e.* that justice must be its guide.

Expediency, the guidance by expected proximate results, proverbially delusive when guiding individual conduct, is thus seen to be still more delusive when guiding collective conduct. The theory that there are no natural rights, that as a consequence the State may usefully shape, and ought to shape, its conduct by balancing expectations of social advantage against expectations of social disadvantage, is shown to be a shallow delusion. From whatever standpoint the question is approached, there results the conviction, that, though there may be additional guidance for individual conduct, there is only one clear, safe, and infallible guide for collective conduct, the conduct of the State. That guide is justice, the recognition of equal natural rights inherent in every member of the State, and entitling each to equal opportunities with all others for the achievement of his own happiness.