

## HAPPINESS—PHILOSOPHIES AND EVENTUAL DISILLUSIONMENT

Why is it that most all of our popular happiness philosophies are finite and fallacious? Why are they neither sensible of life's proper principles nor considerate of the causes which invariably lead to an eventual disillusionment? I trust that there is no question about the apparent fact that they are grounded in narrow viewpoints, operate under functional fallacies and are hence subject to many a rebuff and disappointment.

On analysis we find that a certain amount of selfishness and hedonism is postulated or assumed in nearly every one of them. Their general creed is one of open rhyomism, ambitious only for realizing its insistent self-satisfactions and making its life pleasant and easy as possible. But the assumption is made on the finite grounds of half-wise understanding and the postulate is given from the pseudo-intellectual tower of a specious world-view. With a pinch-penny perspective and a distorted psychology, how can they be expected to be anything but fallacious, finite and sterile? Nay, more, how can they give us what they do not contain and cannot produce, for they add neither happiness nor philosophy to our lives? No such happiness as they dream of is possible; no such philosophy as they argue has ever been proven valid; and no such ethic as they prescribe has ever secured justice or social efficiency even so far as giving aid or comfort to the happy-stricken. Hence, I will say that they are simply futile and foolish attempts to get or enjoy the good things of life without putting forth the spiritual, mental and moral efforts which are necessary to their winning.

Under this aspect it seems that those of us who are intent on pursuing an honest character education must take good care lest we be fooled or misdirected. It is no easy trick anyway, this art of living; it is rather difficult and an activity requiring rare genius, noble motives and industrious spiritual application. I do not believe, therefore that anyone is very deeply philosophical when they make happiness the goal of their life and the reward of their toil. It is too elusive and vain; nay, it is even illusory and chimerical to think that the world was made so much for our little private happiness' sake that we can go ahead and build a whole philosophy and

scheme of life on that one ambitious assumption. On the other hand, I believe that such a condition would not so readily develop if there had been any honest educational measure brought to bear on our naive human nature, and surely there would have been no superficial happiness philosophy if these measures had started with the culture of staunch and lovable characters as the first requisite of a worthy and intelligent life.

It is thus in its relations to education and character that a happiness philosophy will always find its greatest test and often its nemesis. The processes of education, at least when nobly planned and honestly pursued, will go far to forestall any such shallow ideal as that of mere personal happiness. The true cultivation of those clean habits and spiritual aspirations which make up the foundation of a strong and virtuous character will also go far to prevent one's listening seriously to the seductions of satisfaction, the comfort of ease and the gratification of luxury. The vital antithesis is indicated in the opposition of these two irreconcilable attitudes toward life; the first embracing education and character in their full and strictly moral sense stands in direct contradistinction to the second which embraces practically any creed or code which does not require too much stringency on self-love and self-service. Not only is the fallacious ground of the latter hereby revealed, but we can also see presentiments of its ultimate failure, the eventual disillusionment which will prove that the whole scheme, happiness-ideal and all, was a clumsy piece of ignorance, pettiness and vulgarity, a superficial creed of painless gain and thoughtless pastime. Civilization, fortunately, demands more of our spiritual powers than this. It has not progressed thus far by lazy ease or aims toward slave-soul satisfactions, but more nobly and worthily because of the courage, genius and industry of a few heroic, saintly souls who valued character and education above the worldly interests of a mere physical life. Civilization is a spiritual projection, an expression of man's inward life as it affects the rest of the world; but if we could not read in it anything but material progress or refinements of mere physical interests and ambitions, then I would say that civilization was a sham, a sheer madness and meaningless waste of time.

Aspiration, however, comes upon us to urge renewed avowals of the right, the good, the true, the beautiful, the just. It is the best result of education, that much-maligned because much-misunderstood system of coaxing, teaching and inspiring efforts which is not always a futile devotion. Occasionally, there comes an energetic soul aiming high and honorably to take a man's part and do a

man's duty in the world. Then does education become a success, for a man of noble character and virtuous aspirations will be its invariable product. He will seek no inert happiness, no sham credential of reputation, no specious social prestige or political power, but will be quite content and satisfied if he can only fill his life with kindly thoughts and deeds of valor, being sober, cheerful, generous, faithful, courageous and devout. His conduct will be directed, not by aims for self, but by the social sympathies he has at heart; not by cunning stratagems and greed for spoils, but by the honor, integrity and fair dealing which are his basic mottoes. There is no eventual disillusionment in store for him because he is already wise, already too intelligent to succumb to the treacherous charms of a false ideal. The good man of today is generally one of education and character, but of character always, whether or not educated in the popular sense.

No one denies, I hope, that civilization, both as an ideal and a ceaseless effort is based on character, and that character is based on spiritual energy and moral discrimination. The actual foundation of any worth-while achievement is always to be found in people's characters, in their moral strength and stamina, in how they respect just authority and revere the precepts of their wise and virtuous predecessors. I know of no other scheme which can be used instead of this one, so it seems to be our lot to take it and make the best of its patterns. Moral choice in education should be more strongly emphasized so as to bring out the characters of the pupils; for it is all too tardily evident in later life when a person's moral education has been neglected. Were we to devote more time and effort to the development of character as the only spiritual heritage of fifty thousand years, and give less attention to those popular conceptions of education, we would soon rid the world of much of its fickle folly, fashion-madness, cultural veneer and ethical mischief. Above all, we would soon discount its many phases of functional fallacy so often given concrete expression in hate, selfishness, pride, extravagance, greed, deceit and corrupt ambition. With these staring us in the face on every hand we should know that there are certainly a lot of specious happiness-philosophies in the world urging their devotees on toward a chimerical conquest of impossible satisfactions. Poor fools, that they do not see their folly and never worry about the mischief they do or the misery they cause.

However, our future is not altogether pejorative and foreboding; it is not a jeering gargoyle on the cornice of life and offers something besides a brusque disillusionment from our dreams. With

a responsive appreciation and honest practice of the noble principles which a true character education aims to teach and inspire, no one need fear some imminent catastrophe nor feel depressed with the impending disaster of declining spiritual power. No one suffers disenchantment who holds worthy ideals; no one is disappointed who lives a life of meekness and renunciation. It is only the seekers after the world, spoliators, scheming knaves and gullible fools who are ready meat for disillusionment and despair. Anyone who can see clearly has no illusions about life, and hence is not subject to disillusionment. But I think that you will also find that he has no specious happiness philosophy either, and is therefore immune from practically all of the world's numerous plagues of war, greed, immorality and crime. It all devolves upon the chief facts and functions of morality—character and education. If these have been neglected, then we can only expect to find people with cheap aims in life, worldling ambitions, corrupt policies, mercenary motives and vulgar vanities—in a word, vice and ignorance.

When President Butler of Columbia advised our colleges to educate only the fit, he did not thereby rule out those merely physically unfit but those *morally* unfit. It is the delinquent, the imbecile, the depraved debauchee and unaspiring hedonist who is unworthy of our efforts at education and uplift; in fact, they usually sneer and ridicule whatever we try to do for their welfare, and being unfit, they are determined to stay unfit. So then, by their own election, if they want to be unfit morally and intellectually (leaving no question as to their wanting also to be spiritually unfit) we should make socially unfit, also—that is, segregate them and let them disgust each other or work their mischiefs among themselves. They will probably die the sooner and the world will be relieved of a useless burden of wickedness and woe. I have no weak mercy or maudlin sympathy to offer them. In this life, a man must choose the good intentionally and with conscious sense of his own redemption, he must seek wisdom with determination and discretion else he miss the primary delicacies of enlightenment. He must, above all, be honest and devout, brave and resolute, if he wants to achieve his full manhood as an intelligent, spiritual factor in the social life and accomplishment of the world. Without these, what use is it to try to educate or inspire him, he will ignore tradition, ridicule idealism, misunderstand intellectual power, doubt morality, be cynical about public service and dissatisfied with our dispensation of justice. He may be in hot pursuit of pleasure and what he calls happiness the while you are trying to revise his world-conception or restore his

sanity ; but be not overly hasty with anxiety nor persistent with your efforts. Just let Nature take her inevitable course and there will soon enough be another disillusionment to go down in that long weary chronicle of man's struggle toward civilized achievement, social efficiency, justice and common-sense.

In conclusion, I will say that the proper method of education is along the lines of morality, vocational guidance, intellectual honesty and spiritual tolerance, while its proper business is to develop good citizens, useful workers, men of genius in art, science, religion and philosophy, mystics, saints, heroes, poets and sages. It should aim to build up strong and exemplary characters ; it should try to recognize and stimulate every phase of creative power, giving guidance and encouragement to the development of every form of moral energy and social communion. Only that educational program is worthy of our support which is alert to the spiritual needs of a community, the state or nation, and provides means for satisfying those needs efficiently and justly. There is no liberal art that can compare with the art of living, and that is what a real education is supposed to teach. But if we have no foundation in character, no footing in virtue nor understanding in wisdom, then how can we ever realize true happiness, peace or prosperity in our lives? It may be popular to seek the mediocre level of Main Street philistines, but it is certainly not suitable to the laws of life or Nature. They demand rare courage, truth, love, justice, generosity, amiable converse, tolerance, hope, faith and largesse in whatever broad achievement we desire to make ; and I believe it is the proper business of education to see that we get a few pointers on the sort of character whose leading features are thereby enumerated.