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# CAN PSYCHOLOGY HELP?

*By*

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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# FOREWORD

### By H. Crichton-Miller, M.A., M.D., M.R.C.P.

Dr. Montgomery has written a book that should be read by thousands. This modest volume contains a wealth of simple psychology and practical philosophy that very definitely answers the question of the title. Many ordinary people, who are neither stupid nor highbrow, will find in this book illumination, interest and stimulus. And the book, withal, is written in a way that grips the attention from the first chapter. There is a wealth of apposite illustration and simple analogy scattered through its pages. Every sentence, one might say, carries the conviction of the writer's sanity, tolerance and rich experience of life.

At one point we read, " To cease to strive is to cease to live," and this sentiment is implicit in every chapter. The four chapters on how we take life are particularly to be commended, and the following passage from the last chapter is representative of the message of the book : " Thus the development of our lives, as individuals and as a race, depends on our willingness to obey two conditions that Nature has set. First, we must be willing to respond actively to the challenges and incentives by which life quickens our powers into vitality. Secondly, we must discriminate between the various impulses through which our environment incites us, so that we become able to discern the meanings of our various experiences, and respond to those that will most readily increase our understanding and promote our progress to mental and spiritual maturity."

This book will have a large circulation if it is read by one out of every hundred who should read it.

*9th May*, 1938.

# PREFACE

EVERY year The Royal Academy of Arts opens its doors to the public in the month of May. Previous to that date learned R.A.s have examined, adjudged and approved of the year's exhibit of such works of art as they consider suitable to be placed amongst the successes. Even though all of these, by their presence in the collection, bear the hall-mark of quality, there are many of us who, on going to visit them, would have to admit frankly that some of these artistic productions have no message for us; we do not understand their meaning.

Some people feel this barrier so keenly that they do not make any further effort to learn—they just feel that appreciation of such an Exhibition is something beyond them.

Yet we know that, scattered up and down the country, there are many artists of lesser rank extremely eager to develop such artistic gifts as they possess, and an even larger number who are able to appreciate creative work and gain inspiration from it. They do not approach their work in the same way as Academicians, but the door of Art is open alike to the simple and to the cultured, and in each case understanding is progressive.

In the past many of the truths of psychology have been formulated in such a way that they were comprehended only by the specialists, or R.A.s of the subject. But psychology teaches us that as far as human life is concerned, the creative process has its origin and its essence in our own being. Through this side of our being we can not only live according to Nature's physical laws, but we can understand their meaning, value them, and make judgments about them. So, although the subject is profound, it may be approached by all, and I have made this effort to express great truths simply. Should some of my readers feel they might have been even more simply stated, I would ask them to follow the same plan they adopt towards a picture the meaning of which they do not readily catch. Just take another look at it patiently and carefully, and perhaps the meaning will become clearer.

I must acknowledge my great sense of gratitude to friends who have encouraged me to pursue this task. Some of these are friends of the past whose coffers held useful gifts for others as well as for themselves, because they believed in life and its wonderful bounty. A few deserve, and are here accorded, special recognition from me for a sympathy more recent and assistance more tangible given consistently during the writing of these pages.

No measuring-scale has been in their hearts or their hands to record how much they were giving, and it is fitting that my thanks to them should carry a similar quality of generosity and spontaneity.

ELEANOR A. MONTGOMERY.

2, *Devonshire Place,*
*London, W.*1.
1*st May*, 1938.

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# CHAPTER I

## APPROACH TO THE QUESTION

PSYCHOLOGY has been defined as ‘ the Science of mind.’ It is derived from two Greek words: *psyche*, soul or mind; and *logos*, word or law. It is the study of mental activity or behaviour, and it is concerned (*a*) with mankind as a whole, (*b*) with man as an individual. Evidently the subject is a vast one, and it will be necessary to set ourselves some limits, so that we may understand clearly what realms of our being we are to consider in this book, for it is a serious undertaking to make even a brief study of a matter so important to us all.

It is the main purpose of this book to try to give replies to the two questions that are implicit in its title: Can psychology help the race to see and understand the many problems that confront societies and nations, and so make a significant contribution to the true progress and welfare of mankind? Can it help the individual to live more fully and contentedly? My answer to both these questions will be an affirmative one; but it will be confined to the province of behaviour, with which the science of psychology deals. That is to say, I believe that the study of psychology can help us to understand ourselves as individuals and as members of the great human family. We are not, in this book, setting out to explain the universe, to vindicate particular theories about the mind, or to offer a panacea for all the ills and perplexities to which flesh is heir. In the sense in which I am approaching it here, psychology is a science that directs us towards a more conscious way of living. It is that branch of knowledge which shows us how mental growth may become possible for us if we are sufficiently concerned about the quality of our living to make voluntary efforts to improve it ; but neither psychology nor any other kind of knowledge can relieve us of the necessity to give its directions practical application if we are to derive the benefits they confer.

When we think first of mankind in the mass, and then of the individuals who together make the complex whole, one of the first things that strikes us is the great diversity of types represented. Not only between race and race, or nation and nation, but even between members of the same family the most remarkable physical and mental differences are to be observed. We are not all made to a pattern. There is something different and distinctive about every new-born child, both in appearance and disposition; and the differences, apparent even at this early stage, become more marked and more numerous as development proceeds.

One of the explanations of these fundamental variations between individuals has been clearly set out by Dr. C. G. Jung of Zürich. He regards the ‘psyche,’ or soul, of each person as a small ‘world-of-being’ which contains within itself all the elements of the wider, external world. The forces of this inner world and those of the outer world are intimately related. Both are activated by similar constructive and destructive forces, and there is reciprocal and unceasing thrust and parry between the one and the other.

Just as the external world has four cardinal directions or points of the compass by which we orient ourselves, so our inner being may be said to possess four sides—that is to say, there are four basic ways in which we may give expression to ourselves as living beings. These four modes of expression are by no means fully or equally developed. Our control of them is partial and uncertain. We are not sufficiently well aware of them to be able to give all, or even any one, free play. These four sides, or aspects of our inner being are described by the words, ‘Feeling,’ ‘Thinking,’ ‘Sensation’ and ‘Intuition.’ To some extent we all know by experience what these words mean, but in common speech we use them rather loosely, not realising what marked differences there are between the several kinds of activity they distinguish. Let me say a few words about them to make their meaning clearer.

We use the word ‘feeling’ to describe the kind of experience through which we become aware of a certain relationship between ourselves and the things we see or the events we encounter. Thus, we say, “I like this” or “I dislike that”; “I enjoy this, but I find no pleasure in that.” A ‘feeling’ may occur to us in the form of a mood that arises apparently from nowhere, for no accountable reason. Concerning such a feeling we say, “It came over me.” The description is apt, for feelings of this kind are not always related to our present experiences or awarenesses. The obscurity of their origin is the most obvious thing about them. They steal upon us unawares. We may obey them for a long time without realising that they are there; indeed, it is only when we are able to describe one of them by saying, "It grew on me," that we observe it at all.

Although the 'feeling' side of our nature is independent of the rest of our mental activity, and able to act spontaneously, it may also become dependent upon one of the other 'sides.' Indeed, each of the four 'sides,' Feeling, Thinking, Sensation and Intuition, is so constituted that it can play either the principal or a secondary rôle in our behaviour; but if any one side is constantly taking the foremost place, it tends to overrule the rest of our nature, and our lives become inharmonious. Some people allow themselves to be weighed by their feelings when their judgments should be guided by reasoned thought. Other people are cold and calculating at the expense of warm sympathy. When any one element of our nature is allowed thus to usurp its function in relation to the others, we find that inward antagonisms and conflicts occur. It is as if the other members of the party, resenting the dominion of the one, set up a series of obstacles, delays, interruptions and cross-currents to thwart the offender ; so that no part of our nature is able to obtain the complete and satisfying expression necessary for wholesome living. It would make a great difference to us all if, when one aspect of our self-expression is being over-emphasised, we realised clearly what is happening ; for then we could perhaps adjust the matter ' to the satisfaction of all concerned.' As it is, we are not good at observing our own inner activities, and so may suffer the results of their disproportions for a very long time before we realise what is wrong.

If we continue to think of the four ' sides ' of our nature as the four cardinal points in the compass of our personal life, we can say that ' Intuition ' is at the opposite pole from ' Sensation.' The one might be termed ' North,' the other ' South.' Sensation must be more or less in abeyance before Intuition becomes active. Sensation has to do with the breadth of our experience. Through Intuition we reach the heights. Intuition is a mode of perception through which, instead of working our way to a conclusion, we jump to it. It is a very penetrating sort of mental vision by which we expect, or suspect, a certain conclusion to be true, and find subsequently that it is.

Through our sensations we are enabled to assert facts about our experience, saying " I feel hungry," " I feel cold," or " A pin is pricking me." Our intuitions do not give us information in this way at all. Usually we become aware of an intuitive movement within our minds through a phrase like, " I wonder if ." Intuition feels no embarrassment in the presence of mystery; indeed, mystery goads it into activity. Intuition plays upon the puzzling situation which it likes to make clear by its own active and creative process. Intuition has also an objective side. By its aid we may be helped to discern the signs of the times, as the statesman has been known to do, or to make a good guess, like a connoisseur, for example, who might say, " I do not know where this curio came from, but I have a hunch that it has seen the South Sea Islands."

The power to think and feel ' intuitively ' is developed by use. When we are obedient to truth as we see it, we acquire the ability to form good judgments, and repeated judgments merge into intuitions. Through intuitions we may have thoughts that transcend our usual themes, and make trial journeys into a realm where the other basic ways of mental activity cannot serve us—where those who wholly rely on reason dare not tread. Intuition is not hampered by 'Road Closed' barriers of logic and rationalisation as our thinking is, for intuition is no pedestrian, plodding slowly and painfully along the road of material things; it soars on wings and lifts the pure in heart up to the Infinite.

'Sensation,' as I have said, is the mental capacity through which our experience acquires breadth. We have two great groups of sense-organs. Those of which we are most aware lie on the surface of the body, and their intimations to the mind we interpret as touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. But these are not our only sense-organs. There are others, equally active, embedded in muscles, joints and internal bodily organs like the stomach, heart and liver. These are affected by muscular movement and pressure as well as by chemical changes. Sensations, internal and external, may be pleasant, indifferent, or unpleasant. It is easy to understand how large a part sensation must play in our lives, when it acts over so wide a range as this; indeed, it is true to say that many of our sense-organs are being stimulated, and our minds are registering their various messages, at every waking moment, while some do not cease their activity even when we sleep.

We can be aware of several different sensations at the same moment of time. For example, the reader is quite capable of seeing and reading these printed words while hearing certain sounds from the world around, knowing the position of his limbs in the bodily pose he has adopted, realising the comfort of his chair or the discomfort of his strap-hanging, smelling the odours of the forthcoming meal, perhaps, and simultaneously realising that a draught is blowing down his neck.

By the variety and acuteness of our sense-impressions we measure our capacity for breadth of experience. There is no doubt that all our senses are potentially far more sensitive than we realise, and by suitable training can be made a great deal more serviceable to us than they generally are. For example, they say that an Australian sheep-farmer can accurately count a flock of two or three hundred sheep by merely glancing at them. Chemists can detect the most subtle differences between elusive smells. Artists can distinguish gradations of colour and tone that the ordinary man never sees. Musicians are acutely aware of minute variations in musical sounds. These things are possible, not because these various people have more delicate organs of sense than the rank and file, but because their senses have been diligently trained into obedience through observation.

'Thinking' is the name we give to the movement of the mind through which ideas occur to us. We put together two or more items of information received through our sense-organs, and out of this 'given' material make something new. The important characteristic of ideas is their inherent power to lead us on to other ideas, so that our thinking goes step by step from idea to idea; and there seems to be no end to the possibilities of combination and variation.

Thinking is sometimes spontaneous in character, sometimes deliberate. Our minds are actively at work upon ideas, moulding them, changing and reforming them, during the whole of our waking life ; but we are not always giving our conscious attention to the ideas we are considering. When we do attend to ideas, we say ' we are putting our minds ' to something. Vastly different results attend these different ways of dealing with ideas, as we shall discover later on in our discussion.

Akin to ideational thinking, there is also a form of reverie called ' memory-thinking.' In this, we give our minds rein to wander at will over the whole field of our experience. When we do this a series of memories is recalled to us in a certain order of sequence because each one is the stimulus which evokes the next. Strange and rather surprising results sometimes attend this form of thinking.

Whether our thoughts are directed or allowed to wander, they exercise great influence over us. They are liable to affect our feelings and conduct even when we are not aware of them. On the other hand, the activity of our thinking processes is very largely governed by the quality of our feelings and intuitions. Even when we pride ourselves upon being most ' emotionally detached ' or ' coldly logical,' a clearer knowledge of ourselves would disclose to us. the fact—perhaps a somewhat disconcerting fact—that our very satisfaction in our own detachment is a ‘ feeling ’ ! Indeed, it is safe to say that our thoughts are directed by our feelings far more often, and more significantly, than our feelings are directed by our thoughts. This is a truth concerning ourselves that most people are reluctant to believe ; sometimes we strongly resent the suggestion that anything of the kind should be possible, blissfully unaware that such reluctance and resentment are both ‘ feelings ’ that prove the case against us even while we are pleading ‘ Not guilty.’

(1) Feeling, (2) thinking, (3) sensation and (4) intuition—these, then, are the four cardinal directions in the sphere of the mind. Upon their balance and proportion depends the wholesomeness of a personality ; its adequacy for the business of living. Fortunate is he who achieves even an approximation to such a balance. Most of us are like weathercocks, blown by every wind of chance and change ; not masters of our thoughts and feelings, but mastered by them ; not served by our senses and intuitions, but serving them, because our natures are not balanced and poised.

To give an example of how one side of our nature may come to have too much sway over us, let us imagine a scholar who proposes to go into retreat from the world in order to study some deep subject or work out some abstruse theory to which he has a mental clue. In his retirement this scholar will no longer fear lest he miss the train that hitherto he has caught each morning in order to reach his place of work by a certain time. His ‘ feeling ’ about punctuality is in abeyance because he is anchored to a task in which this is not concerned. Neither will his senses urge him to hurry along to the station in order to catch his customary train. He will not call his intuition to his aid to enable him to act spontaneously for self-preservation as he braves the various dangers of traffic-congested streets. The many hazards, duties and encounters of everyday life that together stimulate our minds to exercise their various functions of feeling, sensation and intuition, our scholar avoids by going into his retreat. There he will exercise his ‘ thinking ’ power to the utmost ; but he has withdrawn from the environment where life requires him to respond to it with every part of his nature, and his way of living is very one-sided. Consequently, when at length he returns to the world, the professor will probably be somewhat like a fish out of water, and may have difficulty in readjusting himself to the social environment.

Because a situation of this kind is not likely to happen to most of us, it affords a more striking illustration of the way in which an over-emphasis on one side of our natures may cause weakness or failure in the others. Few of us are in immediate danger of withdrawing from the active sphere of social life into a retreat where mental activity and contemplation afford our only means of self-expression. Our danger is the opposite one. We are more likely to occupy ourselves socially to the exclusion of intellectual pursuits. It is as easy to become mentally lop-sided by doing so as by the scholar's way. The brain needs exercise as much as does the body. It is possible for us to spend our time on daily tasks that would be described as brain-work without really using our brains very much. We become so used to the duties that fall to our lot, that we do them almost mechanically, and herein lies a danger. Perhaps the work of a typist illustrates this as clearly as anything. Many typists read off their shorthand notes and transcribe them into creditable manuscripts without having the least idea of the meaning of the words they tap out on their machines. By failing to call the ‘ thinking ’ side of her nature sufficiently to her aid in the doing of her job, such a typist has applied a weak or distorted energy to the task. Her mind pays the price of her neglect. So it is with us all. When we do not apply ourselves whole-heartedly to our work we deny to ourselves the facility and enjoyment it could afford. Whilst we do not eliminate entirely the activity of three sides of our nature while employing the remaining one, we do exercise one at the great expense of the others, and so limit ourselves.

Or, to take another example, we should not be content to regard eating as merely a matter of appeasing physical appetite. Most of us crave the æsthetic accompaniments of an ordered meal, or the social pleasure of companionship in hospitality. We have various ways of ensuring that our taking of food is accompanied by elements of cultural self-expression higher in value than the actual food, because thus we are enabled to bring the various sides of our nature into participation in the act of eating. Strange though it may seem, there are not many of us who can take our lunch from its wrappings while on a railway journey and eat it alone, without experiencing unusual and vaguely uncomfortable feelings. We may be a trifle apologetic or surreptitious, or we may merely determine to look sensible and unconcerned ; yet it is not easy for us to feel entirely at ease. The strangeness of our circumstances hampers the feeling side of our natures ; the sense of repose is missing, and so we are self-conscious and awkward. But if we were given the same luncheon-basket as we sat on the banks of a stream or in the woods, we should be content and happy, and our meal would give us the maximum enjoyment.

We reminded ourselves at the beginning of this chapter that the mind is like a little world, reproducing within itself both the constructive and destructive forces of the universe. How do these forces take effect within the mind ? We may define the constructive thoughts as those which lead us on to fresh ones, while destructive thoughts do not lead anywhere.

The former are linked up with feelings and intuitions of a sustaining, strengthening kind, while the latter induce states of mind which only rob us of what energy and poise we have. In the simplest of our activities mental influences of the destructive and constructive kind seem to wage war for supremacy within us, and the character of our behaviour is determined according to whether the one or the other wins the fight.

Take, for example, an occurrence so common as the loss of some object in daily use, which has inadvertently been mislaid. Thus, arriving at the door of our home one evening after business, our hand almost automatically dives into our pocket or handbag for the latchkey. It isn't there! " It must be there," we say to ourselves, feeling again, perhaps turning bag or pocket inside out because we cannot bring ourselves to believe the evidence of our sense of touch. Still the key is not forthcoming, and still we disbelieve ourselves. " It simply must be there," we say to ourselves or to the patient friend who waits by our side, " I'm quite sure I put it there when I went out." So we repeat our search, becoming more and more fumbling and agitated as we do so. Eventually we become calmer and allow the thought, " It must be there," to give way to another, " It is not there, where is it ? " Then we begin to use our minds constructively, recalling memories of the morning and allowing ourselves to work step by step to the conclusion that we put the key in the pocket of our mackintosh, not in our handbag, because it happened to be raining hard when we went out. The mackintosh is hanging over our arm, we feel in the ticket pocket—and there is our key, so we do not need to call in the help of carpenter, or policeman, after all.

Our first thoughts after discovering our loss were destructive thoughts. Our certainty that the key was where it was not ; our refusal to acknowledge the evidence of our hand and eye, our insistence about the recollections of the morning—all these were useless thoughts, born out of an unwillingness to admit the possibility of being mistaken or forgetful. The idea of our own ' rightness ' was in the middle of our minds, and so long as it remained there it entirely blocked the traffic, so that other ideas, beginning with an admission of our fallibility, could not rise up one after another and eventually lead us to the place where our key would be found. The mind should be open and receptive, free from bias and able to adjudge on their merits the facts put before it. It very seldom is.

Buddha said, "The mind is everything; what you think you become." Our power to become in any way more constructive and useful than we now are depends altogether upon the extent to which we are willing to base all our thinking upon Reality. That is to say, we must learn to distinguish between ideas that express the truth, and ideas that merely express our own prejudices and desires; we must neither falter in our loyalty to the former, nor cease our watchfulness to detect the illusions of the latter.

We can be helped considerably in understanding what Reality is by observing what it is not. Thus, it is not difficult to appreciate that destructive ideas are not based upon Reality—their very power to injure and limit our self-expression is evidence of that. The unreality of destructive ideas can be recognised also by their power to repeat themselves in various circumstances, by their persistence, and their refusal to give other ideas a chance to raise their heads. Thus, in our illustration of the lost key, the various ideas that said to us, in effect, " I cannot have made a mistake," were untrue: and nothing true can be built upon a falsehood. So long as they persisted, they entirely prevented our minds from moving on to the useful ideas that at length told us where the missing key was. Destructive ideas are generally ideas about ourselves, or ideas derived from ideas about ourselves. Their purpose is not to help us to get at the truth either about ourselves, or the world outside us, but to save us the trouble of trying to understand either. They allow us to preserve our illusions about both the inner and outer worlds, and especially about the pictures we paint of ourselves in the world of imagination.

It is not surprising to find that while we are under the sway of destructive, self-centred ideas and feelings, we are prone to unpleasant emotions like fear, jealousy, self-disparagement and a sense of futility; for such ideas are so dominating that they tend to rule us entirely, and our feelings follow wherever they lead If we lose our eagerness for life, become impatient, bored or disillusioned, we may be sure that it is because we have allowed destructive ' dead-end ' ideas to take possession of our minds.

Constructive ideas and feelings are always directed forwards. They lead us outward to the open country of fresh activities, discoveries and adventures. ' Dead-end ' ideas always have the effect of building walls around us. They create barriers and limitations between ourselves and the outside world. We accept such ideas because we think they will protect us from difficulties, dangers or misfortunes; but we are deluded, for there is no peace of mind at a ' dead-end.' Our natures cannot help attending to the insistent thrust of ' Life-as-a-whole,' which accuses us, and incites us to dissatisfaction with all easy conquests, even when we do our utmost to deafen our ears to its call.

We tend to grow weary at times of this insistent urge of life, which constantly bestirs our spirits to stretch out into the unknown in search of fuller and richer experiences. We hope to find refuge and comfort by retiring within ourselves to a little heaven of illusion; but we are always disappointed, because such heavens are built only of the stuff of dreams.

Surely there must be a better way of seeking relief from strain, of finding restfulness and peace?

There is a way by which the unceasing quest of our souls may be made, not the long and wearying struggle it seems to be for something unattainable, but a continuing series of discoveries, a joyous adventure that always allures because it always rewards our searching whilst always holding the promise of greater things yet to be. That way is to span the chasm between the visible world of facts and the invisible world of the spirit. Man is a creature of two worlds: the visible world of facts, and the invisible world of values. The worth, to our nature, of every experience we undergo is measured by the meaning we see in it. Rarely have we power to order our experiences so that they conform to our desires; but always we can, if we will, so accept events and circumstances that their meaning becomes clear enough to ensure that they have a redemptive, and not a destructive effect upon us as we suffer them. That this can be done there is ample proof in the experience of valiant souls of all ages; and to attempt to do it, however falteringly, is to build a bridge between the temporal world and that world invisible whose foundations were before the earth began, and whose dimensions are fathomless and boundless.

Here perhaps a word of testimony may be useful. There have been known to me some who, in the early stages of life's pilgrimage, saw dimly a 'land of promise' for which ever and anon their hearts yearned with a great longing. Light and enrichment were to be found there, they knew, but the way seemed very long, and their human strength so meagre, that their hope failed. Desire became darkly tinged with fear lest, after all, the vision they had seen was but a mirage that receded as they struggled towards it. But they kept going on, and as they steadfastly trod the narrow way their hope was at length renewed, and a whisper of fresh understanding turned hope into assurance.

That understanding came as a breath of the spirit, but its message was clear and trustworthy,

> I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil and ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

> And I will be found of you, and I will turn away your captivity.

In all ages men and women of goodwill have heard that quiet voice, and in their darkest hour of need have been succoured by it. The testimony of their lives to the eternal truth of the words which that voice speaks surely affords us the finest stimulus we can desire in the day when patience and courage are low, and resolution threatens to fail.

# CHAPTER II

## PSYCHOLOGY IN RELATION TO THE RACE

LET us suppose that someone has asked you to go to Hampton Court or the British Museum so that there you may make a study of some specially valuable tapestry with the object of describing it subsequently to an untutored person, in order to convey some real understanding of what a tapestry is.

I can well imagine you going off to make your visit feeling easily confident of your power to fulfil the task you have been set. But as your examination of the tapestry proceeds you become less sure of yourself. You look at the tapestry closely, first from this angle, then from that, and the longer you look the more you see. The task becomes more difficult as you consider it; not less, as you would have supposed. " How was it," you wonder, " that I ever imagined I should be able to describe the immense richness and variety of this lovely thing? " You cannot describe it as a whole. Some way must be found of analysing, of simplifying the beautiful and complex object, in order to set your thoughts about it in a sequence that others will be able to follow.

You ask yourself, " Where shall I begin ? " and that leads you to notice the outstanding characteristics in the object which at first you saw as a general impression.

" Well," you reflect, " I might speak about the texture of this work of art, for that is truly remarkable. I might begin by discussing its colour, so varied in detail and so satisfying as a whole. Or perhaps I should describe the scene depicted and the forms of men and women that are so prominent a feature of the pictorial design." Of course, if your interest is in the construction of the tapestry rather than in its artistic qualities, you might be disposed to begin your description of it with a dissertation on weaving ; or, in other circumstances, you might feel constrained to deal with the history of the tapestry. But wherever you elect to make a beginning, you soon find that your description of the tapestry includes, as the most important part, its abstract qualities—its beauty, durability, symmetry of colour, etc. You have moved away from the solid, material object itself. Your thought has compelled you to acknowledge that its most important part is that part which you cannot see at all! But, further, the limitations of your mind have diverted your interest from the whole tapestry to its several parts, and only by describing these separately can you hope to convey an impression of the whole.

It was by a method akin to this that the science of psychology began its task of trying to describe the mind of man. A representative individual was taken apart from his social setting and looked at as if he were a fully formed and complete unit, that could be contemplated and adequately described in isolation from other individuals and his surroundings. Just like other sciences, psychology dealt at first with abstract notions. Its subject-matter was the ‘ faculties ’ of man, abstract forms of the general activities of minds. These abstractions were the concern of psychologists right up to the latter part of the nineteenth century.

But by that time the belief was growing that like organisms, men and institutions together formed synthetic groups or wholes, which, besides being single, self-contained and complete in themselves, were also meeting-points of all the forces in the world. In other words, the individual, like a thread in a tapestry, a line in a poem or a single figure in a pictorial composition, is incomplete and inexplicable except in relation to his environment.

This idea has helped the modern psychologist to pass in thought from the abstract psychologies to one which considers the mind in relation to the concrete problems presented by actual living groups of persons in all their inexhaustible complexity. No doubt the work of Darwin, which stimulated the interest of thinkers in the evolution of the race emphasised also the need to study the development of the mind from its primitive beginnings ; and as they began to do this, psychologists became increasingly aware that man and his environment were closely interwoven. They are together the warp and woof of the tapestry of life. Neither is explainable without the other. The behaviour of man is the result of his continual efforts to subdue and control his environment. The environment is that which incites him to make these efforts. Mental development, human nature and character are the result of this reciprocal activity ; and both elements in it are of equal importance. To a certain extent you cannot explain man except in relation to his surroundings. You cannot fully explain all his surroundings except in relation to man.

The aim of all our studies, whether scientific or historical, is, ultimately, to reach a psychological explanation of the ideas, beliefs and instinctive tendencies by which man's conduct is determined, both individually and collectively. Everyone who comes into the world enters into membership of the social group into which he is born, and at once this group begins to play its part in determining his conduct. We are related as individuals to other individuals in our particular group, and our group is related to other groups. These several groups each have special functions to perform in relation to the larger groups. The larger groups have responsibilities towards yet larger ones, and ultimately, by way of family, social class, nation, race and colour, to mankind as a whole. The functions of our social groups we call 'customs.' Some of these may be recent and not very clearly defined; others are old, clear cut and well established; we call them our 'institutions.'

Each of us is a member of several social groups which are closely inter-related. The family is one of the small groups which helps to decide the position one will occupy in the larger groups of social, political and religious corporateness. The family is also the unit which determines the qualities of those intimate and unobtrusive relationships that centre in the home. It is the domestic group.

We have our place also in many political groups—the parish, country, nation and Empire—in which the life is regulated by organised groups that we create by the election of representatives, or by other means. In addition, there are occupational groups, which concern themselves with the economic aspects of our lives : in some places and communities these groups bind people closely together in fellowships of mutual interest ; in other places it is difficult to detect any link of this kind at all. In the groupings connected with religion there is both variety and specialisation of function (or custom) of a very definite and obvious kind.

The necessities of education have the effect of creating special groups too ; dividing us up into ‘ schools,’ ‘ colleges,’ ‘ universities ’ and ‘ learned societies.’ Among people of the simpler and less cultured type the social and educational necessities are both met by the one group. Our need for social self-expression results also in the formation of groups that are to an extent artificial. Social societies and voluntary associations express our desire for the fellowship of others in activities of mental interest and concern.

Each individual takes his disposition and character very largely from his place in the various groups to which he belongs. His response to their stimuli makes him what he is. In turn, out of what he is, each individual tends to modify the pattern or direction of the groups to which he belongs. Thus, it is plain that we cannot define what is a ‘ normal ’ human being, and we cannot by investigation arrive at any orthodox laws to impose on mankind as a whole ; for because the former does not exist, the latter would not be tolerated.

History teaches us that everything lives. Mankind has a past which makes itself apparent in the manners and customs of to-day. The attempt to suppress forcibly this, that or the other trait in social behaviour is often made by those who desire to hasten the progress of the race to a larger maturity ;

but the attempt is futile, although those who make it are often animated by the most laudable intentions. All corporate behaviour is the expression—maybe a faulty and partial one—of man's social needs, which have persisted through the centuries. These needs must find their answer, and if the effort is made by forcible measures to prevent them from being met, they will find some other means, perhaps less worthy ones, of seeking their consummation.

We say, " History repeats itself." Not with exact similarity of detail, but in general resemblance, man's attempts to deal with the circumstances encountered from age to age tend to follow recognisable courses that are repeated at intervals in history. Thus, a trait forcibly prevented from expressing itself now is but delayed. Later on it will issue again.

In order to maintain a satisfactory relationship with our environment, we have to preserve a sense of proportion between our own personal views of what should be or what should not, and the social or group point of view that speaks in ' what is.' Whether in the comity of nations or in the fellowship of a single family, our scheme of life must always be based upon the prime necessity for cohesion and solidarity in group behaviour. We have our majorities and minorities in many spheres, and there are certain rights vested in each. As members of either kind of group—majority or minority—we have both advantages and disadvantages. All our groups gain by the achievements of all the others, both in our own and earlier generations. Each of us suffers for the faults and mistakes of the past as well as for the ones we ourselves make. From this fact we can infer that the ills we have to bear are not the blows of a blind or arbitrary Fate, or the effects on us of some mindless, unreasoning 'world-force.' These accidents are the consequences of the actions, reactions or inactions of the human family as a whole, in all its encounters with the environment, from its beginnings in the remote past until now. We are all held together by the most real and fundamental links. Even if it is our conviction that the present is better than the past and that the future may be brighter still, our power to realise this convicton depends upon our willingness to accept the present as it is, however faulty, and live with it, in order that, through its continuing struggles, the future may realise our conviction. We cannot change the world from outside. We can redeem society only by living in it and sharing its incompleteness.

Yesterday's failures and tragedies are the material out of which life shapes to-morrow's achievements. When, years ago, men found that their vessels were frequently wrecked by storms at sea, they turned their attention to their methods of construction, making boats large in size and strong in keel, equipped with engines powerful enough to enable them to outride the severest storms. The seas were charted, the coasts and shoals were marked, instruments of navigation were developed. Do we not owe our knowledge of astronomy to the seaman's need of fixed points for night steering ? The stars served his need, evoked curiosity and set men to devising means of learning what they meant.

When the crowding in our great cities brought fresh ailments and diseases, scientists began to work at many problems of public health. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we buy, are all subject to treatment of one sort or another designed to prevent disease or improve the conditions under which we feed and work and play.

In regard to the greater hazards of life the individual is never required to act in isolation, or be dependent wholly on his own unaided efforts to maintain his life and safety. We do not behave as ‘ units ’ or ‘ individuals,’ face to face with the threatening conditions in Nature. If we were alone, our battle with circumstances would be an unequal and losing one. The overwhelming odds against us would soon make our poor efforts at resistance of no avail. Society forms a stout bulwark between us and the naked hazards of life. Group law and our loyalty to it sustain us despite our individual weakness. They provide a sound foundation for our learning and effort. They ensure the continuance of the race, and stimulate us in every activity by which the life of coming generations is made more safe, rich and satisfying.

In some of the Eastern cultures men used to be encouraged to regard this world as incurably unsatisfactory or illusory. From its imperatives and loyalties they were taught to endeavour to free themselves. Instead of trying to make their situations better by altering them, they tried to withdraw from the world of sense. The result was that disease, famine, flood and crime were given a free field in which to flourish. The consequences were often appalling.

There is no hope for the kind of religious bent that tries to qualify for the next world by disparaging this one. To cease our efforts—or even our desire—to ameliorate present evils, and fail to institute improvements in the world around us, have the effect of perpetuating the very conditions that we deplore and would evade. However earnestly we may try to sacrifice this world to the next, our attempts will fail, for they are misguided. We have a part to play here ; it is essentially a ‘ redemptive ’ part, and it cannot be postponed or modified until we are transported to some sphere that we consider more favourable to our activities. Indeed when we speak of the ‘ next world,’ we are already somewhat in error, for the world of meaning, the world of the spirit, is co-existent with this present world. Man is called upon to live his life and to exercise his various spiritual powers in the arena of physical circumstances, where the problem of the individual speedily becomes the concern of all. Here is a struggle for existence, decreed by Nature, in order that by the way in which they meet it the fittest may survive and the true progress of the race be assured. This struggle is always a spiritual one. The fitness that survives it is spiritual fitness; and the disposition to forsake this world or to deny its blessedness is spiritual cowardice.

Though this law of survival, which operates spiritually as well as physically, may often appear harsh, unyielding and sometimes cruel in its way of working, yet its end is clearly beneficent. The fire is cruel to the iron, but it imparts to it the flexibility of steel.

Life challenges us to think of it in terms of these higher laws. To see their beneficence strengthens our faith in a world where we must live by faith if we are to live at all.

To ascribe the course of history to undefined, unthinking 'forces,' 'trends,' 'fates' or 'destiny' is an evasion. We know that the direction of events, the effects upon the present of the past, are the results of men's actions and failures to act. As individuals live, move and have their being, impressing upon their surroundings the stamp of what they are, so also do human societies and institutions.

The State is a living organism ; civilisations each have their own individualities and ' heartbeats ' ; and since many civilisations have risen, reached maturity and then died, we can conclude that they, like ourselves, pass through stages akin to the phases of growth in our individual experience. In some respects the various social cultures are like organisms. The life-story of individual organisms is told by science. The life-story of collective organisms is written in history.

During recent years the progress of science has made swift advances, because scientists have been bringing vast numbers of old and new facts together, and collating them into a single comprehensive system. The system was already there. Man's part was to consider it until he could see it as an organised whole. As we know, we see what is significant for us in the world around us. Evidently, therefore, the insights by which we have lately attained so much new knowledge are the outward signs of an expansion in the inner world of our spiritual reality. Something is happening to our souls to make us desire a larger unity in experience and a larger capacity for fellowship with other human beings.

A quarter of a century ago we spoke of the time-distant floes of the Arctic, or of the space-distant continents of the East, with a sense of awe at the remoteness of these places. We would remark upon the surprisingly cosmopolitan appearance of New York or Bombay because it was the exception to see people of many different races in close association. To-day it is as if our world had shrunk. Few places are ‘ remote ’ either in time or space. East and West have joined in many close relationships. A strike in South America creates unemployment in London. A war in China disturbs the continent of Europe. It is the rule, rather than the exception, for cities to be cosmopolitan. The horizons of East and West are not far off; they have met. Even the Poles are not so far apart as we had thought.

Nothing in our world is ‘ settled.’ Nothing is going to be settled, in the sense in which we once used that word. Man looks forward ever to new adventures, and in them finds new predicaments. Knowledge continually alters the world and presents us new problems with which to come to terms. In the changing flux of circumstances a purpose is always to be discerned. A vast drama is being staged in the arena of our living environment. In it we cannot be mere spectators. We must be players. The quality of our living depends upon the manner in which we elect to play. It becomes rich and gracious in so far as we discern that we may be the instruments through which Eternal purposes are realised.

# CHAPTER III

## THE CONDITIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Good health is surely the greatest wealth with which anyone can be endowed; and of all the valuable kinds of health, mental health is the most to be desired. But mental health is not a fixed and concrete form of wealth which can be stored or safeguarded as in a bank or a jewel-case, for it is by nature unstable and subject to constant change.

The condition we call 'health' is one very difficult to define. It is not mere freedom from illness: we all know people who are for the moment quite well and yet must be described as 'in precarious health.' It is not strength: people of excellent physique are sometimes fundamentally unhealthy, while other folk, outwardly not seeming robust, contrive to go through the years to old age enjoying a measure of health that appears to be beyond that which might be expected. In what, then, does health consist? The word means 'whole-th' or wholesomeness. It denotes a certain quality of resilience in the being by which it is able to withstand the strains and stresses of life without undue expenditure of energy. It is a kind of elasticity within us like the bounce of a good tennis ball, so that it maintains its all-round-ness despite the bumps and buffetings that circumstances compel it to undergo. In short, the healthy person is ‘adaptable,’ not easily upset; he has balance or poise.

Like physical health, mental health also consists in balance. The mind is the mysterious organ with which Nature has endowed us in order that we may get to know the world of our surroundings and live with it contentedly. The various ‘sides’ of our nature, which I described in an earlier chapter, are so many ways of activity by which we may become acquainted with the world outside ourselves, and discover enough about its laws and arrangements to be able to fit into the whole. All these modes of apprehension, so different from each other, have a common purpose. It is to enable us to be adaptable, inwardly prepared for life’s various contingencies, so that when we encounter them we may know how to manage them.

The tight-rope walker performs his feats through a fine adjustment of his powers of balance. His mind and muscles are acutely sensitive to every change in the disposition of the physical forces acting upon his body. As you watch him you see how he raises and lowers his arms, sways his body this way and that in instant response to every stress. If he stood rigid he would fall. His resilience is his salvation.

Just so it is with ourselves as we walk the tight-rope of life. The changing winds of fortune sway us this way and that. Our health depends upon our poise or resilience, as our minds, through various organs and modes of apprehension, make us instantly aware of the changes going on around us.

Thus our power to live, our capacity for mental health, depends essentially upon the extent to which we become aware of the forces that are at work both within ourselves, and in the world outside us; forces that for us are constructive or destructive, according to the way we respond to their thrust upon our lives. Just as the tight-rope walker, because of his sensitiveness, is able to use the same force of gravity in order to keep upon his rope, which would pull him to the ground if he failed to respond to it aright, so we may be upheld or overthrown by the same mental forces, according to the manner in which we see them and respond to them.

It is profitable that we should try to understand what some of these forces are, and how they affect our behaviour. For purposes of simplicity we may divide them into two groups—inward and outward. There are constraints and compulsions within us, urging us to certain modes of behaviour. There are other forces from the world outside us, with which we must somehow come to terms, adapting our inward powers to them, if life is to be wholesome and progressive.

Let us think, for a moment, of a schoolboy who, for some breach of discipline, is required by his master to stand before the class and answer a charge. Within the boy is a strong urge to self-protection or preservation. It causes him to feel what we call ‘ fear ’ in a situation of danger to himself. In effect, this inward force says to the boy, ‘ Run away.’ The boy knows that immediate relief and escape from a position of insecurity can only be reached either by actually running away and thus responding physically to his inward urge, or by denying the accusation levelled against him, thus telling a lie and mentally 'running away' or 'retreating' from the challenge to which life has brought him. But while he feels a strong desire to do one of these things, the boy is constrained by another force that is at work upon his personality: an outward collective force. At home and at school he has learnt to 'play the game.' By experience he has become aware of the privilege and benefit of social behaviour, and he knows that the enjoyment of these will be possible for him only to the extent that he accepts his responsibilities. Among these responsibilities is fidelity to truth—without which the trust upon which communal life is based would be impossible. Therefore the boy is aware of a constraint to 'face the music' by telling the truth, accepting the result whatever it may be. He does so, because he allows the outward social force to take precedence over the inward and personal one.

Thus we may distinguish two great groups of forces at work to mould the individual life: external or 'social' forces, and inward or 'self-centred' forces. Mental health is the degree of balance or harmony attained by any of us when the thrusts or pressures of these two groups are rightly related each to the other for the development of life as a whole. By the urges of the 'self' forces each of us develops his own powers; by his acceptance of the disciplines imposed through the working of 'social' forces, he ensures that self-development is in a direction that will constructively assist the health of the whole human family as a corporate unity.

Amongst the inward forces or tendencies two distinct sorts are easily to be discerned: those which make demands for something, and those which seek to avoid something. In the first group we include all the urges through which we endeavour to secure for ourselves whatever will most quickly and easily satisfy our natural appetites and crude animal cravings. Whenever one of these urges is about to make its entry on to the stage of our lives it announces itself with the words, "I want ." Security, praise, power, wealth, esteem, adulation, position, and all other ambitions that we cherish for the 'good things' they will give us or bring to us: all these desires are so many different expressions of an inward force or urge towards self-preservation. The oft-recurring tests of character with which life confronts us are closely bound up with such inward desires, and our way of meeting them is of great moment when we are considering how to maintain our mental health. Whilst there is nothing inherently wrong in these ‘ self ’ urges, their strength is so great that they tend to become insistent, thrusting themselves forward, making demands out of proportion to their importance and unrelated to our social responsibilities.

Just because it is natural to want the ‘ good things ’ of life, we find it very easy to become apprehensive when we feel uncertain about our ability to secure or retain them. Long before misfortunes come our way we begin to dread them and make elaborate plans for avoiding them. Because of our anxiety, life takes on a threatening aspect and we see danger where none exists. When that state of mind begins it quickly increases, consuming our energies in vain precautions, so that the pace at which we can work, the interest we can take in our fellows, and all other active, constructive modes of self-expression are hindered ; the mind becomes confused, our powers of perception are blunted and we find ourselves in a state of restless apprehension.

When, by giving rein to our urges toward self-preservation, we reach such a state as this, life must become a very miserable affair for us, and for those who have to live with us. We do not care to acknowledge that our situation is the result of our desire to indulge ourselves, so we look around for ways and means of explaining the unhappy pass to which we have come. We point out to our friends the peculiar difficulties under which we are labouring, the long period of ' worry ' or ' strain ' we have undergone, the ' overwork ' we have had to suffer—and so on.

Our explanations, though plausible, are not true. The trouble is the result of our failure to strike a balance between the inward and outward forces of our lives. We have indulged one group at the expense of the other. Thus, if we succeed in bringing ourselves to believe our own excuses and evasions, we merely introduce another element of falsity that helps us to maintain our illusion; and so our lack of balance is bound to increase and emphasise our incapacity rather than relieve it. Indeed, such a condition of faulty adaptation to life is most easily to be recognised by the insistence with which it produces arguments to justify itself, not only in our own eyes, but in the eyes of others also. We demand the sympathy of others for our trials and ills; often enough we go so far as to develop all sorts of traits of behaviour which will have the effect of commanding others to attend to us, give way to us, and otherwise acknowledge our perfect right to have just what we want and do precisely what we like; whilst we never for a moment admit, either to ourselves or our friends, what is the true cause of our pains and distresses.

In the sphere of personal relationships, even more than in the hazards of circumstances, is there danger for the life dominated by inward, self-preserving forces. To begin with, the normal desire for self-expression and self-realisation, to which we have referred above, is shared by all other members of the human family. Therefore, when we are striving to fulfil our personal ambitions or to attain situations of personal eminence and security, we frequently find ourselves in competition with others who are striving for the prize we covet. Then there is trouble.

The man who cannot be happy unless he is always obeyed, may find himself having to work in a firm where there are half a dozen others who also feel they cannot be happy unless they are being obeyed. The woman who desires financial security and protection above all else, finds herself married to a man who gets all his fun out of adventuring and taking every possible sort of risk. Since both parties to all such competitive activities are always equally well assured of their own rightness in pressing the ambitions they cherish, interminable conflicts are inevitable. Disappointments, thwartings and suspicions follow too. Thus the whole social environment of the self-dominated personality becomes a fruitful breeding-ground for irritability, jealousy, annoyance, hatred and a sense of personal frustration. In fact, these various expressions of resentment are directed against the external world, whose forces and laws will not permit the individual to have what he wants just because he happens to want it; but in practice the person thus denied the self-indulgence he craves, tends to throw the blame on to particular people or particular circumstances; he tries to revenge himself on fate by ‘ taking it out of ’ those among his friends and acquaintances who, to their misfortune, happen to be so situated that they provide a ready subject for recrimination. But again the mistake of throwing on to something or someone else the onus of responsibility for an inward disharmony rebounds to the disadvantage of the sufferer. The more conclusive the external reasons for his unhappiness seem to be, the less he seeks the real reasons by looking for them in the right place—within himself. Thus all his efforts to explain his situation do but increase its severity.

Conditions of the kind I have described in outline above are responsible for the creation and maintenance of a good deal of what we call nervous illness. We often hear a phrase used to describe people who are prone to sudden and violent temperamental disturbances : it is said that they are ‘ very unbalanced.’ We use this phrase, like many others in common speech, without concerning ourselves to inquire how it came to birth. Most assuredly, when this phrase was coined, somebody must have observed very clearly the ‘ top-heaviness ’ or ‘ lop-sidedness ’ of certain people, realising that it was a state suggesting the likelihood of a fall. Just so. The condition is the direct result of an over-emphasis of one side of the nature to the neglect of the other. The individual is obeying the forces which urge him to realise or express himself. He has forgotten the other forces—external ones—which must also be taken into account and obeyed if self-expression is to be coherent and purposeful. To put the matter in another way: the self-centred individual makes the mistake of thinking he can find the secret of life before he has discovered its object. He wants what he wants, but has no purpose in mind as to what he will do with it, if he gets it.

One of the main tasks of modern psychology is to help us to realise that the art of living consists in discovering what are the forces which impinge upon us from the external world—natural forces and social forces—and what are the forces from within, by which desires and behaviour may be regulated so that the activities of these two worlds are combined into wholesome co-operation.

Most of us give ready ear to inward voices that would persuade us at all costs to please ourselves ; we are, on the whole, reluctant to listen to the call of the greater world outside, which commands us to live with it and serve it, finding the fulfilment we rightly seek, not in self-interest but in social usefulness. It is our tendency to see life as we want it to be, not as it is, that accounts for the difficulties we suffer when the inward urge which I have called the ' avoiding ' instinct gets out of hand.

The instinctive desire to run away from or avoid whatever constitutes a danger to our lives is a perfectly natural and wholesome one. Every creature has it to some extent, and it is most highly developed in animals that have to use their brains for self-protection because they lack brute strength. Without the precautions for its safety that the race of man has been constrained to take at the bidding of this instinctive urge, human development would never have reached the stage of civilisation. But social life implies a necessity to discipline individual urge to communal welfare. One person seeking only his own safety may imperil the lives of hundreds of his fellows—and although we may be ready to say, ' Every man for himself,' when our own fear bids us take risks involving the lives of others, we are slow enough to take up that cry when the effect would be to save the other man's life at the expense of our own or our friend's.

The point needs no labouring. We know well enough that our fidelity to our neighbour is the just price we pay for his fidelity to us. However willing we may be to invent spurious justifications for our behaviour when, in moments of crisis, we betray our fellows in order to protect ourselves—in our hearts we know that there has been a betrayal of something which justly claimed our loyalty; and rightly, we are ashamed.

The 'avoiding' instinct, then, like all others with which we are endowed, is an inward force requiring to be balanced by social and external forces if it is to serve us and not enslave us. It is not surprising, therefore, that, when we refuse to acknowledge the value of the balancing forces, the thrust of the instinct becomes over-powerful, disorderly in its working and destructive in its effect.

What happens then is, in a word, that we become afraid of the wrong things. Since what we want is to please ourselves, we try to avoid whatever will not please us, we become afraid of unpleasant things that seem to be unavoidable, and our energies are consumed in a vain endeavour to run away from everything in life that threatens to thwart our self-centred ambitions and desires.

We shall have occasion later on to return to this matter, giving it closer consideration. For the moment it is sufficient to remark upon the fact that, immediately any one of us refuses the obligation to balance the external with the internal forces of life, distortion and disproportion attend the natural working of all instinctive tendencies. The whole of our behaviour is rendered grotesquely out of tune with life's realities, and the ground is prepared for all the mental and nervous disorders to which our nature is prone.

It is a work of practical value to try to see our own lives with this principle of ' balance ' in mind. Just as the proverbial ' stitch in time saves nine,' so the timely examination of our own behaviour may enable us to detect faults of personal adjustment before they become severe—and the sooner we discover that we are ' off balance ' the sooner and more easily may we hope to restore it.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

REFERENCE was made in the first chapter to the fact that a study of psychology, like knowledge of any other subject, confers its benefits upon us only when it is applied to the practical concerns of everyday life. Now we must try to make the truth of this statement plain in relation to the matters we are considering.

The life of an infant begins, as we all know, several months before birth. The reader may not hitherto have realised that during a great part of that time the unborn child is, as we have reason to believe, aware of its environment and capable of feelings concerning it. During this pre-natal state the infant is not only harmoniously adapted to its environment, but it is actually 'part and parcel' of it. A state of complete comfort and security is enjoyed, for every need of the developing organism is answered through the life of the mother. But at birth there is a rude awakening out of this Nirvana-like repose. From the moment when the first physical shock of contact with cold air incites the breathing apparatus of the infant to activity, life continues to provide more and more stimuli, all designed to encourage it to embark upon the adventure of independent existence. The effect of these stimuli is to compel the child to begin—of course in a very limited way—to assume some responsibility for its own development; and spontaneously the child responds by active co-operation in the management of its life and the fulfilment of its modest needs. It cries to express hunger or pain. It sucks to obtain its food. It kicks to exercise its limbs, and gurgles with satisfaction when all goes well.

We may assume that at this early stage of its independent life the child first becomes aware in some dim way of its own identity, as separate from the being of its mother. Its relation to its mother is still intimate; but it is a relationship between two separate beings, and it is one through which the child gains a variety of fresh experiences, encounters a variety of little obstacles and difficulties, all having the effect of increasing the awareness of the baby-mind until it reaches a 'subjective' state of consciousness. In other words, there comes a moment, shortly after birth, when the child realises its own 'selfhood,' discovers that it is not a part of Mother. It cannot yet take into its comprehension an external world, or indeed anything beyond 'mother-self.' Its tiny mind is wholly absorbed in the feeling of having Mother's solicitude, its interest is entirely consumed in self-preoccupation. Because it is the most important thing in the world to Mother, it becomes the most important thing in the world to itself.

When weaning begins, a new stage of development is initiated. The child is thrown still further on his own resources. He must now take a more active and intelligent part in his own affairs. He can hear and see, he can grasp objects, he has fingers and toes to notice, investigate and play with; but still the source of all his interest is himself, and he finds his supreme solace in concern and curiosity about his own person. Even when alone, he derives vast satisfaction from self-investigation and admiration; but when someone else is at hand he gets added satisfaction from these bodily sensations and possessions.

By the time the child becomes a toddler it is evident to the observer as well as to himself that his own person is important and that the attentions of others—especially Mother—to him and his various needs give him the utmost gratification. His pride at his little prowess in various activities is unbounded. His joy at Mother's expressions of her love for him is wholehearted. She says he is 'the apple of her eye,' and he expresses his hearty agreement with her judgment by making it perfectly clear to everyone concerned that he is the 'apple' of his own!

All this is as it should be, natural and necessary. The tiny child is self-centred because he is engaged upon the supremely important task of self-discovery. As he learns to appreciate and interpret the meaning of the various environmental stimuli that impinge upon his unfolding mind, the child gradually realises both the privileges and limitations of 'self-hood.' As, slowly but steadily, the structure of impressions and ideas is built up, there is formed an idea of its 'self' as an independent, living, behaving 'whole,' the beginning of what we call a 'personality.' And it is only when the child realises his own self-hood that we can expect him to enlarge the circle of his interests and begin to feel his own life in relation to the life of the world.

Notice that this increasing self-awareness and self-realisation are made possible for the young life by a continuously changing and enlarging environment, to which the child must respond by exercising more and more vigorously the physical and mental powers that quicken into activity as he grows. At first the new life is part of the mother's life—bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh. With birth comes the beginning of a separation, which to the child must seem stern and harsh, but yet is an essential condition of continued life. Soon, again, the helpless dependence of babyhood, so easy and soothing for the child, is broken as weaning time comes and life calls further upon the tiny powers of the baby, requiring more discomforts to be suffered and the consequences of many failures and mistakes to be borne as the price of an increasing power to live. Effort is rewarded by a larger sphere of competence, a larger world to be explored ; but in this again there are dangers to encounter and failures to be risked, as the toddling stage is reached, with which comes the desire and power to walk alone. So the rhythm continues. Each new situation of comfort is achieved by effort, but each new achievement prepares the way for a new incentive to effort, and creates a new obligation to forsake safety for insecurity in order that a larger security may at length be attained and then forsaken for an even greater adventure.

We have passed these early stages of life in brief review, stages through which we have all come, in order that, as we regard them objectively, we may see clearly how continuously the environment of childhood changes, and how adaptable the child is in response, being prepared for each new situation by the energy with which he responds to the challenge of the previous one. If we think out for ourselves our own progress from childhood to maturity, we can distinguish many more stages of growth like the few I have described. Each one has had its own peculiar delights and satisfactions; each one has had to be forsaken, perhaps reluctantly, in order that we might reach a more mature development and the larger satisfactions that attend it. All the way along the line of growth, new stimuli from the environment have, at the appointed times, made their impacts upon our minds, changing our outlook, undermining our temporary securities, shaking our serenities and requiring from us renewed efforts at adaptation.

It is this strange ' partnership ' of reciprocal activity between the creature and the environment to which we must now turn our attention. There is a ' practical balance ' that Nature always tries to maintain between the living organism and the circumstances in which it must express its energies. Apparently the environment is harsh, hostile, unfriendly. It surrounds the creature with all sorts of stimuli, all of which require it to exert itself and to bear discomfort or danger in order to maintain its life. Often, it may be with anger and reluctance, the creature answers the challenge, yet even then its activity results in the acquisition of new and greater powers, larger vitality, a richer capacity for living. Again the creature rejoices in its attainments and would rest at ease, counting the world well lost ; but again the environment disturbs its complacency with new irritations, and once more the creature exerts itself, being at length again rewarded with new vitality and new opportunities. Always the environment seems harsh; always its harshness is its promise of friendliness.

We know instinctively that we have never finished with change. So long as we live, our environment works upon us, ever throwing out fresh challenges to our spirits, ever requiring us to alter our ways in order that we may live more fully. Indeed, so long as there is breath in our bodies the eternal thrust and response goes on. We shall never see the last straw removed from our path, nor be assured that the moment's smooth sailing will continue for long enough to carry our frail barque into harbour, untossed by more storms. If we are wise we shall not desire that these things should be; for we shall not be misled by the frowning face of uncertain fortune; rather we shall discern in it the lure of love.

The insistent persuasiveness of environment, in response to which the creature lives and grows, is to be seen exercising its influence upon the lowest orders of the animal kingdom just as unrestingly as upon man himself.

These humbler organisations of life are required to be adaptable and responsive, as we are, though in their case it is to material conditions only that adaptation is required. Nevertheless the law holds good—to cease to strive is to cease to live. This inherent purposefulness of Nature has served as a guide to living creatures all down the ages. Unwise conduct and unwillingness to change have always brought suffering and weakness. Courage and adaptability have always been rewarded with achievement and pleasurable feelings. Time or distance may in this natural order of progress so separate causes from effects that the individual concerned does not perceive the connection between them, but it is always there, determining events according to a law not less inviolable because it is not always clearly to be discerned.

Ornithologists tell us that when each migration season comes round, and the birds take flight to warmer climes, some are always left behind to suffer privation and death from cold. For some reason the instinct to migrate, or the will to live, has not been strong enough in these birds to impel them to hazard the journey. On this scale of life, the law of survival is even more stringent than it is on the human plane. I imagine that very few of us would welcome the conditions under which the animals and birds live; where ruthless and inexorable punishment is swiftly meted out to those creatures that give way to laziness, self-indulgence, procrastination and *laissez-faire*.

Like the lower animals, man attains adaptation to his physical and material environment by the development of the body. To gain the material necessities of life we must till the ground, sow the seed, manufacture commodities, build houses, towns, etc. As we engage in these enterprises we increase our knowledge and gradually achieve a very great degree of skill, attended by an extent of comfort and security beyond anything that our primitive ancestors could have imagined possible.

But distinct from the physical environment which we share with the lower animals, there is for man an environment of mental and spiritual realities. Our thoughts and sentiments, hopes and aspirations are discerned to be social and spiritual; they constitute a world of realities to which we must adapt ourselves by balancing our personal desires and wishes against the good of the community, and it is in proportion as we are successful in this kind of adaptation that our lives are contented or otherwise. Like the physical environment, this one also lures us incessantly towards greater heights of discernment and larger worlds of experience; it also offers rich rewards for courage and endurance, but lays the hand of death on apathy or disinterestedness. So it is that for us human creatures a satisfying life is never in proportion to our material luxuries or possessions. While, naturally, we need the material things of life for the maintenance of our physical health, we are constitutionally incapable of finding complete fulfilment in them. Life demands of us something more fundamental; yet in return it gives us a quality of experience and a range of satisfactions more rich, by emancipating us from the insistent domination of bodily desires. Probably some readers of this book have known what it has meant to maintain a sense of inward peace even while undergoing physical suffering. On the other hand, many more of us have observed how insipid pleasures can be when they are thrust upon us in moments of unhappiness. We are creatures of two worlds, and much of our experience conspires to woo us from the lower to the higher, and to reward our deeper strivings with equally intense satisfactions.

It is curious to notice that alone among living things the human creature, being self-conscious, is able to observe and to resent the intractabilities of the environment, and so to regard as hostile and menacing the very quality of his surroundings in which is the promise of fuller life and greater achievement. Our tendency is always to desire freedom from struggle and difficulty. Even when we discover that certain conditions are inevitable, we tend to battle against them, dissipating in fruitless resistance and conflict the very energies with which we might create nobler vitalities out of the unyielding material that we try to destroy. Perhaps our education is partly responsible for this. So many of us seem to have been brought up to believe that responsibility is to be avoided and that the worth of our effort is proportional to the strain we feel, that we find great difficulty in believing that our difficulties are our privileges or that life is inherently friendly. Thus, when circumstances seem hostile, our first impulse is to draw upon our resources of aggressiveness and pugnacity, not realising that by doing so we are but encouraging within ourselves all the forces of disintegration.

There is one infallible sign by which we may know when our attitude to life is one of mental hostility, even when it is so veiled that our mood does not seem to be aggressive. In the grip of the disintegrative mental forces our tendency always is to argue with ourselves about life, and the argument is always one of an academic character. Thus, we begin to inquire exactly about the relative importance of environment and heredity in the development of character, we debate whether we are creatures ruled by habit or free-will, or whether our futures are governed by ourselves or the inexorable fates. One common quality distinguishes all such arguments: they lend themselves to debate that is interminable. Indeed, that is why we evince so much interest in them, for their purpose is not to enable us to meet life more courageously or deal with our situations more adequately, but rather to afford us an excuse for procrastination. We decide that it is useless to try to solve our immediate problems until these academic issues are settled, and since they never can be settled, we feel we can put off the practical concerns of life indefinitely. You may be fairly sure that you are evading some immediate challenge of experience when you find yourself intensely preoccupied with the theoretical in your thinking. Most of us know very well, when we embark upon such fruitless discussions with ourselves or with others, that whatever the final answers to our questions may be, we can change only that minute sphere of life which lies within our immediate jurisdiction. We also know well enough that the things we dislike or dread in our environment will not yield to our enmity or resentment. We must either develop or discover in ourselves a quality of humility to help us to accept the inevitable gracefully, or the stream of life, pressing on, leaves us in a backwater to stagnate.

There is a way of emancipation from the sense of futility and hopelessness that assails us when we have for long battered against the prison walls of circumstance or limitation.

It is found as soon as we become willing to see at work in our own lives the same beneficent power that constrains all other creatures to forsake the comfort of security for the adventure of ‘ becoming.’ The beginning of such a new attitude is to look for the meaning of life in every encounter we have with it. As we see more meaning in life its disciplines and lessons disclose their pattern ; it becomes apparent to us that our experiences are designed for our instruction, and as we profit by them, our strength is renewed and our environment changes into more fitting and tractable designs. Too often our greatest desire is to be what the Americans call ‘ fixed up.’ We bend all our energies to the task of fitting ourselves into grooves, not realising until we have done so that, as somebody put it, ‘ The only difference between a groove and a grave is depth.’ Our environment is constantly in a state of flux. Life ceases to be life as soon as it becomes static. Thus, every ‘ fixing-up ’ process we undertake is but the prelude to another that we did not foresee when we planned our first refuge. If we become willing to understand life and live with it on its own terms, we shall rejoice in change, hazard, adventure and uncertainty, because we shall know that the tapestry of life is woven of such strands. We shall fear security as we now fear danger. We shall resent passivity as we now resent the incentives with which our environment spurs us on.

To withhold our consent to the terms on which we may live does not make our environment more friendly. To demand safety does not relieve us of the responsibility we desire to evade. The will of life towards us is goodwill, but it is inexorable. It pays no homage to our cowardice, nor yet relieves us because we are lazy. Only when we leave the ‘ dug-out ’ of antagonism for the ‘ no-man’s-land ’ of co-operation with our environment do we discover where true vitality is. Such a change of disposition from antagonism towards life to willingness to co-operate with it is a necessary condition of mental health. Some may question its value, for it is not easy at first to grasp the idea that ‘ our way of looking at things ’ has any power to change them; but so far from this being a small matter, it is of the utmost importance. Just as the most delicate adjustment to the hairspring of a watch can make a vast difference to the rate at which the hands revolve, so a change of mind touches the springs of our being, and may often be significant enough to change the whole effect of a situation upon us, although to outward appearance our circumstances remain the same. I can well imagine that some of my readers may regard this statement with scepticism, for it is one that cannot be proved theoretically. It must be put to the test of personal experience. Only by doing so can we satisfy ourselves of the truth in our own lives. For myself I can only say that repeated tests have convinced me that here is no accident or coincidence, but the working of a law of cause and effect which, though we may not understand it, we can obey and demonstrate by its results.

Within recent years much thought and experiment have been devoted to the task of elucidating the laws of evolutionary processes in the higher organisms. It has been postulated that in the evolutionary development of life there is a 'discoverable trend.' That is to say, growth is not blind, but inherently right in its direction. Each stage of progress has for its result the attainment of fuller consciousness. Biologists like G. Elliot Smith have established that the human stock is not derived from a creature of fierceness and cunning, but from one characterised by sensitiveness, awareness, sympathy and affection. In Professor Henderson's book, *The Fitness of the Environment*, some original contributions are made to our thought on this subject. He says:

> Somehow beneath adaptations, peculiar and unsuspected relationships exist between the properties of matter and the phenomena of life . . the process of cosmic evolution is indissolubly linked with the fundamental characteristics of the organism.[1]

And again:

> It cannot be that the nature of this relationship is like organic adaptations mechanically conditioned. For relationships are mechanically conditioned in a significant manner only when there is opportunity for modification through interaction.[2]

He therefore suggests that " the properties of matter and the process of evolution cannot be due to mere contingency," but that looking beyond the hitherto expected capacities of the cell there is evidence of a suitability and balance, and a delicate inter-relatedness between the environment and the life involved in it.

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[1] *The Fitness of the Environment*, p. 278.

[2] *The Order of Nature*, L. J. Henderson, p. 211.

Thus it appears that there is to be discerned in the whole of inorganic nature a formative, directive tendency such as we feel to be at work within ourselves. As the creature is adapted to the environment, so also is the environment actively at work adapting the creature for the fulfilment of a definite end or purpose, which, though we cannot see it, is wholly good. Thus we live and work in the world not like waifs and strays, nor like aliens in an unfamiliar and hostile country, but rather as members of a family in a house prepared for our habitation. We are not straws blown in the winds of the ruthless fates. There is a meaning in us and a value greater than we can discern. We are part of a mighty enterprise. The world has been prepared for our coming, as truly as we have been made to live and progress in it.

Since this is so, there is nothing surprising in the suggestion that our way of thinking may often have the effect of changing the course of events. Indeed, it may well be that that is precisely what our power of thought is designed to enable us to do.

We are too prone to believe that life has us at its mercy. May it not be, on the contrary, that we have life at our mercy—and by the quality of our mercy may be able to make some choice in the course our lives take and mitigate the intractabilities of our environment; so that our acceptance of a rôle of passivity is a surrender of the very weapon with which life has endowed us for the maintenance of our freedom?

At any rate, I think this suggestion is worthy of the reader's consideration. It is an interesting possibility, for once an experiment has been made to attest its truth, it saves us from all ruts—we avoid on the one hand the rut of the fatalist who feels that events must take their course because nothing can be done to alter them; and on the other hand it keeps us out of the rut of facile optimism, which achieves an easy security by pretending that there is nothing in life to contend against.

The truly balanced person is neither pessimistic nor superficially optimistic, for the innate power of response is preserved through being willingly sensitive to every environmental stimulus, but it maintains its integrity by interpreting every stimulus as an incentive to co-operation. Thus it has the quality of resilience. It is adaptable, and, being so, is not dismayed by the apparent hardness of circumstances, for it sees that hardness as the quality in life which tempers the native ore of human energy into the flexible steel of character.

# CHAPTER V

## THE MEANING OF MENTAL HEALTH

IN this brief study of psychology we think of the mysterious something called ‘ Life ’ as a form of energy, and we regard each human being as a kind of reservoir, in which this energy is constantly being replenished and through which it is expressed in activity. Now, in exactly the same way as electrical energy can be used either to light lamps, heat rooms, drive engines or freeze water, according to the manner in which it is employed, so the energy of our lives can be expressed in many different ways. We speak of the different ‘ outlets ’ of a personality as being physical, mental and spiritual, in order to distinguish different forms of self-expression ; but this classification is an arbitrary one, convenient, of course, yet prone to be misunderstood. Whatever form our behaviour may take in varying circumstances, the energy that directs it is always the same, just as the electrical energy is the same, no matter whether there happens to be a kettle or a vacuum-cleaner at the end of the wire we plug in and switch on.

Moreover, our various modes of self-expression are intertwined in multiple and intricate ways. Our bodies respond to our feelings. Our minds reflect the condition of our bodies. Our spiritual dispositions are always expressed both bodily and mentally. We cannot say of any of our behaviour, " This is spiritual but not mental," or " This is bodily and not mental or spiritual."

The more clearly we observe this essential relatedness of part to part in all our behaviour, the more alive we become to the significance and importance of the personality or ' self ' as a whole. This insight is important, for on it our mental health depends. Whilst it is necessary for us to think sometimes of the various ' sides ' of our nature separately, in order the better to understand them, our idea about ourselves will not be a clear one until we realise that the ' whole ' is more than the sum of its parts. The various aspects of our behaviour, bodily and mental, are to be explained only when we see them as so many manifestations of an inner unity, expressions of a fundamental ' energy of life,' which is the central, indivisible core of personality.

Professor Jung describes this essential spirit or energy as—

> a continuous instinct of life, a will-to-live, which tries to obtain the propagation of the whole race by the preservation of the individual. This effort to preserve the individual life is the main activity of the ' spirit ' or ' psyche,' and the realm to which the task is entrusted is a part of ourselves whose activity is hidden from our consciousness, and inaccessible to the scrutiny of our reasoning mind. It is called by psychologists 'The Non-conscious ' or 'The Unconscious,' to distinguish it from the part of our mind of which we are aware, called ' Consciousness.'

To quote Professor Jung again:

> It must be mentioned that just as the human body shows a common anatomy over and above all racial differences, so too does the Psyche possess a common substratum. I have called the latter ' the Collective Unconscious.'

By the structure of our bodies we know that we are connected with all other mammals in the animal kingdom. And these bodies retain vestigial parts that afford evidence of the evolutionary stages through which the race of man has passed. Indeed, in its earliest stages the life of each newly born child recapitulates the evolutionary history of mankind. Similarly, in our behaviour we reveal countless primitive mental traits that have persisted from the pre-logical times when man was just emerging into self-consciousness. According to Jung, these residual forces exert their power in the deeper levels of the human spirit to which he has given the name, 'the Collective Unconscious.' These forces can be observed objectively in the history of mankind as a whole, where their power to affect the behaviour of the race is clearly seen; and though less easy to trace there, these primeval forces are to be seen at work also in the individual life; for we tend to reproduce the mental history of the race in our growth to spiritual maturity, as we do in our physical progress.

If we compare a representative member of some primitive peoples with a person from a more sophisticated culture like our own, we at once notice great differences, not merely in behaviour, but in the mental activities upon which the individual relies for the direction of his behaviour and its control. The primitive relies upon his instincts and allows his conscious will to be dominated and controlled by their behests. His behaviour is governed by the uprush of energy from the undifferentiated, ‘ unconscious ’ depths of his mind. The more sophisticated person, not less subject than the savage to the pressure of instinctive urges within his soul, strives always to control or subdue them, for they are often at variance with his social and spiritual ideals.

Thus the mind of the primitive man is constantly being guided by impulses of whose meaning he is unconscious. He tends to be held fast in conservative ways, responding to circumstances, not in ways dictated by his own perception and discernment, but by his native instincts, which always constrain him to conform to the pattern laid down by the tribe and its conventions. In some cases primitive races have been known to show but little change in their habits of life and thought over periods of thousands of years. It follows that such people fear innovations, and see a menace to their security in everything new and strange. It is only as mankind grows in sensitiveness of spirit and sees the need to reach higher states of consciousness that he realises also a necessity to increase his power of adaptation towards fresh forms of culture, and encourages his capacity to assimilate new knowledge and new experience.

From the stage of culture in which we are more or less completely swayed by collective and instinctive ideas, to the stage in which we make our own decisions after consideration of the immediate problem or circumstance, is a very long journey for the individual or for the race. It is easy to realise that between the two ‘ termini ’ there are many stopping-places at which a halt may be made. Most of us are living mentally at some point on the journey. While we do not openly admit servility to our instinctive urges, we allow them to dictate much of our behaviour, and our feelings are weighed by them a great deal more than we like to believe. Watch a crowd fighting for places in a full train; notice how intelligent people will allow their ire to be aroused by the emotional persuasion of a political catch-phrase, and the power of instinct over civilised men and women needs no more demonstrating. On the other hand, we are sufficiently aware of the primitive nature of our instinctive urges to distrust them, if not to disown them; and in what we call our ‘ saner ’ moments we do our best to follow our reason or obey the higher command of our spiritual loyalties.

A disposition to rely upon the values dictated by instinctive needs dies hard, however. They afford a line of least resistance for self-expression; yet we have to make it our aim to replace instinctive values with individual ones, choosing our modes of expression not because they afford easy satisfaction, but because they help us to develop the whole being; for if we fail to do this we miss the 'land of promise,' which is true self-fulfilment. It is when we see this issue clearly as a call to be practical in all our dealings with life that we find the true goal of our being, and can then work patiently towards it; for then our very restlessness becomes an encouragement, a potent incentive to spur us on in the direction of increasing vitality.

The urge of our being is always towards an increasing capacity for wholeness, independence, self-direction. These qualities can be attained only as we accept personal responsibility for our behaviour, refusing to be swayed by the surging emotions that well up from the instinctive forces working in the dark recesses of the mind. But often, in our desire to feel that we are being independent, we confuse true self-control with mere self-will ; and then we imagine we are being self-possessed, when in fact we are merely giving rein to our own primitive natures. For example, we allow prejudice and conformity to tradition to dictate much of our behaviour. Then, while claiming to be motivated by the highest standards of personal integrity, we are in fact being moved by primitive racial urges. Standards of conduct that have no warrant but tradition are for this reason bound to perish ; they are no more than the echoes of the voices of yesterday.

We all know the temptation there is at times to voice opinions which are but repetitions of our own old, threadbare thoughts, or the judgments of others, giving them an air of authority and originality, "as if we had just thought of them." How hollow such remarks sound as we make them ! We know their worthlessness even as they issue from our lips, yet we try to make them seem impressive. Again, because it is conventionally correct to do so, we will express joy or sorrow in given circumstances, not feeling joyous or sad, but trying to convey an impression that we do, because we think it is expected of us. All such partial expressions of ourselves arise because we lack self-understanding. We are not fully aware why we behave in such unsatisfactory and half-dishonest ways. Our motives are in the unconscious part of our minds—the primitive, undisciplined region of ourselves that instinct so largely rules. But as soon as we begin to see the wisdom of setting before us a goal of freedom and conscious self-government, then we are at least on the way to an important point of vantage from which there is the promise of a truer and more wholesome mode of self-expression, based on clearer self-understanding. To feel within ourselves this increasing sensitiveness, this unfolding of the spirit to richer and fuller consciousness is, indeed, a greater reward for our efforts to live than any sort of achievement or success; for every stage of the process of self-awakening reveals to us new opportunities for self-expression, leads us to new heights of vision and gives us new encouragement to say to ourselves, " Awake, thou that sleepest." Sleep and torpidity belong to the primeval, unconscious side of our minds. Waking up is the effort of consciousness. Between these two there is in each one of us unceasing struggle. The strife between the tendency to remain unchanged and the desire to renovate our ideas, as we become alive to new points of view, is a perpetual one. Indeed, our whole education is but an attempt to make effective compromise between these two opposed mental tendencies.

When we encourage the 'waking-up' process of the mind, we become alert to the old truths in a new way, and discern fresh aspects of familiar things. The power to do this is one of the fortunate progressive factors in our personality, for it gives fresh impetus to our efforts, enabling us to arrive at new points of view and relate them to the general store of our everyday knowledge. If we do not attempt to assimilate new material of thought in this way, our experiences cannot add anything to our lives. New ideas gradually lose their freshness and worth in our eyes, or else they are distorted to fit in with our prejudices and stock conceptions, so that we end up eventually at what William James describes as, " Old-fogeyism—the inevitable terminus to which life sweeps us on." Needless to say, there are many old fogeys who are still young in years, for the condition is one of mental, rather than physical senility.

Between the conscious and unconscious forces of the mind there is, normally, a constant interplay of activities. The unconscious mind is the great storehouse of the memories that constitute our mental 'capital,' and of reserve energy. The conscious mind is that small fraction of the whole which we use voluntarily and which we can, to a certain extent, explore or put to the test. A simile often used to illustrate the relationship of the two parts of the mind is that of an iceberg. As most people know, when an iceberg is floating on the sea, one tenth of its volume is visible above the surface. The other nine-tenths are submerged. Knowing this, navigators like to give icebergs a wide berth, for there is no telling to what extent the hidden part spreads below the surface, a menace the more fearful because it is unseen. But there is another reason why sailors fear icebergs.

They lie so deep in the water that they move in response to submarine currents. The observer cannot calculate the movements of the berg from the winds and surface reckonings and pressures affecting his ship. He must be on the look out for unexpected, wayward movements of an unpredictable kind.

It is just so with the mind. It includes not only consciousness—which to an extent we understand and can control—but also the great deeps of the unconscious, acting often in obedience to instinctive forces and motives whose currents cross and intercept the movements of consciousness, often determining the course of our lives in ways that are both unexpected and disturbing.

Rather late in the process of evolution, man developed a side of his nature that affects his behaviour unconsciously when circumstances led to the formation of what we call ' habits.' When any living organism is called upon to respond in a particular way to a particular stimulus repeated time after time, it develops a special facility for continuing that mode of behaviour almost automatically. Thus, when we first learned to walk, we had literally to ' watch our step,' laboriously practising each movement and noting each failure, until by constant practice we acquired so much skill that the whole complicated series of muscular co-ordinations involved in the act could be performed without any trouble at all. It seems that as any mode of behaviour becomes well established, the mental activity controlling it becomes less and less conscious, until at length the whole responsibility for managing that part of our behaviour can safely be left to the unconscious mind. As we grow up and our experience of life broadens, more and more of our necessary and regular activities are handed over to the unconscious—the ‘ ready-made ’ department of the mind—so that consciousness is free to deal with immediate tasks and problems.

The realm of consciousness is not sharply divided from the unconscious mind as by a wall ; consciousness merges into unconsciousness, and between the two is a sort of ‘ no-man’s land ’ ; an inner courtyard of mind known to psychologists as the ‘ subconscious.’ It is always at work, but its work is fulfilled with such ease that it gives an impression of play more than of labour. Most of us know something of the activity of the subconscious mind through its power to give us back memories as we require them, or by its curious knack of handing out to us spontaneously items of information that we think we have completely forgotten because we cannot recollect them when we want them, yet find them ‘ on the tip of our tongue ’ after we have given up hope of bringing them to mind. You may have searched your conscious mind vainly for a well-known telephone number, only to find that it ‘ bobs up ’ unbidden ten minutes after you have given up seeking it ; or, being in some perplexity, you may have decided to ‘ sleep on it,’ only to discover when you wake that your dilemma has solved itself while you rested—for the answer to your problem enters your mind as you open your eyes in the morning. These two are instances of subconscious mental activity.

Thus the subconscious mind plays an important part in the management of our lives, helping us to conserve our mental energies, and undertaking in obscurity a lot of work that helps to co-ordinate our thinking while our conscious efforts are preoccupied with present activities. People who live harmoniously are able to make effective use of their subconscious minds. They have learned to trust this quiet, unobtrusive ‘ partner,’ and so they deliberately hand over to it many matters that less well-balanced folk fret and strain over. Thus in a state of mental health the ‘ working costs ’ of a trained, orderly mind are on an economical basis, because there is a close partnership between the conscious and subconscious minds, and friction is at a minimum.

Some of us confess to a vague feeling of dread when reference is made to the ‘ unconscious mind ’ ! Its mysteriousness disturbs us. We feel we know little about it and are reluctant to learn more. This attitude is not a healthy one. Ignorance is always a tie that binds us. The unconscious mind is a good servant but a bad master. So long as we refuse to understand its way of working, we allow ourselves to remain at the mercy of all its vagaries. It does not cease to function because we refuse to acknowledge its reality. The way of wisdom is to accept the fact that the unconscious mind is an essential part of our whole personality, and by learning what we can about how it works, become capable of controlling it and conserving its vast energies for life’s constructive purposes.

The psychic deeps are a part of Nature, and Nature is creative life ; thus through the unconscious mind and its energies we are bound by unseen links both to the barbaric and the sublime. Creative life cannot remain inert or passive. Every year in our gardens we see Nature tearing down the growth she has herself built up, in order to prepare for the unfolding of new life with infinite potentiality for variety of form and complexity of structure. So also in the sphere of our own spirits we are ever reaching out to something beyond ourselves, and the something beyond again for ever lures us. Thus the primeval life-energy expresses itself in us as in all created things, through interest and unresisting urge to explore the unknown.

How to apply, express and use this interest is the constant concern of the unconscious mind. Just as water always finds its own level, so our life-interest is like a spring, forever welling up within us and seeking its way out through consciousness. It may run freely as a clear stream, or it may be hindered in its flow so that here it becomes a raging torrent, there a stagnant pool ; but it cannot be put out of action.

# CHAPTER VI

## HOW WE LOOK AT LIFE

WE reminded ourselves in the first chapter of this book that there are four basic ways in which we may give expression to our vitality in our relations with the world at large. (1) Feeling, (2) Thinking, (3) Sensation and (4) Intuition are the four gates through which any of us may enter the city of life.

Not one of us uses all these modes of self-expression equally. On the contrary, most of us have one favourite way that we tend to employ habitually to the suppression or exclusion of the others. In other words, with all of us there is a side of our nature that we understand fairly well and express with a certain amount of ease and consistency; there is also another, less known, side of which we understand relatively little. Thus a fairly clear distinction can be made between different ' types ' of people, according to the mode of mental activity they habitually favour. For instance, those who rely principally upon their reasoning powers in their dealings with life are generally distrustful of their feelings or emotions. They like to see everything in terms of ‘ two plus two equals four,’ and if they encounter experiences that cannot readily be resolved into logical patterns, they feel somewhat at a loss. They fear emotion, and express it as little as they can, although at heart they are often intensely warm and sensitive. Such people often get a wholly undeserved reputation for being ‘ cold and calculating.’ Usually they like to think of themselves as persons self-possessed; not easily taken in; not given to foolish fancies and extravagances of thought. But more often than not, their restraint is like a dam with which they try to hold up the surging torrents of strong feelings that they dare not release because they fear to be overwhelmed by their strength.

At the opposite pole from these people of the ‘ thinking ’ type are those whose disposition is to test situations and things by ‘ feeling.’ To these people, emotions and sensations are life’s twin guiding lights. They are as reluctant to follow the dictates of reasoning as others are to be weighed by feeling. In the presence of situations requiring calm thought and deliberate judgment they feel themselves to be at a disadvantage.

They rarely rely upon their own reasoning powers, and so do not train their capacity to arrive at true conclusions where facts must be weighed and measured dispassionately. In general they are timid and uncertain of themselves when required to associate with thinkers or engage in activities requiring precision of mind. Consequently they try to avoid such situations, and may quickly become restless and unhappy if they cannot do so.

Of course, no one of us is exclusively of either the ‘ thinking ’ or the ‘ feeling ’ type. We can capture an impression of what it is like to be either sort of person by watching ourselves in different moods. Thus, when we feel very elated or pleased about anything, we know how difficult we find it to settle down to a task requiring concentration of thought. On the other hand, when we are immersed in mental activity, it is not easy to ‘ snap out of it ’ suddenly into a ‘ feeling ’ or ‘ emotional ’ state. Our tendency is to alternate our moods between the poles of ‘ reason ’ and ‘ feeling,’ but we are like the wooden balls used in the game of bowls; each of us has a bias, and expresses himself most readily, spontaneously and habitually either in the one way or the other.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Jung, because he has not only pointed out the presence of this ‘ bias ’ or ‘ one-way traffic ’ in the make-up of our minds, but has stressed the importance of recognising it as a failing. We are not more, but less happy and effective men and women because we exalt thinking and disparage feeling, or conversely, rely upon feeling and refuse to use our powers of thought. It is both possible and desirable for us to bring both modes of self-expression into full activity. We have to be encouraged to use every form of activity that is possible for us, for only as we do so can we become free of the inward restraints and conflicts that hinder us. The person who feels himself under a necessity always to stand guard over his ‘ feelings ’ uses up a great deal of nervous energy in the unceasing effort to keep the ‘ dam ’ closed against his emotions. The person who lives on his feelings exhausts himself by over-enthusiasms and unrestrained activities. Both types need self-understanding through which they may learn how to manage their behaviour without restriction or strain.

It is good for us sometimes to reflect upon the activity of our own thoughts and feelings, for by doing so we can exert some influence over them, and by self-help increase the extent of our personal harmony. Let us, then, consider rather more fully some of the characteristic ways of behaviour of the two kinds of people I have just described. Those who rely principally upon the ‘ thinking ’ and ‘ intuitive ’ activities of their minds we may for convenience term ‘ inward-turning ’ people. The others, who depend more upon their sensing and feeling faculties, we may call the ‘ outward-turning ’ ; for the tendency of the first group is to find life’s satisfactions within themselves, while the others rely more upon the world around for their interests and enjoyments.

Outward-turning people, then, are those who make decisions and take action chiefly through their relation to objective facts and situations, as they are in themselves, rather than as the feelings of the individual interpret them. When this way of taking life is the customary, habitual one, it colours all our behaviour. Our attention and interest are centred in events, chiefly events in the near environment.

Some people find it quite easy to become familiar with what is going on around them; they also accept conditions as they are, and fit into them contentedly. These folk do not attempt to plan much, or make innovations, for as a rule they are sanguine about their ability to meet situations as they arise. They do not get worked up much about what is going to happen to-morrow or in the distant future. They give hearty assent to the idea of 'taking no thought for the morrow,' because it never occurs to them that they will have any difficulty in dealing with to-morrow's problems when they arise. It is natural for such people to be sociable, fond of entertainment, happy in the company of others. By trusting their feelings as they arise, they seem to open the way for instinct to guide their behaviour; consequently they are often led to think and act with a degree of common sense that seems out of proportion to the amount of thought they give to the matters about which they must make decisions.

Our various physical senses are like so many gateways through which the outer world enters our minds to be known and appreciated, and through which also we give expression in the world to our own thoughts and feelings. Naturally, the ‘ outward-turning ’ people use these gateways a great deal. They enjoy their sensations. They are happiest when they are expressing themselves in physical activity. Fresh experiences and variety are the spice of life to them. Consequently their relations with the world around are usually very good, and these people are liked for their cheerful demeanour and easy companionability.

The great disadvantage from which folk of the ‘ outward-turning ’ type suffer is, as I have said, their tendency to measure the worth of everything by its power to evoke their pleasurable feelings. They are happy when their various appetites are being gratified and their emotions ‘ worked up ’ in one way or another by their experiences. Indeed, the ‘ feeling ’ side of these people is given so much rein, and is accounted by them so important, that they tend to give it a value altogether disproportionate to its worth.

Thus, when their feelings are aroused spontaneously and suddenly, these ‘outward-turning’ folk may regard themselves as ‘inspired,’ and may thus be led into all sorts of rashnesses and follies by their exuberant enthusiasms. On the spur of the moment they will say and do things that later they have cause to regret. Moreover, just because they have never discovered or learned to rely upon their own inward resources, people of this type quickly become bored, irritable, unsettled and fearful when circumstances do not provide the external interests and changes that they crave. They depend so much upon the external world, that they can only live with it contentedly so long as it ministers unstintingly to their desires. While they can take life according to their own measurements and specifications, they get along famously; but there is lack of balance in the personality because it has made itself too dependent upon outside interests. Thus it is liable to be upset when external interests are lacking, because too little time has been given to reflection; too little importance has been placed upon the real values of experience.

When for any reason we withdraw our interest from the external world and centre it upon our own inner states, or on abstract thoughts and values, our attitude may be termed an 'inward-turning' one. Most of us know what this tendency is, for we are all prone to turn inwards in self-examination at times; but there are some people whose habitual disposition it is to move in this direction. Their natural inclination is to prefer reflection to action, the abstract to the concrete. Such people use up their energy most easily and simply in thought. Their interest follows the attention they give to ideas, and they are most content when, in preoccupation with those ideas, they can find respite from the demands and responsibilities of the world around.

In contrast to the 'outward-turning' person, who easily effects changes to fresh conditions of life, the 'inward-turning' man or woman makes such adjustments only with diffidence and reluctance. He views every prospect of change with alarm and doubt, for he fears his own ability to adapt himself to new circumstances. People of this type are usually guarded and reserved; critical of everything, but especially of themselves. They have deep feelings, but they find great difficulty in expressing them, for they do not like to trust themselves to the world which will, they believe, be unlikely to understand them. Moreover, these people feel ill at ease in the company of those who do express feeling readily. In emotional situations they are at a loss, not knowing how to handle either the stress of strong feelings upwelling within themselves or the evidence of such feelings in others. The critical faculty of 'inward-turning' people is always in evidence. Even in the simplest circumstance they will be on guard lest they should do injustice to a situation by expressing themselves wrongly in relation to it. Thus, having greeted a friend with the remark, "I am glad to see you," an 'inward-turning' person will at once begin to reflect, "But is that true? Am I really glad to see this person. Partly I am; partly I am not. Is it honest to say I am glad, when I'm not sure whether I am or not?" and so on. The 'outward-turning' individual would not waste a moment upon reflections of this kind. He would say to himself, "This person is my sister, uncle, friend or whatnot; of course *I must* be glad to see him or her," and that would be the end of the matter.

People whose habit of thought is reflective always have a question-mark at the back of their minds. They take nothing for granted—not even themselves. Consequently they hesitate to accept traditional or standard values, either of things or people, and they do not readily engage with others in social enterprises. They are not caught by the dictates of public opinion or moved by the fashions or vogues of the moment. They try to be self-sufficing, and are happiest when they can be left alone to pursue their own meditations. In dress they tend to be unpractical; indeed, in all departments of life that require objective behaviour they show themselves ill equipped and impatient; for their world of interests is within themselves.

There are, of course, many contingences in which the 'inward-turning' person has the advantage over people of the opposite type. Let a situation arise where calm, deliberate judgment is required, or where conclusions must be based upon profound knowledge of principles or theories; and here the person of a reflective temperament comes into his own. You will not find him taking a header into deep waters without first being sure that he knows all about conflicting currents and changing tides. He does not commit himself to agreements in haste, or do anything else in a burst of enthusiasm, to repent at leisure. Moreover, because he gathers knowledge as the raw material of his thought and reflection, the intuitions of this type, when he permits himself to follow them, are usually more reliable than those of the 'outward-turning' person. The meditative will be reluctant to call any thought an 'inspiration'; but when he is inspired, there is a depth and quality about his ministry of thought, which give it a value and a permanence that mankind is quick to recognise. Thus it is that from the ranks of inward-turning people the world has found most of its prophets, seers and discoverers. Again, the reflective type of mind, whilst it may lack the delights of social activity, is saved also from the obligations and pains attending it. The thinker can bear to be alone. He can find ways and means of maintaining his interests when the external world offers him no solace in entertainment.

As I have already suggested, there are many variations between these two markedly different attitudes, the inward-turning and the outward-turning. No one of us is entirely bound within the confines of the one or the other. To use the language of the horticultural catalogue, we are all ' hybrids ' ; we do not belong to any pure cultural category. The important thing necessary for us, as individuals, is to be able to distinguish within ourselves the two distinct sides that our personality includes, and to observe which of them we encourage. We shall benefit signally by trying to forsake sometimes the mode of behaviour that has become habitual, and trying to cultivate the one we tend to suppress or distrust. The inward-turning type must try to use the gateway of the senses more, taking in and giving out more readily the impressions of the external world ; while the outward-turning need to curtail enthusiasm for external objects and activities and give more time for reflection and thought.

By doing this, we shall not only deepen our understanding of ourselves and widen our experience of life, but we shall become better able to enter with sympathy and appreciation into the experience of those whose type is the opposite of our own.

# CHAPTER VII

## OUR BIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

DURING the warmer months of the year one may obtain from almost any stagnant pool specimens of a tiny creature called ' amœba ' : a pin-point of unceasing activity which is the simplest form of living organism known to man. In its largest species, named by scientists Amœba Proteus,' this amazing little animal is just visible to the naked eye ; but the microscope makes it possible to observe all its structure and behaviour minutely, and to-day its life-history is better known than that of many creatures of a larger and more complex design.

Take a drop of water containing an amœba and put it on a microscope slide, then look through the instrument. You will see what at first appears to be a mere blot of dirty jelly. Its shape is irregular, like a splash of rain upon a dry pavement. It is almost colourless, but here and there you can discern tiny black dots like specks of grime floating ; and at intervals you notice that a minute bubble seems to rise to the surface of the jelly and burst, while somewhere near the middle of the mass is a black speck somewhat larger than the others.

At the first glance you find it difficult to believe that an object so formless and indeterminate can be alive ; but watch, and soon you will notice that the shape of the ' splash ' is gradually changing. Here and there the outline elongates itself into a promontory, stretching out from the mass like a pointing finger ; then the mass of jelly, rolling over and over, seems to draw itself up to the end of the promontory, so that the creature has moved forward, rather as a caterpillar or worm moves by stretching out its front part and drawing the rest of itself after.

If a tiny grain of some organic matter floats near to the amœba, then you will see two or more protrusions from its periphery gradually extend outwards and around until the speck of food—for it is food to the amœba—is first enclosed and then engulfed, as the creature, like a drop of animated liquid, trickles over the organic substance, which it digests and absorbs.

Continue to follow the progress of the tiny creature as it makes its irregular progress about the drop of water that is its world, and there will come a time when you notice that it is becoming in shape like a dumb-bell, rounded at the ends and narrow in the waist like a Victorian matron. Now you will see that what was once the ' large black speck ' at the centre of the creature has become two, one situated in each rounded part. Very soon you will realise that the ' waist ' is getting narrower and narrower, until finally the two rounded portions break completely apart, and where there was one amœba, now there are two, each of which will go its own way, feeding, breathing—the breaking bubble of which I spoke is the creature's respiration—growing, and eventually dividing to form two complete new individuals.

The jelly-like substance of which the amœba is composed is living protoplasm—the mysterious substance of which all life is made. The large black spot at its centre is its ' nucleus '—primitive brain, nerve, the co-ordinating, vitalising centre of the whole organism. Because of it the organisation of the creature's life is complete and perfect, whilst its perpetual activity leaves us with a feeling of astonishment; indeed, so fully are these tiny animals endowed with energy that they display more vital resistance than some of the most vigorous animals. The fundamental truth that every living thing clings to life and strives for it, is well illustrated by the amœba. Their activity is ceaseless.

The amœba is a characteristic form of life in its most primitive manifestation: a single cell which contains within itself all the means for the continuation of its existence by moving, feeding, breathing, restoring its energy and repairing its structure. All living organisms, including the most complex, like ourselves, consist essentially of vast communities of cells which, in their structure, closely resemble the amœba. The most striking difference is that while, in the simple organism, all the essential functions are performed by one cell, a change occurs when life evolves into more complicated forms. A division of labour is then called for, and seems to be arranged by mutual consent. Some cells devote themselves exclusively to the work of digestion, others become organised for respiration, others for movement, and so on; whilst the co-ordination of all activities is undertaken by yet other cells which develop in a special way, establishing communications with all the parts of a complex whole, governing all its behaviour from a ' central headquarters ' that we call a ' brain.'

We may presume that in the earliest stages of the development of living organisms upon the earth all cells were of the simplest type, and that changes came about by slow stages so that while at first all cells retained common characteristics, some showed special qualities that were new—developing special ' aptitudes ' as special circumstances required. As time went on, no doubt these ' special tendency ' cells would once more undergo changes, evolving new capacities and creating fresh means of organisation until the present great diversity was reached.

In this development of living forms from uniformity and simplicity to ever-increasing variety and complexity of shape, function and organisation, we can see that, besides the natural law governing development, there has been in the creature always a kind of innate ' trustfulness ' through which it has been constrained to exert itself to change into unknown and higher forms.

Just as the zest of life within the creature urges it to move, and stretch out, towards the unknown, first in the search for food, then in the adventure of discovering a fuller and completer kind of experience, so also there is in the environment of the creature something that rewards it with richer life when it does so. Imbued by some unknown power akin to faith, the tiny amœba stretches itself, moves out into the deep waters, probes the dark recesses of the unknown pool in its unceasing search for life and sustenance. Out of its adventurousness is slowly developed an increasing capacity to cope with the various contingencies it meets, an increasing versatility, increasing sensitiveness and complexity of organisation. At length there emerges a more capable sort of creature composed of many cells co-ordinated for the performance of various activities. This creature also has the urge to adventure 'in the bones,' so to speak; as well as that trustfulness which sends it forth to explore the uncharted seas of life, a proceeding which always ensures due reward. Thus the process continues, until a man with his eye at a microscope can compare, with the amazing variety and complexity of his own living experience, the simple, groping faith of the amœba, and realise that he has become what he is because this minute blot of living jelly has within itself the same kind of ' substance of things hoped for ' that he calls ' faith.'

Notice, however, that the consummation is possible not only because the primitive creature has within itself the restlessness of an unceasing urge ' to become,' but also because there is in the environment of the creature that which justifies its ' faith.' The creature is not mistaken when it launches out into the deep in search of fuller life. Its seeking is rewarded by finding, its ' dissatisfaction ' is answered by a fulfilment beyond all imaginings. It is wonderful for a man to be able to see an amœba—but if an amœba could see a man, and realise that he is the meaning of its restlessness, would not the tiny living thing acknowledge that its trustfulness in its environment was ' justified ' ? Just as life becomes adapted to its environment, so in some mysterious way the environment is suited to life. The creature responds to the lure of the unknown—but the unknown responds to the faith of the creature, and out of its trustfulness weaves the tapestry of evolution.

The innate trustfulness of living creatures which incites them to live adventurously, and so evolve into ever newer and higher forms, is a quality which does not act according to any known laws. It transcends law! In it is to be discovered the beginning of what we call 'mental life.' During all the long ages of physical evolution a corresponding psychic one has also come about. Our minds are subject to laws just as surely as are our bodies. We can investigate these laws, and to some extent make use of them for the direction and modification of our behaviour. Certainly these laws of the mind are not so well known as those governing our physical lives, and it will be good for us to understand them better. Nevertheless, if we are to know ourselves really well, a knowledge of mental laws will not be sufficient for our purpose. The meaning of what goes on within us will become clear to us only when we turn our attention to the essential nature of our being, in which law is transcended by 'faith,' as it is also in the amœba.

As the simple organisation of the unicellular creature is altogether controlled by a mysterious source of vital energy by which all its changes are governed and co-ordinated, so the infinitely complex structure of our own being is organised. The multitude of changes that are constantly taking place in the recesses of our own cellular structure are all designed to conserve and promote our ‘ wholeness,’ and to increase the resources of energy available for our use in the mighty adventure of ‘ becoming.’ The strongest inherent tendency of our nature is towards life and health. The whole of the vast and complicated machinery of the myriad cells composing our organism is created and adapted for the one purpose of yielding up energy to enable us and encourage us to seek ever more complete and satisfying experiences of life by adventuring upon it with zest, in faith.

This vital energy expresses itself mentally through the instincts, emotions, habits and desires we feel. It is these that govern the thought of the present moment, the feeling of an hour hence and the moods of to-morrow. These determine our choice of friends, our failures and successes and our general physical and mental well-being. This is true, not only of us, but of all our acquaintances and of all other men and women everywhere.

Beneath all our differences, great as they may be, there is this fundamental similarity. However diverse our modes of behaviour, they have behind them, as their incentive, the restless, thrusting, questing urge of our inherent vitality: an inward desire to probe, explore, discover the unknown tracts of life in order to become more complete in self-expression and adaptation to the environment in which we move. It is very wholesome for us to realise this. We are too prone to think of ourselves as different from the rest; too well content to feel that we live in a world of our own, and too eager to try to protect ourselves because we feel we are incapable of bearing the difficulties and hardships others have to face. It is a desirable thing for us to realise clearly that our likeness to our fellows is much greater than any difference we may discern; that they feel as we feel and desire as we desire, need as we need, suffer as we suffer when all does not go well. When we make comparisons of our own lot with that of other people, we shall be wise to bear this in mind; for if we do so we shall be less inclined to resent the disciplines that all alike must bear.

The point I would like to make clear is that we shall come to understand the essential conditions of mental, as of physical, wholeness only when we realise that our nature is not created for passivity. Vitality is the reward of adventure. Our being is permeated through and through with an insistent dissatisfaction, an unresting unrest. Fundamentally, all our nervous disorders are due to the pressure upon our souls of this Divine discontent, when, in our reluctance to satisfy it in the only way in which it can be satisfied —by an increasing willingness to meet and deal with its hazards and challenge—we try to exist on a policy of self-protection and 'safety first.'

Most people know enough about psychological conditions to realise that nervousness, and all the forms of illness it may take, are due to what is popularly called 'bottled-up' emotions. The word emotion means, strictly, 'motion going outwards.' Our emotion is the driving power or energy of our ideas, like the steam in the engine or the electric current which supplies the energy of a town. When our thoughts and ideas are harnessed to our fundamental willingness-to-live adventurously and fully, careless of self-protection, then the force of emotion is behind these ideas, augmenting them with power to 'get things done.' When we lack the will and the courage to adventure upon life, then our thoughts and ideas lack the vitality that transmutes them into action, and we are oppressed with a sense of futility.

There is an experience most of us must have had, of feeling very tired while knowing that we must not stop and rest because of the urgency or importance of the work we are doing. As we have continued working, after a time our sense of tiredness has disappeared and we have felt that an additional supply of energy has somehow been placed at our disposal. Similarly, the runner on the track feels that his breathing must stop, but as he keeps going he gets what is termed his 'second wind.' These two instances illustrate the fact that there are available to us all latent resources of energy which may be tapped when our disposition towards life is one of stretching out in the search for activity and adventure. The mechanism at work is akin to that which reinforces the strength and vitality of the amœba when it pursues its unceasing quest of life in the waters of a pool. Life answers its trustfulness with power. Thus life would also answer us if we would live with greater trust and simplicity, desiring from it not passivity but action, not safety but danger, not routine but adventure. If we were more attentive to the whispers of our intuition, we should perhaps more clearly discern that this is the insistent call which, being selfish, we do not always heed, yet when disobeyed prevents us from finding life.

# CHAPTER VIII

## OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In the foregoing chapter we have been considering some of the important things that happen to the living organism in the earliest stages of its development, noticing particularly how intense is the vitality of primitive creatures, how energetically they pursue the adventure of living. Such a study of conditions at life's beginnings is important, not only for its own sake, but because it helps us to see how the evolutionary process is at work in the sphere of mental as well as of physical life.

As we can well imagine, the amount of mental energy available in the earliest stages of our thought-life must be very small. Nevertheless it is sufficient for the time being and already the paths have been prepared along which this energy may pass and give rise to the physical activity by which it is expressed. Moreover, as we have seen, the use of mental energy strengthens the young creature and by degrees enables it to deal with stronger and more forceful impulses.

We use the word 'instinct' to describe

behaviour dictated by the innate necessities of a living organism. It is a form of mental activity that goes on in all living creatures, ensuring that they do what is necessary to maintain their lives, even while they are at a stage of development so primitive that they have no self-consciousness at all. Even in the highest stages of development all living creatures—including man—are governed in their behaviour by the pressure of instinctive energies, and the more clearly self-conscious a creature becomes, the more its expression of instinctive tendencies is accompanied by ' feeling ' or ' emotion '; but it is quite possible for instinctive reactions to take place without emotion; and the one instinct may evoke emotions of several different kinds. One could almost say that what we call an ' emotion ' represents the kind of reception our self-conscious mind gives to an instinctive urge when we become aware of it as an incentive to behave in a certain way.

I will try to make this point clearer by taking as an example the emotion we call ' Fear.' Let us see what it means and how it may affect us.

There is no living creature, however humble in structure or primitive in behaviour, that does not respond in some way to situations of danger. The tiny organism called 'amœba,' which we have previously described, will withdraw itself from extremes of heat and cold, and take measures for self-protection when deprived of the water in which it usually lives. But we have no reason to believe that the amœba feels afraid in these circumstances. So far as we can judge, it has no self-consciousness. Its behaviour is instinctive but unfelt—like the movements we may make during sleep to keep warm or comfortable.

We can say of all living creatures that in the presence of danger they tend instinctively towards flight or concealment; but when there is self-consciousness and the creature is aware of an impulse to do one of these things, it feels the prompting of instinct as an emotion—fear.

Fear, then, in man and the higher animals is related to the instinct of flight and of concealment. Sometimes the one, sometimes the other may be excited, or both may be aroused in quick succession so that there is alternation between them. For example, a small boy pilfering in an orchard, being surprised by someone in authority, may at first run to put more distance between himself and the pursuing farmer; but then, getting out of breath and uncertain of his ability to escape by flight, the boy may hide behind a tree while he looks around for other ways of escape. If the boy cannot make up his mind whether to run away or hide, he will probably stand trembling—'rooted to the spot,' as we say—because he cannot decide which to obey of two equally powerful instinctive urges.

Nervous, swift-footed animals like the deer and the hare give rein to their fear in flight. The crab and the scorpion conceal themselves from danger by burying themselves in the sand, where they remain still and silent until the menace has passed.

The instinct of flight may be aroused by other causes than the presence of danger. Birds take wing in anger as well as fear, or when impelled by the appetites of sex or hunger. An angry cat may run from a dog until it reaches the branch of a tree, where from its point of vantage it snarls and spits at its enemy. Puppies at play may be seen pretending to bite each other, and then all of a sudden one or other becomes frightened and runs squealing to a protector.

There is, evidently, no hard-and-fast rule or law constraining us always to behave in a certain way in response to an instinctive urge or the feeling it arouses. Each of us has some power to select what seems appropriate to the situation we encounter. Moreover, we may often be in profound uncertainty what course of action to adopt, because the one instinct may arouse impulses that conflict with each other.

Physiology teaches us that our bodily sensations, such as quickened heart-beat, trembling, starting at the eyes and dryness of mouth, which accompany intense emotions, are due to an alteration in the working-rate of various organs as a result of instinctive energy aroused. In order to increase our available strength, these organs have to work at high pressure during such times of crisis—hence the fatigue we usually feel after highly emotional experiences.

When a state of fear is prolonged beyond the period of stimulation, we begin to feel the exhaustion caused by the extra drain on our reserves of energy, and a period of depression sets in. Sometimes, however, even this is of service to an animal, for after a period of flight it may become exhausted and paralysed, and by its very stillness escape further danger.

In all animals, then, the awakening of the instinctive reaction to danger causes profound changes of behaviour, and at the same time produces physiological changes—in circulation, respiration, glandular secretion and muscular activity—all serving the same end of enabling the creature to preserve its life by fleeing or hiding from whatever may menace its security. In the higher animals, including man, there is an awareness of alternative ways of dealing with a dangerous situation, and this awareness is accompanied by ' emotions ' or ' feelings ' which, though all aroused by the same instinct, may vary according to the individual's interpretation of the situation.

Owing to his great intelligence and adaptability, man has acquired innumerable ways of satisfying all of his instinctive urges. Thus, within the ' fear system ' he has learned many methods of escape from circumstances that seem dangerous; he can invent disguises for his behaviour, adopt various devices for putting his enemies off their guard; he can repress feelings that he thinks will betray his weakness; he can adopt strategies of bullying and blustering in order to delude those whom he fears into thinking him stronger than themselves; by using his inventiveness he can ward off natural dangers that less well-endowed animals cannot withstand; and he can use the powers of his reason to examine situations which at first appear to be dangerous before he allows his instincts to govern his behaviour, and so exert a measure of personal control over his feelings, gradually making them his servants instead of his masters.

Thoughts of fear are very familiar to us. We know what they feel like, and to some extent we feel them ourselves even when we merely hear them spoken about by others. In us, as in the lower animals, the instinct of fear serves a useful purpose; it is designed to affect our behaviour in a way that will preserve our lives by protecting them from harm. Various emotions are aroused in us when this instinct comes into operation, but it is our business—a responsibility as well as a privilege—to see that there is a just proportion between the strength of our emotions and the real importance of the situation that arouses them. Unless we use our judgment in this way, our emotional forces will tend to assume an unsafe degree of independence, and they will work against our best interests. Just as a timid deer will run away as fast from one who approaches it with food in his hand as from another who stalks it with a gun, so we take flight from many of life's most valuable experiences, seeing danger where there is none, when we allow our first instinctive impulses and emotions to ride rough-shod over our higher powers of mind.

In the earlier stages of life, it would seem that we can do no other than act in blind obedience to our emotions. Later, we grow out of this necessity, and become aware of our capacity to choose courses of action for ourselves. Unfortunately the sense of freedom is not always accompanied by judgment, and for a time we may feel ourselves to be at the mercy of unregulated impulses. Frequently we attain a more comprehensive self-control only by passing through experiences that endanger us—learning in the hard school of experience ways of self-management that we will not allow others more wise to teach us either by example or precept.

As we grow older, the number of situations capable of arousing our emotions is greatly multiplied, so that adult man may be said to be the most emotional of animals. While this sensitiveness to feeling is a mark of culture, it is also a condition involving the possibility of regression. Man may use the energy derived from his instincts in order to evade life's greatest imperatives and noblest responsibilities.

Amongst animals the case is different, for fear is hardly ever observed except in the presence of danger that menaces the life of the creature or its offspring. Deprived of its fear instinct, any animal would stand little chance of survival.

Self-preservation is not the only law of life for man. For himself there are incentives to activity in love of power, property, reputation and pleasure. For his children he not only tries to provide nourishment and protection, but welfare and happiness also. Besides his children he loves his friends and his country. Just to the extent that any of these many interests is precious to a man, his old, deep-seated fear instincts are aroused when anything endangers his possession of them, and he is provoked to courses of activity designed for their protection. Thus there is formed in man an acquired system of behaviour-patterns in which the instinct of fear is the energising power, and caution is the predominant feeling. When the energy of the fear-instinct is aroused by situations that menace the securities upon which we customarily depend, our behaviour is marked by a 'shrinking away from,' or reluctance to face, the circumstances in question. But there is an element of danger and insecurity in almost every activity that can contribute to our personal growth and ultimate well-being; therefore, we are often confronted with what we call a 'conflict of emotions,' the outstanding feature of which is an inhibiting movement of the mind—a 'putting on the brake'—occurring simultaneously with a desire to 'accelerate' in the direction of whatever incites our adventurous or inquisitive tendencies.

For instance, an opportunity may come to us to give up a secure and comfortable job for one involving adventure and hazard but attended with a reward we covet. Fear says, 'Stop,' Desire says 'Go,' and the effect upon us is a feeling of inaction and indecision. Again, being at a public meeting, we may long to speak, perhaps in defence of a misunderstood friend, yet fear glues us to our seats, because we imagine the consequences to ourselves of taking the proposed action—our feeling of security in the good esteem of the crowd is in antagonism with our feeling of love towards our friend.

To explain this sort of indecision we must recall that, as already pointed out, all our primary emotions are connected with particular instincts or innate tendencies; and more than one emotion can be associated with the energy of a single instinct. In situations like those I have outlined above, there is a sense in which we desire the safety and comfort of sitting still, or refraining from speech; yet at the same time the same instinct of self-protection arouses in us another desire—perhaps a more compelling one—to forsake ease for adventure, because in our hearts we know there is a wider horizon in the courageous course.

When we observe ourselves in such moments of uncertainty it becomes clear to us that our fear is closely linked with our faith, for it is our forward-looking faith in life's future possibilities that incites us to encourage our more enterprising modes of behaviour and forsake the immediate securities that fear would persuade us to retain.

We know that fear is a destructive or inhibiting force in the mind, while faith is constructive and energising. As soon as we call upon the latter, we divert energy from the former. But the circumstances that evoke our fear are in the present, whilst the objects of our faith are in the future. We cannot wonder, therefore, if we feel that our stock of faith is small at any given moment. It may be likened to an interrupted current of electricity—you only realise that it was there when for some reason it is cut off. Faith must be kept in working order if we are to find its powers available at need. The best way of maintaining it 'at concert pitch' is to keep always before us a clear vision of the end and aim of our activities, and of our life as a whole. This has the effect of stoking the fires of our constructive energies and of augmenting the strength of our determination to attain.

It is well that here something be said about the rather complicated matter of 'desire,' because although the connection between faith and desire may not be quite apparent, it will frequently be found underlying it. By the exercise of creative imagination we build up in our minds mental pictures of the aims and ambitions we cherish, calling these pictures our 'desires.' These desires have the effect of increasing our energies and of sustaining us in effort for a while; but when there is much delay in attaining our ends, we begin to notice that our desire changes into something like uneasiness; it is a feeling of mental discomfort resulting from the fact that our minds have been charged with energy for which no outlet can be found.

In the process of reaching towards the fulfilment of our desires, noteworthy changes of mood occur, representing the proportions of pleasure and pain in our feelings, according to the encouragements or checks that we encounter as we pursue our objectives. When our chances of success seem good, we feel ‘ hope.’ When we are certain of accomplishment, we feel ‘ confidence.’ When our desires are held long in suspense, we may feel tormenting ‘ anxiety.’ ‘ Disappointment ’ comes when our expectations are postponed or not wholly fulfilled. ‘ Despair ’ assails us when we cease to hope, knowing that an attainment is impossible.

All these varying emotions arise from desire, and they depend for their persistence and strength upon the intensity of the desire they accompany. When we are merely ‘ filling in our time ’ with desultory activities, whether for a passing moment or as a mode of life, we do not feel these emotions. The feeling of ‘ hope ’ always carries with it an idea of the end or fulfilment for which we hope. Despondency is always linked with thoughts of something we feel we have failed to do or to secure. Despair is always joined with ideas about something we think we cannot attain; confidence is linked with certainty, anxiety with doubt.

Of course our simpler desires do not provoke fluctuations of emotion; they are to be accomplished so easily and with so little effort that there is neither time nor occasion for any emotions to be felt with intensity. If while out walking we feel tired or cold, we turn home to rest without undergoing severe emotional strain. While writing letters, perhaps, we remember an interesting book we want to read, and turn to our reading from our present occupation without anxiety or difficulty.

It is only when strongly held desires arouse equally strong currents of emotion that fluctuations of our moods accompany the changing situations we encounter, as we move towards or away from the fulfilment of our ends and ambitions. As I have remarked, these varying emotional states represent the ebb and flow of energy according to our interpretation of the situations in which we find ourselves for the time being.

Consider a person on duty in some distant country who looks forward to returning to England on leave some time in the near future, provided a suitable substitute can be found to carry on his work while he is on holiday. This person greatly desires his period of leave, and would particularly like to reach home at a special time, perhaps for the Christmas or the summer holiday. But he has a great deal of work to put in order before he can leave it to his substitute, and, further, there is some doubt whether this substitute can arrive in time to enable the holiday-maker to get away at the hour of his choice.

In such a position, the person due for a vacation will use the pleasure of the end in view—his home-going—to spur him on with his duties and sustain him during the ups and downs of hope and fear as sometimes he seems to be getting through the work, while at other times he fears he will not finish all he has to do. Very likely, during his periods of uncertainty, a person in such a position will begin to dread lest his colleague should fail to arrive or some other unforeseen accident occur to prevent the fulfilment of his desires. One thing is certain: so long as the desire for a holiday is present, our friend will not be free from emotion of some kind, pleasurable or painful according to circumstances at the moment.

Just such a series of emotions, running the whole gamut from pleasure to pain, may be experienced in regard to any personal aim or achievement, or anything we would like to be, whether we aim at adding some quality to our characters or eliminating some unpleasant trait from them. As all varieties and degrees of bodily pleasure and pain tend to arouse some appropriate emotion, so all efforts in the mental sphere do the same.

There are few satisfactions so great as those which come after a steady effort to let go of some lower wish in order to achieve something greater at the cost of self-denial. Those who have tried to discipline themselves in this way will know by experience how often hope and despair have alternated. The truth is that these two emotions are like halves of the same penny—each plays its part in the development of the personality, for both have the effect of directing the attention to the purpose or aim desired.

We are all too ready to assume that the various inward states or moods I have described are out of our personal control. This is not so. If we try to understand how these various feelings arise, sometimes pleasurable, sometimes painful, we can see clearly that they are examples of many more apparently conflicting states of mind that live together within us. It is rather as if we had inside our minds a personal attacking force and its opposing defence force, either of which can become powerful at our command. As we evoke the resources of faith, we pour strength into the powers that enable us to go forward to attack hostile circumstances and overcome them. As we allow fear to rule, so we strengthen the powers that would entrench us and inhibit our activities. When faith is in the ascendant, we acquire insight and quietness of mind. When fear dominates, the forces of destruction are unloosed.

Where faith is really lacking over a more prolonged period the mind is easily prone to a condition of fear and anxiety which dreads even the most commonplace daily happenings. People of the type who say " Now I'm sure the worst will happen," or " So-and-so always makes me angry and upset," are really giving an open invitation to their fear-instincts to take charge of every situation wherein they do not find everything pleasing. Very often, indeed, we try to justify our acceptance of our instinctive fears by blaming other people for them, whereas in fact we are to blame ourselves for not exercising better control of the forces within us out of which either fear or faith can come, according to the desires we cherish. If we reconsider the stages of thought by which we make excuses for ourselves, we shall find that our feelings of discouragement, or fear, or willingness to surrender to a situation, were not really provoked by the people we blame for them, but preceded their entry on to the scene of our activities. The ' person-who-provokes-us ' is used by us as a convenience : a pretext for our failure to try to manage ourselves.

We should all beware of this tendency to seek ' alibis ' when our behaviour is a regression to primitive or childish ways. Even if there are certain things and people we meet in life against whom we feel protest or rebellion, we should do our utmost not to retain this radical and unforgiving attitude, for unless we do so it will entail our acceptance of personal defeat all along the line. It increases our disposition to accept the dictates of fear rather than the intuitions of hope and faith as the directive factors of our living.

It is natural to prefer hope and faith as the directive factors of our lives. Our failure frequently appears to be in finding the method for making them so. We can neither expect to retain a faith which is not put to the test, nor to maintain it in a growing condition without taking the necessary pains to cultivate it. Just as in Nature good things do not grow without effort, so in the mental sphere it is only the ill-weeds that grow apace and choke so readily what we try to foster. Ill-weeds, such as grudges, resentments, pessimisms, vain speculations, can grow apace and choke our small growth of faith and hope; so we cannot afford to indulge any of these and must be alert to nip them in the bud. By doing this we find a real way to use our faith, and that is exactly what we require—for it needs exercise, a chance to see the daylight, as it were. It can only languish if we do not give it such opportunities intelligently.

We may find the beginnings of hope and faith wherever in our being we feel the gentle stirring of new aspirations and incentives, however small the whisper of their voices may be when first they are heard. To listen to those 'movings' within ourselves quickens our hope into life by reminding us of new adventures and discoveries that we may make as we learn to trust the best we have of spiritual capacity and grace. To try to see life's smallest opportunities and challenges in a spirit of welcome and interested eagerness is to loosen the shackles that hold us in bondage to instinct and fear. By experimental faith we change the cold heart of mechanical dread into the warm and living glow of an active satisfaction because we discover our capacity to help ourselves. Faith steadies life because it gives it direction.

# CHAPTER IX

## PHANTASY AND REALITY

THE word Phantasy describes a kind of thinking in which we all indulge sometimes. We call it day-dreaming. It is an activity of the mind, in which we play a game with ourselves of ' Let's pretend ' ; building castles in the air, or creating imaginary worlds more pleasant to live in than the real one.

There are occasions on which we become aware of these phantasies we are weaving, and we try to pull ourselves up. But there are many times when we are oblivious to them, and even if conscious mind tries to jerk us with the ' penny-for-your-thoughts ' style of prompting, we can find only a vague reply. Somewhere deep within there seems to exist a whispering-gallery of phantasy where even close attention fails in picking up the sounds.

As we shall see, this kind of thinking has its value for our lives, and so long as we are able to distinguish clearly between what is real in our thoughts and what is ' the stuff of dreams,' we derive benefit from the exercise of our imaginations. But sometimes people prefer their dreams to life's realities, and become unable to distinguish the one kind of thinking from the other. Then there is danger ahead.

Nowadays the fact is generally accepted that the experiences of infancy and early childhood are of great importance in determining both the behaviour and the character of any individual. Long before school days begin a child has already established many habitual tendencies and lines of conduct. Those interested in psychological research derive a great deal of information about the mind from their observations of the instinctive equipment and emotional trends of young children. Parents would be well advised to study these matters closely in their children. They would be immediately rewarded by a more active and intelligent interest in the behaviour of their little ones, and later on they would be better qualified to guide them in the various perplexities they encounter as they grow.

At first, the various simple acts performed by a newly born child appear to be mostly automatic; but on closer observation it is clear that almost from the beginning there is in the behaviour of a baby a marked tendency towards individuality. Indeed, to the attentive eye of a mother there are marked differences of behaviour between one child and another. She enjoys enumerating them and watching them recur and develop.

To a new-born infant, life is a continual succession of fresh experiences. They reach him in such swift profusion that his small mind cannot deal with them all. He accumulates a store of ideas and impressions that are linked together or associated in various ways according to the circumstances in which they are received. They acquire various meanings, and so together form the foundation of interpreted mental material by which individuality is formed and life is enriched.

We often discuss separately the intellectual and emotional development when we try to describe the growth of the mind. This is only a matter of convenience, and we should do well to remember that these two kinds of mental activity are as inseparable as the concavity and convexity of the same curve. Wherever possible it is desirable to consider the individual mind as a whole, thinking of each mental experience as having both an emotional and an intellectual aspect. The emotional effects of experience are, however, the more important in the young, both in relation to growth and health; indeed, this is probably true of all ages. When the mind is motivated by emotional considerations it usually works quickly and easily upon intellectual matters. But mental work is apt to be slow and laboured when for any reason the emotional incentive is lacking. By the time children reach the kindergarten stage this difference is exemplified again and again. The work to be done individually or in class is ' hard ' or ' easy ' for the child, according to the emotional disposition which is felt towards the task—a disposition that is usually governed by the child's relationship with parent or teacher.

The thinking of young children is naturally simple, self-centred and self-accredited. That is to say, children feel no need of social approval for their thinking or of external proofs of its accuracy, and so they seek none. We do not know a great deal about the manner of these early cogitations to which the mind of a young child devotes itself, but we do know that they must be of the nature of ‘ make-believe ’ or play. Thoughts arise in the mind spontaneously and without effort. They are accepted as they occur, uncritically, and are believed in because they are there. The idea of disbelieving in his own thoughts arises in the child-mind at a comparatively advanced stage of development. For a long time he is content to accept his thoughts as they arise, taking them for granted.

Having a certain amount of thought-material at hand in his little store of memories and in the present experiences he enjoys through his various senses, and being able to link ideas together by ‘ association,’ a child is naturally preoccupied with his egocentric thinking. He has neither concern nor knowledge about what is ‘ true ’ or ‘ false.’ All is grist that comes to his mill. He is quite content, for the time being, with what he knows and the ‘ rightness ’ of it ; and he spends most of his time, as far as we can judge, in satisfying soliloquies about it.

This complete self-centredness is disturbed only later on, when, by coming into active contact with the external reality of people and things, a child is compelled to exercise some criticism about its own ideas, comparing them with the actuality of the objective world. Thus, in early schooldays a child suffers many little jars to its self-esteem and its sense of security, as through all sorts of experiences it discovers that its surroundings are in various ways intractable, and that everybody else does not think within the magic circle of self-appraising and self-approving ideas, as up to now, 'I' have always done. Many psychologists believe that the foundation of the 'feeling of inferiority' is laid in a child when its first encounters with the external realities compel it to exercise its critical faculty and doubt the validity of its own thinking. Certainly this stage of mental adaptation is critical for the young mind, and great care should be exercised in its training at this time so that it does not become afraid of itself or of the encounters that shatter its baby convictions.

Educationists and others used to assume that children were immature adults in mind as well as in stature, and their education was carried on accordingly. But through the initiative of Rousseau, Pestallozi and Froebel a change was made towards the end of the eighteenth century. The first opportunities for tuition in ‘ child-study ’ were then made available for teachers, and they began to divide the interest hitherto entirely given to ‘ subject-matter ’ between that and the mind of the child. Since then a vast amount of study has been devoted to what we now call ‘ child-psychology ’—and marked advance has been made, both in our understanding of early mental processes and in our manner of imparting knowledge. There is, for example, the child’s great power of living in the present, the readiness to engage in activity, be it work or play, just for its own sake, the suggestibility and readiness to co-operate with reasonable tutors. These are all fresh points of view.

Nevertheless, much remains to be accomplished both in improving our methods of child-training and in increasing our knowledge of the child mind. For example, we might wisely speculate upon what would happen if we responded differently to what we call the ‘ inattention ’ of a child. At present, seeing a child preoccupied with his own thoughts rather than with those we desire to impart, we issue a command to ‘ attend.’ But when we first notice a child in the throes of his efforts to harness a wandering attention to a given task, might we not learn a great deal, and help the child a great deal too, if we encouraged him to recognise and explain why his interest was there and not here; why this and not that had power to command his gaze?

The child's own repertoire of understanding can be drawn upon for such explanations. He knows how to play games, how to run his clockwork engine, handle his small carpet-sweeper or watch the lawn being mowed. Either he has already observed the fact about these activities, or he can understand it when it is pointed out, that sometimes they go smoothly and sometimes they do not. He knows that the game is enjoyable only when you follow the rules; he knows that his engine must be wound up before it will run. It would not be difficult to enable him to realise that in exactly the same way the game of learning has its rules; interest winds up the attention; and so on. A child could be shown that by means of our minds we learn lessons of all sorts, and he could be taught to understand and appreciate the rules that govern the smooth working of his own mind.

Some ways of going to work make lessons hard, other ways make them easy. New lessons at first seem hard to understand, and our inclination is to call them 'too hard,' suggesting to ourselves that we neglect them, believing they will be easier when we are bigger. But if we do that, we make a mistake, for many things that seem too hard in the first five minutes turn out to be easy after we have tried for a little while to understand them. The 'engine' must be wound up before it will run smoothly along the rails.

Such lessons about the working of the mind could be taught to any child. Once they are grasped they would be of immediate interest and practical service. They would become a permanent nucleus of a power of self-management and self-adjustment that would stand the learner in good stead for the whole of life.

Even in the case of those who are no longer children it would be salutary to learn such rules of mental control. Directed attention quickly and naturally becomes converted into spontaneous interest. There is a popular theory that children can memorise things much more easily than adults, and we like to excuse ourselves for forgetfulness by asserting that we do not remember as well as we used to do. This is not actually so. The real reason, if we would admit it, is that now that we are grown up, we do not apply ourselves to such tasks with the zest and hope of childhood. Were we willing to take the necessary time and trouble, we should succeed, and by so doing be able to convict ourselves of yet another of our many mental evasions: one that we maintain by holding on to a 'phantasy' and reverencing it as a fact.

You may be disposed to put the matter to the test by recalling the conversation of someone whom you regard as 'very old,' to whose narratives and reminiscences you sometimes listen. Think of the facility with which such a person will recall innumerable details and graphically accurate mental pictures of events long since passed. Then you will be convinced that the memory is not failing in its powers, but that interest is waning, when your ability to memorise is self-disparaged.

To return to our main theme. We have remarked upon the difficulty that every young child feels in adjusting himself to the facts and realities of life, when his first encounters with the external world compel him to institute comparisons between his private realm of ‘ make-believe,’ in which all thoughts are true and pleasurable, and the objective reality which is in so many ways intractable and apparently hostile.

It can well be imagined that there is in the mind a tendency to prefer the security of ego-centricity to the harsh demandingness of objectivity. The world of ‘ let’s pretend ’ is delectable because in it all things are controlled by the dreamer’s desire. He is there the King of the Castle ; and it may be a severe blow to the self-esteem of a child when it has to forsake the fancied security of that ‘ castle-in-the-air ’ for the harsh, blunt obstinacies of social life and self-expression. Thus it is not surprising that when things do not go according to plan, a child feels a disposition to retire from reality and return once more to the fairy world of self-occupation.

It is perhaps not well enough realised that when we are no longer children in stature, there are many situations which incite us to feel and act as children fleeing from the strains and challenges of reality to the warm security of self-centredness and illusion. The new adjustments we have to make at various stages of our progress through life all require effort and the acceptance of difficulties. The fears which assail us when we face trials and obstacles are the common lot of mankind. When we encounter them and try to meet them by shouldering the responsibilities they entail, we are sharing the general experience of the race.

But, often enough, we resent the effort such enterprises require, and we fear the affront to our self-esteem that our failures seem to convey. So our tendency is to revert upon occasion to childish modes of thinking and behaviour; seeking in some exercise of our imagination either an excuse for evading one of life's imperatives, or some encouragement to sustain our efforts despite our weakness and proneness to fail.

Educators who understand the part that 'phantasy' or imaginative thinking plays in the mental development of children are able to make use of it in constructive ways. It can be an incentive to effort or a deterrent.

A child whose imagination is vivid can be shown how to harness it so that it provides the driving power by which learning is done. On the other hand, a child who is 'over-practical' can be stimulated to exercise his imagination so that with its aid the mind is stimulated to enlarge its sphere of interests. I heard recently of a small boy being exercised in mental arithmetic, a subject at which he believes he is very good. The question is asked, "If you have eight apples and you give three to So-and-so, and two to somebody else, how many have you left?" The boy replies at once, very disconsolately, "But I haven't even one apple, so I can't give any away." From such a pupil the teacher may expect good results in mathematics, for his mind is accurate, but he needs to be stimulated in his imagination. In future the teacher will have to explain why he puts mental arithmetic problems as suppositions, or else express his questions in terms of fingers and toes, or some other actual possessions of his pupil, until he has quickened the child's power of imagery and make-believe.

Drawing is a useful form of phantasy-activity beginning at a very early age.

Young artists overlook the incongruities between their pictures and the things they represent because they draw on paper, not what they see, but what they believe. A child will cheerfully adorn a profile drawing of a face with two eyes and two ears because, " Well, Daddy has two eyes and two ears, Mummy ! " When children are fond of drawing or cutting out and pasting pictures in books, it is easy to follow the progress of their thought over a period of development, for it is reflected in their technique and choice of subject. It is good for children to save their sketches and collections of this kind, for they offer visible evidence of improvements made, and so can be used to show the pupil the advantage of perseverance through which the mind becomes increasingly accurate in its interpretations of reality.

Day-dreaming of one kind or another is common to us all ; as children, its most usual form is a dream of personal prowess, achievement and triumph, adorned with various trimmings in the shape of delights to be enjoyed in the ' good time coming ' when these conquests have been achieved. Such dreams are evidently in the nature of compensations for our present feelings of weakness or incapacity when our lessons seem too hard or our teachers too severe. In adults the same kind of compensations are afforded by similar dreams, more mature, of course, in their imagery, but equally unreal.

Up to a point such day-dreams are helpful; they mitigate the severity of our disappointments and help to relieve our fears; but if they become habitual to the extent that we prefer them to reality, fulfilling our desires in realms of magic where effort is superfluous, then these day-dreams hinder us. They become a substitute for activity instead of an incentive to it. Our minds have 'regressed' to an earlier stage of childish irresponsibility.

Children sometimes communicate their day-dreams and make-up stories to their parents or elders. Their mode of doing so makes it apparent, as a rule, that the gesture is one of confidence. It is well, therefore, to take the cue thus given and listen to their stories with due respect. Listeners should not be 'horrified' by childish exuberances of imagination, or give them the impression that their phantasies are 'such nonsense.'

When the tales narrated are especially incredible or fanciful, it is wise merely to express doubtful surprise without disapprobation, using the occasion to implant the seeds of more fruitful imaginative exercise.

As a rule both children and adults tell more readily their nocturnal dreams than their day-dreams; probably because the former present themselves in more vivid pictorial forms. In both types of dreams, as we have a good deal of evidence, the function is one of compensation. We have it on the authority of both Arctic and Everest explorers that during periods of privation their dreams were largely concerned with the enjoyments of foods denied them during the expeditions on which they were engaged. The sense of enjoyment of the delicious dainties of the dreams was vivid to those who experienced them, as they have openly acknowledged.

A direct example such as this convinces us that somewhere within us there must be a powerful mental activity which is constantly occupied in providing us with useful compensations for our inadequacies: giving us something to soften the hard knocks of life, offering us a measure of protection from its menaces, or luring us on to make preparation for renewed activities when the sun of our life once more shines in his strength.

Many of our habitual activities, besides our dreams, are of this nature. For example, we pay compliments, and the satisfaction we obtain by doing so is often due far more to the feeling of superiority we attain than by our delight in the achievement of him whom we praise. Desiring to be socially successful, we pose in certain ways approved by those among whom we would 'shine.' We offer words of comfort that are more truly described as 'diplomatic' than genuine. We tell people we are glad to see them because 'the situation demands it' rather than because our hearts prompt it. If we are asked to describe our careers, we are more likely to couch our explanations in the 'twopence-coloured' instead of the 'penny-plain' language of truth. Either for our own satisfaction or to impress others, we tend to emphasise the better side of our characters and minimise our failures. We can always find excuses for our own errors and faults. Even our more grievous sins may be found hiding their diminished heads under what we describe as 'slight slips' or 'errors of judgment.' We feel constrained to perform some good deed of charity or pity, but on later consideration, do we not often have to admit that our conduct was a means of seeking approval from others, an excuse for self-approbation, or perhaps a timid concession to convention?

These and many other habits belong to a class of mental activities described in the immortal words of Pooh Bah. They "lend an air of verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative." They are methods of compensation for what we feel to be our personal inferiorities and inadequacies. Perhaps we are so well accustomed to employing such means of maintaining our self-esteem that we hardly realise when we do so. It is as if we retained in the photographic studio of our minds a whole-time 'toucher up' whose duty it was to tone down the deficiencies and touch up the virtues of the portraits we make of ourselves before they are presented for our own or the world's inspection. But the same 'toucher up' can undertake another duty also. He can change the colour of events, alter the proportions and perspectives in which we see people and circumstances. Thus, according to the directions we give him, he will change the face of the world and make it for us more or less desirable to live in.

The question with which we began this book was, " Can Psychology Help ? " Here it seems appropriate to suggest at least one answer to that question. If our closer understanding of ourselves, derived from a knowledge of psychology, can help us to achieve a measure of detachment from the favourite pictures in the gallery of our imaginations, or from the re-touched portraits we have of ourselves, and bring them into the light of reality for more careful and sincere study, then surely it will greatly increase our capacity for living, both by enabling us to release the resources of our imagination for constructive use, and by relieving us of the efforts that hitherto we have found so necessary to keep up our games of make-believe.

# CHAPTER X

## HOW WE TAKE LIFE

THERE is a good deal to be learned about human psychology from a study of the elusive something we call 'temperament.' The word is perhaps less used nowadays than it once was. There was a time when to describe a person as 'too temperamental' carried significance, usually not unmixed with censure. Perhaps a somewhat superficial acquaintance with psychology has led us to take less interest in this matter than once we did.

What do we mean when we speak of a person's 'temperament'? I suppose we refer to the general 'set' or 'bias' of an individual character. We look at a person and try to sum up in a word or phrase what we believe to be the 'prevailing wind' of his particular mental climate. He has his moods; precisely what he will say or do in given circumstances we cannot predict; but taking him all round, we think we can form a fairly clear judgment about the quality of his general response to life, and the circumstances he encounters during his progress through the years.

It is interesting to note that to speak of a person as being ‘ too temperamental ’ is really to describe him or her as lacking in balance or poise. The term is one in which we disparage a tendency to over-display. Nevertheless, we find it difficult to be interested in people whose ‘ poise ’ is so well balanced that their characters lack light and shade. We like our friends to be human and to have temperament—but not too much of it. In other words, to be a person of character one must have a clear ‘ set ’ or direction ; but one must be in conscious control over the motives and desires that give this direction to our self-expression. Otherwise it runs away with us.

In the earliest phases of any new life it is difficult to find anything that can be described as ‘ temperament.’ The disposition is pliable, unformed, responsive to every influence that would direct it this way or that. By degrees, so slow that they are hardly perceptible, a process of change goes on. For various reasons, often obscure, a child becomes more responsive in this way and less so in that, until after a while it has lost much of its early resilience and begins to show signs of taking a direction of its own.

It is never easy to say just what are the most significant of the influences which predispose a person to take this or that line of development; but we do know that we have to look outside ourselves for one determinant. The pressure of our environment, the changing flux of circumstances, plays perhaps the most important part in forming the habitual mode of response with which we greet life and its experiences as they come.

Thus, without going very wide of the mark, we can say that our 'temperament' represents our general plan of living. It is as if we had put all our experiences together and found that on the whole they meant some one thing. Just as in regard to each individual circumstance we encounter we make up our mind how to behave; so it seems we also make up our minds about life as a whole—as if it were a single experience—and our 'temperament' reveals the general conclusion we have reached as to how it is expedient for us to behave towards it.

A generation ago they were fond of repeating the proverb, "At forty a man is either a fool or a physician." Those were the days when of necessity doctors relied more upon their independent observation and judgment than they do to-day. Their treatment of individual cases was governed more by knowledge of their patient's family and personal constitutions and dispositions than on profound scientific understanding of diseases. The suggestion of the proverb is, then, that by the time we are forty we should have studied ourselves closely enough to understand ourselves. The meaning of our temperamental dispositions should by that time have become clear to us.

It is regrettable that so much knowledge of ourselves seldom is clear. Even in this enlightened age we incline to assume that our temperament is something innate and unchangeable. We accept it as an inevitable characteristic of ourselves. Perhaps because it never occurs to us that our temperament can be modified, we do not try to understand it—and so it remains unchanged; not because nothing can be done about it, but because we are not sufficiently open-minded concerning ourselves to begin the task.

It is good for us to look with detachment at these natural tendencies of ours, trying to appraise their worth both as assets and liabilities. The man who is predominantly intellectual in temperament often lacks power to express sympathy, and suffers misunderstanding because he gives to some extent an impression of callousness that he does not feel. His tendency is therefore to limit his life, retire from contact with his fellows and seek satisfaction in solitude which, in his heart, he does not always enjoy. On the other hand, the temperamentally emotional person frequently lapses into sentimentalism. He gives his sympathy too diffusely because he finds clear thinking troublesome. Often, too, he omits to translate his feelings into action, and so fails to turn his energies and talents to use. People who are temperamentally wilful, quick to convert thought into action, may earn a just reputation for efficiency and determination, but their repeated exercise of this one quality tends to make it habitual, and they suffer the effects of their obstinacy, or have a sense of thwarting, when for any reason they cannot behave in their customary way.

Every individual temperament has its own characteristic advantages and disadvantages, and we may expect to discern both these qualities in our own habitual dispositions. In the realm of our 'feeling' or emotion, we may profitably ask ourselves whether it is the physical or the spiritual, the egotistic or the social impulse that has most power to move us. Do we find self-expression easy or difficult? Is our will of the impulsive sort, quick to incite us to action, slow to encourage us to think? Among people of Northern countries the temperament is generally phlegmatic, over-cautious. They tend to endanger the quality of eagerness in their living by 'damping down' their more generous and spontaneous feelings. On the other hand, peoples of the warmer, Southern countries tend to be habitually over-expressive, lacking the control of reasoned thought and judgment.

Tendencies engrained in us by the conditions of early training and environment cause some of us to act habitually in a strong, quick way, or in a strong, slow way, or else weakly and slowly. A considerable proportion of people habitually over-estimate their own powers; as many more are habitually self-depreciative. The blunders made by the former of these two classes are obvious;

those of the latter are less so because the principal sufferer from their consequences is the self-depreciator himself, who suffers much unhappiness and loss of energy from his habitual caution and the anxiety attending it.

Some of us have good memories for our joys and successes, and poor ones for our sorrows, difficulties and injuries. For others the converse is true: our sufferings loom large in all our recollections, and we easily discount the extent to which life has treated us well. When we are good at remembering how successful we are, we tend to be a little rash in our decisions and undertakings, whereas those who take a less sanguine view of themselves find it difficult to embark on new adventures, accept fresh obligations or make far-reaching decisions. There are some people whose temperament never allows them to forget a grievance—they have the sort of memory popularly ascribed to the elephant, who always recalls and seeks means to repay 'old scores.' Other people find it hard to recollect circumstances in which they have been let down or badly treated. When, with an effort, such people manage to remember the details of such unpleasant occurrences, they do so without again feeling the slight or annoyance that was originally roused; while persons of the opposite type are perhaps powerfully moved to anger or resentment by such memories, and have difficulty in forgiving those by whom they have been hurt. Indeed, it sometimes happens that in such cases we are unaware that the duty to 'forgive and forget' is ours even when it stares us in the face; I have known instances where the sudden realisation of such a duty has amazed the person concerned, who had till then never become aware how intensely his antagonism had been harboured for many years.

Differences of temperament like those outlined above are easy to recognise; and for many of them we can account by a study of the circumstances in which the people concerned were brought up. As we have previously mentioned, they represent various strategies of living acquired as the result of environmental influences. But there are other factors involved in our temperamental differences, for which account must otherwise be made.

Man is a creature of the ages. His development to what he has now become is the result of the impact which life has made upon generations of his forbears, through countless influences, natural and historical. Thus the mental background of every one of us contains elements of behaviour-patterns and tendencies derived from the earlier periods of human evolution.

First, for instance, there are proclivities that we share with all other creatures in the animal kingdom; the 'instinctual' or inherited tendencies to modes of behaviour that link us with the brute creation. Again, there remain in our adult minds many of the impressions of childhood, and dispositions to behave as children will. Third, we retain in our mental make-up traces of the primitive mind—modes of behaviour that are to be explained only by going back in thought to the period when our speechless ancestors dwelt in caves and trees, living in a manner only a degree more human than that of the animals around them. And, fourthly, we have what we may term the 'civilised mind,' a disposition to order our behaviour in accordance with the customs and conventions of the society in which we live, and the rapidly moving civilisation of our world, which constantly exerts its influence upon us. Indeed, it is the incitement of the continual forward movement of civilisation which provokes the mind to effort, and so accounts both for its present state and the expansion to which it is always being incited.

It is in the process of adapting itself to all these constraints and influences from within and without that the individual mind grows and develops its latent powers. It is therefore natural that in course of time there is formed in each one of us a kind of conviction about the meaning life has for us, and the special mode of response that in our case seems most appropriate for meeting it.

This ‘preferred approach,’ for us the best way ‘of meeting the situation’ in which life seems to place us, is expressed in what we call ‘temperament.’ It is formed gradually, partly the result of habits created before we were old enough to think for ourselves, partly as the consequence of our own thought and reflection.

Our temperamental mode of behaviour is to a certain extent unstable, not steady and unswerving. It ebbs and flows like a tide, being affected to some extent by our circumstances at the moment, but still more by the desires and aspirations we elect to cherish and develop as we become older. Thus, while we are mentally and spiritually the product of the ages, what we shall become is to some extent within our power to determine. We can modify our temperament and habitual disposition by changing the aim or goal towards which we strive.

It is because so much of what we are is the result of our social and historical background, that the temperamental differences between people tend to group themselves around particularly significant modes of behaviour. Just as one can safely predict that when confronted with a physical danger a certain number of people in a crowd will run away, others will rally to fight or oppose whatever is menacing them, so there are broad divisions between people. Temperaments fall into 'types,' representing common behaviour-tendencies of large numbers of people, who, despite their individual differences, are on the whole very much alike.

In the following chapters several of these temperamental trends will be discussed, so that we may perhaps see how our behaviour tendency reflects the general manner of response to life, and may give us some insight into its meaning.

# CHAPTER XI

## THE SUPERFICIAL AND RELUCTANT WAYS

As we have reminded ourselves in an earlier chapter, life is progressive only when it is adventurous. If the quality of our living is to be varied and satisfying, we have to accept the discipline of growth which requires us continually to deny ourselves easy satisfactions in order to become capable of greater ones. We are able and willing to do this only when we have courage to overcome the inertia of our being and refuse to remain under the sway of our instinctive nature.

Therefore we define as *The Superficial Way* of living that disposition towards life which expresses itself in a tendency always to follow the natural impulse and instinct, preferring the passive acceptance of things to an active pursuit of worthy goals.

There are many whose temperament inclines them to do this. They remember that their parents and forefathers lived in certain ways, followed certain traditions, and they feel that the standard thus defined is good enough to be going on with. These folk are essentially backward-looking, conservative and uncritical in their attitude towards what has been. They consider that customs established by age and general consent are authoritative merely because they are of long standing.

You may point out to such folk that evaluations based on the experience of the past are of little value; you may remind them that the thought of earlier generations was no freer from prejudice and bias than is that of the present. But this makes no difference for even if they agree with your reasons, such persons are only contented when they feel the comfort of relying upon the authority of the past. They will tell you that they believe what they see, but they never do see that their passive acceptance of outworn traditions and conventions is a form of slavery. Indeed, they do not want to see that their loyalty to life's yesterdays is a form of cowardice: it denotes reluctance to think deeply or face the hazards of testing new and untried ways of living.

People whose thought-tendency is of this superficial kind are often robust in their physique and their desires. They feel that life is short, and they want to enjoy it as much as they can while it lasts. For them "The world is full of a number of things and we should all be as happy as kings." They see no point in being gloomy, and they manage to keep themselves well protected from any of life's experiences that would tend to shake their complacent enjoyment of it. They appear to possess many enviable gifts, especially that of ready cheerfulness; but they take it as a matter of course, and it is an essentially self-centred demeanour which does not exert itself to bring happiness into the lives of others less fortunate.

People of this kind give the impression that they get a great deal out of life. Their neighbours are inclined to envy them. But they find it hard to settle down to worth-while tasks, because they see no reason to exert and apply themselves. They glide down the river of life, not as boats swinging in with the stream, but rather like driftwood that floats on the surface at the mercy of every wind of change, flung by the swirling current into a frequent backwater or stagnant pool.

The easy amiability of temperamentally superficial folk is deceptive; sometimes dangerously so, for at times it cloaks an easy kind of selfishness that requires only appropriate circumstances to reveal its presence. When we see it thus exposed, we know quite well how unsatisfactory this superficial attitude to life is. To live is to grow. The deepest enjoyments of life come through the realisation that we are learning to meet the demands of life with increasing adequacy and responding bravely to the difficulties and challenges it presents to our spirits. Evasion, however subtle, is never desirable, and in the end not attainable; for the evasive attitude cannot fully satisfy, because its dependence upon fortunate circumstances is too great; its security is too precariously founded to be lasting.

In complete contrast to the superficial, happy-go-lucky strategy of living is the one we may describe as *The Reluctant Way*. It is to be observed in those men and women who so live that they make their experiences a round of drudgery. They go about the world expecting trouble, or almost looking for it. Their tendency is to assume that Fate is against them, and their complaints are always ‘ on top.’

Among the subjects of this temperament there are many plodders and hard workers who achieve a measure of success through their industry. Unfortunately they rarely enjoy the fruits of their labours, for they have not learnt the secret of working hard and ' playing the game at the same time. They have no *joie de vivre*, nor do they find pleasure in sharing their interests with others. These folk will tell you that ' they do not expect much of life, in any event.' Perhaps it does not occur to them that their readiness to take offence is the result of an expectation that life should single them out for specially favoured treatment.

By fits and starts these ' reluctant ' people seem to accept life. They reach stretches of the road in which they are apparently contented, or, as they would put it, ' resigned.' It is the type of resignation described by the saying, ' What can't be cured must be endured.' It is lacking in those elements of discernment that are associated with true resignation—which never fails to raise its possessors above the level of mediocrity. To harbour grudges is always easier than to forget them. Those who live reluctantly find plenty of material to fan the smouldering fires of their resentment, or support the pose of ‘ resignation ’ in which the person concerned takes pleasure in ‘ being a martyr ’ or ‘ enjoying ill-health.’ It is at least open to question whether such a lifetime of long-continued sleeping partnership is worth the trivial self-satisfaction it brings.

Farmers are, as a class, generally regarded as being of the ‘ reluctant ’ temperament. When we speak to them about their crops or the weather, we almost expect them to express dissatisfaction. Things are either bad or worse—seldom better. When a Scottish farmer admits, for example, in reply to an inquiry about his farm or his health, “ Weel, I daurna complain,” you can be pretty certain that everything is going remarkably well with him. His remark says, in effect, that whilst in the face of facts he has not the audacity to mourn, he feels unable to express any light-heartedness of frivolity by rejoicing that all is well.

This disposition to suppress joy and minimise the value of life’s blessings is typical of all reluctant temperaments. There are many people who reveal this prevailing mood, and there are few of us who do not know how irksome their peevishness and discontent can be. We should be alert to detect the mood in ourselves, for its infection can easily catch us unawares, and its presence is more difficult to spot in ourselves than in others.

When our spirits are faint and reluctant, we are tempted to echo the words of the poet,

> " And ah ! for a man to arise in me,
> That the man I am may cease to be ! "
> Tennyson : " Maud."

But no magical change of circumstances acknowledges our prayer. We have to take our bearings afresh and effect a change of heart. The schoolboy who is bored in the early summer days because he must field for a long time before his turn comes to bat, or whose innings is painfully short, may want to run away from the game on some small pretext, saying, " Sorry, fellows, but I have to go and run some errands." The excuse may relieve him temporarily of his sense of inadequacy, but it will never make him a good cricketer. If he would become that, he knows he must put up with failure and inconvenience time after time, continuing to ‘ play for his side ’ despite his personal feelings.

We have always stretching before us the cricket pitch of life, with its failures, duties and difficulties. It is a waste of time to try to avoid them, or to desire that others should make our troublesome decisions for us. We may think that by so doing we protect ourselves; so perhaps we do, temporarily; but the game goes on, and sooner or later it compels us to take our innings whether we will or no. When that time comes, we discover that by playing for safety in the past we are less prepared than we might have been, and we may lose where we might have won.

Life has one leading quality that people of reluctant temperament always minimise or overlook. We are all agreed that in order to understand life's origin we must turn our attention to the past; but we are apt to forget that the stream of life inevitably carries us forward. What we are becoming matters more than what we have become.

We can see this truth illustrated in the herbaceous border of our gardens, backed as it probably is either by a wall or a hedge. The plants are rooted in the soil, and by its nourishment they grow ; but they are always thrusting upwards and out towards the light. They depend upon the soil, but they derive their meaning and value from their growth away from it.

Structure and function thus develop together. Through the insistent forward thrust the plant comes to flowering. Life has within itself a power to make its adaptations to a larger environment than that from which it comes. As it is in the plant, so it is also in us. The ground of our being is in the past, but our meaning is to be found only in the future.

The fetters which seem to bind to the past people of reluctant temperament, can be broken. It is an unsatisfactory mode of self-expression, because it is only maintained by a continued opposition to the forces of life that make for growth and progress. The power, or energy of life, becomes strong as we yield ourselves in obedience to those laws of being that urge us towards expansion. When we do so we discover an inner freedom that must always remain unknown to those who go through life grudgingly.

# CHAPTER XII

## THE ANXIOUS WAY

*The Anxious Way* of living is so widespread that there can be few who manage to escape it altogether. There is reason to believe that this temperamental trend has its foundations laid very early in life; perhaps that is why it becomes established more firmly and in a greater proportion of people than most of the other 'strategies' we have occasion to discuss.

Some of us who, apparently, go through the earlier part of our lives without being made unduly sensitive to occasions of anxiety, betray by our later conduct that the seeds of this disposition were sown in childhood, although we were not aware of the fact at the time. There are occasions in the personal life of each of us when events seem to synchronise in a manner that causes us to feel alarm at our insecurity. We seem to be menaced or opposed from several different angles all at once, and however earnestly we try to plough our furrow straight, we find it hard to manage, and our courage falters. Then we are apt to become tangled in the web of our own thoughts, bewildered by many dangers, and anxiety dominates our mood.

In the chapter entitled " Phantasy and Reality," we referred to the many shocks to self-confidence a child is bound to suffer when various experiences awaken it to the realisation of its own weakness and ignorance; when it begins to discern that its own accepted standards of judgment do not coincide with the facts of life in its surroundings.

In early years every human being must encounter some experiences of this kind. Their first effect is to shake self-confidence and create a measure of self-distrust accompanied by feelings of personal inferiority and anxious foreboding. What the effect of these feelings will be upon the subsequent development of a child depends upon many factors; not least upon the kind of handling it receives from those in whose charge it is put. By encouragement to develop the more robust and active qualities of its nature, by offers of constructive help in solving his little problems, a child may be led to develop healthy reactions which tend to establish a balanced disposition. A balance is then created between the depressing and stimulating elements in a child's situation, and his character is strengthened. But we know that such a balance is not always struck. Through ignorance more often than through wilful neglect, parents and teachers often behave towards children in a manner that intensifies their natural feelings of inferiority and increases their anxiety. Often, too, the adults surrounding a child are themselves disposed to behave in an over-anxious way, and the child may learn by imitation to respond with anxiety to many situations that are not in themselves essentially harmful. In such conditions a tendency to develop the ' Anxious ' temperament may become firmly established long before a child is capable of forming its own independent judgments about life, and once the direction has been set, it tends to remain through succeeding years.

There are certain differences in physical structure between one person and another that tend also to predispose some towards a prevailing mood of anxiety. The science of ' endocrinology ' is as yet but in an early stage of development. Enough is already known, however, to make it clear that slight derangements of balance in the inter-related system of ductless glands—the thryoid, adrenal, pituitary and other internal bodies in this strange ' orchestra '—may affect the predominant mood of an individual, influencing him or her towards over-assertive or over-submissive attitudes, and so on. It is clear, however, that whilst such physical differences may predispose an individual towards this or that temperamental type, they do not determine it. Just as a physically slight person may feel less desire for walking than a robust one, but yet will walk, and walk well, because some duty or obligation strengthens determination, so a temperamental bias resulting from particular ' gland balance ' may be to some extent controlled by thought, and its effects modified within wide limits.

The fears of an anxious child may be so vague that he is unable to tell you why he is afraid, for instance, when left alone in the dark; but his feelings are no less real, or to him less distressing, because he cannot account for them. Such fears show that the child concerned has already started out on the ' anxious ' way of living. Parents and those who care for children should be on the look-out for such signs and counteract the condition they reveal, by wise training and encouragement. If children do not outgrow these fears in the right way, they are less fitted to face later ones.

As such a child grows, we may observe that he finds difficulty in dispensing with the escort of an older person along the way to school, hanging back timidly when it is suggested that he should go alone. Later, he may cross the roads in fear and trembling, and run home at top speed for fear lest some imagined harm may come to him, catching up with him in his stride. Because he feels a necessity to be punctual, he may suffer undue anxiety lest he be late. I have actually known a child that would often arrive at school well before time, panting and out of breath, because while trudging happily on his way he heard a clock chime and concluded that he was late. He was too agitated to observe that the clock was marking the quarter before the hour. The current of his anxiety suggested to him as he heard the bell, ' That is nine o'clock striking: I must be late,' and his response was a feeling of compulsion to run the remainder of the way to school, where he arrived a long time before he need have done. Such small, everyday happenings often seem to have power to provide an added bias to an already existing condition of anxiety. Small wonder that it becomes more firmly rooted as time passes.

This brief description of the vicious circle in the mind of the child predisposed to anxiety can help us in two ways. First, it enables us to see how easily small and simple beginnings may in time produce profound and serious disturbances in conduct; secondly, by 'tilting the mirror' a little, we may be helped by it to understand something of the causes of anxiety in ourselves.

It is evident that anxious and sensitive children like those we have mentioned must be very prone to fatigue. The sense of compulsion to obey and the necessity for constant alertness consume mental energy; moreover, they incite the child to exert itself unnecessarily, as in the case we have quoted of the boy who felt he must run to school when he might have walked normally. Thus the glandular, circulatory and muscular systems are kept in a state of undue stimulation, and physical fatigue is added to the mental weariness already existing. This fatigue in its turn increases nervous sensitivity and augments the sense of strain felt in relation to the whole environment. Add to this the inevitable expenditure of energy in the processes of growth, and it is easy to account for the severe effects that anxiety frequently has both on physique and mental capacity. As a rule people of this type, both old and young, tend to construe correction as disparagement, and this also increases the strength of the vicious cycle into which their behaviour falls.

We can appreciate how it is that such a person, worn out with the strain of a working day, longs for the peace and protection of bed, the one place where he or she is able to relax in security, free at last from the stresses and strains of getting through the day.

Unfortunately such folk rarely do sleep well. The brain has become absorbed in its struggle with circumstances, and it can only relinquish its control reluctantly. The thread of thought cannot be severed in an instant ; and even in the most healthy mind, a pause is necessary to slow-down mental activity and replenish energy before sleep will come.

Such a slowing-down period is a normal prelude to sleep in us all. But for those of the anxious temperament it is not the only prelude. The experiences of the day must be reviewed and reconsidered; the books of life must be carefully balanced by a scrupulous assessment of successes and failures; plans must be devised to repair on the morrow the mistakes made during to-day; an attempt must be made to forecast to-morrow's needs and obligations. As the anxious person sets about this self-imposed task of accounting to himself for all that he has been or done, he lives again through the crises of worry that assailed him during the day. The brain is stimulated into feverish activity, and the over-tired body is all too likely to exhaust itself in a vain search for sleep that will not come.

So, anxiety and sleeplessness frequently go together, creating yet another element of fatigue to enhance that already in existence.

Besides the many provocations to anxiety which spring from within, the person of this temperament is severely tried by the conditions of his environment. Life requires us all, anxious or not, to make many adaptations of ourselves to circumstances. We have to fit in with our families and friends, with passing acquaintances and fellow-workers, showing consideration for them and interest in their various concerns. Our fund of patience is often taxed by listening to other people's stories of their burdens and difficulties. Household cares and business worries command our attention. We have to deal with numerous occasions of resentment or anger. Physical conditions are often inimical to our strength. Our daily work must be done and our social obligations must be fulfilled.

All these provocative circumstances take toll of our energies, and may probably overtax them. It is no light achievement to maintain the balance between reserve and output, even when the mind is at peace with itself. For those already prone to anxiety, no wonder it often seems impossible.

When we are considering ourselves from this point of view, it is important to remember that our individual store of energy is always a limited one. Like engines, we require a certain ‘ head of steam ’ to do a certain amount of ‘ work ’—in self-expression—and it is necessary to maintain a certain rhythm of rest and expression in order to replenish our reserves of energy between periods of activity.

Anxious people deplete their store of energies quickly and suffer the effects of continual exhaustion ; but that is not because their native store of energy is deficient, but rather because they have never learned how to conserve it. Like engines on slippery rails, they use up large stores of energy on small tasks, making a great disturbance and enveloping themselves in vast clouds of steam without getting much ‘ forrader.’

Such folk need, above all things, to realise how the energy of personality may be controlled by interest. It is a matter of great satisfaction to remember that when our energy is applied to concerns in which we take a real interest, and when our possibilities of achievement are modestly assessed, we use our energy with true economy. It flows smoothly and exerts great force, enabling us to go on working and striving without suffering a sense of fatigue. Fear is the enemy of our energy, for it lays on us a sense of necessity or urgency, and thrusts us into feverish activities, not because we are interested in them, but because we dare not forego them lest by doing so we lose our self-esteem.

In the adult, anxiety is often the child of vanity. If we would be free of the one, our best policy is to deal with the other by learning to appreciate in ourselves our real qualities and capacities which are evidenced by our real achievements, denying to ourselves the illusory satisfactions of coveting more power or praise than we deserve; not asking overmuch of life, nor of our friends, but being ever ready to give generously ourselves.

It is a good plan, therefore, to begin self-observation at the point where we notice our enthusiasms to be on the wane. We have all noticed during our own childhood, and we can observe in the children around us, that the natural attitude towards work is one of interest in it as an undertaking, without concern for the personal credit that may attend its performance. A healthy child enjoys doing things for their own sake; it finds delight in seeing a task through to its conclusion; and above all things dislikes being called to a halt before it has finished whatever it may be engaged upon.

Indecision, lethargy and the sense of futility, often assail the anxious person. These are not natural feelings, but the result of inhibitions due to fear. If we realised that, we should be more willing to inquire into their causes within ourselves, and might do something to remove them.

Instead of doing this, and so making constructive efforts to deal with our temperamental anxiousness, we tend to blame circumstances for our difficulties, which only emphasises our own incapacity. For example, we suggest to ourselves that we are suffering from over-work, or that ‘brain-work is so exhausting.’ In fact, it is rare to find a person who is really over-worked; most of us are under-worked, and brain-work is stimulating when it is engaged in with a quiet mind. No, the causes of our exhaustion are our fears. Our energies work normally along the paths of least resistance. We create artificial resistances by our ambitions, apprehensions and over-protectiveness of ourselves and our reputations. The exhaustion we suffer is not really the natural result of the work we do, but of our fears concerning it.

What we need is a new attitude towards life: one in which we follow the activities of our lives not reluctantly, with a sense of compulsion, but willingly, as an adventure to be enjoyed. There is a place in life for us; it may not be the exalted place we covet; its rewards may not be the kind of personal adulation or power we desire; but it offers us a richer reward than these, in the freedom of a life lived without strain, the peace of a mind unfettered by itself. That place we can all find if we are simple in heart, willing to give as well as to take, to consider others as truly as we do ourselves.

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE RESISTANT WAY

LIKE all the other dispositions we have discussed, the tendency to meet life as if it were an enemy to be resisted is one that at times must have been felt by all of us. In some people it is the predominant mood, but in all of us it is an occasional one. It is to be recognised by the kind of behaviour it encourages: behaviour resulting from an attitude essentially critical, both of people and circumstances.

The habitual objector, the person who is naturally contrary or obstructive, belongs to this series of personality types. He may, and often does, attempt to disguise the purpose of his wilfulness by giving it a high moral tone; he tends to champion lost causes or impart a flavour of heroism to his behaviour by talking easily about the need to stand with our backs to the wall in defence of great ideals, and so on: but behind this air of public-spiritedness there is a feeling of being personally at loggerheads with life, and it is because of this, rather than any altruistic motive, that he behaves as he does.

Recently I heard of a man who has evolved a most effective strategy of resistance to life. He is an organiser of various religious and social enterprises which between them keep him as busy as a bee-hive. When people first meet him they think, " My word, what efficiency, what energy and enthusiasm ! " But as you make his closer acquaintance, you find that by pulling the strings of a variety of different committees and sub-committees, by arranging for resolutions to be passed and conferences that are to be held, he is amazingly successful in continually deferring the moment when anything is ever done. At any moment he will offer you a dozen reasons why a decision should be deferred. In any meeting you can rely upon him to propose that a matter be ' referred back ' or ' deferred for fuller consideration.' He has been doing it for years. When last he was heard of, he was working his head off to arrange a Committee to discuss the formation of a Council to inquire into the possibilities of forming an Advisory Body to investigate the conditions of some specific social question.

No doubt this good man derives the utmost satisfaction from his public service. He would probably have to dig very deep before he found the central root-motive of his behaviour and discovered his feeling of enmity to life to be obstructionism. But it is most evidently there, and he would be a happier as well as a more useful man if he could just realise its presence and deal with it.

Our sense of an obligation to accept life and serve it, is very deep. It is more real than our wilfulness, which we know to be childish and self-centred. Therefore, when we are determined to be wilful and obstinate, we tend to express those traits under camouflage, by giving them a social sanction. For this reason, when people are yielding to their resistant temperament they often express it less in their personal behaviour than in their public allegiances. They like to support all organisations that are 'Anti-'; they tend to join political movements of a 'revolutionary' or 'minority' sort; and they are always ready for a contest of fists or wits, according to circumstances. So much do they enjoy argument and fight that one imagines them as almost being in the schoolboy mood, ready to ask, "Is this a private fight, or can anybody join in ? " That appears to be their social creed.

Part of the general sense of responsibility we should feel towards life is that of entering into our social relationships and accepting our responsibilities as part of the 'body-corporate' in which we live. The root of our social sense is an instinct, and the instincts are all relatively unchangeable. Social behaviour is always aimed at cohesion—the joining up of individuals in corporate strength through loyalty to each other and the society of which all are part. Necessarily, this joining-up involves the keeping of rules by all concerned. It inevitably limits the freedom of individuals in order to ensure the liberty of the community as a whole.

Being self-willed, people of the resistant temperament chafe at such restrictions. They desire the privileges of corporate life, but they resent its demands. Their contrariness is the expression of their determination to 'do as they like' in all circumstances.

As we are often reminded these days, the apprenticeship to good citizenship is served in the home. The family is the first group we recognise, and the one that most readily commands our loyalty, evoking the beginnings of our social sense. In bygone days there was little distinction between the family and the tribe. Loyalty to the one implied loyalty to the other, for tribal society was but an enlargement and extension of family life. To-day the distinction between ‘ family ’ and ‘ society ’ is clearer. Consequently the difficulty of extending the sense of loyalty from the one to the other is so much the more difficult.

In these days we pass by slow stages from family life to true social behaviour, by way of the school. It is the place of transition where, theoretically, our sympathies should broaden out in a steadily progressing expansion until they embrace all humanity.

In practice, we do not experience any such easy and marked transition, for the very good reason that throughout our period of growth we maintain our ‘ ego-centricity ’ or strong sense of individuality. Evidently there is a contradiction in our terms when we speak of ‘ embracing all mankind ’ and at the same time of ‘ retaining our individuality ’; for the sense of ‘ identity ’ is that of being separate from others.

We can see, therefore, that there is a limit set, within which we can give expression to our social sense. We may be able to love and respect our parents directly, but if we are honest we will admit that our love of mankind is of a different quality from that; it is a ‘ love ’ in the realm of ideas, something acquired and indirect. Thus beyond the limit of our personal capacity for social behaviour there is something both presupposed and actual, in which we are precluded by our own limitations from active participation.

Moreover, the bond between man and man requires us to feel a duty to ourselves. It not only constrains us to social loyalty, but incites us also to self-respect as members of society. Clearly a well-developed social sense is necessary to encourage personal development. Perhaps it is when we are, for a time, condemned by circumstances to solitude, and must look within ourselves for the deeper resources of life, that we realise most clearly how intimately we are united in spirit with the rest of our kind, for we then derive strength and security from our sense of its support. We become most aware of our dependence upon it when it is taken away.

We may feel solitary not only when we are physically separated from human intercourse and companionship by illness, distance or other external conditions. When we behave in a manner that evokes criticism or disapproval, or when in turn we are affronted by the behaviour of others, a sense of isolation assails us. The same feeling comes when we are confronted by trying circumstances and lack a motive strong enough to make us exert ourselves to meet or accept them. Our own rebellion makes us lonely.

This rebellious tendency may become the predominant one in our character. It is likely to do so if it has begun in our early years. One of the earliest and commonest forms of anti-social behaviour is excessive self-will or obstinacy. Many of us have recollections of some occasion in childhood when we first realised the strength of our own will by opposing the efforts of a person in authority who tried to persuade us to accept an unwelcome situation or behave in a manner we disliked. Or we may have been asked to submit to some discipline for which we saw no adequate reason.

If, in some situation of that kind, we discovered in our persistent opposition a weapon with which to get our own way and disconcert others apparently stronger than ourselves, our tendency would be to make this way of behaving habitual for the sake of the feeling of strength or importance it gave us; the satisfaction of believing ourselves to be 'big.'

But the child who gives way to frequent exhibitions of self-will does not earn a good reputation with others. By degrees the disturbances occasioned by such 'tantrums' attract attention and make the child an object of more public disapproval. Observing this, the obstinate child sees in it an intensification of his own isolation; he begins to feel that the world is ranged in opposition against him. A sense of personal loneliness is added to the strength of his desire for self-satisfaction, and the disposition to 'resist' is increased by the very opposition it meets.

When such a trait persists into adult life it becomes a great drawback to its owner. He is always on the alert for signs of opposition or disapproval; he tends to imagine them where they do not exist, and so at length enters into active conflict with his environment, carrying into the camp of his supposed enemy a warfare that is real only within his own soul. He has acquired the 'resistant' habit.

To go back a little; we do well to remember that during the pre-school period of development a child is extremely suggestible; that is to say, he tends to accept ideas as they are presented to him by others, without subjecting them to personal criticism. Parents, nurses, friends and teachers all played their part, perhaps unconsciously, in suggesting to the child what kind of behaviour to adopt in various circumstances. So long as such guardians use their authority persuasively and in a way that is reasonable—reasonable, that is, to the judgment of the child—the development of the young mind will probably be normal, for the child will concur in the decisions made for it and co-operate in disciplinary restrictions.

But at school, and sometimes at home, arbitrary rules and regulations are made. Children are required, perhaps, to conform to unnecessary and possibly unreasonable restrictions. They are then apt to feel that the demands made upon them are unfair or beyond their powers, and mostly respond by doing the opposite of what they are told, or by stubbornly resisting the imposition. Again, being told to do something too puzzling for their immature intelligence or distasteful to their feelings, children, aware of being under a compulsion to obey, may outwardly do so, while inwardly raging against the necessity, and forming resolutions to oppose authority as soon as they are old enough and strong enough to do so successfully. By such conditions the seeds of a resistant temperament are sown in the young mind.

For healthy mental development it is essential that children should, at each period of growth, be given opportunities for the exercise of personal judgment. They should be encouraged to discover their powers and to rely on them more and more as they mature. In this manner a firm foundation of self-respect is laid, upon which a superstructure of goodwill and mental independence can be built.

Anti-social habits of all kinds, including obstinacy, increase when they are met with resistance. Unfortunately this is, as a rule, the disposition in which we try to deal with them. Often enough, the obstinacy of a child is opposed by equal obstinacy in the adults who are trying to train the growing mind; small wonder that the effect is harmful. It is the old story of the pot and the kettle. Many parents show great earnestness in the endeavour to knock out of their children as faults the very qualities they account as permissible, or perhaps even as virtues, in themselves.

When treatment of this kind is habitual in a family, it is not uncommon for one figure to stand out in the child's mind as representative of the tyranny to which it feels it is subjected, and around this dominating figure many unpleasant associations and emotions are mentally grouped by the small victim. Later on, he is apt to see the prototype of this 'tyrant' in the person of anyone who is placed in authority over him, or in society as a whole if its customs or laws seem to thwart his will. Arriving at adulthood, a child with such upbringing may see in his 'boss' an oppressor whose prosperity proves that he 'grinds the face of the poor'; or may be convinced that he is subjected to unfair treatment when in fact he is not.

Soon, this young man might begin to think that he would perhaps do better to serve the State, where he will be securely maintained and free from individual prejudice; but then he finds that conditions are laid down here also, and restrictions must be accepted, possibly including the loss of liberties he hitherto enjoyed, and with more rules to obey than under the private employer. Then he will suddenly see in the State the tyrant he has always feared, and to it transfer the opposition and hatred previously vented on the individual. He will begin to examine the economic situation, seeing the harmful effects of trade competition, tariffs, fluctuating markets and the menace of unemployment. Thereupon he becomes a staunch enemy of the Government. Such theoretical disapproval is easily inflamed into hatred, which, even when irrational, can goad people to folly or violence both in thought and activity. The mind is disposed to take hold of symbols, catchwords and slogans. Like the proverbial ' Red rag to a bull ' these are sufficient to provoke outbursts of passion and vituperation.

The rapidly increasing complexity of our civilisation affords each one of us ample opportunities for resistance and opposition if we are disposed to look for them. It is possible to enjoy speed while we are speeding, and yet to curse it when others indulge while we are on foot. We may regard wireless as a blessing when its programme suits our mood, and be ready to curse it when it provides for others enjoyment of a kind we dislike. The resistant temperament can always provide itself with justifications by over-emphasising one or other element in the environmental conditions. So, when once it is established, it tends to persist, and a mass of evidence can always be adduced by the sufferer to give warrant for his attitude.

Nevertheless, the rebel is always to some extent aware of his obligation to discern law and order, and his very sense of its authority tends to inflame his opposition. He feels himself to be ‘ up against it.’ No part of his life is entirely free from a possibility of restraint, and so no part is immune from the resulting conflict between self-will and social obligation.

At the root of the resistant temperament there is, then, always intolerance: probably of some demand that he is unable or unwilling to meet, possibly of life itself because it is by nature demanding.

Essentially this demand that life makes of us is that it should be reverenced. When we refuse the obligation to assume our social rôle, we disobey an innate personal necessity, and stand in enmity, not only against life, but against ourselves. The rebel stands out before the rest and proclaims that he is a law unto himself; but at the same time he is in rebellion against himself, for the law of his own being affronts him as much as the external command of the herd.

Wise men of all ages have prayed to their God or gods for wisdom, to 'know His law' and 'learn His statutes.' However this desire may have been expressed, it has amounted to an avowal that there is within each one of us an innate awareness of the external principles of life, such as justice and righteousness, to which we must give our allegiance if we are to make our experience rich and satisfying.

By the instinctive acknowledgement we give to these principles—even in our disobedience to them—we know that the mind of man is made for fellowship, not isolation. We cannot therefore be healthy or content until we learn to subject our wilfulness and subdue our resistances by accepting our obligation to work creatively, within the social fellowship, for the larger life of mankind.

# CHAPTER XIV

## THE ACQUIESCENT WAY

We describe as *The Acquiescent Way* of living that attitude towards our experience wherein we try to approach as nearly as we can to mental and spiritual maturity. It is not a disposition of facile optimism, nor has it anything in common with a mood we have already described of ' pious resignation ' or pretended martyrdom. Rather, it is that active spirit of goodwill towards life which may constrain us to accept it as it is, even when it is at its most difficult, because we are determined to use the raw material of our own experience as the clay with which to make our living the expression of a fine art. It is an ' acquiescent ' way because in it we learn to make few demands and to issue no specification to life as the condition upon which we will serve it, but endeavour to take life as we find it, and out of what it is try to create something of abiding worth.

Unlike the other temperamental tendencies we have mentioned, this one develops out of personal experience and growth. There is no need to go back to our earliest days to find its beginnings. They are not there; on the contrary, their opposite is there, and it is only by the transmutation of natural endowments in the fiery crucible of life that this new and more finely tempered metal of maturity comes into being.

We have referred to the fact that in babyhood most of us have had opportunity to feel wellnigh omnipotent. There was a time when we felt that our slightest whims were to be gratified, when we seemed to be the most important people in the world. It is in the nursery that the 'lords of creation' exercise their lordship. Baby must be served. Later, too, when a young child begins to undertake independent activities and experiments, attention and praise are accorded on all hands. By this he is encouraged to make further progress—but also to expect further commendation.

Small wonder is it, therefore, that by the time we have reached school-going age, we have already tasted the sweets of pride in our prowess, and have learned to rely upon this or that or the other quality in our character or behaviour as being that which will win us popularity and esteem in our new sphere of activity. For instance, if our wilfulness has had the effect of enabling us to get our own way in the home, we shall be confident in the expectation that it will also do this at school, and we shall be proud of our possession of it.

Schooldays put these early convictions to severe tests. They compel us to find out by methods of ‘ trial and error ’ what is within our power to do, and what is beyond us. Our sense of security may be severely shaken when we discover that the qualities upon which we have prided ourselves, because hitherto they have helped us to gain our wishes, are now no longer to be accounted praiseworthy or of special advantage to us.

Both at school and at home, as well as in less familiar spheres of activity, the early years of our development bring many occasions of discipline and disillusionment. To take but one example : we know that in childhood we credit all adult people with constant virtue, and our parents we regard as all-knowing and all-wise—perfect examples of what is good and proper. All the ‘ naughty people ’ and ‘ bad men ’ either live very far away or died long ago. The rules prevailing in our own homes are regarded as excellent and finally valid, for so long as they are the only ones of which we have knowledge.

Then we begin to go to school, where everything is different. This, that and the other custom, or item of knowledge, does not coincide with what our parents have taught. We begin to wonder: if mother and father do not know everything, then maybe they are not perfect either, perhaps not even perfectly good? In that case, maybe one's own selfish and unworthy thoughts, which one had thought to be peculiar to oneself, are shared by others? We begin to look around; we notice examples of weakness and wrong-doing in our school companions; we observe differences between individual and individual. Some children we like and easily get on with; others are distasteful to us, and we give them a wide berth.

Thus, in course of time, many of our babyish notions about ourselves and others are modified and corrected, until at length we come to rest at the idea of life—with a capital L—as an immense force ranged over against us; a dangerous and unreliable force that may at any moment turn to destroy us.

Over and against this mighty force each of us can see himself or herself as extremely insignificant; a mere pawn in the game, aware most acutely of our own insecurity and helplessness. In this situation we are compelled to devise some sort of plan or strategy of living. We may be driven to take self-protective or aggressive measures against what we suppose to be our natural foe. In that event we shall develop some one or more of the temperamental tendencies we have described in earlier chapters. But if common-sense and wise training come to our aid, we realise that against the overwhelming power of life we can do nothing effective in opposition. We cannot keep the sea back with a broom.

The question then arises: if life cannot be successfully opposed, can we co-operate with it? Can we discern any meaning in its array of forces and use them by working in conjunction with them, as scientists, harnessing the lightning, tame it to docility and use it in the service of mankind? To do this, evidently we shall have to yield to certain elemental conditions of life, that our wills cannot change, and shall consciously have to make certain adjustments of disposition to remedy the false and immature convictions of childhood.

This process of acceptance and self-adjustment is a fourfold one. First we must get to know ourselves as individuals, taking stock of our natural endowments, our sex, our social status, our inherited limitations and gifts. These are our 'natural resources,' and, like the tailor, we must learn to cut our coat according to our cloth. We cannot dispense with them or deny them. We cannot effect any change in ourselves by disparaging our 'capital' or by making envious comparisons of ourselves with others. It is good for us to let this fact 'come home to us.' We must regard our personal endowments and attainments as the raw material with which our web of life will be woven. Only within the range of what we actually are, and through a frank recognition of our limitations, can we hope to build up within ourselves some of the finer qualities of character to which most of us aspire. It is quite entertaining to make marvellous pictures of ourselves in thought, and by the exercise of imagination to turn the pages of the picture-book until we see ourselves in the magnificence of childish omnipotence. These self-misrepresentations are alluring, and it is all too easy to be held by their spell; but we must escape from them by being ruthless in self-examination, for a clear vision of ourselves as we really are is a necessary preliminary to constructive self-development.

We are by nature ego-centric beings. The 'too-unselfish' person of whom we hear now and again is certainly a myth. But sometimes, in moments of extreme self-centredness, when our self-regard is most intense, we are inclined to enthrone ourselves in grandeur, or set ourselves upon a pedestal from which we feel we can look down upon the mass of our fellow-men. There is always insecurity in such eminence, for its foundation is constantly being shaken by a force within us that is ever at work urging us to seek expansion through wider interests which have to be undertaken in company with other men and women.

Thus the second important adjustment we have to make is a social one: we must accept the conditions by which life governs the quality of our social relationships.

Because we are part of a community, inevitably dependent upon it for the maintenance of our existence and for the environmental conditions that make our self-development possible, our acceptance of life means that we must recognise the laws of society as applicable to ourselves, and conform to them even when we disagree with them. Thus, our personal feeling might well be that an extra threepence in the pound on an already high Income Tax is a needless imposition, but, as social beings, we must set aside our personal feelings and make our contribution, because, as members of the community, we have accepted our part in the responsibility of government. For the same reason we may often have to set aside aims that are self-satisfying for others which are socially beneficial, though less pleasing to us.

This acceptance of our social responsibility develops in us the desire to offer our services to the community, according to our abilities, not because it pays to do so, but because our self-respect is measured in part by a social ideal. The service we thus render becomes self-fulfilment of a higher order than we could attain by merely individual interests; for it teaches us the art of co-operating with others for the common good, helps us willingly to give place to others while ourselves filling the position for which we are most suitable by temperament and training.

The third essential adjustment we have to make is that to the demands of sex, or, as it has been defined, adjustment to the potential mate. This designation is of value because it draws attention to the fact that this is an adaptation we are all called upon to make. It is by no means a matter of choice ; neither the old maid nor the bachelor can evade the obligation to make it by proffering the well-known excuse of being unsuited for married life. We must all put our willingness to the test by being prepared to face the issue, at any rate in thought. Many of those who remain unmarried, or who profess to take no interest in the opposite sex, do so because their fears have made a hedge around them. The interest is there, but unacknowledged because it involves a responsibility from which escape is sought. The denial of interest is only a self-protective fence, usually of the flimsiest nature, which should be broken down by understanding and the removal of fear, so that the path of personal development may remain clear.

It is helpful at the outset to reaffirm the simple fact that the sex impulse is part of the natural inheritance of every healthy boy and girl. Its awakening is one of the conditions to which youth must adapt itself. There is no doubt at all that when young people are taught to guide and control themselves sensibly in other spheres, before this instinct has asserted itself, they are already partly equipped to manage this very strong instinctive urge when it does emerge. It can be demonstrated that the preparatory training of a child for its sexual rôle should be undertaken by instruction in the art of self-control over the wider spheres of childish appetites. Children are naturally eager to satisfy their desires for food, clothing, self-display and assertiveness. If in these and other indulgences they are taught some degree of self-control and consideration for others, instead of being allowed to follow the easy dictation of a natural complacency and carelessness, a sound foundation is laid for wise self-management in sexual matters.

Just as, physiologically, the sex organs exist in an infantile state at birth, and from that time develop gradually to maturity, so the psychological attitude towards sex should keep pace. When it does so, the reluctance or lack of readiness to accept the responsibilities of marriage disappears. The gradual increase of strength in the urge toward mating, and the desire to pass life on to others, are unhampered, and develop normally to a natural consummation.

It is not to be taken for granted that all those who marry have reached this kind of sexual maturity; for the true nature of marriage is not always realised even by those who embark upon it.

People marrying sometimes think they will thus automatically solve all their sexual doubts and difficulties. Nothing could be further from the truth. Marriage may mitigate those difficulties, or to some extent alter the form they take, but it will not solve them, for some of these problems are contingent upon the individual's general attitude to life; while others are inherent in the progressive nature of experience. Marriage itself is not an end, but a beginning.

Some marriages arrange themselves, and

some are quite definitely arranged. These latter do not give great promise of success. Some young people, being unhappy in the home where they were brought up, marry to attain a new home and the freedom it seems to promise. In prospect it all looks very alluring, but when the dream is actualised it is frequently found to entail new responsibilities as restrictive as those from which escape was sought: freedom in one direction is offset by new restrictions in another; disillusionment follows.

Marriage affords the supreme test of a man's or a woman's capacity for social behaviour. It is a co-operative activity requiring on each side a high degree both of intelligence and human sympathy for its artistic management. Often it is embarked upon for reasons that are expressions of emotional immaturity or selfishness on the part of one partner or both. The girl may want her husband to offer the protectiveness of a father and the passivity of a plaything; the man may want his wife to mother him or to minister to his sense of power; in such cases neither partner is prepared to assume the responsibilities of marriage in equal partnership; both desire chiefly its privileges.

Fitness for marriage means a good deal more than sexual maturity. It is only to be managed with true success when both partners to the adventure are ready to learn as individuals, willing for independence as well as for co-operation. There is need also to be aware of themselves in finding fresh adjustments, in personal relationships, in social maturity, and in sexual discipline.

The symbol of re-birth which has been so much stressed by Dr. C. J. Jung reminds us of the kind of personal adjustments necessary for satisfactory marriage. He reminds us of the law of life, that whatever is childish or undeveloped in the personality must be offered as a sacrifice in order that the more differentiated powers of our nature may come to birth. No one finds it easy to make such sacrifices, but nothing less will do. They are the price all men must pay for mental and spiritual maturity, and successful marriage is possible only for those who see it in this light.

Mention of sacrifice reminds us of the fourth great adjustment we must all make if we are to develop in harmony with our environment. We must come to terms with the Infinite. The re-birth of which Dr. Jung speaks is not merely a change in our ideas or a readjustment of our temperamental traits; he refers to 'birth from above'; the comprehension of the fact that within ourselves the Supernatural is to be known, and can be known, only by direct experience.

Each of us becomes aware at times of a Life, greater than our own, its source being deeper and its compass wider than our finite minds can apprehend. A sense of the reality of this greater Life impinges upon our consciousness at intervals: perhaps in some hour of great need, perhaps in a sudden vision of beauty or truth; perhaps through the awe evoked by infinite space or time. Such experiences, which are essentially reverent, are significant forms of the Infinite, meaningful reminders of the majesty and purposefulness of the mighty whole to which we belong. By whatever name this ultimate reality of the Infinite is known to us, we must learn to open our minds to it, and to the activity of the force which from it can break through to the human spirit and give it direction and purpose.

Only to the extent that we open our minds to the intimations of this greater Reality, and become sensitive instruments of the forces emanating from it, can we hope to sacrifice what is lower for that which is higher in our own natures. Our past failures evidence the truth of this most clearly, perhaps, and may discourage us from renewing our efforts to maintain the vital contact or 'communion' through which strength comes. At least we should know that the fault is ours if it does not come; for there is a vast company of witnesses who have known by personal experience that it is there.

To sum up, then, we have this fourfold adjustment to life :—

1. To ourselves as individuals.
2. To society.
3. To the claims of sex.
4. To the Infinite.

Not through any sense of compulsion, but from the keen desire to maintain our hold on life and increase our vitality, we should embark with eagerness on the adventure of making this fourfold adaptation to our world.

The American writer, Ralph Waldo Trine, was fortunate in the title he chose for one of his books, *In Tune with the Infinite.* To many of us life seems to have an undertone of music. Beneath the ebb and flow of daily moods, the alternating rhythms of immediate activities, there is a steadily moving melody, unifying all experiences into a harmonious composition. With people of some temperaments like those discussed in earlier chapters, this *leit-motif* of life is like jazz or syncopated music—jerky and irregular. To those who follow the Acquiescent Way, life's melody is deep and rich. The song it sings is the Song of Songs; its harmonies and discords unite and together form a sustained and meaningful composition, and self-expression is satisfying because it is felt to be blessed.

This is mental maturity. It asks of life not freedom, but liberty; not the easy satisfaction to be attained by evading or removing obstacles, hazards and pains, but the hardly earned riches of courage and resource to meet life on its own terms and overcome it by serving it.

# CHAPTER XV

## THE END IN VIEW

We are told in Scripture-history about God's purpose in creating the heavens and the earth: " And the earth was waste and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen. i. 2.)

When we are unbiased we may learn a great deal from history, allegory, analogy or imaginative imagery, and it is not of great consequence in which of these categories we include our quotation. Without unduly straining the sense of the words, we can see in this description of creative process a picture of our own personal nature. For most of us there comes a time when we are aware of the ' formless person ' in ourselves: the something we are not, but yet hope to become. Both within our consciousness and in the world outside us we see truth and error interwoven, crossing and intersecting, governing between them both our behaviour and our peace of mind. There is darkness on the face of our deeps, and it is only the spirit of Truth moving that can bring us out of error into the light of truth, through the continual action and reaction between the self and its environment.

It is when we become aware of this continuous interplay between ourselves and our world that we most definitely feel the need for a purpose of our own. Carlyle said, "Wheresoever thou findest disorder, there is thine eternal enemy: attack him swiftly, subdue him, make order of him." These words make a clear and suitable theme for this concluding chapter of our discussion.

When a creature is dead it can no longer exert any influence upon its surroundings, for it is oblivious of them. It lies supine and inert until it is moved by some external, mechanical force. Material things also are altogether at the mercy of their surroundings. A cannon-ball in a museum lies still, making no movement or demonstration. It can be moved by an applied force, but it has no power to exert force.

Living organisms are known to be alive by the fact that they can change their condition and to some extent their environment by the exercise of inward energies. Urged by the impetus to self-preservation, they react to the conditions around them, and as a result of their responsiveness they acquire strength and increasing knowledge of the world they live in.

The conditions in which we live affect us in such a way that we must pay attention to them and deal with them in some manner. At the same time, the life-impulse within us urges us to respond to our environment with active energy, not merely obeying its various challenges and incentives, but learning from them to increase our adaptability and enlarge our circle of experience.

For a human being merely to obey ' nature,' by responding with passive acquiescence to every impulse, is to live on the level of the animal creation ; for that is what the animals do. Man's privilege is to exercise his power of selection and discrimination, choosing from among the many features of his environment those that will most constructively promote his growth and increase his capacity to live. We have the power, not only to obey the laws of Nature, but to understand something of their meaning, and so to counteract one kind of natural activity by another. We are not to be passively obedient to our environment, but active in co-operation with it by finding out what its various impulses mean and obeying the 'spirit' instead of the 'letter' of the law.

It is by exercising this power of thought and selection that we have accumulated vast stores of knowledge about the world, in the realm of art, science, invention and literature.

Thus the development of our lives, as individuals and as a race, depends upon our willingness to obey two conditions that Nature has set: first, we must be willing to respond actively to the challenges and incentives by which life quickens our powers into vitality. Secondly, we must discriminate between the various impulses through which our environment incites us, so that we become able to discern the meanings of our various experiences, and respond to those that will most readily increase our understanding and promote our progress to mental and spiritual maturity.

These are the conditions upon which all human progress depends. Those who do not take them into account are building on sand. Just as at an early stage of evolution living creatures emerged from a vegetative state into a mobile one because hunger made movement or death the only alternatives, so our own incompleteness or unfulfilment is a kind of spiritual hunger through which Nature helps to lure us to greater discoveries and a greater capacity for living experience.

In other words, our main business in life is to create order out of disorder, by using our various powers to investigate our surroundings and understand the meanings of our experiences. Just as young animals go out adventuring, exploring and questioning in order at length to be able to live at peace because they feel ‘ at home ’ in their environments, so we also are required by nature to fulfil ourselves by making our lives voyages of discovery. Whenever we find disorder in ourselves or in the world, we have found the enemy to be attacked, subdued and brought as far as may be into the service of our higher ends.

Life seems to hold us poised between two worlds. The world as it is would persuade us to accept the ready security of living passively, indulging our more animal appetites and resting on the achievements of the past. The world that is to be challenges us to forsake present comfort for future attainment. It fills us with discontent at our own incompleteness. It makes us uncomfortable, and invites us to sacrifice the past for the sake of the future. Yet in return for our willingness to lay aside assurance and safety, it rewards us with more vitality, until we discover by experience that the way of self-sacrifice is the way to spiritual resurrection. That is a paradox: but it is the paradox of truth. As Bunyan has put it:

> We will come again to this Valley of Humiliation. It is the best and most fruitful piece of ground in all those parts. Indeed it is a very fruitful soil and doth bring forth by handfuls. This is a valley that nobody walks in but those that love a pilgrim's life.

We began our study with the simple question: "Can Psychology Help?" At the outset many of us may have felt that that was a very simple question, to be answered plainly with a 'Yes' or 'No.'

But questions apparently simple are not always resolved by the simplest answers, and this one has proved to be of that sort, for we have had to explore many subjects in turn to find out what psychology is, before we could begin to form any conclusions about whether it could be of service to mankind, and if so, how.

What meaning do we now attach to this word 'psychology'? Has this discussion helped us to understand it better and encouraged us to continue the study?

"Can Psychology Help?" The question reminds us of the small nests of brightly-coloured lacquer boxes with which many of us have played in childhood; for there seems always to be a question within a question, as there was a box within a box, when the task of answering is begun. It has been so in this book.

We have had to pay some attention to the world outside, to the family into which we were born, the social group in which we live, and to ourselves as units in that group. We have had to consider our physical and mental being, the way we look at life, the four cardinal ways of self-expression that are available. We have examined our temperamental trends, our liability to bias both in thoughts and judgments, our responsibilities and privileges, and the necessary adjustments we have to make in order to attain mental and emotional maturity. Now, with 'the end in view,' we come to focus the whole at a central point, the pivot of self-expression, our aim or will-to-live.

Like the tiny, fragile box at the centre of the nest of boxes, our 'will' is delicately fashioned and fragile; easily put out of action. By will-to-live is not meant, now, the thrust of physical energy that keeps our hearts beating, our lungs expanding and our limbs active. We refer to the quality in our nature that encourages us to open our minds to all the winds of emotional chance and change, meeting the stress and strain of life with courage, and being willing to acknowledge our errors, realise their meaning, and, if necessary, start our thinking and living all over again without repining. This central 'willingness-to-live' is like the magnetic compass of our living. From it we take our direction. It exerts its power to sustain us when life buffets us with storms. It enables us to travel life's highway, unswerved from our deliberate purposes and loyalties, even when we are beset with great trial and suffering.

It is in the persistent urge towards fullness and completeness of this ‘ will-to-live ’ that we may discern the reality of a spiritual universe interpenetrating and overruling the physical world: for it is a will-to-live-*meaningfully*; it infects our loyalties with a sense of supreme values that we must not betray. When we accept the intimations it gives us and obey the constraints it lays upon our spirits, we become aware of the reality of this other world; another order of being which is supernatural and abiding. It invests our experience with worth. It sheds a light on our path. It lives through all chance and change that we encounter, giving to our various experiences a meaning and continuity they would otherwise lack. It is eternal.

All down the ages there have been prophets and seers to whom have been vouchsafed visions of this life which is ‘ eternal in the Heavens.’ Some have given us hints and inklings of what they have seen; others have been able to tell us more clearly and precisely what is the true quality of our living nature, and to what kind of destiny we are called. And even we ourselves have ‘ in sundry places and divers manners ’ seen the supernatural at work. We, too, have had our moments of surprise, when the darkness has become light for us and the rough places have been made plain. More and more through succeeding ages the spirits of men may become sensitive and alert to perceive the activity of this greater world impinging upon the affairs of time and space. With increasing intelligence has come greater insight; each new discovery of thought only makes mankind more aware of the mystery surrounding his knowledge, and compels him to bow in homage before the transcendent Reality that overrules.

As we pursue our round of duty from day to day, dull and distasteful as it often is, we are fortified and encouraged when we are able to see it as a discipline by which our most real qualities are strengthened. This is right. For a time our lives seem to move with the sluggishness of a rather torpid stream, but now and then a change comes: the stream flows swift and clear, reinforced by a strong wave of sympathy or love, and for awhile we do really live. The channels of our self-expression become wide and deep, knowing no limits but those imposed by the law of love. In such moments we realise the worth of the earlier disciplines that at the time were irksome; for we realise that in them were conserved the power and vitality that now are working harmoniously in our lives. If we had evaded the trial, the strength would not have been ours when we needed it. Out of suffering we may have created sympathy. Out of failure has come our chance to succeed. Out of our trials may have emerged our strength to love and serve. Then our insight assures us that the discipline was worth while; behind a harsh mask was the face of love, and in the law of love all other laws are fulfilled and transcended.

Perhaps we do not make the best use of our golden moments of insight and illumination. If our spirits were more reverent we should perhaps wonder more at the meaning of life's fullness when we feel it; or we might learn to cherish the memory of our great experiences, joining them on some thread of imagination, so that together they would form a strong chain of experiences in which we should discern the essential unity of our lives, and in them a meaning of deep significance.

Most children have felt the enchantment of being taken out into the fields in the early summer, there to play at will. Tiring of their active pursuits, little children will sit down and make for themselves daisy-chains, taking them home when bedtime comes. Next morning the flowers have withered and the chain is crumpled. Someone says, "Throw it away." But when the child sees the remnants of yesterday's happiness, its uppermost thought finds expression in the request, "You will take me there again, won't you?"

We should be wise if we were to string our memories of life's most expressive moments on a chain, and see in it the promise that yet again we shall go to the open country where life is free and restful and our hearts are filled with laughter and song.

We have a certain power to choose from among our experiences those we will dwell upon, and others that we will discard and consign to the rubbish-heap of forgotten things. This power of choice is made keener by use. If we select out of life's experiences for remembrance those that are fragrant and blessed, our disposition will be to impart their fragrance to present experience. If we choose the elements that are harsh and unpleasant in our past, to keep them in mind, we shall soon find ourselves constrained to see only the unpleasant and hurtful in all that we have yet to go through.

The quality of our 'willingness to live' governs the kind of value we derive from our various experiences, and the aims and purposes we elect to follow. What we are to-day is the result, not of what we have passed through, but of the meanings we have seen in the events of our past. What we shall be to-morrow depends, not upon what may happen to us, but upon the ends we determine to make those happenings serve.

In one of the Gospels there is written a short life-story which illustrates extremely well what happens when a personality is well directed because its 'will-to-live' is allowed creative and wholesome expression.

The story is about a pearl merchant. As every collector knows, the art of discrimination between precious stones is one acquired only by experience. Each individual must make his own beginning as a novice, and acquire expertness in judgment as increasing familiarity with the objects of his study gives insight and alertness to the critical faculty. One cannot become an authority by buying the goodwill of a business. Each one must exercise his personal powers to learn the art of appreciation. Success is to be won only at the expense of many mistakes in judging.

So, the man who would become a connoisseur of pearls must be forever on the alert. From the day when he begins to learn his craft, he must never relax his efforts to quicken his powers of selective perception. He must never tire of looking, spotting flaws, appraising and comparing. He must continually check his own conclusions by the judgment of others. Thus and only thus will the collector of precious stones at length grow wise and shrewd.

Bearing this in mind, then, read the Bible story, which runs thus:

> Again the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

In the life of the race and of the individual, the will-to-live expresses itself in a divine discontent; in an increasing quest for a quality of wholeness always beyond what is already attained. By showing us something of the meaning of our behaviour, psychology can help us to give the ship of our lives a straight direction towards that for which we search. Only we can decide whether we will seek pearls.

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