

Happiness is but a dream

Still from the fount of joy's delicious springs
Some bitter o'er the flowers its bubbling venom flings.

— Lord George Gordon Byron¹

Go, deck the board with damask fine,
Cheer of the best, and mirth and wine:
Fill fast the cups, and in their train
Bring perfumes, wreaths — 'Tis all in vain!
'Mid the full flood of revelries,
Some drop of bitterness will rise
To dash the pleasure of the hour,
And poison each delightful flower.

— Francis Henry King²

After Blavatsky

Happiness has been defined by John Stuart Mill as the state of absence of opposition. Manu gives the definition in more forcible terms:³ . . .

Every kind of subjugation to another
is pain and subjugation to one's self is happiness:
in brief, this is to be known as
the characteristic marks of the two.

Now it is universally admitted that the whole system of Nature is moving in a particular direction, and this direction, we are taught, is determined by the composition of two forces, namely, the one acting from that pole of existence ordinarily called "matter" towards the other pole called "spirit," and the other in the opposite direction. The very fact that Nature is moving shows that these two forces are not equal in magnitude. The plane on which the activity of the first force predominates is called in occult treatises the "ascending arc," and the corresponding plane of the activity of the other force is styled the "descending arc." A little reflection will show that the work of evolution begins on the descending arc and works its way upwards through the ascending arc. From this it follows that the force directed towards spirit is the one which must, though not without hard struggle, ultimately prevail. This is the great directing energy of Nature, and although disturbed by the operation of the antagonistic force, it is this that gives the law to her; the other is merely its negative aspect, for convenience regarded as a separate agent. If an individual attempts to

¹ Byron: *Childe Harold*, Cant. 1, st. 82

² *King's Quotation* 1550

³ [*Laws of Manu*, IV 160.]



move in a direction other than that in which Nature is moving, that individual is sure to be crushed, sooner or later, by the enormous pressure of the opposing force. We need not to say that such a result would be the very reverse of pleasurable. The only way therefore, in which happiness might be attained, is by merging one's nature in great Mother Nature, and following the direction in which she herself is moving: this again, can only be accomplished by assimilating man's individual conduct with the triumphant force of Nature, the other force being always overcome with terrific catastrophes. The effort to assimilate the individual with the universal law is popularly known as the practice of morality. Obedience to this universal law, after ascertaining it, is true religion, which has been defined by Lord Buddha "as the realization of the True."⁴

Since happiness is but a dream on earth, let us be resigned, at least. To do this, we have but to follow the precepts of our respective great and noble Masters on earth. The East had her Sakyamuni Buddha, "the light of Asia"; the West her Teacher, and the Sermon on the Mount; both uttered the same great, because universal and immortal, truths. Listen to them: —

"Crush out your pride," saith the One. "Speak evil of no one, but be thankful to him who blames thee, for he renders thee service by showing thee thy faults. Kill thine arrogance. Be kind and gentle to all; merciful to every living creature. Forgive those who harm thee, help those who need thy help, resist not thine enemies. Destroy thy passions, for they are the armies of Mara (Death), and scatter them as the elephant scatters a bamboo hut. Lust not, desire nothing; all the objects thou pinest for, the world over, could no more satisfy thy lust, than all the sea water could quench thy thirst. That which alone satisfies man is Wisdom — be wise. Be ye without hatred, without selfishness, and without hypocrisy. Be tolerant with the intolerant, charitable and compassionate with the hardhearted, gentle with the violent, detached from everything amidst those who are attached to all, in this world of illusion. Harm no mortal creature. Do that which thou wouldest like to see done by all others."

"Be humble," saith the Other. Resist not evil, "judge not that ye be not judged." Be merciful, forgive them who wrong thee, love thine enemies. Lust not; not even in the secrecy of thy heart. Give to him that asketh thee. Be wise and perfect. Do not as the hypocrites do; but, "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." [Luke vi, 31.]⁵

Now it is a fundamental doctrine of Theosophy that the "separateness" which we feel between ourselves and the world of living beings around us is an illusion, not a reality. In very deed and truth, all men are one, not in a feeling of sentimental gush and hysterical enthusiasm, but in sober earnest. As all Eastern philosophy teaches, there is but ONE SELF in all the infinite Universe, and what we men call "self" is but the illusionary reflection of the ONE SELF in the heaving waters of earth. True Occultism is

⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MORALITY AND PANTHEISM) V pp. 340-41; [Later printings made clear that Mohini Mohun Chatterji was the author of this article.]

⁵ *Ibid.* (FORLORN HOPES) XII p. 392



the destruction of the false idea of Self, and therefore true spiritual perfection and knowledge are nothing else but the complete identification of our finite “selves” with the Great All. It follows, therefore, that no spiritual progress at all is possible except by and through the bulk of Humanity. It is only when the whole of Humanity has attained happiness that the individual can hope to become permanently happy — for the individual is an inseparable part of the Whole.

Hence there is no contradiction whatever between the altruistic maxims of Theosophy and its injunction to kill out all desire for material things, to strive after spiritual perfection. For spiritual perfection and spiritual knowledge can only be reached on the spiritual plane; in other words, only in that state in which all sense of separateness, all selfishness, all feeling of personal interest and desire, has been merged in the wider consciousness of the unity of Mankind.

This shows also that no blind submission to the commands of another can be demanded, or would be of any use. Each individual must learn for himself, through trial and suffering, to discriminate what is beneficial to Humanity; and in proportion as he develops spiritually, *i.e.*, conquers all selfishness, his mind will open to receive the guidance of the Divine Monad within him, his Higher Self, for which there is neither Past nor Future, but only an eternal Now.⁶

After Cicero

He is the happy man, to whom nothing in this life seems intolerable enough to depress him; nothing exquisite enough to transport him unduly. For what is there in this life that can appear great to him who has acquainted himself with eternity and the utmost extent of the universe? For what is there in human knowledge, or the short span of this life, that can appear great to a wise man? whose mind is always so upon its guard that nothing can befall him which is unforeseen, nothing which is unexpected, nothing, in short, which is new. Such a man takes so exact a survey on all sides of him, that he always knows the proper place and spot to live in free from all the troubles and annoyances of life, and encounters every accident that fortune can bring upon him with a becoming calmness. Whoever conducts himself in this manner will be free from grief, and from every other perturbation; and a mind free from these feelings renders men completely happy; whereas a mind disordered and drawn off from right and unerring reason loses at once, not only its resolution, but its health.⁷

A man, then, who is temperate and consistent, free from fear or grief, and uninfluenced by any immoderate joy or desire, cannot be otherwise than happy; but a wise man is always so, therefore he is always happy.⁸

⁶ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THEOSOPHICAL QUERIES) XI pp. 104-5

⁷ Cicero: *Tusculan Disputations*, IV xvii; (tr. Yonge)

⁸ *Ibid.* V xvi



After Judge

. . . it must be said that there are such cycles of woe — from our own standpoint — just as the fact that I have no amusements, and nothing else but work in the T.S., seems a great penance to those who like their pleasures. I, on the contrary, take pleasure and peace in the “self-denial,” as they call it. Therefore, it must follow that he who enters the secret Path finds his peace and pleasure in endless work for ages for Humanity.⁹

After Plotinus

It would be absurd to think that happiness begins and ends with the living-body: happiness is the possession of the good of life: it is centred therefore in Soul, is an Act of the Soul — and not of all the Soul at that: for it certainly is not characteristic of the vegetative soul, the soul of growth; that would at once connect it with the body.

A powerful frame, a healthy constitution, even a happy balance of temperament, these surely do not make felicity; in the excess of these advantages there is, even, the danger that the man be crushed down and forced more and more within their power. There must be a sort of counter-pressure in the other direction, towards the noblest: the body must be lessened, reduced, that the veritable man may show forth, the man behind the appearances.

Let the earth-bound man be handsome and powerful and rich, and so apt to this world that he may rule the entire human race: still there can be no envying him, the fool of such lures. Perhaps such splendours could not, from the beginning even, have gathered to the Sage; but if it should happen so, he of his own action will lower his state, if he has any care for his true life; the tyranny of the body he will work down or wear away by inattention to its claims; the rulership he will lay aside. While he will safeguard his bodily health, he will not wish to be wholly untried in sickness, still less never to feel pain: if such troubles should not come to him of themselves, he will wish to know them, during youth at least: in old age, it is true, he will desire neither pains nor pleasures to hamper him; he will desire nothing of this world, pleasant or painful; his one desire will be to know nothing of the body. If he should meet with pain he will pit against it the powers he holds to meet it; but pleasure and health and ease of life will not mean any increase of happiness to him nor will their contraries destroy or lessen it.¹⁰

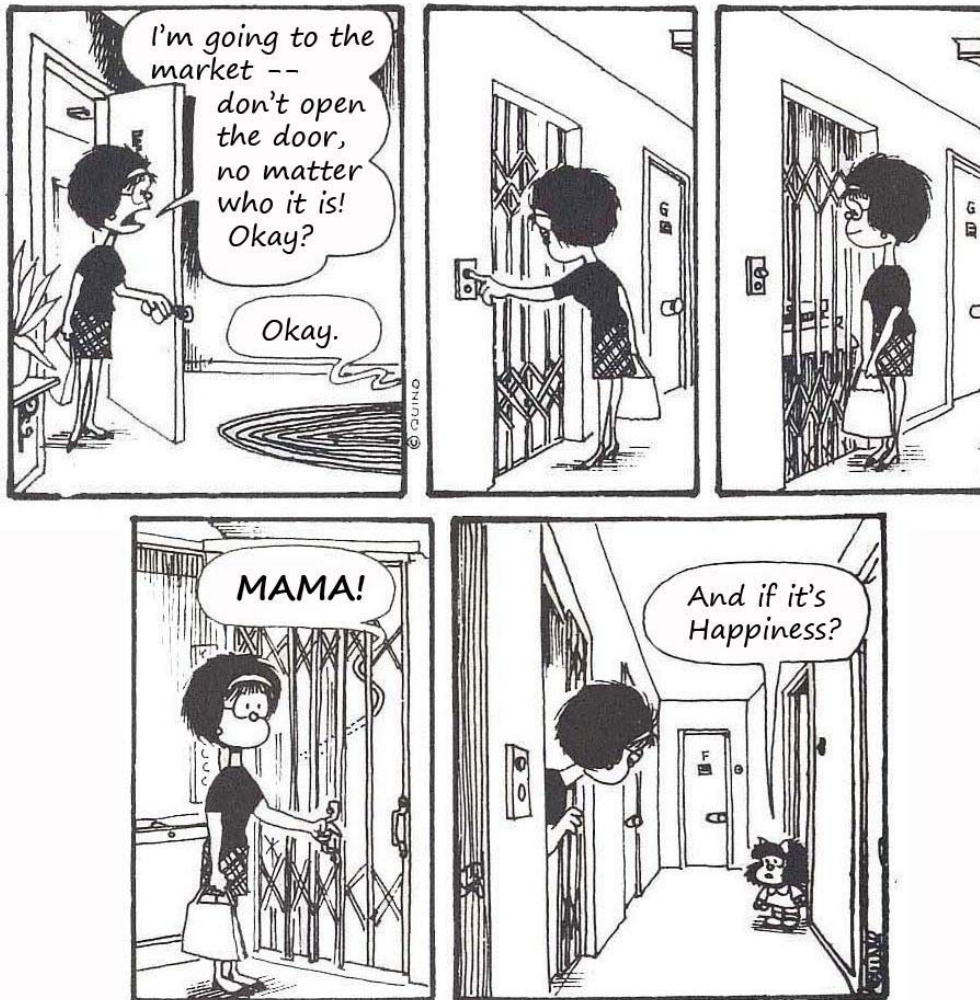
⁹ Judge W.Q. *Letters that have helped me*. [Bk. II, Extracts “On Occult Philosophy”] Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1946; p. 116; [on *The Voice of the Silence*, and the cycles of woe undergone by the Arhan who remains to help mankind.]

¹⁰ Plotinus: *Ennead* I, iv “On True Happiness,” ¶ 14; (tr. MacKenna & Page)



After Ruskin

Remember, then, that I, at least, have warned *you*, that the happiness of your life, and its power, and its part and rank in earth or in heaven, depend on the way you pass your days now. They are not to be sad days: far from that, the first duty of young people is to be delighted and delightful; but they are to be in the deepest sense solemn days. There is no solemnity so deep, to a rightly-thinking creature, as that of dawn. But not only in that beautiful sense, but in all their character and method, they are to be solemn days.¹¹



[Mafalda expecting Happiness]
Joaquín Salvador Lavado

¹¹ John Ruskin: *Sesame and Lilies*, (3rd ed. of 1871) Preface, ¶ 8

