

## The Scientific Mind in Social Work.

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AT least a measure of scientific training should be regarded as essential for the efficient social worker. By a scientific training I do not mean an advanced knowledge of any particular branch of science, but that kind of training which produces a scientific habit of mind—which at least teaches us to observe correctly, to trace causation, and to reason logically. It has been said that there are two kinds of science—one which deals with forms, the other with what are usually, if somewhat loosely, termed causes and effects. So among the benefits which a scientific training confers are that, first, it teaches us to bring our minds into direct and close relations to facts or phenomena, to observe these exactly, also to classify the contents of our knowledge with care; secondly, it teaches us how to draw conclusions correctly, either from particular facts, or from collections of similar facts which have been carefully sifted and classified. Again, it prevents us from speaking of events happening by chance or by accident; it reminds us that for every phenomenon there is, or has been, some cause, whether that cause is or is not known. It gradually convinces us of what has been termed the universality of law, by which is meant an order, whether known or unknown to us, which pervades every sphere of the universe; it also prevents us from confusing “law” with “force.” But above all a scientific habit of mind teaches us to reason correctly. On scientific reasoning general rules are drawn from the careful observation of many particular cases (the method of induction); when these general rules are thus established, then conclusions (affecting conduct) are deduced from them (the method of deduction). I may say at once that one result of our applying scientific methods to social work will prevent us being content with observing symptoms, and also with being content to palliate these, instead of seeking for the

causes or sources of social evil, and of doing all we can to remove or counteract them.

Attention has recently been drawn to the difference between "sentiment" and "reason," as these are applied to social problems and social work. It has been stated that among most primitive peoples sentiment is almost the sole factor by which conclusions are arrived at, and that among them logical inference is practically unknown; also that the development of science is little more than a widening of the sphere of logic, and a narrowing of the sphere of sentiment in the formation of human judgments.

If by sentiment is meant "feeling," I should strongly dissent from the last of these assertions; indeed, I should suspect that the one who uttered it has unwittingly fallen into the not uncommon error of confusing "law" with "force." I believe that true and right feeling is a great moral force—indeed, in almost all kinds of social work it may be regarded as the driving or impelling power both to, and in, the work—that without this power acting upon us we should probably neither enter into the work nor persevere in it.

But while we are impelled by feeling—and the feeling of compassion is an emanation from "*L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*"—we must be guided by reason. The first may be compared to the engines of a ship, the second to the steering gear, including the knowledge and judgment of the captain.

The connection between emotion and morality is too large a subject to enter upon here. Certainly we cannot entirely dis sever them. A thoughtful writer has asserted that the manner in which, and the extent to which, suffering of any kind appeals to us are measures of our moral condition. Another and more recent writer has urged that all our moral judgments have ultimately an emotional source.

Of all books upon social problems or upon social work the Bible is still incomparably the best. It is the most "human" in the highest and fullest sense of the word. One reason for its

superiority lies in its wonderful combination of feeling and reason. It ignores no part of our one complex human nature. This is especially true of the New Testament and the Prophets, and, from a somewhat different point of view, of the Psalms; it is also true of "the Law" and the Wisdom Literature. In the New Testament and the Prophets we find a perfect conviction of the existence of a Divine moral law and of the constant action of Divine moral forces, against which man hurls himself in vain. We find also a perfectly fearless facing of the facts, including the processes of life or experience. From one point of view the Bible may be said to be a commentary on the words, "Things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why should we seek to deceive ourselves?" In other words, the Bible reveals and inculcates a perfectly scientific view of life in the sphere of character and conduct. The scientific-mindedness of its writers is beyond question. If we take only the Sermon on the Mount, what is it but an enactment and explanation of the Divine Law in the moral sphere, a sphere which is certainly not regarded as being under a different, or less stable, or less trustworthy governance than is the physical sphere? Of course, in the one Divine Law there are many precepts. The Sermon begins by stating the conditions of true welfare from the ideal or Divine point of view, which it terms blessedness, and these conditions involve obedience to various fragments of the one Divine Law for man. Throughout the Sermon Christ insists upon the inexorable results, through the operation of law, of certain kinds of conduct—social and unsocial. Indeed, one very helpful way of regarding our Lord's teaching office is to regard Him as the revealer of the Divine Law in the moral sphere or order. As in His Person He came to fulfil, so in His teaching He asserted, the inevitable fulfilment of all law and all true "prophecy." And prophecy is sometimes a revelation of law, while at other times it is exhortation to obey the law. The connection between law and prophecy—and law is not seldom actually of the nature of prophecy—lies in both being a revelation of the Divine will

towards man. This conception is, again, entirely that of the scientific mind.

The same is eminently true of St. Paul, who saw more clearly than any of his predecessors the organic nature of society. His analogy between society and the human body, the various details of this analogy, and the practical lessons which he draws both from the analogy as a whole, and from its details, should be remembered by every social worker. Also, in the course of St. Paul's teaching, as in our Lord's, we frequently find utterances of Divine eternal laws for man's welfare, with both comments upon them and exhortations to obey them. An interesting fact about many of these sayings, both of Christ's and St. Paul's, is that they assert laws of social welfare which modern students of sociology have arrived at by the inductive method.

The recognition of the place or office of feeling is equally present in the New Testament, as it is in the Prophets and the Psalms. No one can read the books of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel without seeing this. To recognize the reality, the power, and the place of feeling as a factor in social work is not to be unscientific. The power and effect of feeling are just as verifiable by experience as is the existence of an irrefragable law. The force behind all the work, for instance, of both Christ and St. Paul is their love for man. It is quite unnecessary to give proofs of this; every page of our Lord's history, every chapter of St. Paul's writings, bears witness to its truth. Christ's life, and the lives of hundreds of Christ's followers, who have lived the true philanthropist's life, and died the martyr's death, have proved not only the reality, but the strength of their love, and "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Also we find that in the New Testament writers the practical recognition of law—that which issues in obedience, and this force of love, which issues in philanthropic conduct, are revealed as in absolute harmony. Feeling with them works in directions indicated by law, and therefore the recognition of law guarantees

the wise expenditure of feeling along the paths of highest usefulness. In our enterprises feeling is too often not regulated by the discernment of law ; it is apt to run in unauthorized channels ; too often it dissipates its force, and fails to do its appointed work ; through refusing to be guided to a wise end it is wasted, and effects no practical result.

All this shows that when we plead for a "scientific view" of society, and for "scientific methods" of social work, we are appealing for the most *Christian* view and for truly Christian methods. Yet this is not generally recognized. At a meeting to inaugurate a certain philanthropic effort, I was pleading for a scientific method of procedure when a brother clergyman rebuked me for "mixing up charity and science," and informed me that "these must be kept apart, for they had nothing to do with each other."

By taking the scientific view we shall, like St. Paul, regard society as an "organism"—we shall recognize what has been termed its "solidarity." But while we regard society as analogous to an organism, we shall be careful not to push analogies, which all too readily suggest themselves to us, too far. Both to the propagation and defence of truth much harm has resulted from the use of specious analogies, such as upon examination have been found unequal to bear the strain which has been put upon them. It has been said that the three chief characteristics of an organism are :

1. It is a whole, all of whose parts are intrinsically related to it.
2. It develops from within.
3. It has reference to an end which is involved in its own nature.

A little reflection will convince us that society fulfils all these three conditions, also that to remember these three conditions (which we may regard as laws governing an organism) will be a most helpful guide in directing social effort. The first warns us that we cannot interfere with any part of an organism—*e.g.*, any member of a society—without affecting the other parts. We cannot isolate a member of a family, or a family in a street,

we cannot deal with either in such a way that we affect it alone. Our action may be directed towards an individual, but the effect of our action is bound to be social. The second characteristic of an organism will show us that any permanent progress must come from within, at least must work within (though of course it may be a response to an external stimulus); it must not be due simply to permanent pressure from outside. A scientific social worker, with an insight into human nature gained from careful observation, knows that while little may be expected from what is done *for* the poor, much may be expected from what they are encouraged to do for themselves. Thus the scientific social worker's aim must be to make self-effort possible—a preliminary operation frequently forgotten—and then to rouse potential self-effort into steady action. If we remember that society is like an organism, we shall be careful to remember that we must assist the possibility and process of the development of the whole human nature, and nothing less than this. Countless failures have arisen from forgetfulness of this law.

In works dealing with the social question the word "sociology" is coming more and more into use, and we are being reminded that a "scientific" knowledge of sociology is indispensable to the social worker. Up to the present time the study of sociology as a science has been comparatively neglected in this country, that is, as compared with the attention bestowed upon it in the United States, in France, or in Germany. Even now there is no "chair" of sociology either at Oxford or Cambridge. But we are rapidly learning the value of this branch of study, and every day increasing attention is devoted to it.

But the social worker does not study society merely as an interesting field of investigation; though few studies can compare in interest with that of sociology in its various branches. The social worker studies society in order to influence and reform it. But "society" is composed of human nature, hence the social worker must be a deep student of human nature.

Again, in the study of human nature, the most important factor is the study of mental phenomena, including mental processes—*e.g.*, the ideas of people and the growth of these ideas, also beliefs, feelings, tastes, etc. The social reformer must study these, for they are the material upon and through which he has to work ; indeed, only through influencing these can he hope to influence conduct. But to know how to influence the ideas of people most satisfactorily he must have some knowledge of psychology, which may be defined as the science of all kinds of mental operations, and which deals not only with thoughts, but with feelings and emotions, with the will, with sensations of pleasure and pain, with the powers of perception and reasoning, with attention, memory, etc. For one reason at least an elementary scientific knowledge of psychology is especially useful to the social worker, who, from the very nature of his object, is bound to be a teacher—that is, one who wishes to find an entrance into people's minds for new ideas. Psychology teaches us how to do this. We may of course accomplish our purpose without a conscious knowledge of psychology, but in that case possibly only after many failures. If psychology does nothing else, it will show us by what roads not to travel, in what directions not to make effort. In the past social workers have not been sufficiently careful to appeal to the highest faculty in man—*i.e.*, to the mind or reason. They have too often appealed merely to the feelings, the emotions, the appetite, even to the pocket. But if we would affect people permanently for good we must appeal to the mind.

In no branch of social work is the scientific habit of mind and scientific method more essential than in the work of investigation. Here we require the greatest care, accuracy, and patience. We must decide what is, and what is not, essential. We must put aside all kinds of prejudice and mere hearsay, and determine to get at the truth, not merely by collecting, but by sifting, all possible evidence. We must pursue the history of a "case"—that is, of some social phenomenon—into the past. We must find out and estimate the strength of all the various forces

or influences—physical, moral, mental, social, and economic—which have been at work to produce the present conditions; also which of these are still at work. To leave out even one of these may vitiate our solution of the problem. Among physical forces, we may find sickness in one or more members of the family, want of fresh air, insufficient food, etc., all tending to lower the physical vitality, and tending also to lower energy or power of effort; among mental forces, will come education, or the want of it; among social forces, we must place the influence of friends and acquaintances, that of the public-house, or club, or neighbourhood. Besides all these there are the economic forces, which will include various trade conditions, lack of employment, etc. Lastly, there are the religious influences, or the want of them, which will affect character. I enumerate all these because I wish to show how extremely involved are the problems with which the social worker has to deal—how many are the influences which have to be taken into account. It is what a mathematician would call the number of variants or of variable factors entering into the problem which makes all dealing with human beings so difficult. In our efforts to bring about an improvement in people, we have to think what evil factors can be eliminated, and what salutary factors can be substituted for them—*e.g.*, whether an individual or a family can be taken out of an unwholesome physical, or moral environment, and placed in healthy surroundings.

Again, a scientific habit of mind is necessary to estimate correctly the resources and the needs of people who are said to be in distress. Careful estimation of these will often prevent unintentional cruelty—*e.g.*, giving half a crown to a family of, say, four persons who are in absolute want, without taking the trouble to think what the utmost purchasing power of half a crown is, or for how many hours it will provide sufficient food for four hungry people. A scientifically-minded worker—one who is accustomed to calculate correctly—will know within narrow limits what the income of a family of a given number of persons in a particular town or district must be in order to



maintain those people in physical efficiency. He or she will know the cost of the food per week which is necessary for a man doing hard manual labour, for a woman, and for each child, when the age of the child is known. He will know what to allow (according to the locality) for rent, also for fire and light, household necessities and clothing. Suppose I come across a family of two adults and three children living in a cottage in a town, suppose I find them all well nourished, tidily dressed, with fire and light, and I am told that the total earnings of this family do not amount to more than seventeen shillings a week, I should be justified in assuming that the total earnings had not been divulged, or that they were receiving help—at least, occasionally—from some source unknown to me. In the country the case would be different: there the house-rent would probably be half a crown less than in the town; there might be some garden ground, from which vegetables could be raised, also something might be made by keeping pigs or poultry. The point on which I would lay stress is this—that in every case with which we attempt to deal we must try to discover all the various factors entering into it, and we must try to find out the power or value of each one of these.

Another part of the social worker's task in which the exercise of scientific-mindedness is essential is in deciding whether any particular case is or is not "helpable." The monetary resources of most workers are limited; the number of cases of poverty known to them is often large. There is always a temptation to help as many cases as possible. This may mean such a dissipation of means that no one case is adequately assisted. Here I would say that, while general rules which embody principles are useful, ultimately each case must be judged by itself. Experience will teach how to divide temporary from chronic cases. Few parochial "poor" funds can bear the strain of many pensions, for a pension, if it is to do real good, and not to be actually a source of temptation, must be adequate. So it is inadequate "out-relief" that frequently does so much harm. Few members of Boards of Guardians think sufficiently scientifically to realize

that an inadequate regular allowance of out-relief—the customary half a crown, three shillings, or even five shillings a week—frequently not only perpetuates evil conditions, but both aggravates and tends to spread them. In regard to out-relief, there should be but two alternatives—either an adequate allowance or absolute refusal; it should certainly never be, as so often at the present time, a grant in aid of wages, or as supplementary to insufficient (*i.e.*, “sweated”) wages. This may mean that large numbers of the poor are being wronged by a general lowering of wages in the neighbourhood, and that certain individuals (manufacturers, middlemen, etc.) obtain the labours of others at less than a fair wage—*i.e.*, at the expense of the community. The best use which can be made of “charity” as opposed to poor relief is to help people to tide over a period of temporary misfortune—temporary sickness or loss of work—and to replace them in a position in which they can, by their own efforts, support themselves. Then it is a great temptation to both Poor Law Guardians and charitable workers to think of the effect of their action only upon the particular case they are helping. The scientific mind remembers the organic nature of society, and consequently the “epidemic” effects of both charity and Poor Law relief.

One general law which the scientifically-minded social worker will not forget is that human nature, as certainly as any physical body in the universe, follows the line of least resistance. Examples of this law, when once it is grasped, will be found to be almost innumerable, and it will explain the reason for an equally large number of actions and courses of conduct. The following instances are suggestive: “It is generally easier to alleviate symptoms than to remove causes; it is easier to lean upon charity than to make effort to find work; it is easier to follow the fashion, especially in public opinion, than to think out a problem for oneself.”

This plea for the exercise of scientific-mindedness in social work is a plea for more than the exercise of greater thoughtful-

ness and for action which is based on the fullest and most accurate knowledge available. It is really a plea for the recognition of the existence of law and causation in a realm in which their existence is too seldom recognized in conduct. The majority of educated people accept the existence of law in the physical world and act accordingly. They accept it in such matters as health and disease; but when they enter the moral sphere—which is intimately bound up with the social, when they come to consider questions of character, most people fail to see that so-called moral causes and effects, moral forces and influences, moral failures and successes, the growth and deterioration of character, etc., are all equally governed by law. Only in this sphere the laws may be far less well understood than in the physical sphere, because, as I have pointed out, the number, nature, and variety of the forces are greater. In the education of a child there are physical, mental, moral, social, and religious forces at work. The scientific educationist does not admit that while physical, and, possibly, mental forces may be governed by law, this is not true of other kinds of forces. We must believe that the Divine Law pervades every sphere of the universe, and that no sphere is outside the range of its operation. God is not the God of confusion. Even what we term “spiritual” influences (producing moral results) will ultimately be found always to act in strict obedience to law, though it may be long before the exact nature and range of that law is fully understood. And just as man uses the great forces of physical nature according to certain known and fixed laws, for definite ends, so shall we in time employ a similar process in the higher sphere of conduct.

As the architect, who wishes to build some great and permanent structure, or as the engineer who wishes to build some great work of skill, like a bridge or a mountain railway, must know and take careful account of the nature and behaviour of both the forces and materials he wishes to utilize—the laws governing the action of the former and the strength and suitability of the latter—so must it be with the social worker, who

aims at building up character, and who seeks the welfare of individuals, families, cities, and states. Failure in an engineering enterprise means either ignorance of, or inattention to, some law, some force, or the nature of some material. So in social work the want of social welfare means either ignorance of, or disobedience to, some moral or economic law or force. Moral and social failures do not happen "by chance." They frequently arise through our underestimating the strength of some opposing force. The many disappointments in our social work arise from our underestimating the force of ingrained habit, whether of thought or conduct, from our forgetting what an immense expenditure of mental and moral energy is required to effect any real and permanent progress. We sometimes see, as the result of excitement, an immense apparent moral improvement (as in sickness from the use of stimulants or palliatives), but the effects soon wear off, and the social, or the moral, or the religious state, as the physical one, relapses to the old level, or, more probably, sinks still lower. Not every one that saith unto Me Lord, Lord, but he that doeth, that constantly obeyeth the Will, the Divine Law, of the Heavenly Father, the great Divine Law-giver, and which Will he has made every effort to learn and to understand, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.



### Conversion and Modern Needs.

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**I**N the CHURCHMAN of July, 1906, I put forward a defence of the doctrine of conversion in the light of modern thought. In this article I pass from the theoretical side of the question, leaving it, even as such, with much unsaid that might be said, and pass to its practical issues in the face of modern needs. Let us reserve our main thesis and work up to it. Let us ask, What sort of religion does our age require? And then it may