

equal enthusiasm or equally careful use of the information the system yields for administration.

The system has been in operation for too short a time for complete appraisal from a community-wide point of view; however, some observations are possible. The common reaction of budget committee members is much the same as agency board members. They say that they have a clearer understanding of an agency's operations—program even more than financing. More searching questions are asked in

budget reviews, relating as much to program as to finances. Most important of all, however, is the spotlight the method throws upon the agencies' services—the sole reason for its existence—and the subordination of financing to its proper role of implementing rather than controlling or dictating program. The agency knows, too, that by assessing costs it assesses services, and in the long run, by streamlining costs, the agency not only streamlines services but makes these services more effective.

# The Philosophy of Social Work

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I HAVE BEEN ASKED to speak on the subject "The Philosophy of Social Work." No one can claim to give *the* philosophy of social work, and even *a* philosophy of social work is an enterprise which by far surpasses the limits of my ability and the time given me here.

What I shall attempt is to try to develop some ethical principles of social work which may be useful to reflect on and consider for those who do the work, as well as for those of us who are only friends of such work but who may find their problems a mirror of the problems of human life generally.

Looking back in memory and with a little bit of pride at the twenty-five years of Selfhelp, its small beginning, its continuous growth, its power to last, I see a healthy tree which never tried to grow beyond the natural strength of its roots, but under whose branches many birds from many countries, and often of surprising varieties, found a transitory refuge. It might well be that this help is partly dependent on a sound philosophy of social work, a philosophy which lives not only in the minds but in the hearts of those who work as part of Selfhelp.

Therefore, when I agreed to speak today about the "philosophy of social work," I was helped by the idea that I did not have to develop concepts out of the air but had only to give a philosophical interpre-

tation of the actual work of Selfhelp and the basic convictions underlying this work—convictions which we have developed, discussed, and transformed during the twenty-five years of our existence.

The basis of all social work is the deficiency of every legal organization of society. A perfectly functioning organization of the whole society, a social mechanism embracing all mankind would not leave room for social work, but such a mechanism is unimaginable. It is prevented by two factors, one which is rooted in what we call today in philosophical jargon "man's existential predicament," his insufficiency. The second factor is rooted in man's existential nature, the uniqueness of every individual and every situation. No total regulation, even if given in the best interest of everybody, ever has adequately functioned either in war or in peace. The disorder produced by totalitarian regulations in Nazi Germany during the Second World War is equaled by the disorder in food distribution in Soviet Russia during the present cold war. Neither intellect nor character of men is adequate to such a task. And even if they were in one part of the world, interferences from other parts would spoil the functioning of a perfect social organization. The fact on which Selfhelp is based, the European immigration, was for a long time beyond the reach of any existing legal organization of social needs. Spontaneous social work was the only way to solve the immediate problem.

But this is a minor part of our question. More important is the fact that even in the best legal organization of social needs, every individual represents a unique problem. Only in a society which suppresses

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individual claims for help can this problem be put aside, and not only individual persons but also individual situations between persons, or persons and groups, transcend the reach of any legal organization. It is the greatness of man that his freedom implies a uniqueness which prohibits his being absorbed into a social machine so long as he remains man. For this reason social work is more than emergency work, unless one defines emergency as a perpetual concomitant of the human situation—and that probably is true.

Certainly all social work tries to make itself superfluous and many forms of it have done so. And in all our discussions we often have asked ourselves whether we have already reached that stage, but each time we found a large number of emergency situations which required the continuation of our way of social work.

We tried to listen to the situation as we did in the years of our foundation, and in doing so we tried one of the great laws of life, the law of "listening love." It is one of the decisive characteristics of love that it listens sensitively and reacts spontaneously. As one of our early friends, Max Wertheimer, has indicated, situations have a voiceless voice. "Things cry," he used to say, but also what cries most intensively are situations. It was the cry of a particular situation which we hardly could have ignored and which drove us to found Selfhelp. And it was not only the beginning of our history in which this happened. Again and again we had to listen sensitively and to react spontaneously. It is certain that in some situations we were not sensitive enough and reacted not spontaneously enough, but it was a fundamental principle of our philosophy of social work.

Social work is centered in individuals. The most concrete, and therefore most important representative of social work is the caseworker, and for him is valid what is valid for the whole organization in its relation to the individual. He also must listen sensitively and respond spontaneously. He is in danger of imposing instead of listening, and acting mechanically instead of reacting spontaneously. Every social worker knows this danger, but not always does he notice that he himself may have already fallen to this temptation. He should not make a harsh judgment about it, but from time to time he should restate the principle of "listening love" in order to dissolve any hardening mechanism in those who do social work.

The danger of which I am speaking is a tendency in every dealing with other persons to treat them as objects, as things to be directed and managed. It was always a symbol for me that the patients of the social

worker were called cases. I do not know whether a better word can be found, but the word "case" automatically makes of the individual an example for something general. Who, I ask all of you, wants to be a case, but we all are cases for the doctor, the counselor, the lawyer, and certainly the social worker. He is not to blame for this inescapable situation, but he would be to blame if in his dealing with the patient, with this case, he makes him into an object for whom everything is determined and in whom spontaneity is suppressed. The question is whether the caseworker is able to see in his patient not only what is comparable with other cases or identical with what he has experienced in other patients, but that he sees also the incomparable, the unique, rooted in the freedom of the patient. It is the amount of love between the social worker and the patient which here is decisive—the listening, responding, transforming love.

Here, when I use the term love, as before, I certainly do not mean the love which is emotion; nor do I think of *philia*—of friendship which only really develops between the social worker and his patient, nor do I think of the love which is *Eros*, which creates an emotional desire towards the patient that in many cases is more destructive than creative; rather, it is the love whose name in Greek is *agape* and in Latin *caritas*—the love which descends to misery and ugliness and guilt in order to elevate. This love is critical as well as accepting, and it is able to transform what it loves. It is called *caritas* in Latin, but it should not be confused with what the English form of the same word indicates today—namely, charity, a word which belongs to the many words which have a disintegrated, distorted meaning. Charity is often identical with social work, but the word "charity" has the connotation of giving for good causes in order to escape the demand of love. Charity as escape from love is the caricature and distortion of social work.

Critical love, which at the same time accepts and transforms, needs knowledge of him who is the object of love. The social worker must know his patient. But there are two different ways of knowing. We may distinguish them as our knowledge of the other one as a thing, and our knowledge of the other one as a person. The first is the cognition of external facts about somebody. The second is the participation in his inner self—as far as any human being is able to participate in another one. The first is done in detachment, through an empirical approach; the second is done through participation in the inner self of the other one. The first is unavoidable, but never enough in human relations. The second gives the real knowledge, but it is a gift given alone to the intuition of love. Here the social worker is in the situation of all

of us in our daily encounters with each other. No amount of factual knowledge about each other can replace the intuition of love, which remains love even if it judges.

A refinement of the empirical way of knowing man has been given to us by the psychology of depth, the very name of which indicates that it will be more than knowledge of an object, that it will know the person as a person, but with the means of analysis of the dynamics of his being. It is a way, one could say, between the two other ones. It is understandable that it was attached from both sides, and still is, but also that it was eagerly taken over as a tremendous help for social work, as well as for other fields. In earlier years, it often made the social worker into a dilettante psychoanalyst, just as the minister in the alliance of religion and psychological counseling is in danger of establishing himself as a minor psychoanalyst—an attitude against which I have warned my students of theology for thirty years now.

But there are two dangers in this—schematism and dogmatism. It judges the object of analysis according to schemes with a relative validity but never fully applicable, and it is dependent on the doctrines of the different psychotherapeutic schools, usually judging on the basis of one of them. As the best analyst knows, personal participation in terms of mutuality, and this means the intuitive love, is never dispensable. No matter how refined the psychoanalytic matter may be, if you don't have a point of communion with the central person of the other one, all the methods do no good in the long run. Analysis is a tool, very refined, but not without the danger of missing the end by the way in which the tool is used.

This leads to the last and perhaps the most important question—the end, the aim, of social work. The aim has several degrees. The first degree is the conquest of the immediate need, and here the factor of speed is important. The necessity of accepting and being willing to bear the consequences of possible errors, even of helping somebody who doesn't deserve help, must be taken by the social worker. It is analogous with love which has the principle that it is better missing several guilty ones than condemning one innocent one. The second degree is the self-abrogation, the self-conquest of social help, as far as possible, by guiding the person into independence.

This is attempted always in all social agencies, but we know it is not always possible. Then there is a third stage about which I want to say a few words. On the basis of the present situation as I have seen it in the young people in all the colleges and universities, and in many other people, we mainly need to give the people of our time the feeling of being necessary.

Being necessary is, of course, never absolute. Nobody is indispensable. Nevertheless somebody who does not feel necessary at all, who feels that he is a mere burden, is on the edge of total despair. In all groups I found this widespread feeling of not being necessary. There are many reasons for every effect, but one of the reasons for this is that in our secularized society one thing is lost, namely, that, whatever their external destiny may be, people no longer have an eternal orientation, an orientation which is independent of space and time. It is the feeling of having a necessary, incomparable, and unique place within the whole of being. Herein lies a danger for uprooted and migrating millions. It is a danger for mankind itself, namely, to feel that their existence as a whole is no longer necessary. The easy way in which politically we are playing now with collective suicide is analogous to the phenomenon of individuals who have lost the feeling of a necessary place, not only in their work and community, but also in the universe as a whole.

This leads to a final aim of social work. In helping every individual to find the place where he can consider himself as necessary, you help to fulfill the ultimate aim of man and his world, namely, the universal community of all beings in which any individual aim is taken into the universal aim of being itself. That is the highest principle of social work and, of course, transcends the limits of its techniques. It is certainly understandable that this aim is not always conscious to those who have the burden of the daily work. On the other hand, it may give them a spiritual lift in moments when they feel grateful to hear a response from one of thousands whom we may have helped. It may be of inspiration to us to think that we contribute to the ultimate aim of being itself in our small way—and every individual's way is small.

To give such inspiration may be a function of an hour of memory such as the present one.