

## **SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN REMAKING.**

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Consider for a few moments such varied types of human beings as the Shelton Brothers, Leopold and Loeb, Thomas Edison, Babe Ruth, Henry Ford, Jane Addams. These are but samples that express the variety which is endless. We might go on and show hundreds of types of personality. Why is there so much difference between human beings? Is there anything that can be done about it? We take it for granted that certain types of personality, such as were represented by the Shelton Brothers, Leopold and Loeb, are not socially desirable, and that the world would be better off if in future generations these types can be eliminated.

What is this thing personality that differs so in various individuals? Does it change? If it does, can these changes be made to take a certain direction?

There are those in this country who say that heredity is the cause of all these differences, others that environment accounts for everything. The evidence of modern psychology and sociology and the evidence of our own common sense points to the fact that personality as it is in any individual at any particular time is the result of a combination of the hereditary forces and the environmental forces. What any individual is today is due to the moulding force environment on the physical entity of the body, the mind—all that was inherited. Heredity gave us the potentiality, the crude clay upon which the forces of environment have worked and moulded the combination that we find at the present time.

Personality is an all-inclusive term that describes any individual. It includes everything that he is—his physical being, his ideals, his habits. It is better in understanding personality to make "habit" include not only those things that we ordinarily speak of as habits, but to include all actions that have been learned and represent the response of that individual to different kinds of situations. We have our work habits that include many minor habits that are very complicated, and differ according to the kind of work that

each of us may be engaged in. We have our father habits, our mother habits, our church habits, our citizenship habits, recreational habits, sleeping habits. Pervading all of these what may be called our thought habits, for our so-called mental activities are as subject to certain ways of doing things that we have learned as any habits. Of great importance are emotional habits. The term habits as we shall use it then in conjunction with personality describes the sum total of man's responses to his environment at any particular time, and are the means of measuring the personality, of describing the kind of man.

It is easy to observe that from the period of birth throughout life habits are developing in response to outside forces, a response of the hereditary tendencies of forces with which we were born. Since no two individuals are born with exactly the same hereditary forces and since no two individuals have exactly the same environmental forces acting on them, we see the reason why none of us are alike, and why we have the differences in personality indicated by the few names that were presented at the beginning of this talk.

Further, we see that with this view personality is a continually changing thing in any individual. We have only to look back into our own lives a few years to see the changes that have been made. These changes are evidenced by new habits that we have developed, old habits that we have dropped. Usually the changes are gradual and slow, but like the weather, they may be sudden and catastrophic. We have all of us seen a person that has been so changed in a short time that we wonder. Whether the change is slow or rapid, it may be a change for what we call the better or the worse—meaning by better that the change has been in a direction that we approve, and for the worse in a direction that we disapprove.

What kind of forces are those that are particularly significant in shaping personality? First are the bodily changes due to growth and the reaching of maturity; particularly striking are those attendant upon the sexual development of the early teens. The bodily changes are not subject to much control. How we shall grow depends chiefly on our heredity and the nature of this is evidenced by the responses we make to certain kinds of environment. Second,

and of particular interest to us, are the environmental or external forces that bring about changes in personality. In childhood these are primarily the home, parents, brothers, and sisters, the neighborhood, playmates, and later on the school, the church, the playground. With age the circle of environment gradually widens until it includes all of the complicated stimuli that affect the adult. During the adolescent period comes the powerful play of ideals in shaping personality. Ideals are an external force depending on the personalities of other persons with whom one comes in contact, not only in the neighborhood, but in the community, the nation, and to a considerable extent, the whole world, as evidenced by the recent world war. Love, courtship, marriage, birth of children, rearing of children, sickness, death are among the most powerful of the environmental forces.

Would there were time to trace in some detail the kind of things that happen to personality from year to year, or to take some individual and follow up his personality changes from childhood to maturity.

The significant thing is that all through life the human being is subject to the interaction of the internal forces that represent heredity and growth, and the external forces. To illustrate simply, there are not only sounds all about us, but our sense of hearing is reaching out at all times to capture those sounds; there is not only work to be done, but our hands and bodies are eager and reaching forth to perform the things that are waiting to be done. There are not only community points of view, ideals, and customs, but we have natures that are reaching out to accept these and make them part of ourselves.

As was indicated, the internal forces are not subject to control except through outside forces that play on them. We can hear only the sound waves that reach our ears; we can see only the things that are within the range of our eyes, we can do only what we have learned to do with our hands or our bodies, and our thinking, our ideals follow the patterns that have been set for us by outside forces.

The trouble with the external forces is that they are not designed to meet individual peculiarities, individual needs whether of strength or weakness. The human beings living in the latter part of the eighteenth century never intended that Napoleon's skill in manipulating human be-

ings and managing wars should result in such wide-spread suffering, such national changes, such an upset of Europe as occurred.

Man has learned, however, that he can change and control some of the external forces and bring about thereby conditions that improve the human being, in other words, a personality change in an approvable manner. Take for example conditions of employment, methods of education, public recreation. These are environmental forces that are applied to groups and by group methods, and thereby affect the individual. Many other forces are, however, as yet seemingly beyond our control, particularly the customs and ideals, which are continually changing but not according to human plan. There are, for example, many persons who would prevent war, but they do not have the power to do so. It is also evident that in addition to influences on groups by social changes, one may deal with individuals in certain parts of his environment to bring about valuable personality changes in the individual. This is usually done by one individual for another, the parent for the child, the clergyman for those who come to him for help, the doctor for his patient. These efforts to change personality are usually limited in their intents and effect. The doctor is concerned with building up health rather than changing the personality in a certain way. The changes may occur indirectly. The parent who has a wayward boy is usually unable to handle that situation unaided. He may, however, by sending the boy into a new environment, such as a particularly good school, bring about a development of new habits that break up the ones that were classed as wayward. The clergyman approaches from his point of view the problem of the individual, dealing particularly with the religious life, although very frequently he goes much further.

Some months ago a former criminal, known as Black Jack, wrote a biography entitled "You Can't Win." It is an excellent demonstration of how personality is swayed for the worse by environment, and how finally the efforts of one man who interposed personal kindness and new environmental opportunities, broke up all of his habits of law breaking, and made him a law abiding citizen. Although this reformer was not a social worker by profession, he used the methods of social case work.



We have noted a number of the chief environmental forces that create personalities. We have pointed out that their action does not take into account individual differences. Unfortunately, some of the same external forces will produce different personalities in different persons, and because of their failure to take into account differences in individual adjustability we have created a large class of dependent, inefficient persons, parasites, law breakers, those who are chronically sick mentally and physically, and those who have bad habits that sometimes produce serious effects, such as reckless drivers, drinkers of bootleg liquor. We have noted that some of these external forces can be controlled and made better adjusted to the needs of individuals, that by social action changes have been made in the industrial, educational, public health and hygiene, and other fields which have reduced the number of individuals that have suffered from them.

Social work is the organized effort of society to adjust environmental forces in order to improve personalities. Part of this is done through group effort. In this program approved ideals, interesting educational programs, recreational and other projects are given to groups. Examples of this type of social work are found in the Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, City Recreation programs. Not all of the individuals who are brought under the influence of these efforts are benefited thereby, because there is a lack of individualization. It does not fill the need of everyone, and considering the diversity of personality, it can readily be understood that no set program or group work can reach everyone.

There is another type of social work which deals with the individual as a specific problem. Here the personality of the individual is studied in relation to the environmental forces that are acting on him and have acted on him, and the attempt is made to change his external forces, to build up new ways of living which include the development of new habits and throwing off of old habits that are bad.

This is known as social case work, and is the method followed by family welfare organizations, children's welfare and aid societies, juvenile courts, mental hygiene workers, and others who deal with individuals rather than groups.

For example, a mother with two daughters was found living in a hovel, filthy, badly furnished. The mother was drinking heavily and was using her children to beg and steal in order that she might get the means of providing herself with a sufficient quantity of liquor. The social case worker made a diagnosis. There were two forces in the life of this woman which offered promise. These were her fondness for her children and the fact that she had some relatives who were well adjusted to life. The children were immediately taken away and placed in an institution. The mother was also placed in an institution where she could be removed from the temptation of liquor and given training in house-keeping and work. She was put on probation in order that she might put herself in a position where her children might be returned to her, and a home of their own established. It took six or seven years of effort on the part of the case worker to achieve this result. She did it by a skillful control of the environmental forces playing on that woman and her two children. The family is now living in a neat little home that they are purchasing, the younger daughter doing well in school, the older daughter working and about to marry a substantial young man, and the mother living a satisfactory life in friendly relation with her neighbors, relatives, and her church.

We cannot take time to describe the elements of case work in detail. It is still in its infancy, but it is a rapidly developing child, not only in the amount of work it is doing, but more significantly in the technique and science that are the basis of its action. It must find out much more about the relationship of the forces that go to make up personality. It must find out much more about the control of forces that are developing bad personalities and good personalities and how to overcome them. Since social case work must use, to accomplish its results, the achievements of the medical profession, of education, of industry, of religion, of psychology, or sociology, its advance is dependent on the advance of the sciences underlying those activities, and the opportunities they afford for application to individual instances.

Case work is the most complicated of human efforts since its attempts to take into account personality and environment in which it lives, and the possibilities of other

environments. In the not too distant future it should be possible for any individual who is in trouble to go to a professional case worker and have his personality straightened up as it is now for a person having appendicitis to have that taken care of by a surgeon, and just as the science of medicine has made it possible to reduce the number of persons suffering from typhoid fever, so it should be possible for case work to furnish information which would enable society to largely reduce the number of persons who are dependent, who are law breakers, who are inefficient.

It is fortunate that the American public has shown so much interest and given so much encouragement to the development of the profession of social case work. The returns up to the present time are not great, but the effort is well worth while, because of the possibilities that lie within it, even though these are possibilities that will not be realized by this generation or the next. It will possibly never be the means of remaking the human race, but it does offer the possibility of remaking many of the individuals who under the present condition of living are unable to make their own lives satisfactory to themselves or their friends or the community in which they live.