

## THE RELATION BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

MOTHER M. VIRGINIA, C.M.S.A.

In the treatment of a topic where two concepts have to be compared and their relationship analyzed, the only appropriate course of action to be taken is to define the terms first. If the different parties agree on the meaning of the terms used, needless and sometimes hot debate can be avoided. In this case the task has already been half done as the previous article explains the meaning and scope of sociology. Therefore, we only have to clarify for you the meaning of the term social work.

What is social work? If we asked this question of the ordinary man in the street, we would probably get the following answer: Social work deals with poor people. Intelligent persons would not think of associating social work with the activities of "socialites,"—this is a perversion, an abuse of a good thing, and it is sad enough that the caricature is usually better known than the thing itself. However, the first group of answers would be as much mistaken as the latter.

Due to the Anglo-Saxon development of social work within the framework of poor relief and charitable philanthropic institutions, social work has been identified in the mind of the common man with "works for the poor." A contemporary definition of social work, however, should go beyond this historical setting and include the functional aspects of today's social work as well. An attempt to summarize the different definitions of social work leads us to a descriptive statement of the field which is the best we can do at present.

Social work is the art in which knowledge of the science of human relations and skills in human relationships are used to mobilize the capacities of the individual and the resources of the community, appropriate for the better adjustment between the client and all or part of his total environment.

It is not the purpose of this paper to give a full analysis of the scope of social work, but only insofar as it is necessary to point out its relationship with sociology. When we analyze the definition, we single out its three main elements: social work is an art; based on scientific knowledge; aiming at the social adjustment of an individual. As an art, social work falls in the category of doing and not in the category of speculative thinking. Consequently it belongs to the normative disciplines. Social work by necessity rests on a definite philosophy. The nature of the relationships established, the methods used and the specific ends to be achieved are conditioned by the view of life of the social worker, including his ethical code.

The end of social work being better social adjustment also calls for value judgments. What is the "better" adjustment to be achieved? What norms shall we use for judging and for guiding our action? In relation to this aspect of social work, it has sometimes been asked: "Can there be 'neutral' social work?" From my point of view, the neutrality should belong to the social worker, while the "denominational" character should be determined by the client. Like the psychiatrist a social worker should

be open to accept, though he may not necessarily concur with the view of life of his client and adjust his own advice and guidance to the latter's convictions.

So far we have considered the relationship between social work and the normative disciplines. This was done because one of the contemporary issues in the field of sociology is whether sociology is to be mere positive science or whether it should also be normative and directed towards action.

In the previous article we learned that sociology because of the nature of its object, man in interdependence, should use both the inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. This is true not only for sociology but for any science, insofar as any science, no matter how exact it be, accepts postulates from other disciplines among which specific metaphysical postulates are always to be found. It should not seem justifiable, however, to go any farther and to say that sociology must proceed in its study on the basis of the moral nature of man and judge the other elements of its analysis in the light of this philosophical postulate. Social sciences, should limit themselves as much as possible to descriptions of structure, relationships, dynamics abstaining from value judgments and from any attempt to direct action. Science belongs to the "speculative" intellect not to the "practical" intellect. (Speculative is used here in its broad meaning: Reasoning of an abstract thing, not just philosophical or deductive reasoning) and therefore should not be concerned with the consequences of its findings or try to give directions as to how certain situations should be remedied.

Much of the confusion in the field of sociology is due to this attitude of social scientists: knowing things, they also want to change things. This may not be entirely wrong, but then they should accept the fact that they thereby step out of the field of science, of knowers, and enter the field of arts and professions, of doers. Social scientists who try to change social institutions, to influence public opinion, to reconstruct society are no longer only scientists but become also reformers, politicians, social workers.

Not everybody, perhaps, will agree with this statement. It is offered as an opinion to stimulate thought and discussion which, in turn, will lead to clearer understanding and agreement concerning the subject.

Now, then, we have a clearer understanding of the relationship between sociology and social work. Social work is an art, based on scientific knowledge, dealing with people. Sociology is a science studying these same people, in an objective way, as they interact in their social groups. An understanding of the group structure, of group dynamics, is indispensable equipment for any social worker. Besides this, the skills which the social worker will use in his relationships with his client will be determined by the correct diagnosis of the case, for which a thorough understanding of the dynamics of human behavior is required. Therefore, we may conclude that a fairly good training in sociology as well as in psychology should be one of the scientific prerequisites for any person who intends to enter the field of social work. The same also holds true for all the other fields of social reform and social action; for all have the same end to achieve, the same scientific basis for action, but differ in the specific methods used. Each of them deals with the solution of social evils. These evils were recognized

as such because of the judgment of social philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists as to the detrimental effects of these situations for the individual person and for society. Each of them tries to work towards a solution and, as doctors have different medicines for the same sickness which they prescribe on the basis of differential treatment for each of their patients, so the "social doctors" or doctors of society have different methods to apply in different situations depending on their judgment as to which is the most appropriate at that specific time and place. The politician uses law and mass measures, the social reformer works on public opinion and through community resources, the social worker uses an individual approach working with individuals and their adjustment to their social environment.

With this exposition, hopefully we can better understand the relationship which exists between sociology and social work. Sociology studies and analyzes the situation while social work, relying on the findings of the sociologists, apply their helping methods to bring about the reconstruction or betterment of society through its services to individuals.

## A Note: ON THE NEED FOR SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES IN WORKING OUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE PHILIPPINES.

THOMAS R. McHALE

The more economists work on the problem of economic development have great limitations. indccs tools have great limitations. Development in "underdeveloped" countries, the more they realize their analytical tools have great limitations. Development economics, which we can roughly describe as the economics of significant structural change, (as differentiated from welfare economics which is distributive oriented, or from growth economics which is mainly concerned with increasing magnitudes along essentially similar structural lines), provides for greater opportunity for the cultural anthropologists and the sociologists to make meaningful contributions in both understanding and influencing the process than it does to the orthodox economic analyzer.

One of the major problems involved in economic development in a country like the Philippines is the problem of reorienting or in some cases completely replacing existing value systems. The economist uses the market mechanism to give relative prices to goods and services which have already attained a place in the social fabric of a particular area. The economist, however, feels ill at ease when he is asked to work with relative values for social objectives which are not susceptible to market pricing.

The economist can provide the necessary analysis of market demand for a factory's product; he can work out relevant factor inputs and product outputs. And he can provide a means of pricing products at various levels of production.

But what about the factory itself? Are factories desirable objectives per se? Is the rigidity of factory discipline a good thing or a bad thing and what is the criteria involved? Is hard work desirable as an end in itself? What about the obvious need of an industrial society to operate with a whole new set of authority and status patterns? It is all very easy to say that industrialization is a necessary and desirable thing for the Philippines, that hard work is a desirable end in itself, and that Filipinos should pay a lower premium for leisure than they do. It is all very well to criticize conspicuous consumption, the great emphasis on fiesta celebrations and the lack of self-initiative in the Philippines. It is all very well to condemn nepotism and family clannishness. But such criticisms and condemnations are reflective of the acceptance of a hierarchy of social values which has not been accepted by the majority of Filipinos. By and large, however, this is what the economists have been asked to do!

The main point that needs emphasis is that Philippine economic development at either the macro or micro level cannot be brought about merely by the planning of "bright" economists. "Bright" economists can set up economically feasible development programs. The economic logic of the programs may be impeccable and the economic wisdom might be extremely deep; yet wide gaps invariably develop between the plan of the "bright" economists and reality.