

AN EXTENSION COURSE IN PSYCHIATRIC SOCIAL WORK.*

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The idea had been taking root in Rhode Island for some time that a course of instruction should be given to meet the needs of the workers in this state, to give them some insight into the psychiatric view-point. Miss E. Frances O'Neill of the Providence Society for Organizing Charities had seen the desirability of having her workers acquire this view-point and had been instrumental in spreading the theory among other groups of workers in and out of the city. But the problem of Providence is rather unique in a way, as I may suppose can be said of the problem of each community. Communities, I take it, are like individuals, different, and the problem of Providence is perhaps not the problem of any other American city and certainly not like that of any European city. However that may be, it was thought desirable to try the experiment of getting something of the psychiatric view-point and the experiment has been tried with the result that it now seems desirable to publish it with its results, both the desirable and the undesirable.

Dr. Arthur H. Harrington, the Superintendent of the State Hospital for Mental Diseases, was especially interested in the projected experiment and he and Dr. G. Alder Blumer, the Superintendent, and Dr. Arthur H. Ruggles of the staff of Butler Hospital, opened their wards for the demonstration of illustrative cases, and aided the work both directly and indirectly in numerous other ways. The experiment was watched with lively interest by the State Penal and Charitable Commission and the Trustees of Butler Hospital, both composed of men of proved public spirit and humanitarian interests.

The cooperation of Brown University was sought and every facility of the University was put at our disposal to insure the

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success of the experiment. The type of material at hand, the fact that those who would most probably be interested were already engaged in some form of social or community work or were teachers in the special schools of Providence, together with other decisive considerations, led us to adopt the plan of presenting the material at hand in the form of one of the Extension Courses which have been given at Brown University on matters of public and general interest, for several years.

The choice of a title for the course seemed a matter of considerable importance. Should we call this a course in Social Psychiatry or in Psychiatric Social Work? The question may seem to be one of academic interest merely. I would like to digress for a moment to defend the thesis that the choice of a title for such a course or for any course dealing with such kindred matters, is a point that should demand some thought and no little attention. If we are to talk about social psychiatry, is it not reasonable to predicate a certain amount of knowledge about social psychology? And what are we to accept as standard in the matter of social psychology? When we speak of the mind of the nation or of the mob or of the family are we to imply a mystical higher personality which exists somewhere above the individuals? I think you will be ready to reply in the negative and yet that is just what many persons who are talking about these matters do imply because they have not considered carefully enough the implications of just this seemingly academic question, which enters into our choice of a title for this course. Social psychology begins where two or more persons enter into actual relations. The individual experiences mental states which would not enter his consciousness without the existence of other men. The simplest gesture or imitation as well as the most complex act controlled by custom or fashion or by law involves the consciousness of the social group. The social psychologist deals with the mental functions as the real objects and does not start with the group; the social psychologist must always begin with individuals. The processes of language, of customs, of faiths, the life of primitive peoples or of highly civilized communities may properly be the object of his study as well as the intellectual or artistic or religious or political or industrial leader. But in the case of these leaders it is the mutual influence between the leader and his fol-

lowers or his opponents which comes within the province of social psychology.

If men were mentally alike, the social groups would have an entirely different character. The elements of social psychology, therefore, are individual differences but only those differences which have significance for the social organization and the resulting social mental states need be considered. These differences may be classed under those due to age, those due to differences between groups of individuals, the differences in character, temperament and intelligence between individuals, and the differences due to abnormal variations. The next step in the development of the social mind is organization. Organization depends upon the getting together of the elements in the social group and all processes which work toward this end may be classed under the general heading, union.

Union is made possible through communication of a voluntary and of an involuntary sort, and this communication is brought about by language and by association into groups which range from the chance meeting of two persons to the bonds of matrimony or from a chance group in the street to an industrial community with its cumulation and division of labor. Yet the manifoldness of social groups would be impossible on the basis of mere coordination of individuals. Two other processes are present, known as submission and self-assertion. The former takes place through suggestion, imitation and sympathy; the latter through aggression, self-expression and self-display. These are the simple social processes.

The complex social processes may be summarized in the expressions, organization and achievement. Organization shows itself in the literature and institutions of the world and is itself moulded by them. Such organization may be voluntary or involuntary, temporary or lasting, immediate or indirect, personal or institutional. Achievement is a sign of biological usefulness and the death of social groups is due to ill-adjusted achievement, a lack of adaptation to the conditions under which they are organized. The material for this sort of study lies in moral statistics, industrial statistics, political statistics. The laws and the literature, the churches and the cities, tell the story of the working of the social groups. Assimilation is necessary for achievement; assimilation

of the laws, the customs, the language, the history, the traditions and the beliefs of the group concerned. New social influences and productions, leaders, *et cetera*, bring about a ceaseless forming of new organizations which makes up the progress of civilization.

Now the course given at Brown did not deal with group psychology or psychopathology. It did not consider destructive habits such as race suicide or over-indulgence in alcohol. It did not talk of revolution or massacre, graft or corruption, lack of public spirit or recklessness. It did not discuss foreign enemies or imported social poisons, customs and beliefs. It had nothing to do with individual differences, or with union, communication, submission and self-assertion, or with organization, literature and institutions, or with achievement, industrial, moral and political statistics, assimilation, new social influences and leaders.

On the other hand it did deal with individuals from the normal and the pathological sides. Does not my thesis, for the defence of which I have made this long digression, seem to be substantiated? It is substantiated by the fact that the course did not deal with anything pertaining to social psychiatry and on the other hand did deal with many things pertaining to the psychopathology of the individual.

Nor am I content to let this matter of selection of a title for such a course drop with an exposition of the reasons for the selection of the title to stand for the extension course at Brown. I would like to conduct a little raid of my own into the camps of those who are giving courses in social psychiatry, to ask them if they have considered these matters and whether they do not think that the time will come when true social psychiatry may be taught, to the confusion of those who are now being led to believe that they are studying social psychiatry?

Let us turn from this friendly gibing to a consideration of the conditions which obtain in an extension course. In the first place the usual extension course is a matter of ten lectures. Secondly, the lectures must be given in the late afternoon or the evening because the lecture-halls are for the most part occupied during the day by the regular students of the university. Thirdly, an extension course is designed to deal in a popular way with the topics of the day. Such conditions might make one hesitate to even consider an attempt to present psychiatric social work (sup-

posing that is the proper title), as an extension course. In fact the objections to this method of presentation were numerous from the less sanguine of those who considered it. In the first place, ten lectures were considered an entirely inadequate number in which to hope to put the subject matter across. Only the buoyant hopefulness of youth could see a chance of success.

The fact that only certain times were available happened to be a fortunate matter as these periods in the way prevented us from selecting the wrong periods and happily coincided with the best time for an audience, as an enrolment of fifty-nine later proved. This number proved to be the largest in any extension course given in the university this year. Only thirty-five would have been necessary to insure the financial success of the course, which is a matter that has to be considered from the university's point of view, I imagine. In the third place we could not consider psychiatric social work as a topic of the day, much less could we present it in popular form, so to speak. In spite of this, the regular announcement in the daily papers which is printed before the extension courses are given did bring out one electrical engineer whose hobby for many years had been matters directly or indirectly relating to psychology. For the rest, of course, we attracted those who were interested in the special schools of the city of Providence and in the various forms of social and philanthropic work which are going on in the city, both of which groups showed a wholehearted and untiring interest in the course. Apparently also we interested a still larger field than we had anticipated if we are to judge from the number of visitors to the clinics held in connection with the course, who were not registered in the course itself. Such enthusiasm has led us to hope for greater things in the way of a combination with the other allied courses.

The method of presentation was by lecture supplemented by the clinic. The lectures were illustrated by means of charts which summarized the main elements to be driven home; the charts naturally used the visual route to the minds of the hearers and it is well known that this route must be used in order to make the greatest impression. Of course this absence of visual impressions is the very thing that makes the teaching of psychology most difficult; how to reduce what one has to say to visual images is

the great feat. The first lecture was given to orient the student in the total field. It is a matter of common observation that specialists get to see only their own corner of a problem. This is as true of specialists in social work as it is of specialists in medicine or science, perhaps more true. However that may be, it seemed desirable to give a bird's-eye view of the whole field, using the material which has been produced during the past few years as the basis for the lecture. It almost seemed as though the lecture were a set of plagiarisms from many authors. If it was, it had this advantage, that it presented the material views from many sources and did not savor of individualism too much. The second lecture sought to be an exposition of introspective psychology and again did not necessarily represent the speaker's views but was chosen as the form of psychology for the background of the course because it seemed to offer the possibility of some tangible anatomical correlations. I can not here go into the reasons which have led me to this opinion nor can I go into the analysis of consciousness as we did in that lecture. Suffice it to say that personality was shown to consist of certain complex mental functions called perceptions, ideas, activities and inner states and then it was shown that these complex functions could be reduced to simpler mental processes known as sensations, association, reaction and inhibition. Charts of an anatomical conception of the higher reflex pathways in the brain were devised in accordance with this psychology and the suggestion offered that they might be used though emphasis was laid on the fact that they had not been tried out and that they were merely a logical deduction from introspective psychology.

The next five lectures dealt with psychopathology, using the eighth edition of Kraepelin as the basis but rearranging the order presented in that work to make it conform to the psychology as presented; this made the correlation in the minds of the audience more certain, I am sure. In such a course with such a short time at one's disposal every advantage of this sort must be utilized. No pains should be spared to avoid every chance for confusion. Irrelevant details must be entirely passed over and considerations of a confusing nature must be stringently avoided. Otherwise there will result in the minds of the audience a hopeless confusion which will lead them into a maze of doubt and uncertainty and

finally convince them that the subject is entirely over their heads and in that case, I take it, they are right.

The time was never too short to stop for a concrete illustration and the clinics at Butler Hospital and at the State Hospital for Mental Diseases at Howard served to erase any doubts that might have hung over from the previous lecture. At the clinics no case was presented *in toto*. The clinics were given up entirely to the illustration of symptoms which were to be discussed in the following lecture, that is to concrete examples of the points in psychopathology which were to be considered at the next lecture, and these were so arranged that each lecture could be referred back to the psychology upon which it was based and which had been given in the second lecture. In addition, points that remained unelucidated from the previous lecture were discussed and there was constant repetition of salient points with equally as constant avoidance of any maze, such as that of classification, for example. After the regular lecture, those who were taking the course as students were required to remain for informal discussion, and those who had registered as auditors were invited to listen to the discussion. In this way another repetition took place, this time in an informal way which served as no other method could to show the instructor how far his words had really arrived. The questions were usually few because pitfalls had already been avoided but those asked did much to lead the teacher into the proper paths for further emphasis. He was enabled to take one moot point at a time and attack it from many possible angles, constantly and religiously avoiding statements which could lead to additional complication. It may be questioned whether such a procedure is at all desirable. I would reply that it is not, but that it cannot be avoided if an extension course is to be successful.

This leads me to two other considerations with which I will close, namely what constitutes the success of the course and what should we desire if such a course were to be continued? I should assume that the course had been successful if the psychiatric viewpoint had been instilled into the minds of those who attended. By that I mean that those who took the course will have to regard the insane patient as they would regard a patient suffering from pneumonia for example and when he recovers will go to meet him in the same way that they would meet a recovered pneumonia pa-

tient; that they are so sure of their own attitude in the matter that they can be depended upon to carry that attitude into all their thought and actions where the insane are concerned. I mean that they will have come to recognize that there is a difference between insanity and mental disease and to be able to detect what the difference is. They will be able to recognize that something is wrong with the mind of those with whom they have to deal and know when to call in the psychiatrist. That is the chief point, not to be able to give a diagnosis, but to be able to tell when a diagnosis should be asked for. I should consider the course a success, thirdly, if my audience acquired an interest in the matter. I think it may be said that the course of ten lectures can be made a success if we use these criteria of success.

What more is to be desired then? The objection may have come to you that students in such a course may get the impression that they have acquired a great deal more than the facts warrant. Such does not prove to be the case and yet I think it may be said that the acquisition of a little more knowledge could not be considered undesirable. In other words, the foundation for an understanding seems to have been laid and we should hope, expect and reasonably desire that a more complete course might be given as a complement to the present one. The foundation has been laid in a psychology which is tangible, the psychopathology has been deeply impressed by the consideration of symptoms alone and these have been illustrated by actual cases. The next step should be to demonstrate the multitudinous combinations into which these symptoms may enter and from this step to teach how our conceptions of disease entity are constructed.

However, it occurs to me that social workers, teachers in public schools for backward children, and district nurses should not be expected to know too much about frank insanity, not because such knowledge can ever be thought inadvisable but because they do not often see cases of the frank psychoses. On the other hand they often see abnormal mental traits which lead the people they are dealing with into all sorts of social and moral difficulties, or make them misfits economically and industrially. They should recognize these finer traits of which they see only the gross caricatures in the hospitals for the insane. Thus, while many social workers will bring an extended knowledge of sociology with them

to the course, the knowledge of sociology which they may be expected to get in connection with the course is desired only with the object of teaching how far the finer mental disorders are at the bottom of sociological difficulties and problems. In such a course they cannot be expected to get the group idea. That should be left to a still later stage in their development if, perchance, they have not already acquired it, and in that stage they should also get another aspect of psychology, namely, the behavioristic. But to give behaviorism in the second course when one is trying to refer everything to introspective psychology would be fatal; it would lead to confusion and doubt with the results mentioned above to be expected.

Another factor is desirable also in this extended course both for the training that it gives in exact thinking and for the reason that we are dealing with a psychology that is tangible and that may reasonably hope to correlate with anatomy, that is neurology. Such a course in neurology should not be a general one but should be related to the course in psychiatry in the most intimate way, very much in the manner that the course in sociology may be expected to be related. This intimate relation of all three subjects precludes the possibility of their being given as separate courses. The program of subjects should be arranged beforehand and the neurological and sociological topics should be introduced at the psychological moments, so to speak. Such a course, which is the sort of thing now being contemplated, will necessarily take more than ten lectures. More credit in the matter of points will be expected and given. The interest is already ours. How can the outcome be anything else than successful?

NOTES.

The section of this paper dealing with Social Psychology is abstracted from "Psychology, General and Applied," by Hugo Münsterberg, D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1914, pp. 224-285.

The charts which were demonstrated in connection with the paper are to be published in connection with another piece of work. Hence they do not appear here.