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HUMAN VALUES IN SOCIAL HYGIENE

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I.

WHAT human values are is as much a matter of difference of opinion as are the final destiny of man and the best way of achieving that destiny. Each one of us approaches that question, stepping out from a background of diverse philosophies of life, religious convictions, cultural pre-suppositions, into a foreground of present day chaos with its teeming upheavals and its discordant currents and counter-currents and its wild uproariousness. Can we reach any agreement concerning human values differing as we do about philosophies and religions, personal and social responsibilities, eternal and temporal destinies, peace and war, striving and yearnings, on the one hand, and acquiescence and adaptations, on the other? It is around the concept and content of human values that the great strifes and contests and conflicts of life have been waged, on the battle-field, in the pulpit, in the rostrums, on the political platform, in the council chambers of legislative bodies, at the ballot box.

Let me again repeat, can we agree upon some common point of departure in this discussion? Will you try to follow me? One greater than any of us, Who, according to the Christian revelation, was God-Man and Who proved His Divinity by miracles and His Manhood by an earthly life of thirty-three years, gathered around Him His disciples and after speaking to them of the dignity which He was conferring upon their leader, Peter, He seemed, as it were, to take the honor out of that conferral of leadership by the fateful warning "For what doth it profit a man, if he gained the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" (Mt. 16, 26). He had just conferred upon Peter the supreme dignity which He could confer upon a mere man and He calls Peter back from the new throne of his own pride which He feared Peter might have erected for himself in that moment of self-elation and He warns him lest he "suffer the loss of his soul."

In the Roman Missal, we read in the prayer of the third Sunday after Pentecost, the petition in exquisitely condensed and pointed Latin "That under Thy divine direction and leadership, we may pass through the transitory good things of this life, so that we may not lose the eternal ones." "Ut te rectore, te duce, sic transeamus per bona temporalia ut

non amittamus aeterna." In both of these quotations, human value is placed in the human will, extrinsic therefore to the object valued but dependent upon the person who values. Christ places the responsibility for human value in my own determination and the loss of my soul is thus made my responsibility. In the prayer which I have quoted, human values are regarded as achievable through prayer, that is, divine grace and assistance, to be sure, not without human cooperation, for we pray that the eternal values might be granted to us under the divine guidance and leadership.

We are too prone to overlook the human values in social hygiene for the simple reason that we are too apt to forget that that for which social hygiene strives is precious of itself as well as it is precious to the individual "prizer." It holds estimate and dignity in the prizer; it is part of that gain for which the gain of the whole world is but a trifle; it is part of that exchange for which a man can and must at times give his own soul. It is a fraction of that eternal gain for the achievement of which we must simply pass through the transitory things of this life.

II.

From another view point, to speak of the human values of social hygiene would seem to be to speak of the obvious of what is so obvious that any remarks made about such human values may be regarded as trite and pedantic. Whatever any one of us might mean by human values and whatever good one of us might select as an illustration of what we mean by human values, that in some sense and in a very true sense, can be found in an adequate social hygiene program, or to speak more briefly, in social hygiene. If we are speaking of personal wealth, the economic value of social hygiene can be pointed out. If we are speaking of pleasure and the satisfactions of life, the hedonistic values of social hygiene can be pointed out. If we regard as human value, the artistic and humanistic value of life, the aesthetic value of human nature can be pointed out. And so if we speak of health and recreation and exercise, remedial or developmental; or the pursuit of literature, these and all the other phases of life in which we find the temporal good things of this world, inclusive of the mental good things and the emotional, and experiences of feeling, all of these have some relationship to social hygiene and may be multiplied for the betterment of people through a favorable and adequate program of social hygiene, or they may be depressed and diminished for the deterioration of man through a failure to develop an adequate and comprehensive attitude towards social hygiene. The sciences and skills, the principles governing human conduct and the truths underlying it; the applications of truth and the utilization of motives; the intellectual preception of facts and the soul-stirring experiences of emotions; all these in some way are elicited, utilized and as it were, consumed in any one or several of the many pro-

grams that make up the social hygiene field. In some way also, social hygiene aspects enter into the individual's philosophy of life and they are related very profoundly to the individual's levels of moral conduct and his orientation toward his religious obligations in his worship of God.

All this is true because adequate social hygiene must enter into practically every phase of human activity. It enters into the private life of the individual, man and woman, boy or girl. It enters into his or her employment in industry or office, in classroom or playground, in commerce or one of the professions. It injects itself into human recreations, group recreations and individual recreations and into every recreational phase from the movie to the living room conversation and from the swimming pool to the bridge table. It penetrates into human thought, into human feeling, into human emotions, into the most diverse of human experiences. There is no personal experience from which social hygiene in some one of its many forms is excluded.

And so also, if we turn to group experiences, for example, the community. In the community, we find the group counterpart of the individual's life and as in the individual we find social hygiene elements in almost all phases of his existence, so also in the community. As the individual has his philosophy and his religion, his principles of conduct, his spirit that guides him in the selection of the relatively better or the relatively worse in life so too, in the community.

All of this is included in any adequate answer to the question of human values in social hygiene. What I wish to emphasize, however, most of all here, is that over and above these general and what, for the purpose of an argument, we may here call non-specific human values, social hygiene does have much to say about present day attitudes towards man and mankind, towards life and all those who live it, towards workers and their work, towards the citizen and his country, towards the creature and his God.

Among these human values, towards the conservation and development of which social hygiene contributes ever so much, are the three to which I desire here to direct your particular attention (a) the preservation of the family, (b) the dignity of the individual, and (c) the elevation of human society.

III.

The American Social Hygiene Association has challengingly and fearlessly made the preservation of the family the chief purpose of its existence. In doing so, it has thrown down the gauntlet not only to the many currents of thought and the many philosophies of life which would undermine the concepts upon which Christian civilization is built, but it has also made itself the protector of those who desire to preserve the sanctities of family and home life, the glowing innocence of childhood, the vigorous

aggressiveness of youth and young adulthood and the sweet mellowness of declining age.

The temptation is strong at this point to enter here upon an angry jeremiad against the social phenomena which are attacking family life; to speak of the number of divorces and the number of persons affected by the divorces; the number of children who have been made parentless and especially motherless by divorce; to speak of the growing rate, for it is really growing despite occasional indications of possible regression, and of the comparative rate in our various social strata; to speak of the growing number of divorces among persons who have passed the mother's child-bearing age; of the numerous separations of couples after thirty and forty years of happy marital life when their own children have already married and who fail to find happiness in each other because they have tragically misunderstood the transforming function of marital love by failing to keep their idealism. All of this and much more you read in the daily press and in the technical journals and in the research publications which deal with human biology, sociology, politics and government. Let me rather turn to the other side of the picture and attempt to present what is much more difficult to show because it is less sensational, the supreme beauty and significance of family life.

I know there have been philosophies that have sought directly or indirectly to undermine the family. There are those hedonistic philosophies which seek in the self-satisfaction of the individual either in himself or in society, the chief criterion of the rightness or the wrongness of our actions, in which philosophies marriage is looked upon as an occasion for self-gratification, and in the teachings of which, anything which imposes burdens on man and wife must be considered as contrary to the chief purposes of marriage. In such a philosophy, the child as a living link or love between husband and wife, is unthinkable because of the biological inconvenience for both husband and wife of pregnancy as an impediment to personal gratification.

And then, there is that group of philosophies which, as we know, have been translated into national programs in at least two of the major countries of Europe, even in our own time, which substitute a national ideal for a family ideal and create children not within the happy bounds of family life but in the unbounded license of extra-marital relations, to effect a more rapid increase in the nation.

And finally, there is that third set of philosophies which would deny flatly the validity of monogamy as a basis for civilized living and which regards polygamy in one of its numerous forms as an evolutionary step in human conduct, giving to the partners of a temporary or a simultaneous multiplicity of partners that opportunity for self-realization which, according to such teachings, are the true expression of a legitimate lust for unrestrained and unfettered liberty of action.

These thoughts need only to be put into a formula, as I am doing here, to make us all realize what seems to be obvious that such philosophies cannot constitute a sound basis for human society.

In contrast to all of this, we need not plead for the Christian ideal, the monogamist marriage in which the relations between husband and wife, biologically, are only the vehicle of mental and emotional attitudes towards each other, only the expression of unsounded depths of feelings, associated with mutual respect, mutual attraction of one for the other, mutual desire to give one's self wholly and entirely to the partner and companion and sharer of one's life's fate. Love cannot possibly consist only in receiving, it cannot possibly consist only in joy and pleasure, it cannot possibly consist only in an unbroken and perpetual ecstasy. The contentment and happiness and joy and ecstasy are the objects around which marital life must find its satisfactions and its indescribable gratifications but in the achievement of them, there are and must be, even if only by way of contrast to accentuate happiness, moments of suffering and anxiety, even of bitterness, sometimes of misunderstanding, sometimes of a cruel satiety, and at times even, the threat of disillusionment; but if love has been true and steadfast and reasonable and unselfish, love can leap over the yawning chasms of a black bitterness from mountain peak to mountain peak of ecstatic happiness and stress in the partner of one's love, chiefly the joys to the complete obliteration of the moments of sorrow and agony. Such is the Christian ideal of marriage since Christ Himself has taught us the sanctity of suffering, the philosophy of suffering, the all-pervading meaning of self-abnegation, self-discipline for the sake of others: "He that will lose his life for My sake will find it." Happiness like the kingdom of heaven must suffer violence.

In the Christian dispensation, the marital ideal does not stop, for wifehood whenever possible, must be translated into motherhood just as husbandhood must be translated into fatherhood. Mutual love must be expressed in the living embodiment of that desire to give one to the other, and the child must become the personification of the majesty, the beauty, the ecstasy of mutual love. That alone, in Christian civilization can be the true expression of the identity of interests and personalities of husband and wife.

"If by any device of knowledge
 The rosebud, its beauty could know,
 It would stay a rosebud forever
 Not into its fullness grow.
 And if thou couldst know thy own sweetness
 Oh little one, perfect and sweet,
 Thou wouldst be a child forever,
 Complete while incomplete."

It seems unnecessary for me to point the moral; unnecessary to emphasize what alone can constitute the happiness of married life; what

alone can complete the inadequacies of married life; what alone can bring to the child those blessings and graces and riches of home which the child, which is the true embodiment of mutual parental affection, has a right to expect. A Christian philosophy of life sees in the homelife of Christian countries, the embodiment of a certain home on a high hillside in northern Judea, not so far inland but what on a clear day one might see on the far horizon, the distant sea and where a hard-working callous-handed foster father and a Virgin Mother and a Child that was God, showed forth to all the ages that were to come the sublime simplicities of life and love.

IV.

Social Hygiene recognizes that in the achievement of its primary purpose in safeguarding civilization through safeguarding the family, it must make its appeal to the individual and must bring to the individual a sufficiently dynamic message to guard him or her against a vast multitude of licenses at every age and under the most diverse circumstances and conditions. And so, the field of social hygiene has vastly spread. Social hygiene recognizes that it must have a vast educational program, co-terminous almost with human interest; that it must have a large prophylactic program guarding the individual through recreation, through the creation of extra vocational interests, through a desire for enjoyable occupations and through the development of acceptable and stimulating employment; through proper housing and through the development of aesthetic appreciations; through motivations which range from the frankest appeals to self-interest to the most exacting religious appeals to self-sacrifice; that it must have thirdly, a large health program, not restricted alone to the so-called venereal diseases but also to all that precedes and follows venereal disease in the life of the individual; and fourthly, that it must have a strong social program which includes reasonable controls on human conduct not primarily designed to stifle the freedom of the individual by legislative and police force but primarily designed to bring social, moral, religious as well as governmental support to the struggling personality of a weak human being in the maintenance and re-achievement of his self respect.

Again, the temptation is strong to launch out here upon a castigation of modern society as is done so often in less well advised attacks upon either the younger or the older generation; to talk here of the unwarranted freedom between the sexes in the teen ages, to speak of crime waves, to describe the lurid pictures of passionate murders and to invoke the whole gamut of sentiments and feelings that constitute the orchestration of our modern sensationalism. But again, I say why should we do this when we can do something that is so much more helpful to all of us?

You are all interested in social hygiene, otherwise you would not be here, and hence, you must be interested, it cannot be otherwise, in the

preservation of purity of our younger generation. And when I say purity, I am advisedly using a much abused and perhaps, a suspicious word, at least a word that is suspect in some quarters. I am not talking of ignorance or of taboo or of stupidity but I am talking of the boy or girl of today who knows what life is and who has been properly instructed not by the back-lot or the corner gang but by mother or father in the so-called mysteries or secrets of life; and yet, who walks through life in youthful innocence waiting for the day when over the horizon of consciousness, there will dawn a glowing light that will mean love. And with love will come warmth and affection for someone who will be the partner through life, the sole partner and sole sharer of the secrets of unsullied and untainted and unspotted affection. This ideal is not too high to uphold. I cannot be so pessimistic as some whom I know who insist that such youth do not exist; they do exist. They play their way through a party; and they dance their way through a reception; and they laugh their way through conversations that might otherwise bring the blush of shame to many a cheek; and they reason their way through crises and catastrophes; and they emerge stronger and better and more vigorous for the experience. Yes, they have help. The unseen support of a high ideal, inspired by the highest motives, cleanliness in God's sight, "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." Such persons are neither puritans nor purists, neither pietists nor hypocrites, they are the students of our colleges and our high schools, the workers in our offices, the secretaries of large-minded industrialists; they are the leaders of our society whose mothers do not regard popularity as synonymous with sex license. They are the persons who are not guilty of what we describe by the use of a very ugly word, promiscuity. Not the whole of American youth is made up of sex-dominated individuals.

A few months ago, the Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service was confronted with the problem of defining the functions of the public health officer with reference to venereal disease. The discussions naturally turned upon the reasons for the spread of venereal disease. Inevitably, occasions were discussed on which venereal disease is transmitted and to everyone's amazement, a review of the current literature and a further review of current studies, showed that today, venereal disease is communicated more frequently through casual contacts between acquaintances in home and tavern than through those who have made it their business to pander to the vices of loosely living men. And this in turn led to a discussion of the enlargement of the functions of the health officer. The plea was made that the health officer should inveigh against promiscuity since it is in promiscuity among persons of adolescent age and somewhat older that transmission is today occurring in increasing numbers.

We talk freely about the causation of all the diseases and yet we think of stamping out venereal disease without a frank recognition of the

transmission of venereal disease in age groups that in the past we have sought most anxiously to protect. When this problem was faced, it was emphasized that it must be regarded as the function of the health officer to secure the cooperation of the community in a reasonable, comprehensive and effective program. May I quote from the report?

“The Committee again emphasizes the fact that the local health officer has an official and professional obligation to initiate general health educational programs in his community, if none already exist. Where there are established programs, comprehensive in their objectives and medically, socially and morally justifiable as to content and method, the health officer must be obligated to support and cooperate with them . . . these obligations of the local health officer for educating the public have an even greater force with respect to venereal disease than they have with reference to other threats to the public health, such as smallpox, typhoid and other communicable diseases.” (Report of the United States Public Health Service Advisory Committee on Public Education for the Prevention of Venereal Diseases to the Surgeon General, July 18th, 1945.)

The Committee realized the far reaching change which it was thus enunciating in the functions of the health officer. The causation of venereal disease is, of course, an organism but in order to stamp out syphilis and gonorrhoea as well as the so-called other minor venereal diseases, it is not enough to combat the causative organism, but to prevent those occasions on which the causative organism is transferrable from one to the other human being. To prevent these occasions, we must strengthen youth, we must strengthen those age groups in our population who are more apt recklessly to seek the gratifications which unrestrained conditions can do so much either to create the happiest of worlds or to develop the most deprived of worlds as the environment for human beings.

Personal morality is, in the last analysis, the only safeguard against not only venereal disease but also against all the sequelae of venereal disease. Personal morality means character and education for character; it means the influence not so much of schools and teachers but, let me emphasize it, of homes and of fathers and mothers; it means the influence not so much of physical environment, although this is important, as it means the influence of the internal environment of the individual, of his thoughts and his emotions, of his personal psychology. This can be controlled, guided, led, through the advisorship of mother and father, through the advisorship of properly constituted religious authority, through the aids and graces that come from a personal devotion to prayer. Temptations are not a disgrace; yielding to temptations is the disgrace and the greater disgrace is discouragement after yielding. The inability to rise above one's own actions and to use one's own self-reproaches as stepping

stones not upward but still farther downward, that is the danger to which the unguided youth of our day may be exposed. Character still means something in our complex civilization for which we have invented no substitutes. Housing, adequate food, conditions of employment, placement in employment, all these are aids to the individual but they can never become substitutes for individual responsibility. In the last analysis, the individual must realize his own creatureship before a Creator Who is God and Who will judge him mercifully, to be sure, with an infinite mercy but also with a justice that has at its command omniscience and omnipresence equally infinite with His mercy.

V.

The human values for which social hygiene stands fundamentally are the preservation of the family through the conservation of the individual's dignity and through this in turn, the elevation of human society. Discussion of this latter has been impossible in this paper for lack of time. But in all of this, it has become clear that these human values are beyond all valuation, and are indispensably essential in the structure of our culture and civilization. They must be purchased at the price of enormous effort on the part of such agencies as the Social Hygiene Association. The Association must use the full resources which society has at its disposal; it must use the educational agencies, the recreational agencies, the family and child welfare agencies, the social agencies dealing with employment and non-employment, the medical agencies in their full range from medicine itself to medical social service and from the hospital agencies to the public health activities, all of these must be brought into focus in every community interested in the conservation of the human values of which we have spoken.

The Church of which all unworthily I have the undeserved honor and privilege of being a priest, has pronounced again and again upon the indispensability of personal morality in securing for the human being, the full opportunity for his self-realization in time and in eternity; but it has emphasized with equal force, that society as a whole and government under certain specific conditions must make themselves responsible for ensuring facilities for such moral living to each individual. Let us take a page from the book of that Church's teaching and let us dedicate the resources of this community again to the preservation of its citizenship of highminded, unselfish, pure living, self-sacrificing men and women who will know how to give themselves to others and who by such giving will achieve that happiness for which we are all living, who will work for the conservation and preservation of their families and thus for the conservation and preservation of their youth.