

Social Consciousness

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SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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SOCIAL MIND IN GENERAL

Mind is an organic whole made up of co-operating individualities, in somewhat the same way that the music of an orchestra is made up of divergent but related sounds. No one would think it necessary or reasonable to divide the music into two kinds—that made by the whole and that of particular instruments; and no more are there two kinds of mind—the social mind and the individual mind. When we study the social mind, we merely fix our attention on larger aspects and relations, rather than on the narrower ones of ordinary psychology.

The view that all mind hangs together in a vital whole, from which the individual is never really separate, flows naturally from our growing knowledge of heredity and suggestion, which makes it increasingly clear that every thought we have is linked with the thought of our ancestors and associates, and through them with that of society at large. It is also the only view consistent with the general standpoint of modern science, which admits nothing isolate in nature.

The unity of the social mind consists, not in agreement, but in organization, in the fact of reciprocal influence or causation among its parts, by virtue of which everything that takes place in it is connected with everything else, and so is an outcome of the whole. Whether, like the orchestra, it gives forth harmony may be a matter of dispute, but that its sound, pleasing or otherwise, is the expression of a vital co-operation, cannot well be denied.

SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In the social mind we may distinguish—very roughly, of course—conscious and unconscious relations. The unconscious are those of which we are not aware; which, in one way or

another escape our notice. A great part of the influences at work upon us are of this character. Our language, our mechanical arts, our government and other institutions we derive chiefly from people to whom we are but indirectly and unconsciously related. The larger movements of society—the progress and decadence of nations, institutions and races—have seldom been a matter of consciousness until they were past. And although the growth of social consciousness is perhaps the greatest fact of history, it has still but a narrow and fallible grasp of human life.

Social consciousness, or awareness of society, is inseparable from self-consciousness, because we can hardly think of ourselves excepting with reference to a social group of some sort, nor of the group except with reference to ourselves. The two things go together, and what we are really aware of is a more or less complex personal or social whole, of which now the particular, now the general aspect is emphasized.

In general, then, most of our reflective consciousness—of our wide-awake state of mind—is social consciousness, because a sense of our relation to other persons, or of other persons to one another, can hardly fail to be a part of it. Self and society are twin-born, and we know one as immediately as we know the other.

This view, which seems to me quite simple and in accord with common-sense, is not, so far as I can discover, the view most commonly held. Psychologists, and even sociologists, are still much infected with the idea that self-consciousness is in some way primary, and antecedent to social consciousness, which must be derived by some recondite process of combination or elimination. I venture, therefore, to give some further exposition of it, based in part on first-hand observation—too detailed for this paper—of the growth of social ideas in children.

Descartes is, I take it, the best-known exponent of the traditional view regarding the primacy of self-consciousness. Seeking an unquestionable basis for philosophy, he thought that he found it in the proposition, "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito, ergo sum*). This seemed to him inevitable, though all else might be illusion.

I observed [he says] that, whilst I thus wished to think that all was false, it was absolutely necessary that I, who thus thought, should be somewhat; and as I observed that this truth, *I think, hence I am*, was so certain and of such evidence that no ground of doubt, however extravagant, could be alleged by the skeptics capable of shaking it, I concluded that I might, without scruple, accept it as the first principle of the philosophy of which I was in search.

From our point of view this statement is unsatisfactory in two essential respects. In the first place, it seems to imply that "I"-consciousness is a part of all consciousness, when, in fact, it belongs only to a rather advanced stage of development. In the second it is one-sided or "individualistic" in asserting the personal or "I"-aspect of consciousness to the exclusion of the social or "we"-aspect, which is equally original with it.

Introspection is essential to psychological or social insight, but the introspection of Descartes was, in this instance, a limited, almost abnormal, sort of introspection—that of a self-absorbed philosopher doing his best to isolate himself from other people, and from all simple and natural conditions of life. The mind into which he looked was in a highly technical state, not likely to give him a just view of human consciousness in general.

Introspection is of a larger sort in our day. There is a world of things in the mind worth looking at, and the modern psychologist, instead of fixing his attention wholly on an extreme form of speculative self-consciousness, puts his mind through an infinite of variety of experiences—intellectual and emotional, simple and complex, normal and abnormal, sociable and private—recording in each case what he sees in it. He does this by subjecting it to suggestions or incitements of various kinds, which awaken the activities he desires to study.

In particular he does it largely by what may be called *sympathetic introspection*, putting himself into intimate contact with various sorts of persons and allowing them to awake in himself a life similar to their own, which he afterward, to the best of his ability, recalls and describes. In this way he is more or less able to understand—always by introspection—children, idiots, crimi-

nals, rich and poor, conservative and radical—any phase of human nature not wholly alien to his own.

This I conceive to be the principal method of the social psychologist.

One thing which this broader introspection reveals is that the "I"-consciousness does not explicitly appear until the child is about two years old, and that, when it does appear, it comes in inseparable conjunction with the consciousness of other persons and of those relations which make up a social group. It is, in fact, simply one phase of a body of personal thought which is self-consciousness in one aspect and social consciousness in another.

The mental experience of a new-born child is probably a mere stream of impressions, which may be regarded as individual in being differentiated from any other stream, or as social, in being an undoubted product of inheritance and suggestion from human life at large; but is not aware either of itself or of society.

Very soon, however, the mind begins to discriminate personal impressions and to become both naïvely self-conscious and naïvely conscious of society; that is, the child is aware, in an unreflective way, of a group and of his own special relation to it. He does not say "I," nor does he name his mother, his sister, or his nurse; but he has images and feelings out of which these ideas will grow. Later comes the more reflective consciousness which names both himself and other people and brings a fuller perception of the relations which constitute the social unity of this small world.

And so on to the most elaborate phases of self-consciousness and social consciousness, to the metaphysician pondering the ego, or the sociologist meditating on the social organism. Self and society go together, as phases of a common whole. I am aware of the social groups in which I live as immediately and authentically as I am aware of myself; and Descartes might have said "you think" or "we think," *cogitas* or *cogitamus*, on as good grounds as he said *cogito*. I have explained this point of view more fully in "Human Nature and the Social Order," New York, 1902.

But, it may be said, this very consciousness that you are considering is, after all, located in a particular person, and so are all similar consciousnesses, so that what we see, if we take an objective view of the matter, is merely an aggregate of individualities, however social those individualities may be. Common-sense, most people think, assures us that the separate person is the primary fact of life.

If so, it is because common-sense has been trained by custom to look at one aspect of things and not another. Common-sense, moderately informed, assures us that the individual has his being only as a part of a whole. What does not come by heredity comes by communication and intercourse; and the more closely we look, the more apparent it is that separateness is an illusion of the eye and community the inner truth. "Social organism"—using the term in no technical sense, but merely to mean a vital unity in human life—is a fact as obvious to enlightened common-sense as individuality.

There is, then, no mystery about social consciousness. The view that there is something recondite about it, and that it must be dug for with metaphysics and drawn forth from the depths of speculation, springs from a failure to grasp adequately the social nature of all higher consciousness. What we need in this connection is only a better seeing and understanding of rather ordinary and familiar facts.

PUBLIC OPINION

We may find social consciousness either in a particular mind or as a co-operative activity of many minds. The social ideas that I have are closely connected with those that other people have, and act and react upon them to form a whole. This gives us public opinion, in the broad sense of a group state of mind of which the group is more or less distinctly aware. The unity of public opinion, like all vital unity, is not one of uniformity, but of organization, of interaction and mutual influence. It is true that a certain underlying likeness of nature is necessary in order that minds may influence one another and so co-operate in

forming a vital whole, but identity, even in the simplest process, is unnecessary and probably impossible.

The consciousness of the House of Representatives, for example, is by no means limited to the common views, if there are any, shared by its members, but embraces the whole consciousness of every member, so far as this deals with the activity of the House. It would be a poor conception of the whole which left out the opposition, or even one dissentient individual.

That all minds are different is a condition, not an obstacle, of that unity that consists in a differentiated and co-operative life.

Here is another illustration of what is meant by individual and collective aspects of social consciousness: Some of us possess a good many books relating to social questions of the day. Each of these books, considered by itself, is the expression of a particular social consciousness: the author has cleared up his ideas as well as he can and printed them. But a library of such books expresses social consciousness in a larger sense; it speaks for the epoch. And certainly no one who reads the books will doubt that they form a whole, whatever their differences. The radical and the reactionist are clearly part of the same general situation.

A group "makes up its mind" in very much the same manner that an individual makes up his mind. The latter must give time and attention to the matter; he must search his consciousness for pertinent ideas and sentiments, bring them together, and work them into a whole, before he knows what his real thought about it is. In the case of a nation the same thing must take place, only on a larger scale. Each individual must make up his mind as before, but in doing so he has to deal, not only with what was already in his thought or memory, but with fresh ideas that flow in from others whose minds are also aroused. Everyone who has any fact, or thought, or feeling which he thinks is unknown or insufficiently regarded by others, tries to impart it; and thus not one mind only, but all minds, are searched for pertinent material which is poured into the general stream of thought for each one to use as he can. In this manner the minds in a communicating group become one mind, a single organic

whole. Their unity is not one of identity, but of life and action—a crystallization of diverse but related ideas.

There may be quite as much difference of opinion as there was before, but the differences now existing are comparatively intelligent and stable. People know what they really think about the matter, and what other people think. Measures, platforms, candidates, creeds, and other symbols have been produced which serve to express and assist co-operation and to define opposition. There has come to be a relatively complete organization of thought to which each individual or group contributes in its own peculiar way.

Take, for instance, the state of opinion in the United States regarding slavery at the outbreak of the Civil War. No general agreement had been reached, but the popular mind had become organized with reference to this matter. It had been turned over and regarded from all points of view by all parts of the community, until a certain ripeness regarding it had been reached, revealing in this case a radical conflict of thought between the North and the South, and much local diversity in both sections.

One who would understand public opinion should distinguish clearly between a true or mature opinion and a popular impression. The former requires earnest attention and discussion for a considerable time, and when reached is significant, even if mistaken. It rarely exists regarding matters of temporary interest, and current talk or print is a most uncertain index of it. A popular impression, on the other hand, is facile, shallow, transient, with that fickleness and blatancy that used to be ascribed to the popular mind in general. It is analogous to the unconsidered views and utterances of an individual, and the more one studies it, the less seriously he will take it. It may happen that ninety-nine men in a hundred hold opinions today contradictory of those they will hold a month hence—partly because they have not yet searched their own minds, partly because the few who have really significant and well-grounded ideas have not had time to impress them upon the rest.

It is not unreasonable, then, to combine a very slight regard

for most of what passes for public opinion with much confidence in the soundness of an aroused, mature, organic social judgment.

SOCIAL WILL

Social will differs from public opinion only in implying a more continuous and efficient organization. It is merely public opinion become an effective guide to social development.

It is quite plain that the development of the past has been mostly blind and without human intention. Any page of history shows that men have been unable to foresee, much less to control, the larger movements of life. There have been seers, but they have seen principles rather than processes, and have almost never been men of immediate sway. Statesmen have lived in the present, having no purpose beyond the aggrandizement of their own country, their order, or their family. Such partial exceptions as the framing of the American Constitution by the light of history and philosophy, and with some prevision of its actual working, are confined to recent times and excite a special wonder.

Will has been alive only in details, in the smaller courses of life, while the larger structure and movement has been subconscious, erratic, and wasteful. The very idea of progress, of orderly development on a great scale, is of recent origin and diffusion.

At the present day, also, social phenomena of a large sort are for the most part not willed at all, but are the unforeseen result of diverse and partial endeavors. It is seldom that any large plan of social action is intelligently drawn up and followed out. Each interest works along in a somewhat blind and selfish manner, grasping, fighting, and groping. As regards general ends most of the energy is wasted; and yet a sort of advance takes place, more like the surging of a throng than the orderly movement of troops. Who can pretend that the American people, for example, are guided by any clear and rational plan in their economic, social, and religious development? They have glimpses and impulses, but hardly a will, except on a few matters of near and urgent interest.

In the same way the ills that afflict society are seldom willed

by any one or any group, but are by-products of acts of will having other objects: they are done, as someone has said, rather with the elbows than with the fists. There is surprisingly little ill intent, and the more one looks into wrong-doing, the less he finds of that vivid chiaroscuro of conscious goodness and badness his childish teaching has led him to expect.

Take, for instance, a conspicuous evil like the sweating system in the garment trades of New York and London. Here are people, largely women and children, forced to work twelve, fourteen, sometimes sixteen, hours a day, in the midst of dirt, bad air, and contagion, suffering the destruction of home life and decent nurture; and all for a wage insufficient to buy the bare necessities of life. But if one looks for sin dark enough to cast such a shadow, he will scarcely find it. The "sweater" or immediate employer, to whom he first turns, is commonly himself a workman, not much raised above the rest and making but little profit on his transactions. Beyond him is the large dealer, usually a well-intentioned man quite willing that things should be better, if they can be made so without too much trouble or pecuniary loss to himself. He is only doing what others do and what, in his view, the conditions of trade require. And so on; the closer one gets to the facts, the more evident it is that nowhere is the indubitable wickedness our feelings have pictured. It is quite the same with political corruption and the venal alliance between wealth and party management. The men who control wealthy interests are probably no worse intentioned than the rest of us; they only do what they think they are forced to do in order to hold their own. And so with the politician: he finds that others are selling their power, and easily comes to think of it as a matter of course. In truth the consciously, flagrantly wicked man is, and perhaps always has been, for the most part, a fiction of denunciation. The psychologist will hardly find him, but will feel that most sorts of badness are easily comprehensible, and will perhaps agree with Goethe that he never heard of a crime which he might not himself have committed.¹

¹ I have not space to show at length that this view does not impair the righteousness of blame and punishment; the reader will perhaps think it out for

In all such cases the first requisite is to create a social consciousness—that is to say, a definite awareness, not only of the evils themselves, but of the conditions upon which they depend and of the means by which they may be redressed. This will open the way for an effective public opinion, a social conscience, a social will. Those having power in the matter will find a fairly definite course of right marked out for them, and will not be inclined—or, if inclined, will not be permitted—to depart much from it.

Thus it is not bad will, but lack of will, that is mainly the cause of evil things; they exist outside the sphere of choice. We lack rational self-direction, and suffer not so much from our sins—dark as those may be—as from our blindness, weakness, and confusion.

It is true, then, as socialists tell us, that the need of society is rational organization, a more effectual social will. But we shall not agree with the narrowness of this or of any other sect as to the kind of organization that is to be sought. The true will of society is not concentrated in the government or any other single agent, but works itself out through many instruments. It would simplify matters, no doubt, if a single, definite, and coercive institution, like the socialist state, could embrace and execute all right purposes; but I doubt whether life can be organized in that way.

The real ground for expecting a more rational existence and growth is in the increasing efficiency of the intellectual and moral process as a whole, not, peculiarly, in the greater activity of government.

In every province of life a multiform social knowledge is arising and, mingling with the moral impulse, is forming a system of rational ideals which, through leadership and emulation, gradually work their way into practice.

himself. Men are justly praised or blamed in order to support or discredit the ideals they stand for. It matters little whether their sins and virtues are conscious or not. As to the comparative unimportance of conscious wickedness, note that the man who feels that he is in the wrong is divided against himself, hence weak and unlikely to carry out a sustained policy. The most efficient badness is based on a quiet conscience.

The striving of our democracy toward clearer consciousness is too evident to escape any observer. Compare, for example, the place now taken in our universities by history, economics, political science, sociology, statistics, and the like, with the attention given them, say, in 1875, when, in fact, some of these studies had no place at all. Or consider the multiplication, since the same date, of government bureaus—federal, state, and local—whose main function is to collect, arrange, and disseminate social knowledge. It is not too much to say that governments are becoming, more and more, vast laboratories of social science. Consider also the number of books and periodicals seriously devoted to these subjects. No doubt much of this work is feverish and shallow, but this is incidental to all rapid change. There is, on the whole, nothing more certain or more hopeful than the advance in the larger self-knowledge of mankind.

Ideals for the betterment of human life are products of constructive imagination, incited by sentiment and informed by knowledge. In the past the sentiment has mostly been undisciplined and the knowledge deficient. A study of the ideals and programmes that have had most popular acceptance even in recent years makes it appear that our state of mind regarding society is still much like that which prevailed regarding the natural world when men sought the philosopher's stone and the fountain of perpetual youth. A vast amount of energy is wasted, or nearly wasted, in the exclusive and intolerant advocacy of special schemes—single-tax, prohibition, state-socialism, and the like—each of which is imagined by its adherents to be the key to millennial conditions.

Every year, however, makes converts to the truth that no isolated scheme can be a good scheme, and that real progress must be an advance all along the line. Those who see only one thing can never see that truly, and so work in a superficial and mistaken manner.

Idealism ought to be organic; that is to say, each particular ideal ought to be formed and pursued in subordination to a system of ideals based on knowledge and good sense. The idealist, while putting a special enthusiasm into his own work, should have a

general understanding also of every good work, and of the whole to which all contribute. For him to imagine that his is the only work worth doing is as unfortunate as for the captain of a company to imagine that he is conducting the whole campaign. Other things equal, the most effective idealists are those who are most sane—who have a sense for the complication, the interdependence, and the inertia of human conditions.

The rise of a social will means the substitution of consciousness for mechanism, of principles for formulas. In the early growth of every institution the truth that it embodies is not perceived or expressed in simplicity, but obscurely incarnated in custom and formula. The perception of principles does not do away with mechanism altogether, but makes it relatively simple, flexible, and human. Under the old system everything is preserved because it is not known just where the virtue resides; under the new, the essential is kept and the rest thrown away.

This change is not unlike the substitution of an alphabet for picture-writing. When it is once discovered that speech is made up of a few elementary sounds, the symbols of these suffice to express all possible words, and so supplant the innumerable and cumbrous characters that were used before. Language is thus enabled to become more various and flexible in its function, and at the same time simpler in its mechanism. In the same way, at the present time, the elaborate formulas of the church tend to give way to brief statements of principles based on a better insight into human nature; and all contemporary institutions show change of an analogous character.

We may, then, expect that the modern world, in spite of its complexity, will become fundamentally simpler, more consistent and reasonable. Apparently, formalism can never more be an accepted and justified condition. It exists, and will exist, wherever social consciousness is deficient, but is ceasing to be held as a ruling principle in any department. There will be creeds, but they will affirm no more than is helpful to believe; ritual, but only what is beautiful or edifying; everything must justify itself by function.

Our moral system, which is one phase of the social will, must

be on the same large scale as modern life itself. The current methods are inadequate, and we must learn to feel and to effectuate new kinds of right—kinds involving a sense of remoter results than men have previously taken into account. Our good intentions will never work out unless they are as intelligently organized as commerce and politics. All thinking persons are coming to see that those traits of decency in the obvious relations of life which we are used to regard as morality are inadequate to our needs. The great wrong-doers, as we now see, are usually decent and kindly in daily walk and conversation, as well as supporters of the church and other respectable institutions. For the most part they are not even hypocrites, but men of a dead and conventional morality, not-awake to the real meaning of what they are and do. Social will means, among other things, that they should be waked up; that a social conscience, based on science as well as feeling, should see and judge things by their true results, and should know how to make its judgments effectual.

The guiding force underlying social consciousness is, now as ever, human nature itself, in those more enduring characteristics that are little affected by institutional changes. This nature, familiar yet inscrutable, is apparently in a position to work itself out more adequately than at any time in the past.

DISCUSSION

PROFESSOR EDWIN L. EARP, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

I have been teaching sociology for so short a time, this being the middle of my third year in my present position, that, were I to follow my inclinations tonight, I should certainly give place to these masters in the science present who could do eminently better than I in discussing this most interesting and able paper presented by Dr. Cooley. In fact, I never felt so inclined as now to be a psychologist; for, if I were, I should be in New York at this time, and not be called upon to discuss this paper, which is so largely of a psychological character.

If time permitted, a full discussion of this paper should be undertaken along three lines—namely, the psychological, the ethical, and the sociological. This topic of "Social Consciousness" is a very timely one. Last summer a year ago President Maxwell, of the National Educational Association, said, at a meeting in Ocean Grove Auditorium, that we needed to put more emphasis, in education today, upon the social side of the individual's equipment for life. In the past we have been emphasizing the fact of making the individual a breadwinner. Now we need to put the emphasis upon relating him to society.

The dean of our Teachers College the other day declared that the emphasis in pedagogy is now being placed upon the socializing of the individual. In other words, the individual, largely because of our methods of education, has often not scrupled to take another's bread in his efforts to win his own. What we need today in every phase of human life is more of the social consciousness that will enable us as individuals and as groups to respect the rights and seek the good of others.

We need social consciousness in legislation and in the administration of justice; for only as men come to see the truth of social relations will they be able to legislate for the good of all instead of for particular individuals, corporations, or classes.

The same is true of theology and religion. An adequate development of the social consciousness would result in greater toleration, and greater federation, co-operation, and union, among the great denominations of Christendom.

In his discussion of the social mind I do not think Dr. Cooley gives us a clear understanding of what the social mind really is. He says: "Mind is an organic whole made up of co-operating individualities; social mind and the individual mind are but phases of the one mind. Every thought we have is linked with the thought of our ancestors and associates, and through them with that of society at large. The unity of the social mind consists, not in agreement, but in organization, in the fact of reciprocal influence or causation among its parts, by virtue of which everything that takes place in it is connected with everything else, and so is an outcome of the whole."

It seems to me that from these statements the moral implications that logically follow are important for society. If all mind is one, and every thought so linked with ancestors, associates, and society at large; if everything that takes place in it is the outcome of the whole, where are we to place moral responsibility? Where is the ground for justice in questions of administration of law? Who is debtor and who creditor? Who can claim patent-rights or copy-rights? Where is the ground for personal merit and demerit, rewards and punishments? Where will reform begin? What social advantage has the genius or master over the humblest member of the audience, or even the giggler in the "peanut" gallery? If Professor Cooley has in mind some future state of society like the millennium, then such views are appropriate, but for the present stages of social development it seems to me that moral implications are pertinent.

Concerning social consciousness the writer of the paper says that psychologists and sociologists are still infected with the idea that self-consciousness or individual consciousness is primary. I confess that I am still "infected." I believe the self-conscious being could never become such without society, or some form of association with other creatures of his kind. These must have their efficient influence before he, the individual self-conscious being, is able to realize the fact of self-consciousness. Had there been no objectivity for Descartes to doubt, he could never have come to the consciousness of himself as a thinking being.

We are told in this paper: "All consciousness, all vivid, wide-awake state of mind, is social consciousness, because a sense of our relation to other persons, or of other persons to one another, can hardly fail to be a part of it." Now

suppose a man comes in contact with his neighbor's bulldog, or falls over a wheelbarrow, or treads upon a tack at night, is this wide-awake state of mind, which he as an individual surely has in each case supposed, necessarily a part of social consciousness? It seems to me that we must distinguish between consciousness of persons or of society and "social consciousness." Are they necessarily the same psychologically? Self-consciousness involves self-determination, or the consciousness of ability to make use of ideas for self-advantage. Social consciousness is distinct from consciousness of persons or the group, in that it implies the ability of the individual or social group to make use of ideas for the advantage of society as well as for self. Both imply a moral element in consciousness, or obligation and utility. In fact, no idea, whether in the consciousness of the individual or in that of the group, can be properly called social until it can be measured in terms of social activity of some kind. To be aware of persons or of a social group does not prove that I have social consciousness, in the true sense of the term, any more than to be aware of a pack of wolves would prove the fact. The elements of self-initiative and of self-determination seem to be given no place in Professor Cooley's view of the social consciousness.

The emphasis today in education implies the priority in development of the "self or I-consciousness." So does the difference between religious denominations in history and the more recent federative movements. The same fact might be illustrated from a study of commerce and politics. In fact, if we take a survey of society, we shall discover that many of the conflicts between groups have been the result of the lack of social consciousness, or the primary development of, and the resultant actions growing out of, the individual or personal consciousness.

I wish to say just a word in reference to the last two divisions of the paper, namely, "public opinion" and "social will." In nearly everything in this part of the paper I am in agreement with Dr. Cooley.

With regard to public opinion: A distinguished missionary recently returned from the Philippine Islands said: "In the Philippines there is no public opinion, because there is no way of creating it. They have no newspapers. In this country you buy your public opinion for two cents in the morning and one cent at night." The point of importance for us as sociologists is to see that there is created in this country and for the world at large the proper means of communication that will make an enlightened and intelligent public opinion possible.

In the last part of the paper, which treats of the "social will," I cannot agree altogether with the writer when he says, "The wicked man is a fiction of denunciation," and that there is very little wrong-doing with ill intent. You will recall the words of a very prominent leader of a great organization who, when arraigned before an investigating committee, said he and his associates were working for their own pockets all the time. Recent investigations in various quarters have revealed the fact that in most instances of wrong-doing to society these were individuals who intentionally committed certain specific acts knowing all the time that they were breaking laws, statutory and moral.

I believe it is possible so to develop the social will that society by its obedience-compelling power may be able to bring all wrong-doers to justice, and

so modify legislation that the individual wrong-doer can no longer dodge behind the corporation, or the corporation dodge behind the law; then we shall have social control that will result in the greatest good to all factors of human society.

MR. ALVAN A. TENNEY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

On account of the unavoidable absence of Professor Giddings, I should like to present a thought which, it seems to me, he would have emphasized at this time. If, in spite of four years' work with him, I misinterpret his point of view, I hope that those of you who have a more accurate knowledge of his ideas will make the necessary corrections.

The speaker of the evening has apparently assumed that his subject, "Social Consciousness," is equivalent to the phrase "social self-consciousness." It is, of course, true that progress is likely to be more and more harmonious, the greater the amount of rational and purposive effort attained by a society which is capable of appreciating the results of its own action—is sufficiently self-conscious to exercise rational control over itself. It is also true, however, that social consciousness includes mental phenomena that are in large measure the result of feeling, and not of any such process of thought concerning the content of the social mind as the term "self-consciousness" implies. If any of you have been present at a negro revival meeting, you will realize what I mean. You will doubtless remember certain phenomena which may accurately be considered phases of a certain form of social consciousness, but which could hardly be described as phenomena of social self-consciousness. Certain things were going on which could not have taken place had there not been a number of persons associated. No one of the participants would have acted as he did had he been alone. It is hardly conceivable, however, that there was any rational attempt on the part of those exhibiting these phenomena to understand their significance. Of social self-consciousness there was none; of social consciousness, much.

The suggestion, then, that I wish to make is that feeling is an extremely important element in social consciousness. The members of a society like this, accustomed to rational reflection, are perhaps likely to overestimate the importance of social self-consciousness as an explanation of existing social conditions. It may be that the forces of the physical environment, the influence of which Professor Lindsay has emphasized, register themselves in social feeling far more potently than we imagine, and that social feeling plays a greater part in the social process than has yet been suspected.

MRS. CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

There are a number of facts which readily occur to any one of us as illustrating the social character of mental activity. Solitary confinement is known to be one of the most terrible punishments, for it drives its victims mad through the absence of intercourse with other human beings. The mind cannot live unto itself, but must have contact with other minds. Lighthouse watchmen placed at points which are isolated, and where they have practically no opportunities for contact with mankind, are never left entirely alone, but are invariably given a companion. This is not because it requires two to attend to the work,

but because the isolated individual deteriorates mentally and becomes something altogether abnormal. But even when there are two of them in the same lighthouse, it is not uncommon for them to become insane, or at least cranky—because two persons form too short a circuit for stimulating social intercourse.

Even the smallest and most selfish minds, those which seem to center wholly about themselves and to care nothing for others, need social intercourse. The intellectually lowest type of woman, capable of little truly mental life, nevertheless needs contact with other minds and finds it in the form of gossip with her neighbors over the backyard fence. Consider, again, the incontrovertible desire to impart a secret to other minds. The more important and the greater the secret, the more insistently does it press for communication to other minds. Great thinkers, no matter how profound their contempt for the "common horde" of readers, invariably seek the means of imparting their thoughts to others. Mental property is not individual, but social. Furthermore, when we read of the suffering of others, of people whom we may never have seen, and whose welfare does not concern us at all, why is it that we suffer? What is it in us that suffers, unless it be our social consciousness? We suffer in that part of us in which we are not ourselves, but a part of something greater than ourselves. When the country's flag is insulted, what need we care as individuals? The insult does not touch us. It does, however, affect our social consciousness. We are hurt as members of the social body.

Our mind is therefore part and parcel of the group to which we belong, and the interests and desires and feelings of the group become our interests, our desires, and our feelings. Take a perfectly truthful young man and make him a reporter on one of the newspapers. From that time on his group-consciousness becomes such as a member of the staff of that paper that he will work for it, fight for it, and lie for it as he never would for himself.

PROFESSOR C. W. A. VEDITZ, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Had not Mrs. Gilman prepared the way for the somewhat radical point of view that I wish to present, I should have hesitated to present any remarks on Professor Cooley's exceedingly suggestive paper. As it is, however, I should like to say a word in behalf of the contention that of the two, self-consciousness and social consciousness, the former is a derivative of the latter, and not the latter of the former. Social consciousness, or awareness of society, is not only inseparable from consciousness of self, but consciousness of self is developed *later* than social consciousness. Instead of saying that self and society are in the consciousness of the individual twin-born, I would say that consciousness of society precedes consciousness of self.

We know that in the experience of infants it requires considerable time before the child learns to mark off itself from the outside world, to draw the line between the *ego* and the *altrui*. Similarly, in the domain of psychic existence the marking-off of self takes place late in the history of consciousness. Moreover, it is always a vague and indefinite marking-off—so vague and indefinite as to make it not unreasonable to contend that social consciousness is more real and more definite than self-consciousness. Any endeavor to mark off those contents of the mind which are primarily individual, which belong to

me, as opposed to the social group of which I am a member, at once reveals the difficulties that stand in the way of any description of self-consciousness. Language itself, in which all thought-processes find their expression and in which they necessarily take form—whether language be articulate or inarticulate does not matter—is a social product. In other words, whenever we think, we use words, either aloud or inarticulately; and these words are social things. Thus the implements of thought are themselves social implements. The assumption that of the whole field of consciousness one part—that part which belongs to me as a distinct ego—cannot only be marked off from the rest, but is more fundamental than the rest, has no foundation in fact. Not infrequently what I regard as the peculiar characteristics of myself as a psychic entity are not my characteristics at all, but are attributed to me by my fellow-creatures and represent merely the characteristics which I am striving to attain. The indefiniteness of the psychic self on this account is well illustrated by Dr. Holmes's celebrated story of John and Thomas. When John and Thomas take part in a dialogue there are, said Dr. Holmes, at least six personalities distinctly to be recognized as participating in the dialogue: first, there is the real John, known only to his Maker; second, there is John's ideal John, never the real one, and often very unlike him; third, there is Thomas' idea of John, never the real John, nor John's John, and often very unlike either. Similarly, there is the real Thomas, Thomas' ideal Thomas, and John's ideal Thomas. The real John may be old, dull, and ill-looking. But John very possibly conceives himself to be young, witty, and fascinating, and talks from the point of view of this ideal. Thomas, again, believes him to be an artful rogue, we will say; therefore he *is*, so far as Thomas' attitude is concerned, an artful rogue, though really simple and stupid.

Nietzsche somewhere contends that our idea of ourselves in no way corresponds with the reality, and is usually determined by other people's idea of what we are.

In brief, I am not at all certain that Professor Natorp is wrong in his statement that the individual is just as much an abstraction in the social sciences as the atom is an abstraction in chemistry—made for purposes of convenience, but possibly corresponding to nothing real and distinguishable.

MR. JAMES MINNICK, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

I should like to say a word in regard to the line of thought suggested by Professor Earp. I could not help feeling, in listening to the paper of this evening and also to that of Professor Jenks at the opening of this conference, that in our endeavor to explain the workings of the social conscience there is a tendency to excuse too much the acts of certain individuals, that have been socially and industrially harmful. I am wondering also whether the present state of public mind in regard to social and industrial ills is due entirely to a higher state of social conscience recently developed, or whether it is that the public at large has begun to understand the influence of the acts of many of the leaders in the financial and industrial world. The game of cards is so universal that practically everyone knows what we mean by "stacking the deck," but when James Hyde invented his great gambling scheme of the tontine policies in

insurance, the public at large was not sufficiently well informed in regard to the game to understand what Mr. Hyde was really doing. It seems to me, however, that Mr. Hyde was fully aware of just exactly what he was doing, and it was just because he did understand and was so far-seeing that it was possible for him to carry on his plan so successfully. When the great railway companies obtained grants of land, and afterward, when the lands were all sold, straightened their tracks, it seems to me they understood exactly what they were doing. The public at large did not protest, because they did not know what was going on. A striking example of this seems to me to be that of the agitation about the public schools in Chicago. When years ago the attorney of the *Tribune*, a member of the board of education, forgot his obligation to the welfare of the public schools and, acting as the attorney for the *Tribune*, obtained leases of public lands that gave to that company valuable school lands at the rental of thousands of dollars per year less than their true value, it seems to me he knew exactly what he was doing. The public did not protest at the time, because the public knew nothing about it, and as the leading newspapers of Chicago are all equally guilty with the *Tribune* in similar transactions, the combined power of the press has been used to keep the public in ignorance and to attack the Federation of Teachers, which has exposed the scheme. The press did everything in its power to create public sentiment adverse to the Teachers' Federation and to confuse the public mind as to the real question at issue. It is estimated that the loss to the public-school fund in rentals in the past decade is something like twenty million dollars. Can any theory of development of social conscience justly excuse the guilty individual? When Senator Dryden persuaded a compliant legislature of New Jersey to turn over to him the accumulated surplus of his insurance company, it seems to me he knew exactly what he was doing, and it does not seem to me that any theory of development of social conscience should make us find excuses for individuals in such acts. It is important to decide, therefore, whether any particular state of public mind is due to a development of higher social conscience, or whether it is because the public is just being informed of the facts in the case. Even the socialists, whose programme demands the most complete change in the structure of society, maintain they have no quarrel with individuals, but entirely with institutions. Nevertheless, it seems to me that we should quarrel with those individuals whose acts are far-reaching and harmful to the whole country.

PROFESSOR E. A. ROSS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

How social is man appears from a study of suicide. Few commit suicide from physical anguish—from pain, cold, or hunger. A man is far more likely to renounce life when some catastrophe happens to the image of himself he is accustomed to see in the eyes of others. A business man fails, an officer is cashiered, a woman who has made a false step is exposed, and though their physical well-being is secured, out they go. Again, there is nothing like social relations to keep down suicide. Isolated, the individual who meets with shipwreck lets go of life; knit up with others, he is supported by sympathy and encouragement and hangs on. Though all is lost, he has his social self to live for his "honor." This is why the lone suicide from three to five times as much

as the married; why the Catholics, more closely joined into a religious community than the Protestants, endure much better the shocks of life and hence suicide less; why suicide is common in disintegrating societies, while wars and revolutions that knit men afresh cut down the frequency of self-murder. We enter life as animals; so long as we have bodily health, we battle on; but gradually personality forms out of the give-and-take of social life and overgrows the physical man, constitutes, as it were, a kind of giant parasite. Presently we live or die according as the social self thrives or droops. After a man is fifty, how quickly he breaks if anything shatters the image of himself he is used to finding reflected from the faces of others! Let him suffer overwhelming political defeat, let him become a fugitive from justice, let wrongful accusations smirch his honor, let a daughter's shame make his name a by-word, or let his wife run away with another man, and he crumples like wet paper.

On the other hand, let him, as the years pass, meet with widening appreciation, love, and honor, environ him with old friends and young grandchildren, and he will live into the nineties. To explain this development of personality, to analyze the process out of which it arises, to describe its stages, to correlate it with the ideals and institutions it gives birth to—this is the supreme task of social psychology.