Is Social Work a Profession?

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Before beginning to consider whether social work is or is not a profession, I must confess a very genuine doubt as to my competency to undertake the discussion. My acquaintance with social work, with the literature of social work, and with social workers is distinctly limited—far too much so. Hence, if the conclusions that I have reached seem to you unsound or academic, I beg you to understand that I should not be disposed to press them.

The word profession or professional may be loosely or strictly used. In its broadest significance, it is simply the opposite of the word *amateur*. A person is in this sense a professional if his entire time is devoted to an activity, as against one who is only transiently or provisionally so engaged. The professional nurse, baseball player, dancer, and cook thus earn a livelihood by concentrating their entire attention on their respective vocations and expect to go on doing so; whereas the amateur nurse enlists only for the duration of the war, or the amateur baseball player, during youth or college life. Social work is from this point of view a profession for those who make a full-time job of it; it is not a profession for those who incidentally contribute part of themselves to active philanthropy.

However, I have not been asked to decide whether social work is a full-time or part-time occupation, whether, in a word, it is a professional or amateur occupation. I assume that every difficult occupation requires the entire time of those who take it seriously, though of course work can also be found for volunteers with something less than all their time or strength to offer. The question put to me is a more technical one. The term profession, strictly used, as opposed to business or handicraft, is a title of peculiar distinction, coveted by many activities. Thus far, it has been pretty indiscriminately used. Almost any occupation not obviously a business is apt to classify itself as a profession. Doctors, lawyers, preachers, musicians, engineers,

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journalists, trained nurses, trapeze and dance masters, equestrians, and chiropodists—all speak of their profession. Their claims are supposed to be established beyond question if they are able to affix to their names one of those magical combinations of letters that either are or look like an academic degree. On this basis, chiropody would be a profession because the New York School of Chiropody confers the degree of M.Cp., and social work might qualify at once with the degree S.W. Some years ago, the president of a western university told me that he had compiled a list of all the degrees ever conferred by his institution. In the list appeared a very ominous combination of letters—nothing less, in a word, than N.G. I was relieved to be informed that this was not an effort to characterize the entire academic output but signified only "graduate nurse." If the academic degree decides, nursing is a profession for that reason, even were there no other.

We need waste no time in endeavoring to formulate the concept of professional, if the concept is to include the indiscriminate activities touched on above. If there is a dancing profession, a baseball profession, an acting profession, a nursing profession, an artistic profession, a musical profession, a literary profession, a medical profession, and a legal profession—to mention no others—the term profession is too vague to be fought for. We may as well let down the bars and permit people to call themselves professional for no better reason than that they choose in this way to appropriate whatever of social distinction may cling to a term obviously abused.

But to make a profession in the genuine sense, something more than a mere claim or an academic degree is needed. There are certain objective standards that can be formulated. Social work is interested in being recognized as a profession only if the term is limited to activities possessing these criteria. The social worker wants, I assume, to be a professional, if at all, only in the sense in which the physician and the engineer are professional, and he wants to make common cause with them in defending the term against deterioration. In this narrower and eulogistic sense, what are the earmarks of a profession?

One has, of course, no right to be arbitrary, notional, or unhistorical. The nature of a profession has undergone a readily traceable development, and the number of professions has not remained stationary. Occupations that were once non-professional have evolved into professional status. These changes will continue to go on. The definition that we may formulate today will therefore need recasting from time to time, and internal modifications will occur in many of the activities that we shall mention. My present concern, however, is not to consider the evolutionary aspects of the problem, but rather to ask what are at this moment the criteria of a profession and to consider whether social work conforms to them. There are a few professions universally admitted to

be such—law, medicine, and preaching. From these, one must by analysis extract the criteria with which, at least, one must begin the characterization of professions. As we proceed, we shall consider how far the conception has been widened or modified by the addition of new professions; and finally, to what extent social work measures up to the standard thus reached.

Would it not be fair to mention as the first mark of a profession that the activities involved are essentially intellectual in character? Manual work is not necessarily excluded; the use of tools is not necessarily excluded. The physician is not the less a member of a profession because his fingers feel a pulse and his hands sound a patient's chest; the engineer is not the less a member of a profession because he employs instruments and tools. But in neither of these instances does the activity derive its essential character from its instruments. The instrument is an incident or an accident; the real character of the activity is the thinking process. A free, resourceful, and unhampered intelligence applied to problems and seeking to understand and master them—that is in the first instance characteristic of a profession.

Wherever intelligence plays thus freely, the responsibility of the practitioner is at once large and personal. The problems to be dealt with are complicated; the facilities at hand, more or less abundant and various; the agent—physician, engineer, or preacher—exercises a very large discretion as to what he shall do. He is not under orders; though he be cooperating with others, though the work be team work rather than individual work, his responsibility is not less complete and not less personal. This quality of responsibility follows from the fact that professions are intellectual in character; for in all intellectual operations, the thinker takes upon himself a risk. If then intellectuality with consequent personal responsibility be regarded as one criterion of a profession, no more merely instrumental or mechanical activity can fairly lay claim to professional rank; for the human mind does not, in instrumental or mechanical activities, enjoy the requisite freedom of scope or carry the requisite burden of personal responsibility. The execution or application of a thoughtout technique—be it crude or exquisite, physical or mental—is after all routine. Someone back of the routineer has done the thinking and therefore bears the responsibility, and he alone deserves to be considered professional.

We are accustomed to speak of the learned professions. What is the significance of the word learned in this connection? Does it imply that there are unlearned as well as learned professions? I suspect not, for the intellectual character of professional activity involves the working up of ideas into practice, involves the derivation of raw material from one realm or another of the learned world. Professions would fall short of attaining intellectuality if they employed mainly or even largely knowledge and experience that is generally

accessible—if they drew, that is, only on the usually available sources of information. They need to resort to the laboratory and the seminar for a constantly fresh supply of facts; and it is the steady stream of ideas, emanating from these sources, which keeps professions from degenerating into mere routine, from losing their intellectual and responsible character. The second criterion of the profession is therefore its learned character, and this characteristic is so essential that the adjective learned really adds nothing to the noun profession.

Professionals are therefore intellectual and learned; they are in the next place definitely practical. No profession can be merely academic and theoretic; the professional man must have an absolutely definite and practical object. His processes are essentially intellectual; his raw material is derived from the world of learning; therefore he must do with it a clean-cut, concrete task. All the activities about the professional quality of which we should at once agree are not only intellectual and learned but definite in purpose. The professions of law, medicine, architecture, and engineering, for example, operate within definite fields and strive toward objects capable of clear, unambiguous, and concrete formulation. Physicians rely mainly on certain definite sciences—anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, etc.—and apply these to the preservation and restoration of health. Architecture relies on mathematics, physics, etc., and applies these to the designing and construction of buildings. Ends may of course be concrete and practical without [being] physical or tangible. University professors, engaged in teaching, in the training of teachers, in the increase of knowledge or the development of thought, stand the tests that we have thus far enumerated: their work is intellectual, learned in quality, and definitely practical in object.

Each of the unmistakable professions already mentioned for the purpose of illustration possesses a technique capable of communication through an orderly and highly specialized educational discipline. Despite differences of opinion about details, the members of a given profession are pretty well agreed as to the specific objects the profession seeks to fulfill, and the specific objects that the practitioner of the profession must master in order to attain the object in question. On this basis, men arrive at an understanding as to the amount and quality of training, general and special, which should precede admission into the professional school; as to the content and length of the professional course. These formulations are meant to exclude from professions those incapable of pursuing them in a large, free, and responsible way; and to make sure that those potentially capable are so instructed as to get the fullest possible benefit from the training provided.

A profession is a brotherhood—almost, if the word could be purified of its invidious implications, a caste. Professional activities are so definite, so

absorbing in interest, so rich in duties and responsibilities, that they completely engage their votaries. The social and personal lives of professional men and their families thus tend to organize around a professional nucleus. A strong class consciousness soon develops. But though externally somewhat aristocratic in form, professions are, properly taken, highly democratic institutions. They do indeed tend to set up certain requirements for matriculation, so to speak; but democracy, I take it, means not the annihilation of distinctions, but rather the abrogation of gratuitous and arbitrary distinctions. If membership in a profession were conditioned on some qualification not essentially related to the activities involved—on birth or wealth or some other accident—professions could be fairly charged with being snobbish or aristocratic; but if qualifications are determined by the nature of the responsibility alone, and if membership depends solely on satisfying terms thus arrived at, then professions must be adjudged thoroughly democratic in essence.

There is, of course, always danger that the interests of an organization may conflict with those of the body politic. Organizations of physicians, lawyers, and teachers may find the personal interests of the individuals of whom they are composed arrayed against those of society at large. On the whole, however, organized groups of this kind are, under democratic conditions, apt to be more responsive to public interest than are unorganized and isolated individuals. In any event, under the pressure of public opinion, professional groups have more and more tended to view themselves as organs contrived for the achievement of social ends rather than as bodies formed to stand together for the assertion of the rights or the protection of interests and principles. I do not wish to be understood as saying that this development is as yet by any means complete. Such is far from being the case. Organizations of teachers, doctors, and lawyers are still apt to look out, first of all, for "number one." But as time goes on, it may very well come to be a mark of professional character that the professional organization is explicitly and admittedly meant for the advancement of the common social interest through the professional organization. Devotion to well-doing is thus more and more likely to become an accepted mark of professional activity; and as this development proceeds, the pecuniary interest of the individual practitioner of a given profession is apt to yield gradually before an increasing realization of responsibility to a larger end.

Let me now review briefly the six criteria which we have mentioned; professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their raw material from science and learning; this material they work up to a practical and definite end; they possess an educationally communicable technique; they tend to self-organization; they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation. It will be interesting to submit

various forms of activity to the test in order to determine whether these criteria work.

We begin with a crude and obvious example—plumbing. Plumbing possesses certain professional characteristics: it is definite in purpose, possesses a technique communicable through education, and has developed a very definite organization. Nevertheless, plumbing is not a profession. The plumber is a mechanical performer, acting on the instrumental rather than the intellectual level; the data which he uses are the property of common experience, not immediately or recently derived from the realms of science and learning; finally, there is as yet no convincing evidence that the spirit of plumbing is becoming socialized. Plumbing is still prosecuted too largely for the plumber's profit. It is therefore a handicraft, not a profession.

Banking is an activity with certain professional characteristics. Its purpose is definite; it gives a good deal of scope to intelligence; it develops a distinct class consciousness. But the disqualifications are plain: Banking is as yet far from being to a sufficient extent the application of economic science; it is largely a matter of what is vaguely called business sense or business experience, common sense or rule of thumb. The scientific possibilities unquestionably exist, and recent legislation marks a distinct advance in the direction of scientific or professional banking in the stricter use of those terms. For the present, however, banking practices are still too largely empirical to square with the modern conception of professionalism. There are, of course, other defects. A prominent banker recently described himself as "a dealer in credits." The motive of financial profit is thus too strongly stressed. It is true that at times of crisis the banking interests of the country have mobilized for the protection of the general public. But in these instances, trade interest and general interest so largely coincide that it is a question whether the motive can be regarded as an example of professional altruism; in any case, it is exceptional, due to common danger from the outside rather than to spiritual striving from within. For the present, therefore, banking is to be regarded as a trade with certain professional learnings.

Is pharmacy a profession? Is trained nursing a profession? The pharmacist compounds the physician's prescription, for which task he requires a considerable degree of expertness, a knowledge of certain sciences—especially chemistry—and a high degree of caution, since either the slightest error on his part, or inability to detect an error on the part of the physician, whether due to ignorance or carelessness, may have very serious consequences. Recurring to our criteria, I should say that pharmacy has definiteness of purpose, possesses a communicable technique, and derives at least part of its essential material from science. On the other hand, the activity is not

predominantly intellectual in character and the responsibility is not original or primary. The physician thinks, decides, and orders; the pharmacist obeys—obeys, of course, with discretion, intelligence, and skill—yet in the end obeys and does not originate. Pharmacy, therefore, is an arm added to the medical profession, a special and distinctly higher form of handicraft, not a profession. Nor is this distinction merely a verbal quibble, for it has an important bearing on the solution of all educational questions pertaining to pharmacy.

I am conscious of endeavoring to pick up a live wire when I undertake to determine the status of the trained nurse. But if consideration of various activities serially will throw any light upon the problem as related to the social worker, there are obvious advantages in discussing the twilight cases. The trained nurse is making a praiseworthy and important effort to improve the status of her vocation. She urges, and with justice, that her position is one of great responsibility; that she must possess knowledge, skill, and power of judgment; that the chances of securing these qualifications, all of them essentially intellectual, improve, as the occupation increases in dignity. It is to be observed, however, that the responsibility of the trained nurse is neither original nor final. She, too, may be described as another arm to the physician or surgeon. Her function is instrumental, though not, indeed, just mechanically instrumental. In certain relations, she is perhaps almost a collaborator. Yet, when all is said, it is the physician who observes, reflects, and decides. The trained nurse plays into his hands; carries out his orders; summons him like a sentinel in fresh emergencies; subordinates loyally her intelligence to his theory, to his policy, and [is] effective in precise proportion to her ability thus to second his efforts. Can an activity of this secondary nature be deemed a profession? On the answer, an entire educational policy depends.

I have spoken of the trained nurse, the sick-room attendant, and I have raised, without endeavoring finally to dispose of, certain questions suggested by her relationship to the physician. Meanwhile, it is only fair to add, we are developing nursing along other lines. The public health nurse is a sanitary official, busy in the field largely on her own responsibility rather than in the sick room under orders. Whether the term nurse is properly applicable to her, whether a differentiation in training and terminology is not likely to occur as public health work comes into its own, I need not undertake to decide.

With medicine, law, engineering, literature, painting, music, we emerge from clouds of doubts into the unmistakable professions. Without exception, these callings involve personally responsible intellectual activity; they derive their material immediately from learning and science; they possess an organized and educationally communicable technique; they have evolved into definite status, social and professional; and they tend to become, more and more clearly, organs for the achievement of large social ends. I need not

establish this position separately in reference to each of them. Let the case of medicine suffice. The physician's function is overwhelmingly intellectual in quality and his responsibility absolutely personal. He utilizes various instruments, physical and human: microscope, stethoscope, sphygmograph, orderly, pharmacist, dietician, nurse. But his is the commanding intelligence that brings these resources to bear; his the responsibility of decision as to the problem and how it is to be solved. There are, of course, physicians in abundance to whose processes the word intellectual cannot be properly applied—routineers, to whom a few obvious signs indicate this or that procedure, by a law of mechanical association; but these poorly trained and ill-equipped medical men have no place in modern medicine. They are already obsolete, mere survivals destined soon to pass away.

In the next place, medicine derives its material immediately from science. Indeed, an imposing array of sciences has been developed, very largely out of problems encountered and needs felt in medical practice: anatomy, physiology, pathology, bacteriology, and pharmacology. These sciences have now achieved independence in the sense that, like chemistry and physics, they possess inherent interest and are capable of development without immediate reference to disease. They nevertheless furnish the data with which the physician very largely operates, and his professional development may be determined by the degree to which he substitutes in his observation and thinking data thus derived for data empirical in character.

Medicine qualifies on other points equally well: it has the definite, practical end already noted, viz: the preservation and restoration of health; it lends itself admirably to an effective and orderly educational discipline, calculated to attain the definite status; finally, though neither the organization as a whole nor the members as individuals can claim to be exempt from selfish and mercenary motives, it must in fairness be said that the medical profession has shown a genuine regard for the public interest as against its own, that it is increasingly responsive to large social needs, and that there are not wanting signs of a development that will minimize personal profit somewhat as it is minimized in teaching.

I hope that these examples have made our criteria so clear that they can now be applied to social work. Is social work a profession in the technical and strict sense of the term? The Bulletin of the New York School of Philanthropy under the title The Profession of Social Work makes the following explanation:

> The School of Philanthropy is primarily a professional training school, of graduate rank, for civic and social work. The word philanthropy is to be understood in the broadest and deepest sense as including every kind of social work,

> whether under public or private auspices. By social work is meant any form of persistent and deliberate effort to improve living or working conditions in the community, or to relieve, diminish, or prevent distress, whether due to weakness of character or to pressure of external circumstances. All such efforts may be conceived as falling under the heads of charity, education, or justice, and the same action may sometimes appear as one or another according to the point of view.

The activities described in these words are obviously intellectual, not mechanical, not routine in character. The worker must possess fine powers of analysis and discrimination, breadth and flexibility of sympathy, sound judgment, skill in utilizing whatever resources are available, facility in devising new combinations. These operations are assuredly of intellectual quality.

I confess I am not clear, however, as to whether this responsibility is not rather that of a mediating than an original agency. Let me explain as concretely as I can. The engineer works out his problem and puts through its solution; so does the physician, the preacher, the teacher. The social worker takes hold of a case, that of a disintegrating family, a wrecked individual, or an unsocialized industry. Having localized his problem, having decided on its particular nature, is he not usually driven to invoke the specialized agency, professional or other, best equipped to handle it? There is illness to be dealt with—the doctor is needed; ignorance requires the school; poverty calls for the legislature, organized charity, and so on. To the extent that the social worker mediates the intervention of the particular agent or agency best fitted to deal with the specific emergency which he has encountered, is the social worker himself a professional or is he the intelligence that brings this or that profession or other activity into action? The responsibility for specific action thus rests upon the power he has invoked. The very variety of the situations he encounters compels him to be not a professional agent so much as the mediator invoking this or that professional agency.

In speaking of social work as mediating, I do not intend to say that other professions are mutually independent and act independently. Indeed, the collaboration of different professions in the doing of specific tasks is a characteristic feature of latter-day organization. Architects, engineers, sanitarians, lawyers, and educators cooperate in the building of a school or a tenement. But it is to be noted that this is a division of labor among equals, each party bearing, subject to general consent, primarily responsibility for his particular function, the definiteness of that function and the completeness of the responsibility differing I take it, from the function and responsibility of the social worker under similar conditions.

Consideration of the objects of social work leads to the same conclusion. I have made the point that all the established and recognized professions have

definite and specific ends: medicine, law, architecture, engineering—one can draw a clear line of demarcation about their respective fields. This is not true of social work. It appears not so much a definite field as an aspect of work in many fields. An aspect of medicine belongs to social work, as do certain aspects of law, education, architecture, etc. Recur for a moment to the scope of interest indicated in the extract above quoted from the prospectus of the New York School: the improvement of living and working conditions in the community, the relief or prevention of distress whether individual or social in origin. The prospectus of the Boston School for Social Workers enumerates the various kinds of positions occupied by its graduates as follows: care of children, church or religious work, civic agencies, industrial betterment, institutional and medical social service, neighborhood work and recreation, organizing charity, probation and parole. The field of employment is indeed so vast that delimitation is impossible. We observed that professions need to be limited and definite in scope, in order that practitioners may themselves act; but the high degree of specialized competency required for action and conditioned on limitation of area cannot possibly go with the width of scope characteristic of social work. A certain superficiality of attainment, a certain lack of practical ability, necessarily characterize such breadth of endeavor. If, however, we conceive the social worker, not so much as the agent grappling with this or that situation, but rather as controlling the keyboard that summons, cooperates with, and coordinates various professional specialists, this breadth of attainment is very far from being a matter for reproach. It imposes upon the social worker the necessity of extreme caution, of considerable modesty, because in these days a considerable measure of certainty is possible to any one person only within a restricted field. Would it not be at least suggestive therefore to view social work as in touch with many professions rather than as a profession in and by itself?

Perhaps the same idea can be brought out in other ways. A good deal of what is called social work might perhaps be accounted for on the ground that the recognized professions have developed too slowly on the social side. Suppose medicine were fully socialized; would not medical men, medical institutions, and medical organizations look after certain interests that the social worker must care for just because medical practice now falls short? The shortcomings of law create a similar need in another direction. Thus viewed, social work is, in part at least, not so much a separate profession, as an endeavor to supplement certain existing professions pending their completed development. It pieces out existing professions; breathes a new spirit into them; and binds them together in the endeavor to deal with a given situation from a new point of view.

Lack of specificity in aim affects seriously the problem of training social workers. Professions that are able to define their objects precisely can work out educational procedures capable of accomplishing a desired result. But the occupations of social workers are so numerous and diverse that no compact, purposefully organized educational discipline is feasible. Well-informed, well-balanced, tactful, judicious, sympathetic, resourceful people are needed, rather than any definite kind or kinds of technical skill. Insofar as education can produce this type, the education is not technically professional so much as broadly cultural in a variety of realms of civic and social interest. The vagueness of the enterprise in which they are engaged must have troubled the instructors themselves, if I may judge from a remark once made to me by one of them: "We don't know just what to teach them." In this connection, it is worth noting that the heads of schools for social workers are trained men with subsequent experience but not trained social workers. Dr. Graham Taylor is a theologian by training; Dr. Brackett and Dr. Devine are economists. In addition to knowing a specialty well, they are all well-informed in many other directions. This breadth of interest and attainment reinforced by practical experience makes them competent heads of schools for social workers—this, rather than any particular training aimed at the particular job.

Let me add, however, that what I have just said does not imply that schools of philanthropy are superfluous. Looking at them as educational ventures, I suspect that they are as yet feeling about for their proper place and function. There is an obvious convenience, however, in having an institution which focuses as far as possible the main lines of social activity; an obvious advantage in having an institution that emphasizes the practical side of what might otherwise be more or less academic instruction in many branches. But instruction of this kind is not exactly professional in character; it supplements and brings to bear what good students might well acquire in the course of their previous higher education.

If social work fails to conform to some professional criteria, it very readily satisfies others. No question can be raised as to the source from which the social worker derives his material—it comes obviously from science and learning, from economics, ethics, religion, and medicine; nor is there any doubt on the score of the rapid evolution of a professional self-consciousness, as these annual conferences abundantly testify. Finally, in the one respect in which most professions still fall short, social work is fairly on the same level as education, for the rewards of the social worker are in his own conscience and in heaven. His life is marked by devotion to impersonal ends, and his own satisfaction is largely through the satisfaction procured by his efforts for others.

There is, however, another side even to this aspect of professional activity. Professions may not be cultivated for mere profit. Neither, let me add, can they develop on the basis of volunteer or underpaid service. Most men and women are fortunately so placed that the careers they adopt must afford them the income necessary to their existence and development. Well-trained men and women cannot, as a rule, be attracted to a vocation that does not promise a living wage in return for competent service. Am I mistaken in thinking that not infrequently the inner joy attached to philanthropic endeavor has seemed to those in control a more complete satisfaction of the worker's legitimate desires than it has seemed, for example, to the worker herself? Here again I am raising a question, not making a criticism.

Now that we have run through the marks of the professions and have found that on the whole at this stage, social work is hardly eligible, it is fair to ask whether we have not been simply engaged in quibbling. Has an analysis of this kind any practical significance?

It seems to me that it has. For example: the social worker is at times perhaps somewhat too self-confident; social work has suffered to some extent from one of the vices associated with journalism, excessive facility in speech and in action. Let us suppose for a moment that our reflection on the differences between the accepted professions and social work reminds the social worker at crucial moments that he is, as a social worker, not so much an expert himself as the mediator whose concern it is to summon the expert: will not his observation be calmer, his utterance more restrained, be the difficulty he encounters economic, educational, or sanitary? He will, I mean, be conscious of his dependence, and this consciousness will tend to induce caution, thoroughness, and moderation. For if social work is not definite enough to be called a profession, the social worker will at least be less cock-sure than the professional man whom he calls in. Is it not possible that part of the vast army of reaction is made up of those needlessly terrified by the occasionally reckless—and perhaps somewhat baseless—confidence of the reformer? If so, failure to realize the limitations of social work from the professional point of view is not without practical consequences.

Matthew Arnold somewhere quotes Goethe as saying: "To do is easy; to think is hard." There is a sense in which the remark is true. If we mean routine doing and fundamental thinking, then truly to do is easy, to think is hard. But there is a sense in which the remark is false. For if we mean by doing, effective doing, then to think is easy, to do is hard. The easy, impatient sweep of progressive recommendation, characteristic of even the best progressive journalism, is one thing; the working out of a practical problem is quite another. I know of nothing more difficult than to take hold of a definite

situation in sanitation or education and to make it better. Nor is it only or in some cases mainly the iniquity and perversity of men that are at fault; our impatience may occasionally be unjust, if it is due to any such view. The problems are in themselves intricate; our resources are inadequate; our powers, especially in dealing with others, are relatively slight and work slowly. In the sense in which we are now speaking, Goethe's saying may be reversed: To think is easy, to do is hard.

I have no desire to discourage social workers; still less do I want to bring aid or comfort to the enemy. I do not want to diminish the vigor of any attack that can be made upon poverty, ignorance, disease, selfishness; but for the moment I am, ignoring all else, looking at the method of the social worker from the merely professional standpoint. Now when social work becomes thoroughly professional in character and scientific in method, it will be perceived that vigor is not synonymous with intelligence. Moreover, vigor cannot succeed without intelligence. The battles that social work wages will not be won by phrases which too often serve as a substitute for experience and knowledge, but by trench warfare carried on by men and women who have learned every inch of the ground over which they must fight.

I spoke a moment ago of journalism. I would not be understood as discrediting effective and able journalistic work. Its limitations, however, are obvious, and by none are they more acutely felt than by some of those who are compelled by the necessities of the case to labor within them. What I mean to point out here is this: that a profession needs in these days a form of expression and record that is scientific rather than journalistic in character. The newspapers, the weekly and monthly periodicals, more or less serve social work as far as journalistic publicity is concerned. Now while it is doubtless still advisable to concentrate this material in journals expressly devoted to social work for news-propaganda and agitation, it is important to remember that we do not thus rise above the journalistic to the scientific or professional level. A profession must find a dignified and critical means of expressing itself in the form of a periodical which shall describe in careful terms whatever work is in progress; and it must from time to time register its more impressive performances in a literature of growing solidity and variety. To some extent, the evolution of social work toward the professional status can be measured by the quality of publication put forth in its name. I cannot pretend to such familiarity with the literature of social work as to warrant me in passing an opinion as to how far its periodical or its book literature is impressive, scientific, or professional in quality; but I believe the point is one which might be profitably considered by those who wish social work to be taken as seriously as medicine or engineering.

At the moment, therefore, it may be—observe that I am not endeavoring to be very positive—it may be that social work will gain if it becomes uncomfortably conscious that it is not a profession in the sense in which medicine and engineering are professions; that if medicine and engineering have cause to proceed with critical care, social work has even more. The father of the late President Gilman was once asked whether his son Daniel had "chosen his profession." "I don't know," he replied, "Daniel is always working rather than professing."

But, after all, what matters most is professional spirit. All activities may be prosecuted in the genuine professional spirit. Insofar as accepted professions are prosecuted at a mercenary or selfish level, law and medicine are ethically no better than trades. Insofar as trades are honestly carried on, they tend to rise toward the professional level. Social work appeals strongly to the humanitarian and spiritual element. It holds out no inducement to the worldly—neither comfort, glory, nor money. The unselfish devotion of those who have chosen to give themselves to making the world a fitter place to live in can fill social work with the professional spirit and thus to some extent lift it above all the distinctions which I have been at pains to make. In the long run, the first, main, and indispensable criterion of a profession will be the possession of professional spirit, and that test social work may, if it will, fully satisfy.