with considerably more historical precision than Heidegger, who is more concerned with proving that reification is the permanent structure of the human mind. That not only this question but the whole book was largely conceived as a response to Lukács has been convincingly demonstrated by Goldmann, in *Lukács and Heidegger*. But, as Lukacs has himself pointed out, Heidegger's philosophy as a whole is an implicit critique of Marxist philosophy as such.

15 *Radical Philosophy*, Nos.25-27.

16 It would, however, be as logical to argue, for example, that Popper's preoccupation with Marxism shows that he was a communist.

17 I am not for a moment suggesting that this was what Waterhouse intended; but I am sure he would agree that this attitude towards existentialism in particular is not an uncommon one.

18 See, for example, *BT*, p.320.

19 *BT*, pp.63-64.

20 *BT*, p.164.

Philosophy and Social Work: The Legitimation of a Professional Ideology

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Introduction

In the 19th century there were close links between philosophy and social work. The moral social and political issues that arise in social work were of vital concern to British neo-idealists, and social work as a profession owes much to the influence of these philosophers at its foundation. However, social work soon lost its interest for philosophy, until in the last two decades British analytical philosophers have started to pay it some attention once again. Unfortunately, the interest that has been paid so far has not been very beneficial. Often it has been a rather distant, patronising interest as expressed in the view that '... so long as philosophy and philosophers remain withdrawn from the substantive issues (of social work), it is inevitable that ideology should flourish' [1], as if philosophy itself were an indubitably objective and neutral tool of analysis. This paper will argue that not only have recent philosophical contributions not been neutral, they have positively helped to reconstruct and sustain ideological values in the social work profession.

Values in social work

As social work is commonly regarded as a liberal semi-profession, it is not surprising to find liberal values reflected in its literature. It is a frequent assertion that social work ideas reflect the values '... held to be central to the existence of Western liberal democratic society, and to Britain in particular' [2], and these include above all '... the primary importance of the individual', and '... a parliamentary democratic system of government' [3]. Like J.S. Mill, liberal social work values are concerned with simultaneously protecting the freedom of the individual, and also allowing for the morally important influence of the community to exert, in some degree and in some respects, its effect on individual character. The liberalism underlying social work illustrates this moral concern with individual action in the context of a participatory democratic society. The moral attitude is more fundamental than a specific political commitment, and is compatible with a variety of political views. It is the *moral* concern with both the individual and society which legitimates a type of interventive activity aiming to balance the interests of the individual, and the interests of others to their ultimate mutual benefit, as expressed in the British Association of Social Work's code of ethics: 'The profession accepts responsibility to encourage and facilitate the self-realisation of the individual person with *due regard for the interests of others*.' [4]

Some social work authors ignore the question of values, taking a 'scientific', medical or practical orientation towards their subject matter - and usually committing themselves to broad liberal values by default. However, many social work texts, facing the pressing moral and political dilemmas of social work practice, do make explicit reference to values. It is the formulation of a largely forgotten philosopher of social work, E.C. Lindeman, which became the basis for expressing liberal values in many social work texts. He was a teacher at the New York School of Social Work from 1924 to 1950 and was deeply influenced by Dewey. His work has been studied, utilized and popularised by G. Konopka, whose book on group work refers to Lindemann's '... distinction between *primary* and *secondary* values, the first ones representing basic ethical demands, and the latter ones growing out of cultural mores which change in time and place' [5]. She argues that 'The clear acceptance of primary values, and the demand of honest investigation into the social worker's own value system are basic to social group work practice' [6]. She identifies these primary values by saying that 'The key values of social work are ethical ones since they concern themselves with interpersonal relations. They are: "justice", and "responsibility", combined with "mental health".' [7]

The importance of this distinction and of the identification of primary values in social work is in the assumptions that these values are: (1) basic (i.e. universal, and not a subject of political and social debate); and (2) moral (since they 'concern themselves with interpersonal relations' at an individual level). These 'basic', 'moral' values thus underlie other social or political values. The

distinction thus helps to establish a broad liberal view as the basis of social work. In her study of Lindemann's social work philosophy, Konopka's discussion of the distinction between primary and secondary values brings this out clearly. She concludes that: 'The preceding discussion shows clearly that social work is based on *absolute values*, namely the *dignity of the individual*, and the *responsibility of the individual for others*.' [8] This distinction has been taken up on both sides of the Atlantic, helping to preserve the 'ultimate' values, as against the 'intermediate', and 'instrumental or operational' values [9].

The American example is paralleled by the British social work establishment both in respect of the distinction between primary and secondary values, and the description of the basic values in moral, personalistic terms. The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work published a report on values in social work which states that:

> 'Primary values' are the broad and generalised values characterising a whole social outlook. The value of 'respect for persons' is an example of a primary value, and there is a wide consensus of agreement that this is the value underlying a great deal of Western liberal culture. [10]

Furthermore, this central liberal value is 'The value to which the social work profession most frequently lays claim' [11]. The British Association of Social Workers also makes a similar distinction between 'ultimate values' and 'instrumental values', asserting that: '... there is a broad consensus amongst social workers about ultimate values in social work' [12]. Numerous other works utilize the same kind of distinction between primary and secondary values, sometimes with slightly different terminology, but invariably they describe the basic values in terms of a moral concern with the individual in society.

It is only in recent times that liberal ideas in social work have been under serious attack, and this has usually been at a social and political level. Traditional ways of doing social work, especially individualistic casework, came under heavy criticism from the left in the 1960s and 1970s, ruffling the social work establishment. However, there was little criticism of the basic moral stance taken up by social work theorists. The distinction between primary and secondary values has therefore continued to be particularly useful to the liberal establishment in helping to reserve a suitable basis for an 'apolitical' code of ethics, in which the conception of morality is conveniently enshrined as both the basis of a profession, and also a central feature of the culture, disguising the extent to which a particular concept of the moral has a particular range of implications for politics and society. Obviously, this basis of ultimate values needed some justification in itself - but this provided British academic philosophy with the opportunity of performing a socially useful function: reconstructing the social work profession's basic ideology.

The legitimation of social work values

In the 1950s and early 1960s the dominating themes of moral philosophy, such as emotivism and prescriptivism, offered little help to social workers searching for firm foundations. It was part of the liberal academic consensus that there was a very wide range of considerations that could be counted as 'moral' and therefore a person was free to choose other than those officially promoted in social work. However, the development of British moral philosophy in the 1960s and 1970s saw a revival of interest in utilitarianism and Kantianism, and this made the subject of direct use to social workers. For example, in a study of the nature of social work, Z. Butrym makes use of G.J. Warnock's neo-utilitarian ethical position on the '... amelioration of the human predicament' [13].

What was of more significance than the occasional reference by social workers to current trends in ethics was the developing interest of academic philosophers in the value base of social work. At this point, philosophy had reached a stage where it could more than adequately help to provide a legitimating ideology. One of the first philosophers to get interested in social work in recent times was Dorothy Emmett, whose contribution was based on the view that moral judgements can be 'reasonably grounded', and that the general principles of ethics relevant to social work was that '... people should be helped to build up their own moral wills, and their own integrity' [14]. This brief paper set the tone for subsequent discussion: the view of moral judgements as founded on rationality, impartiality, and a respect for persons as independent individuals.

It was a colleague of Emmett's at Manchester, Raymond Plant, whose book has been used for the past decade as a basic text in social work. The book sought only '... to describe and analyse the concepts which others use', and not '... to argue for or against the use of particular concepts' [15]. It thus sought to characterise the nature of the ethical principles at the basis of the casework relationship. But, as Emmett had already noted, '... anyone who sets out to discuss the meaning of ethical terms will be bound to produce an ethical theory, which can be controverted' [16]. Accordingly, Plant's account of casework principles is not just a description, but a justification in terms of the Kantian argument that 'Respect for persons ... is a pre-supposition of having the concept of having a moral principle at all' [17], since 'If I am rational then I will respect others as sources of argument, of rationality, and therefore as moral agents' [18]. He then shows the tension between this basic social work principle and other aspects of social work, presenting therapy, reform or revolution as an 'insoluble conflict' which arises out of these tensions, reflecting the fact that '... implicitly at least, the theory and practice of social work raise in an immediate and important manner some of the most difficult problems of social and political theory' [19]. But the scope of this debate has been limited by his initial commitment to a particular conception of morality: the 'insoluble conflict' is over the social and political means to this moral end.

If Emmett and Plant laid the foundations, it has been R.S. Downie who has been mainly responsible for further refining a framework of legitimacy for social work. His general stance is even more determinedly liberal than Plant's. In a Postscript to his study of social ethics, he admits to having '... attempted to restate the viewpoint of liberalism in a way that incorporates the insights of mid-twentieth century socialism of the "welfare state" variety' [20]. His ethical position is a strong form of Kantianism, which he has elaborated in several places, and his chairmanship of the CCETSW Working Party of values resulted in a document which clearly showed the imprint of his position [21]. His understanding of 'respect for persons' is as '... an attitude which combines a regard for others as rule-following, with an active sympathy with them in the pursuit of their ends' [22]. It is thus broader than Plant's, including 'feeling' and 'desire', as well as 'rational will' in the object of respect. Downie regards respect for persons as '... pre-supposed by the content of a particular type of moral discourse' [23], which

is identified as 'Western liberal culture', and the political implications are spelt out concisely: '... social improvements can be brought about by co-operation with the state' [24]. Social work is thus seen as rational human action, coping with the rights and duties of different social roles, so that the self-determination of clients as moral agents is maximised and balanced against the rights of others within a liberal democracy.

A further contribution to the legitimation has been made by Plant in his study of the concept of community. He moves closer to Downie's position in orienting himself towards reaching a 'liberal theory of community', in which a community worker is not only committed to the ideal of community, '... but at the same time, *qua* social worker he must have a very deep respect for the individual' [25]. Plant emphasizes that community work and social work are complementary aspects of the same endeavour, both committed to '... a range of values of a liberal sort', values which '... we are forced to choose' [26].

There is thus now a legitimating liberal philosophical framework to which social and community workers can appeal, professing to justify and describe the moral basis of the principles on which they operate. Subsequent contributions have modified and added to this framework. For instance, Watson has argued in favour of 'respect for human beings' rather than 'persons', and Downie and Loudfoot have extended ethical analysis towards more practical issues, including policy-making and the use of skills [27]. Elsewhere, an analysis of client self-determination concludes by appealing to '... the basic moral assumptions of our society' [28], in the style of Plant and Downie. The most recent contributions by the latter two philosophers extend their liberal moral views outwards from social work into the wider fields of social services and medicine. Plant tries to link up the principle of respect for persons with the concept of meeting basic human needs, in order to justify state welfare provision [29], whilst Downie elaborates upon the same principle in the context of the 'caring professions' of social work and medicine [30].

This philosophical intervention in the field of social work, whilst not always received without criticism of its remoteness, has been significant in its support of established liberal ideas. It has had some direct influence partly through Downie's contribution to the CCETSW document on values, and through the use of books by Plant and Downie as standard texts on social work courses. Their vindication of social work ethics has come at a crucial time when social change and research evidence had cast doubts upon the profession.

A critique of moral values

Some recent contributions to ethical theory which utilise a Marxist approach help to situate the contribution made by the academic philosophers. This shows that the academics have succeeded in constructing a particular form of moral concepts, but one which is related in specific ways to different groups in society. It is neither theoretically nor socially neutral, but has contestable implications that social workers need to know.

It has been convincingly maintained that what is historically unique about a particular morality is not only its content but its *form*. Whilst different societies must overlap moral concepts in the area of basic human needs, the characterisation of these general facts of human life cannot be entirely value-free, but will reflect the forms of specific moral concepts. Thus, general, humanitarian, and 'primary' moral principles cannot be regarded as neutral, even though they cover the same kind of ground where '... certain human interests are so fundamental and so general that they must be acknowledged universally *in some form* and to some degree' [31]. Even if it is the case, therefore, that the content of a particular morality is non-invidious, in the sense that its principles try to cover the needs of all without discrimination (such as 'respect for persons'), its form and structure are not neutral, and it was in *this* respect that '... Marx called the whole established notion and practice of "morality" into account' [32]. It is an important part of Marx's view of bourgeois morality that it cannot be condemned except within its own terms. But this implies more than a reiteration of the cultural relativity thesis because '... it was *as a whole* that Marx condemned capitalism, ... based on an analysis of its inner workings, and its position in human history' [33]. But this is not simply a 'moral' view, since it does not separate out moral from political, social and other values. Nor is it merely theoretical, insofar as its view of society expresses the attitudes and demands of the dominated classes in society: '... the dominated class ... will experience what cannot be said' [34], but Marxist theory tries to say what 'cannot be said' - the class values that are only partially formed within capitalism. It is thus possible to contrast with established liberal values other emergent and different values emanating from the experience of common suffering and collective action [35].

In this context, I only wish to draw out the general contrast between the form of the concept of 'morality', and the values contained in Marxist theory. Whereas Marxism is consciously non-universal in its internal connection to one social class rather than another (because it is the dominated class), it is characteristic of morality in class society to be universal. For instance, the universalism of Kantian principles is functional in class society '... because blanket obedience to them here and now supports exploitation and deception' [36], and '... easy conformity with authority [37], regardless of their humanitarian content. Skillen illustrates this by arguing that: '... to refrain *on principle* from harming or lying to the bosses or the officers of the state is to consent to exploitation by those whose good is typically the harm of the exploited' [38]. This *form* of morality is also exemplified in the utilitarian use of universality: '... that it is the good of all which is to be pursued by each individual; this moral imperative taking absolute priority over the naturalistic good of each individual' [39]. The assumption behind the 'universal' form of morality is the existence of common interests, and the relative unimportance of power relationships and inequality between individuals.

A second structural feature of morality is that it is '... typically experienced as a quasi-external command, and as a prohibition against a natural impulse' [40]. Whereas Marxism has an obviously positive attitude towards the satisfaction of the wants and needs of the dominated classes, it regards these wants as socially structured and constrained. But morality is typically concerned with restraining 'natural' impulses: '... the negation of needs, rather than the satisfaction of them' [41]. This is particularly clear in anti-naturalistic ethics such as Kant's, where moral action is duty for duty's sake, a form of self-control over inclination: 'An unbridgeable gap is placed between the natural values and moral imperatives, and the latter are supposed to take absolute priority' [42]. Naturalistic ethics such as utilitarianism take wants as naturally given, thus artificially reducing potential conflict over goods. Either way, this moralistic form - the intern-

alisation of the demand to control the satisfaction of impulses and wants - serves to maintain the interests of the socially dominant class, by reducing the demand for goods from the dominated classes.

Finally, it is clear that the form of morality as necessarily personal, individual and voluntaristic contrasts sharply with Marxist values which do not separate out personal from social and political values, and which do not set individual human action in a voluntaristic category apart from the sociological, economic, political and psychological factors governing human behaviour. Some versions of existentialism take this aspect of moralism to an extreme, but it is typical of a wide range of moral thinking, leading to an opposition between '... an *understanding* of the action, which sees it as an intelligible response to a situation', and a moral view which 'cuts short all understanding' [43]. The form and structure of morality as being a matter of individual personal action is in itself opposed to a Marxist point of view: 'The normal political implications of personalist ethics is "classless" liberalism' [44].

In summary I have argued that Marxism is a theory about society that contains a value-slope which favours working class values and interests. But it is a theory which stands in an antagonistic relationship to the whole concept of morality as it has been understood by a wide range of philosophers, including those who have been appealed to by social workers [45]. The implication is thus that the concept of morality is itself not neutral but is socially structured along lines which favour one set of interests rather than another.

Conclusion

It is necessary to make one or two qualifying remarks. Firstly, there should ideally be a detailed historical study to support this conclusion, as I do not wish to suggest a simple functionalist account of social work values, which are in any case more complex, contradictory and varied than the above brief sketch can possibly show. Secondly, I am sure that both at the level of social work values, and at the level of ethical theory, the analysis could be made more accurate by complementing and adding to it a feminist critique. The centrality of 'respect for persons' in the 'caring' professions is *not* coincidentally related to the fact that at the level of practice, it is largely women's work. I do not feel competent to make this critique.

Thirdly, I should ideally justify using the term 'ideology' but space forbids. My use of 'ideology' in this context, therefore, is to signal two judgements about primary social work values. Firstly, that they cannot be taken as a neutral 'humanitarian' base, forming an inescapable moral obligation for all social workers, and an uncontestable foundation for a professional code of ethics. Secondly, that they represent a particular expression of some of the values of the dominant class in our society. An important qualification is that it is *not* being implied that primary social work values are to be dismissed as entirely worthless. This would be incompatible with a Marxist conception of ideology: the ideas and values of a dominant social class should be subsumed and transcended by a more comprehensive theory [46]. This is precisely what British academic philosophers have not done: they have merely helped to elaborate and legitimate an ideology of basic values already established in the textbooks, codes and practices of social work.

Footnotes

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8 G. Konopka, *E.C. Lindemann and Social Work Philosophy*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1958, p.179.
9 M. Siporin, *Introduction to Social Work*, MacMillan, NY, 1975, p.73.
10 CCETSW, Working Party Report, *Values in Social Work*, London, 1970, pp.16-17.
11 *ibid.*, p.28.
12 BASW, *The Social Work Task*, BASW, Birmingham, 1977, p.24.
13 Z. Butrym, *The Nature of Social Work Practice*, MacMillan, London, 1976, p.45.
14 D. Emmett, 'Ethics and the social workers', in E. Younghusband (ed.), *Social Work and Social Values*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1967, p.20.
15 R. Plant, *Social and Moral Theory in Casework*, RKP, London, 1970, p.3.
16 D. Emmett, *Rules, Roles and Relations*, MacMillan, London, 1966, p.83.
17 R. Plant, *op.cit.*, p.20.
18 *ibid.*, p.21.
19 *ibid.*, p.90.
20 R.S. Downie, *Roles and Values: An Introduction to Social Ethics*, Methuen, London, 1971, p.187
21 CCETSW Working Party, *op.cit.*, pp.16-17.
22 R.S. Downie and E. Telfer, *Respect for Persons*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1969, p.29.
23 *ibid.*, p.155.
24 *ibid.*, p.23.
25 R. Plant, *Community and Ideology*, RKP, London, 1974, p.36.
26 *ibid.*, p.83.
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28 R.F. Stalley, 'Determinism and the principle of client self-determination', in F.E. MacDermott (ed.), *Self-determination in Social Work*, RKP, London, 1975.
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31 P.F. Strawson, 'Social morality and individual ideal', in G. Wallace and A.D.M. Walker (eds.), *The Definition of Morality*, London, 1970, p.111 (my emphasis).
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34 P. Corrigan and D. Sayer, 'Class struggle and "morality"', *Radical Philosophy* 12, 1975, p.21.
35 Cf. A. Arblaster, 'Liberal values and socialist values' in R. Miliband and J. Saville (eds.), *The Socialist Register*, Merlin, London, 1972.
36 A. Skillen, *op.cit.*, p.132.
37 A.C. MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, RKP, London, 1976, p.198.
38 A. Skillen, *ibid.*
39 A. Collier, 'The production of moral ideology', *Radical Philosophy* 9, 1974, p.9.
40 A. Skillen, *op.cit.*, p.126.
41 A. Collier, *op.cit.*, p.10.
42 *ibid.*, p.9.
43 R. Norman, 'Moral philosophy without morality?', *Radical Philosophy* 6, 1973, p.5.
44 A. Collier, *op.cit.*, p.10.
45 Cf. M. Simpkin, *Trapped within Welfare*, MacMillan, London, 1979, pp.95-100, for a similar attack on social work ethics, but restricted to Kantian interpretations.
46 A. Arblaster, *op.cit.*, p.97.