

## Human Relations for the Secretary

Like everything human, human relations may be an art, a science, a fiction, but most of all, they are an inescapable reality. If they are effective and help the secretary to <sup>ful-</sup>fill well her calling, human relations are good: if they block the secretary's work, they are evil. Whether good or evil, the secretary cannot avoid them; she is caught within their web for good or for worse.

Let us ask, then, what are some of the main principles that generate good human relations so that we may try them experimentally. First, the principle of tensional equilibrium. I consider this one the nucleus of human relations, since it constitutes the foundation of that elusive something called personality; and human relations may be defined as interpersonal. Tensional equilibrium means a distribution of weights or forces between the two poles of a straight line, as in a lever; and personality is a structure or pattern of tensional equilibria. Let us define personality as a pattern of traits of behavior. Each one of those traits will be a tensional balance of forces. Let us define a psychological force as a constant tendency to behave in one particular way. Then the mainspring of human behavior will be the tensional equilibrium between isolation and communication.



That organizational center usually called awareness, I, or conscience, is the deeply hidden abode of our cherished ideas, emotions, dreams, purposes, and innermost desires. They are so secluded that sometimes they are hidden from our own selves; but from their seclusion they dictate our overt decision, words actions, and gestures.

All our behavior is symbolical expression of that secluded self. Yet, the very existence of that self is a function of the social life of the infant. It was formed in association and communication and it lives and thrives accordingly. Once that it appeared, even seclusion means interiorization of the person's social relations. Language, the very essence of awareness, is a social bond, and solitary thinking is the interiorization of language.

From this mainspring of human relations, defined as the isolation-communication continuum, the second principle is produced. Let us call it the sense of human dignity. This is also a tensional equilibrium of a feeling of personal worth and a feeling of worthlessness. The feeling of worth is attached to the fact of awareness, which makes of each person the unique center of a universe, its existential universe. Environment means the world that envelops the aware individual person.



Above, below, behind, in front of the individual feeling and thinking person constitute the cardinal points of a universe personally constructed. Contrariwise, the very many natural, and cultural necessities to <sup>h</sup> which a human being is subjected often imparts a feeling of indignity. Sickness, death, hunger, dependency, are some of the sources which charge the negative affective pole. This means that dignity is a very labile status, very easily upset and leading to all sorts of disturbances in human relations.

A third, but by no means a last tension is the semantic or value continuum. Language is constituted of words arranged in syntactical and intonational patterns. Apart from the thousand and one definitions that linguists may concoct, language is a symbocial projection of the first tensional equilibrium; that is the personal and secluded awareness of self in an attempt to communicate its psychic universe with another psychic universe, one isolated individual trying to overcome his isolation to reach another isolated individual. To be effective, the instrument of communication must have a conventional social value, universally accepted. Yet language is acquired as a personal experience, like learning to love, to hate or to swim. Each experience is coined in language which unites in itself a logical idea set up in an emotional context. The feeling of personal



identity for example, is logical awareness of self that is a concept, but it is also a construct of ambivalent feelings: threat and resistance; attraction and hostility; shame and self-assertion, etc. When we try to communicate with each other in linguistic medium we can never be sure what values, in terms of ideas and feelings, our words evoke in the other person. If we care to insure good human relations, we must try to certify for ourselves that the intended meaning of our communication has reached the other end correctly and vice-versa. This should never be taken for granted.

If the secretary is well aware of these three main principles of human behavior, how could she take the best advantage of her knowledge to accomplish good human relations? In the first place she must have the good will. Peace on earth is granted only to persons of good will. In the second place she must pay the price in terms of intelligent practice, self-criticism, self-correction and self-improvement. Perfection is a goal, partial fulfillment is the reward granted to the good-willing imperfect secretary.