

Nursing and Social Justice

Taylor A.J.W Ph.D

Emeritus Professor of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand.

***Correspondance:**

Taylor A.J.W, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand, E-mail: tony.taylor@vuw.co.nz.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Nursing is an honorable profession that has gained national and international status for responding to the needs of the population in times of crisis. With roots in religion and philanthropy, its charitable work received approbation beyond measure, as its purveyors strove to apply limited resources to the service of mankind.

Over the centuries, as populations grew, national governments assumed greater responsibility in the health sector of their domains. Medical science developed, the prevention of disease became an issue, technology brought refinement in hospital care, and the training of nurses intensified. Yet the profession retained the richness of its noble tradition.

To exemplify the continuity of values, Megan-Jane Johnstone, Professor of Health Education at Melbourne's Deakin University, was taken with my reflections on social justice. Accordingly the crux of the thesis is presented here, by invitation, to see if it resonates with others in the nursing profession [1-4].

Features of justice

Justice is a nebulous but far from negligible force in personal, family, community, national and international affairs. It has three main components: the criminal, the civil, and the social, all of which are prime motivators in righting perceived wrongs, and indeed in preventing others from occurring. It is sustained by a complexity of judicial webs, facilities, and personnel. As far as nursing is concerned, the emphasis here is on affirming the social application of the profession

Here attention turns to Abraham Maslow, since he is the only psychologist to have mentioned justice in a theory of human behavior, albeit without placing it firmly within his category of basic needs, nor putting those at the pinnacle of maturity under an obligation to address injustice. To open the topic for discussion, Maslow's theory is presented below (Figure 1), followed by the proposed revision (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Maslow's Motivational Hierarchy



Figure 2. Maslow's schema refigured to include justice as a basic human need.

