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Socialization and consciousness of social norms

Rokuro Sahara

This thesis consists of the following five parts: (1) Those who are to be socialized, (2) Those who try to socialize others, (3) Dessocialization and resocialization, (4) Socialization of individuals and socialization of culture, (5) Consciousness of social norms. Below we summerize its essential arguments.

When we inquire into the whole process of "socialization," it is important to make clear the following three elements in the process: "whom," "who," and "what." By "whom" we mean those who are to be socialized, by "who," those who try to socialize others, and by "what," contents of socialization, namely consciousness of social norms, or subjective aspects of culture as ways of thinking and behavior. Thus we can define "socialization" as the whole process by which individuals (who are to be socialized) are led to develop the consciousness of social norms stimulated by other individuals or groups (who try to socialize them).

Socialization means, in some sense, the limitation of freedom of individuals by confining their ways of thinking and behavior within narrower range. But whether socializing stimuli coming from outside be conceived as pressure or not depends upon the nature of the social norm given to them; dispositions, traits, past experiences etc. of those who are to be socialized; attitudes of those who try to socialize others, and so on. Men may be led to conform to social norms with more or less easiness and promptness. But if the majority of a group are socialized, the possibility of both the maintenance and security of the group itself will greatly increase, unless some disturbing situations occur.

By the term "consciousness of social norms" we mean the feeling or sense that a person's consciousness of social norms is not only his own, but also entertained by others in common. So

it may be said that the same consciousness is felt as if it were shared by so many persons at the same time. Therefore, even if a person loses his share of the consciousness, he may expect others to retain their shares. Thus the consciousness of social norms may be considered exterior as well as interior to a person. This is the reason why this consciousness has two attributes, that is social and normative. The social nature of this consciousness can be explained by the sense of plurality of those who share the same consciousness and the normative nature, by the power of constraint which press upon those who entertain the same consciousness.

We have tried to make clear the three elements of socialization and to explain the social and normative nature of the consciousness of social norms which are the contents of socialization. And our conclusion is as follows: socialization can be successfully attained when social norms which seemed at first as external and heteronomous to a person become internal and autonomous, thus leading him to conform to those norms spontaneously.