

Counseling and Social Psychology

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COUNSELING AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY (I)

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What contribution will social psychology, in which personality, society and culture are taken into account each in the same weight and detail, make to counseling? In Part I, the meaning of social psychology and how to deal with the problems of adjustment and maladjustment, which constitute the central theme of counseling, have been discussed from the standpoint of social psychology. Later, in Part II, what contribution such a view-point will make to the counseling will be investigated.

I Counseling and Its Relation to Other Sciences of Human Being, Especially to Social Psychology

It is well-known that no clear definitions of counseling, its goal, subject and method, have been laid down.

It may be primarily due to the fact that the development of counseling depends upon three streams, vocational guidance movement, psychometrics movement, and clinical psychology. Accordingly, counselors may be liable to lean to either of these streams, because of their overspecialized knowledges. But, on the other hand, there appeared, in the counseling itself, a movement for integrating these streams and moreover approaching to other sciences of human beings, such as educational psychology, social psychology, etc. And then, as in response to that movement, sociology, anthropology, and the like, have begun from the opposite side to approach to the counseling. Thus, historically, a route has been opened, by way of which social psychology is easy to approach to it.

Apart from such rather historical circumstances as mentioned above, we take much interest in counseling, theoretically as well, from the view-point of social psychology, as follows:

1) The counseling situation is only one of the whole range of behavioral regions for a client as well as a counselor. In order that the client may participate quite positively in the counseling situation and it may exert an efficient influence on him, what position will it have to hold in his whole range of behavioral regions?

2) What value-standards are controlling the counseling situation? And what relation have they to those of the client's daily life?

3) What central value-standards is the client learning, by means of adjusting himself to the counseling situation?

4) In order that the client may adjust himself smoothly to the counseling situation, what relation will the central value-standards have to establish with the value-

standards of his everyday life ?

5) Has the client's daily life nothing to do with the process in which the central value-standards are learned or reinforced ?

By the way, we do not want, here, to define what the counseling is. But, whatever frame of reference a counselor may take, the consueling situation consisting of a face-to-face relation between a client — or clients — and the counselor, may be of central significance to the counseling itself. Then, since social psychology must investigate human problems from the standpoint of the interaction among an individual, soceity and culture, it is natural that such questions as mentioned above should be put to the counseling. Moreover, to solve them from that standpoint may make the counseling progress.

Now we shall briefly define social psychology and then discuss how to deal with the problems of human adjustment, which constitute a central theme of the counseling, from the view-point of social psychology, and further, what contribution it will make to the counseling.

II Social Psychology and Personality, Society, Culture

To begin with, we shall start defining clearly our meaning of social psychology. Nobody may contradict that social psychology is to deal with the interrelation among personality, society and culture. However, on one hand, when we approach microscopically this interrelation, we shall come in effect to lose sight of society and culture, and, on the other hand, when we approach it macroscopically, we shall fail to notice the substance of personality. The former is nothing but general or individual psychology, and the latter is nothing but social or cultural sciences; neither may be said to be genuinely social psychology. Therefore, whenever we investigate any human problem from the view-point of social psychology, whether it may be general or particular, we shall have to pursue it "median-scopically", that is to say, always by means of taking into account personality, society as interplay among individuals, and culture as behavior standards in groups, each in the same weight and detail. And then, we must regard personality as the lifespace, because, by doing so, we shall be able to grasp it without removal form society and culture. Subsequently, we shall discuss the lifespace in some detail.

A man, having a physiological constitution, behaves formally or informally towards given goals, in order to satisfy some needs actualized at present, and will adjust himself or make maladjustment to the value-standards of human relation in a behavioral region. Under these circumstances, as a matter of course, he is experiencing various feelings, operating cognitive functions, manipulating others as well as himself, on the basis of readinesses. And when he has adjusted himself to those value-standards, we may call his behavior social adjustment, and when he has failed to, we call it social maladjustment. However, one's social adjustment in a behavioral region does not necessarily mean one's cultural adjustment to the cultural value-standards of the groups to which one

belongs. For example, when a few boys are playing truant, they do make, in fact, social adjustment to the truant value-standards in that behavioral region, but they make cultural maladjustment to the school to which they belong. Naturally, in case a given behavioral region is controlled and dominated by the cultural standards of a group, one's social adjustment to that region is at the same time one's cultural adjustment to that group. Furthermore, those behavioral regions which have no functional relation to one, may be called non-adjustment regions for oneself, but it does not mean that these regions had not such a relation to oneself in the past or will not have in the future. If one has adjusted oneself to a given behavioral region for a long time, even though it has not a functional relationship at present, it may be called a potential adjustment region, to which one has yet the readinesses to adjust oneself. By the way, where the whole range of behavioral regions for an individual are cognized by himself in reference to his needs, feelings, values and readinesses, we call the range his lifespaces.

Well, the needs which are of central significance for one may be called one's basic needs. Then, the goals and means for gratifying them will result in having chiefly important values and so becoming one's central—or controlling—value-standards by which to integrate and balance one's personality as lifespaces. Thus, one's whole range of goals and means constructs a given value-system around the central value-standards, and one's all behavioral regions, too, form a given structure around the basic regions in which the basic needs are satisfied, while one's personality, as the lifespaces consisting of such a system and structure, develops dynamically within interaction with the objective socio-cultural conditions. And then, it is the ego that controls the personality through the central value-standards. By the way, more often than not, these socio-cultural conditions may exert such serious effects on the personality as to disturb deeply its balance and integration, by frustrating the function of the central value-standards. In this case, it may be said that the socio-cultural conditions make an individual maladjustment to that personality. When the balance and integration of personality are seriously disturbed, whether because of an individual maladjustment or not, we may call that state the personality disorder. But, as we shall discuss later on, it does not necessarily mean that the personality disorder is, at the same time, a social or cultural maladjustment.

As above mentioned, social psychology should pursue the human behavior, through the interplay among personality as lifespaces, society as interaction of individuals, and culture as behavioral value-standards in groups. Therefore, even if we investigate one's cognitive functions, needs, feelings, values, and readinesses, we must do so, always by relating them to one's lifespaces, which is interacting with the objective socio-cultural conditions, so far as we want to stand on the view-point of social psychology. It may be the role played by individual or personalistic psychology to canvass them microscopically.

III Lifespace, Central Standards, and Adjustment, Maladjustment

We shall further discuss the problem of adjustment and maladjustment, revolving around the lifespace. Because, as noted before, we think that it constitutes the central subject of counseling and to do so will make clearer our frame of reference.

Now, as we have referred, on one hand, the good balance and integration of the personality depend upon those of the lifespace controlled by the central value-standards of the ego, and, on the other hand, upon the fact that those central standards may be sanctioned or not by the objective value-standards in the basic behavioral regions. Of course, the more those regions in which they are sanctioned may extend, the more the good balance and integration of personality may be reinforced. Because, in case when one's central standards may not be sanctioned even in the basic regions, one's personality will result in losing the actual scaffold and facing the crisis of serious disturbance, so far as one wants to live a real life. Even though one's central standards may be religious or ideological, such is the case.

Thus, it has an important significance for the balance and integration of personality, whether one's central standards may be sanctioned or not by the objective value-standards in society, especially in one's basic regions. However, it does not necessarily follow that the central value-standards adjust to the cultural value-standards of the whole society, even though one's personality is well-balanced and integrated. For example, in the case that an individual has regarded a criminal group as his basic region, has internalized the criminal value-standards as his central ones, and has formed the readinesses to escape from the controlling pressure of normal social groups through his mask-adjustment, then, even if he is a criminal, his personality may be well-balanced and integrated. When we want to reform such a man, at first we shall have to destroy the good balance and integration of his lifespace controlled by his criminal central standards, by means of cutting his connections with the criminal group.

As mentioned above, the balance and integration of one's personality are due to this: to what extent is the ego able to integrate and develop the lifespace through one's central value-standards sanctioned in one's basic regions? And where the discrepancy of objective value-standards in those regions, or the internal or external frustration of some basic needs causes one's central standards not to be able to balance and integrate the lifespace, one will be confronted with a vital crisis. Of course, we do not mean that the contradiction of value-standards or the frustration of some needs in a peripheral region has nothing to do with the balance and integration of personality, but they will not exert such a serious effect as to disturb deeply the whole personality, because of being peripheral. Now, an individual, who has been confronted with a vital crisis, will resort to various means in order to recover the balance and integration of personality seriously disturbed. On a certain occasion, he may be able to recover them, but on the other occasion, he may allow them to grow much worse, through the distortion of the real world, or the multiple adjustments, or the formation of narrow adjustment-regions. Furthermore, even if he has recovered them, he may have done so by way

of becoming a criminal. What course he may take depends upon the interplay between the objective socio-cultural conditions and his lifespace.

As mentioned above, so far as we want to canvass the problems of one's adjustment, maladjustment, personality disorder from the standpoint of social psychology, we should do so by means of relating them to one's lifespace, especially to the central value-standards of one's ego, which are controlling one's lifespace through the interplay with socio-cultural conditions. Because it is these central standards that primarily determine one's basic behavior pattern, and one's personality will result in being largely disturbed when their function is deeply frustrated. Furthermore, we cannot help taking interest in this: when one's personality has been seriously disturbed, how does one find one's way out of this trouble? If he takes the way of making much worse the balance and integration of personality, we shall have to give a helping hand. Then, we shall discuss these ways in some detail.

1) Moving toward the removal from reality or its distortion.

These ways are one's attempts for recovering the balance and integration of personality seriously disturbed, by means of being removed from reality or distorting it, and they may be liable to be taken when one is deeply referring to the central standards fastened to the past glorious status, or to the fantastic one, or to the present one.

Even though an individual sometimes makes use of flight into fantasy or rationalization in order to balance his personality, we do not want to assort his behavior to this category, so far as he is living his life without removal from reality or its distortion in the important respects.

When the former champion boxer, for example, is barely balancing his personality by means of loafing around saloons, indulging in his glorious reminiscence, because he cannot adjust himself to his present miserable state, then it may be said that he is liable to live such a life as to be removed from reality or to distort it. Further illustration: in case that an incompetent employee, who is thinking his colleague usurped the post of a section head, is balancing his personality through the central standards which still aim at the section head, by means of rationalizing his incapacities or failures, it is also true of him as the former illustration.

2) Moving towards multiple adjustments.

This way may be liable to be taken, when there is a clash between incompatible sets of value-standards in one's basic regions. For example, where the strict discipline of parents collides with the dotage of grandparents, it may be difficult for a child to take over the consistent central standards and so he may be liable to let himself be swayed by the external conditions of any behavioral region. On a certain occasion, having been tempted into evil doing by bad companions, he may become unaware a delinquent boy, or on the other occasion, he may be treated as an untrustworthy boy by every group. When he would try to internalize, at the same time, these discrepant sets of standards, he would be confronted with the crisis of destruction of his personality.

Even in this case, he may be able to cope with such a difficulty, and to establish the consistent central standards in order to balance his personality. However, such a success would be rarely achieved. And we must call attention to the fact that the complicated socio-cultural structure of our times is prone to compel us to make multiple adjustments and to put in danger the balance and integration of our personality.

3) Moving towards the formation of narrow adjustment-regions.

This way is to maintain a good balance and integration of personality, by means of escaping from the dangerous regions into those narrow ones defended with thick boundary in which the function of the central standards may not be threatened at all. For example, in case that an overprotected dull child has resulted in remaining indoors and playing alone with toys, because outdoors he or she is mocked and bullied by his comrades, then his behavior may be assorted to this category. If in such narrow regions there occurs a frustration or a clash between incompatible sets of value-standards, he results in being driven in a blind alley. In this case, he may take the same way as the first category mentioned previously, or he may reverse the central standards and take the way towards criminality, or he may get out of it into death.

4) Moving towards criminality.

When the balance and integration of one's personality have been seriously disturbed by the frustration of some basic needs in the basic regions, one may sometimes succeed in achieving a new balance and integration, by means of reorganizing one's lifespace around new central value-standards. However, it does not necessarily follow that these new central standards may be sanctioned by normal social groups, and where they are criminal, we may call one's resort "the moving towards criminality." For example, a child who is always punished by parents because of his poor school credits, may often bully his good schoolmates on his way home from school, consciously or unconsciously to get over his inferiority feeling, and so he may gradually take over such conducts as his central value-standards. And then, when he encounters the controlling pressure of the school or the neighborhood, he may take refuge in a boys' gang, moreover in a professional criminal group, and may pursue the course of a stable delinquent boy, reinforcing his criminal standards. Further, in case that a boy whose parents are away from home most of the time, gets his loneliness lessened by the contact with a boy's gang, he may more smoothly pursue the way towards criminality.

These four ways, we must say, often shift from one to another, or overlap one another. And, by understanding them deeply, we shall be able to give a helping hand to an individual, who is coping with a difficulty by resorting to one of them, and on the other hand, however indirectly, we may be able to increase the general knowledges to reinforce the good balance and integration of personlity.

We have so far discussed the human being's adjustment, maladjustment, and personality disorder from the standpoint of social psychology. And then, we have emphasized, as well, the fact that, in dealing with these problems it is of central significance to grasp the central value-standards of one's lifespace in reference to the objective socio-cultural conditions. In Part II, we shall discuss what contribution such a view-point will make to the counseling.

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