

Review and Theory of Sociological Social Psychology in Contemporary Japan

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In contemporary Japanese sociology, there have not been many empirical studies of collective mentality, so called sociological social psychology. That has been partly because of the lack of empirical studies based on social research. I can also point out the loss of an analytical axis in this field. Once there was a continuum, 'traditional-modern,' based on modernization theory. With the continuum as the main issue, several empirical studies were conducted in the 1950's and the 1960's. However in the 1990's, such studies have completely disappeared from the field. In this paper, I attempt to construct a new analytical axis on which new empirical studies can be conducted.

I regard the study of psychological functioning relevant to class and stratification as one of the most abundant branches to start with. Though many studies have been conducted, I cannot find an obvious key concept to explain the relationship between class and personality. Therefore, they are treated as merely descriptions of class variance of psychological functioning, and share quite diffused issues.

On the other hand, M. L. Kohn and his colleagues have studied the relationship between class and personality for more than 30 years. They focus on one's job condition as a pivotal point of the relationship. Then they use a key continuum, 'occupational self-direction' to analyze it. At the same time, they present a personality axis relevant to it, called 'self-directedness.' The definition of self-direction or self-directedness is "acting on the basis of one's own judgment, attending to internal dynamics as well as to external consequences, being open-minded, being trustful of others, holding personally responsible moral standards." In my view, self-directed orientation, which is the main part of self-directedness, is the most appropriate concept to integrate the diffused issues in the field.

I can also point out that the concept, self-directed orientation, shares almost the same mentality with authoritarianism, which was originally the central issue

in the theory of mass society. This theory was the original issue of sociological social psychology in the 1950's and the 1960's. So, I may regard self-directedness of orientation as an analytical axis to reconstruct the field of sociological social psychology in contemporary Japan.