Obrdlíková, Juliana

Regulation of social activities

JULIANA OBRDLÍKOVÁ

REGULATION OF SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The social activity is conceived here in a broad sense as an activity of associated individuals, as an activity which creates social reality, reshapes it and reshapes its conditions, too, i. e. its outward natural conditions (anorganic) or inward natural ones (organic and psychical). An activity thus defined includes social action or behaviour (e. g. legal action or behaviour, or ethical, political, speech expressions, etc.) but also activities in a narrower sense the product of which is not only an act, but a concrete, even tangible product (e. g. an artistic work, a scientific study, a technical product as respective results of artistic, scientific, productive etc., activities). Accordingly, the regulation of social activities (or social regulation) can be defined formally as a set of social processes and their results, which bring about the fact that specific social activities are performed in no arbitrary way, but uniformly or — if differentiated — in a relatively orderly way. This orderly performance of social activities results from the fact that they are activities of some social whole. Thus e. g. in a global society, the manner in which certain material objects are produced or goods are exchanged, is uniform; the scientific and artistic activities manifest certain standards of creation; a specific collectivity uses a uniform language, has the same kind of education, etc. The same orderliness can be found in partial groups (or subgroups, such as a factory, a school, courts of justice, etc.) or in primary groups (e. g. the family, the workshop, etc.), which are characterized by personal contacts of their members and, because of that, by the latter's direct influence over the structure of the group activities.

The problems of social regulation are usually discussed under the term of social control. This term is rather inadequate in the European languages, because it conveyes the meaning of "supervision" only (e. g. the control of the fulfilment of a plan). Even in English the term "control" has two meanings, either that of power and its exercise or of supervision (surveillance). This equivocality is partly responsible for many an inconsistent treatment of the problem, as was shown by G. Gurwith.[1] The present paper is not intended as a critical evaluation of various definitions and analyses of social control, in American literature above all. This task was fulfilled successfully by G. Gurvitch as early as 1945,[2] However, he did it from his idealistic point of view and, moreover, his conception of the problem does not seem broad enough. Essentially, the theories concerning social control can be classified into two groups. The

first group conceives a social group (mostly the global society) as a mere sum total of its members. Such is the conception of the majority of American sociologists and social psychologists who discussed the topic, of E. A. Ross, the promoter of the term, too. The second group considers any social whole whatever to be something more than a mere sum total of its individual members (C. H. Cooley, G. Gurvitch, T. S. Segerstedt).

In the first case, social control serves as a means of creating — intentionally or unintentionally — an ordered, integrated group, capable of functioning, out of individual members, or if the group is threatened by dissolution, it serves as a means of its reintegration. Thus E. A. Ross defines social control as social ascendancy over the individual group members or their groups — and in this way he contends is created social order.[3] This conception results in the fact that the analysis of social control becomes focussed on its socio-psychological problems as manifested by E. A. Mumley.[4] In his work, he analyzes the means of social control — which he defines in a narrow psychological way as an "effective will transference" — i.e. of devices of psychological pressure upon individuals to conform. Or T. Parsons considers social control as a process "paired" in a sense with the process of socialization and which connotes activities which reinforce each other. He concentrates the problem on the psychological analysis of mechanisms that counteract individual tendencies to deviant behaviour.

For the above conception of social control it is characteristic that it considers power and authority as an important, if not dominant, element in social control. This was manifest in E. F. Lumley's definition of social control. Or Jerome Dowd ranks among the four factors of control "an authoritative person or group having the power to induce or compel group action". And in agreement with his formal conception of social group, Leopold v. Wiese ascribes a specific importance in social control to the organized power institutions.

The other conception of social control is connected with the conception of an immanent auto-regulation characteristic of the whole social life, as means of its own processes of organization and self-creation. It is a kind of an imanent auto-regulation characteristic of the whole social life, as it was formulated by R. König about E. Durkheim.[7] The most important representative of this conception is Georges Gurvitch (op. cit.) who has, moreover the merit to have brought order into the problematics of social control. Because of this alone, though for other reasons, too, his analysis ought to be built upon. That is why we shall interpret his analysis more minutely and, at the same time, try to broaden the problematics of social control and set it free from Gurvitch's idelalism.

Georges Gurvitch defines social control as "the sum total or rather the whole of cultural patterns, social symbols, collective meanings, values, ideas and ideals, as well as acts and processes directly connected with them whereby inclusive society, every particular group, and every participating individual member overcome tensions and conflicts within themselves through temporary equilibria and take steps for creative efforts".[8] The definition states explicitly that social control is a means of overcoming tensions and conflicts the results of which is a temporary equilibrium.

But these tensions need not been necessarily those between an individual and his group. Since very often a conflict which appears to be one between the individual and his group, is but a tension between various elements (in Gurvitch's terminology: depth layers) of the total social phenomenon, e. g. between fixed patterns of social activities and their actual processes. This statement can only be accepted.

In his definition, Gurvitch intentionally omits the term "social order" (not to mention "social progress"), because, as he says, "what is 'order' from one point of view is 'disorder' from another and changes occur in the same society in different directions" (op. cit. p. 286). Gurvitch was certainly right when he stressed the relativity of order from the standpoints of various subgroups of the same global society, and of this society as well. However, he seems to exaggerate this relativity — it holds good when a new social order is emerging out of the needs of social life. In other cases the mutual permetation of various orders should be stressed, especially how the order of the global society permeates the orders of its subgroups.

The definition also suggests that various systems of social control exist in various subgroups as well as in inclusive (global) societies, i. e. that social control has various agencies (organs). We can add that beside the organs of social control Gurvitch distinguishes its kinds of which religion, law, morality, art, science and education are considered as most important. Correctly, without doubt, Gurvitch contends that technical means by which social control is realized can be the same for various kinds of social cotrol or they can be different for the same kind according to varying social situations, and the treatment of them does not belong to the field of general sociology.

Gurvitch's analysis of social control brings a distinction between organized and spontaneous forms of social control. Spontaneity in social control seems to be a matter of degree. Thus a rather routine form of social control through cultural usages, patterns, rules and symbols is the least spontaneous; the more spontaneous form is realized through values, ideas and ideals; and the most spontaneous form is produced "through direct collective experience of evaluation, of testing, of aspiration and of collective creation". In the latter revolts and revolutions are included. The first spontaneous form of social control often takes externally the expression of an organization (organized social control) and exercises "constraint" upon groups and individuals. This organized form can become more or less "distant" from spontaneous expressions of social life. And it can be either autocratic, if it is separated from the spontaneous control by an abyss, or it is democratic, if it is rooted in the subjacent spontaneous social controls. According to Gurvitch, the organized social control even implies the so-called social engineering.

Gurvitch's classification of spontaneous forms of social control is an application of his repth sociology as formulated in his "Essais de sociologie".[9] There by means of a phenomenological reduction[10] he proceeds from the most easily accessible levels of the total social phenomenon to its least accessible strata: to the proper social phenomenon, to mental states and acts which are individual, interpersonal and collective at the

same time. Values, ideas and ideals form the immediately preceeding and less spontaneous level. In Gurvitch's depth sociology consists his idealistic conception of society. Besides, we see no reason why e. g. values, ideas and ideals should be less spontaneous than mental states and acts, if the former are implied in the latter, are created by them but also influence them. The same can be repeated about the spontaneity of cultural customs, rules and symbols, on the one hand, and of values, ideas and ideals, on the other hand. The organized control in Gurvitch's conception also implies some evaluations, though they need not be of the same kind as those which permeate, and are created in, the real processes of a specific group life. The spontaneity of social control, or as we shall continue to call it, of social regulation, should be seen in connection with the processes, both mental and activistic, issuing from various social situations which correspond to various group needs.

There are two more items in Gurvitch's analysis of social control which evoke disagreement. He takes social control to be the working of the spiritual order in social life and draws a sharp distinction between technical and symbolic cultural patterns[11] through this distinction seems to be rather the matter of a lesser or greater specificity of activities. And then, because Gurvitch admits an organized form of social control, he implicitly admits the intervention of some authority in the processes of social control — personal in primary groups (though political may intervene too), political authority when global society is concerned. Processes of social control cannot be isolated from some kind of group authority, since authority itself is a principles of order, since it can enforce certain behaviour upon both individuals and groups. On the level of global societies this collective authority is organized in the state with its representative organs and its autocratic or democratic organizations. Political activity is also a social activity, i. e. a regulated activity, but it is a regulating activity as well, it has a regulative function. It was the uniformity and coordination of social activities enforced by the state which was in the focus of the marxist theory, i. e. the latter was interested in one aspect of social regulation, before it grew reconciled to sociology. Since then, only the Polish sociologist J. Sczepański[12] dealt with the problem of social control in a more detailed way, but he concentrates it upon its institutional aspect and omits the constant process of the creation and re-creation of social control.

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The analysis of the complex problematics of social regulation has to start with the social activities themselves. Its complicated character can be made manifest in a concrete case at its best. Although every system of social regulation depends on its specific organ (the type of social group), its origin, maintenance and new creation can well be analyzed — although in a simplified manner — in a primary group constituted to realize one common interest. For instance, a number of young people would decide to organize picnics on Sundays. In order to realize this common interest, they would have to come to an agreement as to matters directly con-

nected with it: the goal of the excursion, the time and place of the departure and of the return, etc. But other needs would emerge during the process of their common functioning: the need of adjusting mutual relationships among various members of the collectivity (regulated by law, morality and the rules of good manners), the need of deciding on the manner of common entertainment, etc. When such problems are being solved, conflicts can arise; in individual opinions differences of respective individual endowments, both organic and mental, can make valid themselves as much as individual social backgrounds, personal sympathies and antipathies, the influence of leading or authoritative personalities; many a problem can be solved in an "activistic" way, i. e. the act of one person is accepted as a norm by others or by all. And because a picnic implies a stay in the country, all these processes will be influenced by its character.

In the above analysis, the inner aspect of the social situation of the collectivity is described. This social situation is constituted by the need shared by all, namely to realize a common interest. In the processes of satisfying this dominant collective interest, other collective needs arise and have to be complied with. It has been apparent that this social situation is determined organically, mentally, socially and even geographically. Its rules and symbols, on the one hand, and of value, ideas and ideals, on the and volitions and constitutes a more or less common mental type so that cooperation is possible — although this mental unification is also brought about in this cooperation. The originally heterogeneous plurality of individuals becomes united with respect to the most important items which concern the realization of their common interest. Outwardly, this is manifested by the fact that the collectivity appears as a relatively orderly whole, a social group, although it can be a disturbing element of the public order, i. e. of the order of a superordinated social group. But this picnic group can appear orderly even from the point of view of this superordinated social group, because its members have internalized the patterns of thought, feeling and willing of the global society and made them valid in the social situation of their picnic group. Even in this small group, the orderly coordination of activities is relative only, because some persons will refuse to submit to its collective demands either inwardly or outwardly as well, the necessity may arise to convince them or to take measures against them in order that they may be brought to group ways; or they may fall off during the picnic or even be expelled by the group.

Repeated picnics will fix the tradition of the first one. The relatively coordinated activities together with the corresponding ideas, feelings and endeavours will become patterns for the further functioning of this group, i. e. for the further realization of the same dominant group interest. From the point of view of the individual, it was possible to say at the beginning that the group activities "took place under a norm as it were",[13] they seemed to be imposed upon the individual member from the outside, although there was a sort of pressure of every individual member upon all and of all upon every individual member of the collectivity in a common social situation constituted by the need of realizing a common interest. By recurrent common experiences, these uniform activities which

represent the external structure of the social group and are accompanied by the internal socio-psychological structure (by certain common ideas, feelings and volitions), are petrified in real rules and norms. On their turn, these — in our case unwritten — norms regulate the collective mentality and behaviour of the group, they have become obligatory for the group members to a large degree.

The binding character of the group norms and rules manifests itself as a pressure upon the members of the group. This can be an inner pressure, if the individuals respect the norms spontaneously or it is an outward pressure mediated through a sort of the group public opinion, or through some collective authority supported by physical power. They use various forms of constraint and enforcement with regard to such members of the group who refuse to conform, or who have become new members of the group. Similarly, when the social situation of the group has changed either through some influence external to it (the change of weather, collision with another group) or internal to it (some conflict situation), the order of the group which represents its bond and has a tendency to continue, proves to be an obstacle of the group's adaptation to the new situation, as a hindrance against the creation of a new group order which would correspond to the new situation. If the group authority can dispose of physical power and happens to support the old arrangement, its norms can be enforced.

If the group is organized very loosely, such a situation can easily end not only in the non-conforming members' leaving the group of their own will or in their expulsion, but also in the dissolution of the whole group.

This simple case has been described to make the complexity of social regulation processes manifest. In a primary group for which the external social environment (the external aspect of its social situation) is important (e. g. in the family group) the process of social regulation is much more complex. This external social environment makes itself manifest through various pressures and constraints upon the group and must be worked up by the group in relatively ordered types of functioning.

Neither in theory can the process of social regulation be separated from those activities which are regulated by it and in which the relative order of the group is constantly made and remade, but also maintained, and in which, in this way, the very group is maintained. So that the uniformity and coordination of social activities is not only a formal term, but it implies the fact that these activities are — consciously or unconsciously — directed towards the realization of the interests of the social whole in respects important for its maintenance.

This regulative process has its objective and subjective aspects. Its objective character is in the systems of rules and norms which imply certain ideas, feelings and endeavours. Its subjective character consists in the individual projection of the objective component in the individual mind. Both aspects are united in the act. The complexity of the social regulation problem consists, firstly, in the circumstance that the objective component takes its origin in the processes of social activities (economic, speech, moral, legal, political and other activities), but once created, it also exercises influence upon them — in agreement with the law of struc-

tural determinism which is valid in every social whole. Secondly, social regulation processes and their products (norms and rules and systems of collective ideas, feelings and volitions) of a global group and of various its subgroups, permeate one another.

As to the first item, its consequence is that the existing system of norms and rules (with the underlying ideas, feelings and volitions) exercises influence upon social activities even when it is, or has grown, distant from them, i. e. when it does not correspond to the changing group needs and interests, both material and non-material. This distance can be the result of a changed social situation of the group, or a consequence of the fact that the norms and rules are dictated to the group by its own or some superordinated power authority which either intentionally or unintentionally neglects the real needs and intereststance of the group. Accordingly, the objective component participates in the social situation of the group either as a support of individuals (or partial groups) in their activities, or as an obstacle preventing the group from the adaptation to its social situation in an autonomous (spontaneous) manner. According to the complete social situation of the group, this obstacle will be sustained or destroyed either in part on in its totality.

Consequently, the character of the processes of social regulation vary in dependence on the changing social situation, especially on the fact if the dominant factor therein is the group needs and interests (both material and immaterial) or whether this dominant factor is the system of rules and norms which never did, or no longer does, correspond to group needs. In this sense only, it seems to us, it is possible sociologically to distinguish between the spontaneous and the imposed (or alienated) social regulations. To say it explicitly: spontaneous social regulation arises directly in the processes issuing in the group under the pressure of some collective need. Imposed social regulation does not correspond to group needs.

We have deduced our conception of social regulation and of its two forms, spontaneous and imposed, more or less from its processes in a simple primary group. When it is seen from the standpoint of a global society — and this takes us to the second item mentioned above — there are cases in which the majority, or the whole population, acts under the pressure of some collective need: the need to protect the global group from the outside ennemy; the need to destroy, partly or totally, its social order and to create a new one in its place. Because of the complex character of the global society, in normal circumstances its social regulation is mostly organized from some authoritative centre, usually the state — though of course the state is not interested in all activities of its subgroups. Such an organized social regulation is either autocratic — and then rarely spontaneous, or democratic. In the latter case it has a better chance to be spontaneous in the sense defined above. But even for organized regulation the primary group with its spontaneous regulation is of importance. As it was manifest in our example, the primary group works up the influences of the global society (and also of other subgroups) into a specific unity which can, but need not, be in agreement with the demands and interests of other subgroups and of the social whole.

The discussion of the relation between the spontaneous and imposed social controls would not comply with the scope of the present paper. The boundaries between them are very changeable and depend on the specific kind of the collectivity, i.e. on the organ of social regulation. It can be a primary group, any more complex but partial group (the church, school, courts of justice, factory etc.), a global group (politically organized into a state) or even larger groups (a capitalistic or socialistic societies; the international society). Every such organ has a specific system of social regulation which depends on its specific social (or historic) situation, i. e. on the manner of its historical development, on the function or functions it has in the superordinated whole, on the manner in which it fulfils these functions, on the degree to which this superordinated whole (or wholes) satisfies the fundamental needs and interests of the specific subgroup. These different systems of social regulation complement, cross or counteract one another.

Social regulation and the relative order created by it, are differentiated in the same way as social activities themselves. Accordingly, in the framework of a specific global society, there exist different kinds of social regulation, different partial orders: economy, knowledge, art, religion, language, law, politics, morality, etc. Each of them is further differentiated in various ways. Being parts of the same whole, they penetrate, and depend upon, one another. This mutual penetration and dependence combined with those which appear in systems of social regulation in various its organs, hardly allows a general sociological analysis.

Let us add some remarks as to those kinds of social regulation which we consider to be most important from the point of view of the present global society, namely education, politics, law and morality.

Education has a specific task in the process of social regulation. It is a means of transmitting the knowledge of rules, norms, ideas, feelings, endeavours (and the implied values and ideals) from one group to another at one point of time, or from one generation to another generation. The education exclusively regulated by the state counteracts the educational influences of other groups, but if its contents are too distant from the interests and needs of various subgroups, it succeeds externally only.

A special function in social regulation is performed by politics, law and morality. Political activity has — beside others — also a coordinating, regulative function. In so far as it is organized in a state and its bodies, it is supported by organized power. A structural conception of the global society implies that every cultural component (economy, language, law, knowledge etc.) tend to assert its own autonomy. As regards politics, this means that power and its maintenance becomes the goal of those in power. Then organized regulation of politically important spheres of social life is used to the end of preserving the existing social and political structure. Various forms of democracy of a lesser or greater scope, attempt to counteract the outdistancing of politics from the needs of different parts of the population — with a varying degree of succes of course.

The problem of imposed and spontaneous social regulations is urgent especially in modern complex societies. Such is the case particularly in socialistic systems, because they require planning, and consequently or-

ganized social regulation which should correspond to the needs and interests of various subgroups and of the whole global society. Obviously, such spontaneous regulation can be — in a more efficient way than any means of propagating ideas, values and ideals concerning the global society — a guaranty of a voluntary conformity to the order of society on the part of both individual and group subjects of social activities. The management of social affairs, and the participation in it, requires a deep insight into the intricate web of the needs and functions of various subgroups in the social whole, and of the whole as well. Those who participate in decisions regarding the organized social regulation, should have sociological erudition or should be advised by sociologists. Another important prerequisite of the organized regulation is such a scale of values which would base the vitality, both material and spiritual, of the social whole on the vitality of all its component parts. If such is not the case, even a democratic social regulation becomes imposed and deforms the social life in all its spheres, although this deformation is not always so manifest as in economic life.

The political power organized in the state and its representative organs uses law above all for its regulative function. Law represents an important regulative principle by the very fact that it determines mutual rights and duties of each member of a group and of groups as well. At present, all law mostly relies on the power of the state. In the growing complexity of present global societies, law penetrates a constantly increasing number of spheres of social life. And it penetrates social life not only more widely but also more deeply. However, as it regulates a sphere of social life in small details, its regulation — even democratically brought into effect — grows more distant from the real life in its concrete manifestations. The danger of a bureaucratic deformation of social life obviously increases in scope since it sticks to the letter of the law where there is no concrete ground for it.

Another disastrous consequence of an extreme legal regulation consists in the fact that law prevents other kinds of social regulation from making themselves valid. This is true especially with regard to morality. Morality also tends to regulate mutual relationships among humans and among social groups. It brings about this regulation by making moral values valid in other social activities. Undoubtedly, its rational component can also be dependent on power groups and sustain the established social order. But its main characteristic is a creative act of concern with other fellow men. Now, people who are accustomed to everything being organized both for themselves and for their fellowmen, lose this spontaneous concern with the needs of their fellowmen and of the group as well. However, eventually moral concerns, especially concerns for love, truth and justice, make it possible that people who know the mutual dependence of all components of a global society (or its subgroups), can behave according to this knowledge.

Translated by J. Obrdlíková

NOTES

[1] *Georges Gurvitch*, Social Control, in: G. Gurvitch and W. E. Moore (eds.): Twentieth Century Sociology, New York 1945.
[2] Op. cit.
[3] *E. A. Ross*, Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order, New York 1901.
[4] *E. F. Lumley*, Means of Social Control, New York—London 1925.
[5] *Talcott Parsons*, "Propaganda and Social Control" (1942), in: Essays in Sociological Theory, rev. ed., Glencoe, Ill., 1963: The Social System Glencoe, Ill., 1951, p. 297 ff.
[6] *Jerome Dowd*, Control in Human Societies, New York—London, 1936.
[7] *R. König*, Soziologie, Frankfurt am Main, 1965, p. 255.
[8] Op. cit., p. 291.
[9] Paris, 1937.
[10] Later, in his La Vocation Actuelle de la Sociologie (Paris, 1963 (2nd ec.), he rejected his phenomenological approach, but kept his "sociologie en profondeur" and his idealistic approach to social phenomena.
[11] In his later works, he comes to the conviction that "il ne faut pas exagérer cette opposition qui est très relative" ["Sociologie en profondeur" in: G. Gurvitch (ed.), Traité de sociologie I, p. 160—161]. He finds both in economy as much as in morality. This development of his theory might have influenced his conception of social cotrol, too.
[12] Cf. *J. Sczepański*, Základní sociologické pojmy (Fundamental Sociological Concepts), Chap. IX, Praha 1966.
[13] Cf. *I. A. Bláha*, „La vie envisagée au point de vue sociologique", in: Cahiers internationaux de sociologie, Vol. VII, 1949.

REGULACE SOCIÁLNÍCH ČINNOSTÍ

Sociální činnost je činnost jednotlivců ve sdružení, která vytváří sociální realitu, přetváří ji a přetváří i její podmínky, ať už jsou dány přírodou vnější (anorganickou) či vnitřní (organickou a psychickou). Takto definovaná činnost zahrnuje sociální chování nebo jednání (např. právní, mravní, řečové apod.), ale též činnosti v užším slova smyslu, jejichž výtvorem není jen čin, ale též konkrétní i hmatatelný výtvor (materiální produkt, umělecké dílo, vědecká studie). Potom regulací sociálních činností (nebo sociální regulací) rozumíme sociální procesy i jejich výtvory, které způsobují, že sociální činnosti neprobíhají libovolně, ale uniformně nebo — při jejich diferenciaci — relativně uspořádaně (řádově).

Autorka navazuje na to, jak problémy sociální regulace utřídil G. Gurvitch, a rozlišuje orgány sociální regulace (skupiny primární, skupiny složitější, ale částečné, skupiny globální i mezinárodní), druhy sociální regulace, které odpovídají druhům sociálních činností (hospodářství, vědění, umění, náboženství, řeč, právo, mravnost aj.) a její formy. Každý orgán má svůj systém sociální regulace a podle zákona strukturálního determinismu se uvnitř téhož nadřazeného orgánu podřazené systémy sociální regulace prolínají navzájem i se systémy podřazenými i nadřazenými i v témž druhu sociální regulace. Formy sociální regulace jsou v zásadě dvě: spontánní a ukládaná. Spontánní sociální regulace vyrůstá ze sociální situace skupiny, v níž dominantním faktorem jsou potřeby skupiny; ukládaná sociální regulace vyplývá ze sociální situace, v níž rozhoduje soubor pravidel a norem, které neodpovídají potřebám skupiny. Vzájemný vztah obou forem závisí zejména na druhu mocenské autority ve vlastní skupině i ve skupině nadřazené.