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Towards System-Functionalism Sociology

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1. Introduction

One thing the writer worries about when he looks at sociological textbooks recently published in this country is that many introductory textbooks of sociology are full of journalistic or current topics put together at random without any systematic frame of sociological theory, and many sociologists are often asked to write a small article about this kind of topic. How can beginners understand the discipline of sociology with such a haphazard introduction? This paper tries to show the fundamental principle and outline, with which the writer has attempted to re-organize the sociological discipline. The outcome of this attempt is now available in the form of a book.. *System-Functionalism Sociology* (Kawashima-Shoten), 1970, Tokyo.

Certainly, it is disagreeable to find a social science which pays no attention or concern to the 'social facts' which are constantly changing around us. But no less irrelevant than this is an academic discipline without any systematic theoretical framework.

Generally speaking, in this country, a generation ago Japanese sociologists were ardently engaged in organizing sociological discipline, at a time when sociologists ignored field work and were content to study merely from books, and the dominant tendency in the sociology of the day was European, and especially German—the so-called Sociological Formalism.

In this type of sociology, the essence of society..das Soziale.. was conceived in terms of human bonds, association, co-living; and, putting aside somewhat concrete social phenomena, it dealt with such abstract subjects as (i) social differentiation, (ii) social consciousness, (iii) social organization, (iv) social relation and process and (v) culture; these are regarded as the underlying reality to society. Dr. Yasuma Takada, one of the greatest sociologists in Japan, who completed his systematic theory of sociology in the 20's, suggested some overseas sociologists worth studying, and we can see what kind of sociology was dominant at that time in Japan from those names. These are; in French, E. Durkheim, G. Tarde, C. Bouglé and R. Worms, in English, H. Spencer, F. H. Giddings, L. F. Ward, E. A. Ross, C. A. Ellwood, A. W. Small and R. E. Park, in German, A. E. F. Schäffle, L. Gumplowicz, G. Ratzenhofer, G. Simmel, F. Tönnies and A. Vierkandt.

This Formalism School of Sociology in the 20's, however, tended to become a kind of basic social science theory, though Dr. Takada declared that his sociology was never "imperialistic".

The writer will return to this point later. After the end of World War II, Japanese sociology, as in every sphere of social life, was influenced by the Americans. Even in this country, practical research supported by so-called "behavioral science" was widely undertaken.

That is to say, now that sociologists were free from the rigid theory of

sociology, they investigated every field of social life in order to undertake 'sociological research'.

Although it seems to be haphazard, the sociologists' concern with social phenomena went hand in hand with the historical process of the day.

One example: the content analysis of an authorized sociological magazine... *Soshioroji*, of which editorial office is in the Faculty of Letters of Kyoto Univ. The first issue of this academic magazine was published in 1952 and the fortieth was in 1965; the total number of articles included are 131. What kind of subjects were dealt with by Kansai sociologists during this period ?

#1—#10 (1952-55): the dominant topics are; family, kinship relations and rural village community studies: and then come the history of sociological theory and social pathology.....

#11—#20 (1955-58): the main tendency in selecting subjects is unchanged, but in addition to these, labor, class, and religion appear.

#21—#30 (1959-62): the two old main themes... family & kinship relations and rural village community study... are fading away rather noticeably, and organization analysis concerning labor and management, and such political sociology topics as the nation, the political system and voting, are revealing themselves. The concern with General Theory is also to be observed.

#31—#40 (1962-65): in addition to the traditional topics such as family, kinship and rural village community study, general consideration of culture & society and the new concern with economic sociology and political sociology appear. Social problems and social pathology are also seen among the subject matter of the sociological analysis.

Roughly speaking, during this period, the topics of the sociological studies which appeared in *Soshioroji* are: (i) family & kinship relations, (ii) culture and society in general, (iii) rural village community studies, (iv) political issues such as the nation, the political system, power, (v) so-called 'theoretical sociology' and religion, social action and social relations, deviant behavior, delinquency, social disorganization and organization analysis in labor and management, in order of priority. The change in selection of the topics is rather drastic from the 50's to the 60's. The shift from family & kinship relation to bureaucracy and organization in politics, industry and labor, from rural village community to urban community is relatively clear. Sociologists' concern with General Theory is also to be noticed. This, the author imagines, is due to the shift in generation of sociology teachers and contributors and also to the historical change in Japanese society. Therefore, this tendency is applicable to Japanese sociology in general at that period.

Though the details are omitted, in the period of 1965-70 (#41—#50) the content analysis of the same review shows that the sociologists in this country are interested in such subjects as General Theory, industry, labor, the nation, politics and so on. Attention must be paid to the fact that in community study as well as in other fields, the sociologists' concern is moving from rural to urban; and from Japan to foreign countries, particularly to developing nations.

Today, it is no exaggeration to say that there is no social field untouched by sociologists. The following table, which has been made by the Japanese Sociological Association to summarize research by its member sociologists, shows the number of articles written by Japanese sociologists in 1968 (January-December).

Subject	# of articles
(1) Sociological Theory & its History	32
(2) General Theory	18
(3) Research Method	8
(4) Social Groups	198
(a) Group in general	8
(b) Family	36
(c) Rural Village excluding (d)	36
(d) Fishing Village	6
(e) City	29
(f) Community	29
(g) Organization & Bureaucracy	21
(h) Nation, Race, Politics and Social Movement	15
(i) Class-Stratum	18
(5) Industry & Labor	32
(6) Social Change	13
(7) Population	9
(8) Education	29
(9) Culture	23
(10) Social Psychology & Social Consciousness	37
(11) Mass Communication	30
(12) Social Pathology	16
(13) Social Problem & Social Welfare	35
(14) others	32
Total	512

(Data: *Japanese Sociological Review* Vol. 21 #1 1970 June)

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the task of combining sociological theory and concrete sociological work becomes very difficult. So it is understandable that some textbooks, abandoning the attempt to relate the theoretical parts and the applied parts in sociology, only deal with topics chosen at random. But professional sociologists cannot remain silent when confronted with this situation. The writer tries to outline a systematic logical structure of sociology, according to the 'Three Paths to a Definition' suggested by A. Inkeles... 'What the Founding Fathers Said', 'What Reason Suggests', and 'What Sociologists Do'.

2. General Orientation

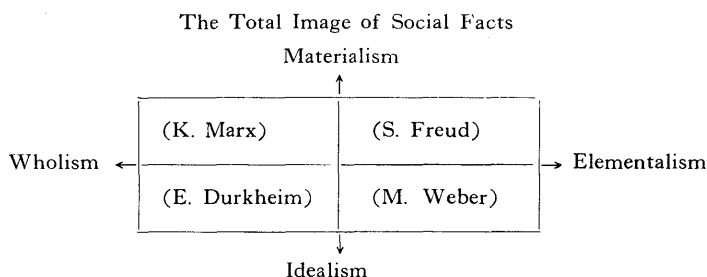
A rather radical concept is necessary, as will be appreciated, in order to re-organize the sociological discipline in such a complicated situation as 'no social field remains untouched by sociologists'. All theoretical outcomes in various sciences must be included. The present 'division of labor' among social sciences (=the science of society) must be reconsidered. Coping with this difficult task, the writer will take two steps.

The first: the theoretical frame of reference he employs is System-Functionalism Analysis, which is based on the creative ideas developed in General System Theory, Structuralism and Functionalism. The implication of using this frame is as follows; (i) to conceive the subject matter as a system (this is to confine and define the object of analysis), (ii) then, to make clear the structure

and process of the system in terms of the concept of function. It also suggests that (iii) the system must be regarded as morphogenic and that (iv) the system units are not necessarily equal...these may be unique, heterogeneous, sometimes showing hierarchy in their importance to the system as a whole.

The second: by applying the above theoretical frame to Total Society, the social facts in a total social system and their differentiation will be made clear. To make clear the differentiation of the social facts is to define the 'division of labor' of the social sciences (=the science of society).

Only the conclusion is mentioned here. The writer tries to define the total image of 'social facts', first by re-examining the history of sociological theory. It is found that there are two axes of epistemological hypotheses concerning the social facts. (They are hypotheses because they could not be verified by the scientific method). These are: (i) Wholism v. Elementalism Axis and (ii) Materialism v. Idealism Axis. The combination of these two axes makes four spheres of the social facts, the whole of which shows the total image of social facts. In the parenthesis are the representative social thinkers.



In order to define the total image of social facts, other models or hypothetical theories must be taken into consideration. They are; T. Parsons' AGIL Model, the phase movement theory in small group, Malinowski's society model, cybernetics, and the general system theory etc. The basic logical frame is, as mentioned above, System-Functionalism, which has been employed to analyse every subject treated in this analysis... the history of sociological theory, the personality system, the social group system, the total social system (and its sub-systems), the international social system and so forth.... Here is the conclusion:

- (1) The total social system is divided into four functionally differentiated sub-systems. They are:
 1. Material Property System (roughly parallel to 'Economy' System)
 2. Social Power System (roughly parallel to 'Polity' System)
 3. Bond System (roughly parallel to 'Integration' System)
 4. Information System (roughly parallel to 'Culture' System)
- (2) Each sub-system produces its own output using other sub-system's output as input. And the total social system is to be conceived as an exchange (or flow) system of these four kinds of social output, produced in these four functionally differentiated sub-systems.
- (3) The process of production, exchange (or flow), accumulation and consumption of these four kinds of social output shows a relatively stable structure, and this relative stability is based on 'institutionalization', which is one of the basic characteristics of society.
- (4) A common pattern can be observed in human behavior in the activities of

each functional sub-system, about which some attempts deductive as well as inductive have been made to construct theories. A convergence of theories can be seen.

In explaining the above four propositions, the relation of the 'division of labor' among the social sciences, the sociological point of view and the hierarchy of social science theories will be mentioned. According to the proposition (1), the social facts about a total social system are to be analysed from the four points of view. Therefore, there are four basic social sciences. They are as follows:

Sciences of Human Society

- (i) science of material property (=Economics in the wide sense)
- (ii) science of social power (=Political Science in the wide sense)
- (iii) science of human bond (=Sociology in the narrow sense)
- (iv) science of information (=Cultural Science in the wide sense)

The principle idea here is due to N. Wiener's cosmology which argues that this world consists of the three basic elements, 'material', 'energy' and 'information'. The writer adds 'humanity' to these three elements, to convert this universalistic cosmology into a particularistic human-centered idea. In this sense, the (iii) dimension is particular as it includes the concept of 'human life', though the writer cannot discuss it in detail here.

Each of the four basic social sciences shows its internal differentiation and this process corresponds to its activities. That is to say:

(i) 'object'-science-type differentiation according to the kind of output. To take an example from economics, the sub-division of economics is due to what kind of output is regarded as 'subject matter': raw materials in the primary industry; or industrial products in the secondary industry; or professional services in the tertiary industry; and so on. The reason why economic analysis must be differentiated according to the kind of output is that the pattern of supply-demand relation, the way in which the price is fixed and the process in accumulation and flow are different depending on different kind of output.

(ii) 'method'-science-type-differentiation: the sub-division occurs as it deals with the different processes of production, flow (and exchange), accumulation and consumption. Here, there is a tendency for theories to converge across the four concrete sub-systems of the total society. An example again comes from economic theory; the supply-demand and price theory developed in economics is applicable, to some extent, to other sub-systems than the 'economy' sub-system.

The above-mentioned two ways of internal sub-division in the four basic social sciences are due to our assuming 'independent variables' in each sub-system. No need to mention, however, that these four sub-systems are in a complicated reciprocal relationship, exchanging their outputs mutually. The first view point of sociology, the writer assumes, is the case of the analysis of one sub-system, assuming 'independent variables' outside that system. An example in the case of 'economic sociology'; this is the analysis of social phenomena observed in the economic sub-system with the explanatory variables outside that system (in other words, with the independent variables in the other three sub-systems of society). This analytical point of view is equally conceivable in each of the four functional sub-systems. Thus, there are four basic (once they are called 'applied' as in the table of contents attached at the end of this paper) divisions of sociology;

- (1) economic sociology

- (2) political sociology
- (3) bond-solidarity sociology
- (4) information sociology

Proposition (2): Thus, the total social system is to be analysed ultimately as a total relation structure of these four sub-systems which the four basic social sciences and the four basic sociologies analyse respectively. The topics that sociology must deal with are made clear and formulated.

Proposition (3) is concerned with the assumption that, in order to understand society as a whole, the sociological point of view ('institutionalization') must be taken. The social phenomena seen in the four sub-systems are really only the concrete social phenomena, and among these there is a common characteristic which is also the special character of human society. This may be seen as the way in which to resolve the technical difficulty arising with the increase in the quantity of the kinds of social output and their flow. It is this 'institutionalization' mechanism that makes society's development possible. Thus, in each of the four sub-systems, there comes into existence a generalized and institutionalized form of its output, which is based upon the 'credence' shared by the people concerned. This consists of a complicated institution matrix of each sub-system as well as the total society.

The structure of this mechanism is as follows:

<i>general form</i>	<i>example in 'economy' system</i>
social output.....	material property (and service)
generalized and	
institutionalized form.....	money (system)
credence.....	credit
fundamental value-item.....	gold (or rare metal)

Proposition (4) is as follows: the social phenomena, once separated from their concreteness, are to be grasped on a certain level of abstraction. This analytical level has already been suggested by Sociological Formalism, there being the possibility of a 'general theory'. It seems to be a mere question of terminology whether this 'general theory' should be called 'sociological theory'. The completion of such a theory is indebted to theory-building efforts in various social sciences and behavioral sciences as well as the contribution of recently developed biological and electronic sciences. The 'general theory' of this kind consists of four theories: (i) Theory of Social Action, (ii) Theory of Social Group, (iii) Theory of Total Society, and (iv) Theory of Culture. But this idea of dividing the 'general theory' into four is transitional. The writer predicts that more generalized and abstract 'general theories' would come into being in the near future, and these would be: communication theory; organization theory; decision making theory; value theory and general system theory; and so forth. Anyway, the writer calls this the second analytical point of view of sociology, the application of 'general theory' to concrete social phenomena for analysis. Here he regards this 'general theory' as the basic theory of sociology.

3. Discussion

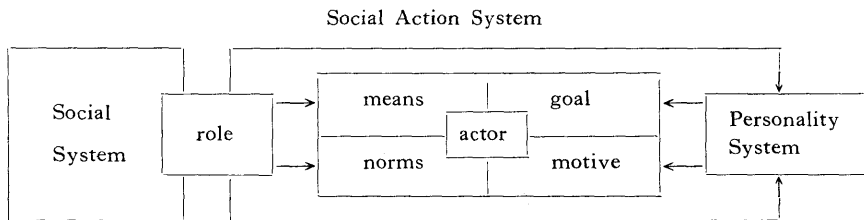
Let us discuss the title of this paper more concretely. The writer's System-Functionalism Sociology consists of: 3 parts, 15 chapters and 1 appendix, of which the table of contents is to be found at the end of this article. The original idea for re-organization of sociological discipline is as follows:

Part I includes every effort to introduce the present-day conceptualization of

'society', (i) by examining the early period of sociology in terms of the frame of 'sociology of knowledge', (ii) by extracting the two axes of epistemological hypothesis on 'social facts' from the past attempts to conceptualize 'society', (iii) by demonstrating the writer's re-conceptualization of 'society' and (iv) by developing the outline of the analytical frame of social system in terms of System Functionalism.

Part II unfolds the so-called basic theory of sociology, though this writer thinks it is rather a question of wording whether it is called 'sociological' or not. The theory is concerned with 'social action', 'social group', 'total society' and 'culture', and these subjects are treated on a theoretical level from the analytical point of view of System Functionalism.

An example of analysis from 'social action':



First of all, social action (=unit social act) is conceived as a system of a dynamic mechanism intermediating the personality system and the social system. The component elements are those above demonstrated. The analysis of social action system is a three-step one:

(i) unit analysis; each component element of social action is analysed separately.

(ii) inter-unit relation analysis: units selected at random, two (or more), are analyzed in relation to each other. And this analysis, supposing four component elements of social action and taking two-unit-relation only, is subdivided into six. The analysis and typology of social action suggested by M. Weber and R. K. Merton belong to this category of analysis.

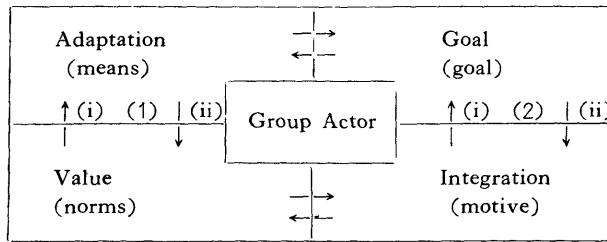
(iii) finally, total relation analysis putting the social action system between the social system and the personality system.

Here, for example, while social structure is to be defined in terms of such component elements of social action as norms and means, personality structure deals with goal and motive.

The writer's central concern with social group system is as follows: just as social action system intermediates between personality system and social system, so social group system intermediates between the individual and the society as a whole. The characteristics of social group system are examined from two different angles, one in a large group (including the concept of bureaucracy and organization), the other in a small group.

The group process (often called 'locomotion' by social psychologists) is regarded as a conversion process in which something 'individual' becomes or transfers itself into something 'collective'. The stability of a group depends upon the success or failure of this process.

Social Group System and Conversion Process



- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) rationalization process | (2) democratization process |
| (i) legitimatization process | (i) representation process |
| (ii) effectivation process | (ii) gratification process |

(1), (2) are the processes of conversion as defined by the writer. In particular, (2) process suggests that the success of this process is to widen the range of the members who could share the responsibility of group decision making, and to realize the more equal distribution of group output. Another important process could be seen, for example, between Value and Integration of what is called 'socialization' (\longrightarrow) and 'identification' (\longleftarrow) process.

On the theory of total society, here is a summing up, though some repetition is inevitable. As already mentioned above, the theory of total society is an application of System Functionalism Analysis and this also suggests how sociological analysis unfolds, by choosing subject matter proper to sociology with the definition of 'explanatory variables'.

Now, employing the terminology of T. Parsons' A, G, I, L, to designate the four functionally differentiated sub-systems of the total social system (though the A, G, I, L, should be conceived as signs, because this writer's interpretation of the I and L dimensions is quite different from that of T. Parsons), A: 'economy' system, G: 'polity' system, I: 'bond' system and L: 'information' system; then the discussion may be summarized as follows: A and G dimensions are interpreted roughly parallel to T. Parsons' conception, each corresponding to 'economy' and 'polity' system respectively. 'I' dimension, however, though this is the dimension where 'integration' and 'solidarity' are its output, is to be considered as an ultimate purpose of human existence where 'reproduction of human beings' and their 'life' occur. The 'tension-management' function originally put in L dimension by T. Parsons comes into this I dimension in our own model, and added to this dimension is a special meaning in the differentiation of function in the total social system. The 'pattern-maintenance' function belongs to L dimension, but at the same time this is the dimension concerning the production of 'information', which as a system is institutionalized and generalized. This is the main pattern, called 'value-system', to be maintained in a society. As already suggested, in each four functionally differentiated sub-system, there can be observed a parallel and common structure concerning the process of production, flow, accumulation and consumption of output, their generalized, institutionalized forms and their base (=fundamental value-item) and so on. The institutionalized process of production, exchange, consumption of social output is based upon people's credence. The parallel structure of this in the four sub-systems of the total social system is as follows:

	A	G	I	L
social output	material property (and service)	social power	human bond	information
the generalized & institutionalized form	money	political power	solidarity	value system
credence	credence to utility	credence to legitimacy	credence to belongingness	credence to truth
fundamental value-items	gold	violence	primary bond (population)	belief (direct-experience)

On the theory of culture: though the concept of culture is ambiguous, this time it is treated with the contribution of cultural anthropologists to the theory of society, so that this contribution may be absorbed. The term culture in its wide sense means roughly 'society' and in its narrow sense, 'information'. Therefore, in the view of the present writer the independent theory of culture has no reason to exist.

Part III consists of applied sociology (it may be more appropriate to call it basic sociology). The selection of topic and the analytical point of view in sociology have already been made clear. The difficulty lies in I and L dimensions, where even basic social sciences are not well established, in comparison with A and G dimensions, where economics and political science are well established as scientific disciplines.

The sociological analysis is introduced here with the example in the case of 'information sociology', though this analytical point of view (sociological point of view) is applicable to all sub-systems of the total social system.

The science of social information, today, is accumulating its common heritage in four different fields. First, the classical achievements in the field of religious sociology, sociology of knowledge, history of social thoughts, the study of social consciousness (particularly class-consciousness) and so forth. Here, as a hypothetical argument, the influence of 'being' over 'idea' is emphasized (=Seinsgebundenheit). Secondly, ranging from philosophical epistemology to logics, linguistics and anthropological study of myth, religion, magic, arts etc., these studies are searching for a wide variety of human ideologies. Thirdly, studies on mass-communication since the 20's, when radio was invented as the means to send one-way massive information to the public. With the help of psychology and social psychology, the process of mass-communication was eagerly analysed: sender, receiver, contents, media (or channel) and effect. Fourthly, the practical application and study of information have recently spread, and now center on using electronic calculators to draw out the unknown knowledge from the known. In this field, the theoretical convergence comes from various disciplines: genetics in biology, brain-neurological physiology and electronic engineering. The noisy discussion about the knowledge (or information) industry also lies in this field. Today, the semantic aspect and the technical aspect of social information are rather separate despite some structuralists' efforts to combine them. Social information science, coping with this difficult situation, wants to build an integrated frame of reference to interpret these various information phenomena as a whole. Here, an example is adopted in the case of 'science', which is the

dominant information system (therefore, the value-system of our own society), to demonstrate the analytical point of view of 'information' sociology. Needless to say, this point of view (which the writer calls 'sociological') here employed to analyse 'science', is applicable to any kind of output in this functional sub-system.

(1) Application of the 'general theory'

(i) scientific activities as social action (individual): here is social action analysis of scientists, for example, who are producers of scientific knowledge. The motive, reward, satisfaction, productivity etc. are treated here as far as these factors affect the behavior of the individual scientist.

(ii) scientific activities as social action (in group): this is the application of group theory to, for example, scientific organization. The analysis is to be done, centering on morale, leadership, professional norms, productivity and satisfaction of a group of scientists sometimes put together for a special purpose (as in the think-tank system) from different specialities.

(iii) Norms, value-system and professional ethics, which sometimes promote and sometimes impede scientific activities or scientific development, are to be studied here.

(2) Sub-System Relation Analysis

(iv) polity and science: science development policy and budget distribution are, among other things, the important subjects in this analytical sphere.

(v) economy and science: industry, always hoping for continuous technical innovation, is coming into the scientific domain. How the scientific field is influenced by industry is one of the biggest issues that contemporary sociologists are interested in.

(vi) science and ethnic affiliation (or nationality or race) is another interesting theme. The international brain-flow (today, this flow is remarkably oriented toward the United States) is one of these problems.

Thus, we notice that the traditional view point of sociology of knowledge, in which 'being' defines 'consciousness' (that is to say the information sub-system is defined by the rest of the sub-system of society) is the typical thinking inherent to sociology of information. Conversely, to some extent, every human and social phenomenon can be regarded as information phenomena, and so wide is the applied field for sociology of information. For example, M. Weber's work, in which he discovered a strong connection between the protestant ethics and the productive activities at the early stage of capitalism, is one of the classical achievement of this kind.

4. Conclusion

So far there has been given the outline of the reorganization of the sociological discipline that this writer is engaged in. As a conclusion, he thinks that it is difficult to find the proper room for sociology among social sciences, as a 'object' science. Now, among some social scientists there is a tendency to think that so-called behavioral sciences such as psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology are 'method' science, in contrast to those sciences which have their particular 'subject matter' in concrete social phenomena. But for confinement of what sociologists could do in particular social domain, this thinking would be rather appropriate. Then, the question arises whether there would be a unique 'method' exclusively 'sociological'. In this work, this writer called the 'general theory' of human behavior 'sociological' or 'basic theory' of sociology. At the same time, the point of view in which certain social phenomena

in one of the four sub-systems in society is analysed in terms of 'explanatory variables' outside that sub-system is called 'sociological',... inter-subsystem relation analysis....

The general theory of human behavior, however, as suggested above, seems to converge around, for example, 'information theory', and even the inter-subsystem relation analysis could be called differently. Thus, it would become a question of wording whether we use the term 'sociology', designating the analytical point of view explained above.

In the writer's view, today, the 'science of human society' is coming to a transitional period; and this science should be reconsidered, concerning its 'division of labor', its methodology, its education and so on. In this paper, nothing is said about the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences that the writer has in mind. Today, in 1970, 'social laws' are conceived not as 'discovered' but as 'created' by human activities. No other historical period could find that the idea of 'planning' is so closely intermixed with social sciences. Such a practical attitude and convergence of various scientific theories must combine in order to develop a new frontier to the 'science of human society'. It is hoped that this paper may be one of these efforts.

SYSTEM FUNCTIONALISM SOCIOLOGY

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(昭和45年9月28日受理)