Selected Topics in Sociology

Ⅰ - 1. Introduction

Contents 2017

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(1) About the Course

a. What does Sociology Study?

Anthony Giddens and Philip W. Sutton 2013, *Sociology*, 7th ed., Polity Press

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b. Two Fields of Sociology

Though contemporary sociology has a large variety of fields of research, there are two basic ways of studying modern sociology. One is the *empirical study* and the other is the *theoretical study*. The main topics for the former way include such topics as family, gender, city, media, which seem to be familiar to students.

On the other hand, the theoretical research of sociology studies the relation between individuals and society. Why is there social order instead of chaos? How are individuals motivated to social actions? How is social integration possible? Those are major topics studied in theoretical sociology.

In this course, we will study THEORETICAL topics, not empirical topics. Society is composed of individuals, and so the question of 'mind' or 'self' will be the central focus of the discussion of this course. Therefore, the question 'What is mind'or 'self ?' is the main topic of this course. Because this course is about theoretical sociology, the contents are rather abstract. Students are expected to get accustomed to abstract and logical way of reasoning.

Complexity Theory in Sociology

There are several different methods in theoretical sociology. The theory used in the explanation in this course is complexity theory in sociology. This theory is based on complexity science, which has developed in modern physics as **non-linear dynamics**. The main focus of this theory is to explain such macro dynamics as life. Now the idea of non-linear dynamics, or self-organizing dynamics is expected to be introduced in the field of the study of the mind, the self, communication and society. In this lecture we will explain mind, communication and society from the point of view of complexity theory.

c. Various Ideas in Sociological Thought

Sociological theories and metaphor

Rigney, Daniel 2001 *The Metaphorical Society An Invitation to Social Theory*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Society as (1) Living system, (2) Machine, (3) War, (4) Legal Order, (5) Marketplace, (6) Game, (7) Theater, (8) Discourse

Society as Living System

"In general, biological metaphors call our attention to the relational and organically interconnected nature of social life, in contrast to more recent atomistic images, which tend to portray society as a loose collection of autonomous individuals."

Society as Machine

"mechanical images of society, which emerged to prominence with the rise of modem science and the industrial revolution. In the nineteenth century, scientifically inclined philosophers known as "positivists" began to imagine the possibility of a rigorous science of society worthy of the name "social physics." With this positivist dream of a social physics came the corollary vision of a "social engineering." While the metaphor of social physics portrayed societies as natural mechanisms governed by immutable scientific laws, the social engineering metaphor offered a rather different view of societies as artificial machines capable of being designed and redesigned to solve human problems more efficiently."

Society as War

"Warmer than the image of society as machine is the fierce image of society as a battleground whereon adversaries wage a relentless struggle for scarce and valued resources. Metaphors of social warfare have been developed in widely varying ways by Machiavelli, Hobbes, Karl Marx, and many others in the diverse tradition of conflict theory."

Society as Legal Order

"a tamer image of society as an intricate system of rules, regulations, or codes of conduct. Order and social control are central themes in this legalistic model of social life, which suggests that we are by nature the makers, followers, breakers, adjudicators, and enforcers of social norms, both formal and informal."

Society as Marketplace

"depicts society as an elaborate network of exchange relationships among individuals and groups. Inspired by Adam Smith's classical economics and developed by social exchange and rational choice theorists, this metaphor reflects the assumptions of the prevailing culture of capitalism, urging us to view social relations as transactions based on self-interested calculations of reward and cost."

Society as Game

"The popular image of society as game, like the image of society as marketplace, portrays social life as a spirited and intensely competitive quest for prizes and payoffs. Like the war metaphor (although usually less grim), the game metaphor highlights the importance of strategy and tactics, deception, and team loyalty in social relations."

Society as Theater

"All the world's a stage," wrote Shakespeare, "and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts." We call upon the language of theater when we describe people as social actors playing their prescribed roles in accordance with received cultural scripts or, alternatively, as improvisational actors making up their performances as they go along."

Society as Discourse

"If any one metaphor has come to dominate cultural analysis in recent decades, it is the image of human societies as linguistic creations—artificial realities constructed socially through the medium of symbols. The image of society as language or discourse, presented in chapter 9, has its roots in European philosophy and linguistics. It has inspired a wide range of intellectual movements in twentieth-century social thought, including symbolic interactionism, social phenomenology, ethnomethodology, hermeneutics, structuralism and semiotics, deconstruction, postmodernism, and postmodern forms of feminism."

d. The Metaphor (Image) of This Course

From Substances to Processes

"Sociologists today are faced with a fundamental dilemma: whether to conceive of the social world as consisting primarily in **substances** or in **processes,** in static "things" or in dynamic, unfolding relations. Large segments of the sociological community continue implicitly or explicitly to prefer the former point of view. Rational-actor and norm-based models, diverse holisms and structuralisms, and statistical "variable" analyses—all of them beholden to the idea that it is **entities** that come first and **relations** among them only subsequently—hold sway throughout much of the discipline. But increasingly, researchers are searching for viable analytic alternatives, approaches that reverse these basic assumptions and depict social reality instead in dynamic, continuous, and processual terms". (Emirbayer 1997 "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology" *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.103, No.2: 281)

Actors do no control processes, but are involved in them.

"A process of mutual response and mutual adaptation **shifts the 'ground' that actors stand upon**, sometimes making the previously inconceivable not only conceivable but obvious, necessary and even automatic. Immersion in an interaction context which acquires an unusual dynamic and trajectory draws the actors involved into ways of behaving that they would not previously have countenanced.

It is only a small step to recognize that, were such unusual patterns ever to become usual, so too would the individual patterns of behaviour involved. **Actors are shaped by the interactions in which they are involved**. Trajectories of interaction can transform the way in which they act, feel and think......actors do not simply 'do' interaction. They are affected by it. And what they do in it is shaped by how they are affected by it. (Crossley 2011:30)

"In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are inter-woven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behaviour in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world. In the present dialogue, I am freed from myself, for the other person's thoughts are certainly his; they are not of my making, though I do grasp them the moment they come into being, or even anticipate them. And indeed, the objection which my interlocutor raises to what I say draws from me thoughts which I had no idea I possessed, so that at the same time that I lend him thoughts, he reciprocates by making me think too". (Merleau-Ponty , Maurice 1962 *Phenomenology of Perception*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul:413)

Chemical Reaction and Magnetic Field

"Life is always lived in common, whatever rugged individualists may think, but in the Sixties it seemed especially true that History with a capital H had come down to earth, either interfering with life or making it possible; and that within History, or threaded through it, people were more than themselves, they were supercharged: lives were bound up with one another, making claims on one another, drawing one another into the common project."

(Gitlin, Todd, 1993 *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage*, New York, Bantam Book, p.7)

b. System, Interaction and Field

(2) Natural and Social Sciences

a. Influences of Natural Sciences

This lecture is an attempt to introduce two important ideas of *contemporary physics*:

Field, and self-organization.

Why physics?

Each discipline must have its own methodology. In the long history of natural and social sciences, the latter has referred to the former concerning methodology. In other words, social sciences have developed under various influences from natural sciences, especially physics.

b. Determinism

Three Stages of the Influence of Physics on the Social Sciences

(1) Determinism

In the 17th century, Newton and other physicists succeeded in establishing the foundation of modern physics and its methodology.

It is called ***deterministic***, because in classical dynamics of Newton, the behavior of nature is expressed in mathematically formulated equations. If you determine the value of necessary variables, then you can determine the value of remaining variables.

For instance, F = ma. Each stands for force, mass, acceleration

c. Mechanism

This deterministic view of nature has brought about the mechanistic view of nature, or *mechanism*, as it is called. In this view, nature is assumed as a *machine* which is driven by the natural law.

This deterministic view of the world has become a *paradigm* through 17, 18, and 19th centuries.

Under this mechanistic paradigm, many social sciences have tried to formulate theories like *classical dynamics*.

Only economics seemed to have succeeded in the attempt. In the theory of neo classics, the market is assumed to be a deterministic machine driven by the law of general equilibrium.

Sociologists hoped to follow economics, but in vain. Because, compared with the market, the whole society is far more complex, and it was totally difficult to be expressed in mathematical equations.

d. Cybernetics and System

In the middle of the 20th century, a new theory called **cybernetics** was introduced in physics, especially in its applying aspect, or engineering. Cybernetics has proposed the idea of '**system**'. Under this influence, the idea of '**social system**' was created in the middle of the 20th century. Then, **social system theory** was created.

e. Complexity Science, or Non-linear Dynamics

At the end of the 20th century, another new wave came again from the edge of modern physics. That is the idea of complexity science. This innovation happened in the field of **non-linear dynamics** in modern physics. Non-linear dynamics deals with **complex physical phenomena** that deterministic functions or equations cannot deal. The most important example of such complex dynamical system is, **life**.

f. Western and Eastern Ideas

Since the 16th century, the Western world dominated the whole world, not only economically and politically, but also culturally.

Then, the Western ideas were considered to be universal and true.

As the result, many non-Western people tried to learn the Western ideas: the Westernization.

Japan had become the most successful Westernized country.

However, as will be explained later, the Western philosophers began to criticize the Western ideas.

These philosophers, called postmodernists or poststructuralists, summarized the Western ideas into 'subject and truth', and declared both of them are false.

Now, pluralism and diversity are accepted as the global standard of value.

From this notion, the Western ideas are not universal, but are one of possible perspectives.

In this age of globalization, non-Western people need to develop their own perspective in such a way as all people in the world can be benefited.

However, often the Eastern ideas are expressed in a vague way.

Example: Buddhism

A theory based on an eastern idea must be describe in a logical and clear way. Otherwise, people in other regions of the world cannot understand it.

(2) Traditional Model

a. "Homo Clausus"

"As Elias notes, Westerners are accustomed to thinking of themselves as their own little self-enclosed world – ***homo clausus***, as he terms it. But – and as I suggested above – this process involves the suppression of an alternative perception, one which understands **the person in terms of their relations with others**, and hence understands **identity as formed *between*, rather than *within* persons**.

This view, to quote Elias again, conceptualizes the person as being "Fundamentally oriented toward and dependent on other people throughout his life. The network of interdependencies between human beings is what binds them together. Such interdependencies are the nexus of what is here called the figuration, a structure of mutually oriented and dependent people...**[People] exist, one might venture to say, only as pluralities, only as figurations** (Elias, N., *The Civilizing Process*:213-14)"

'Without you I'm nothing': without a nexus of others, none of us could be 'who we are'. The Western notion of the individual, however, rests on a massive suppression of this complex interdependency and suggests a model of identity which is, at its heart, outside the social world. As Elias suggests, sociological analysis has to challenge this notion, rather than incorporating it."

(Steph Lawler, *Identity Sociological Perspective*, 2008, Polity Press, pp.7-8)

b. Becoming and Doing

A linguist Yoshihiko Ikegami points out there are two kinds of languages in the world, and accordingly two contrasting orientations in the way in which an extralinguistic event is linguistically represented (Ikegami 1991:289). One type, such as English, singling out individuals, places the focus on them. In this language, 'somebody – does – something' is a representative form of expression. The other type of language, such as Japanese, focuses the event as a whole rather than individual elements inside the whole, the individuals involved in it being submerged in the whole. In this language, 'the whole becomes' is the representative format. Ikegami calls former Do-language, latter Become-language.

c. The Logic of Becoming and Complexity Science

Prigogine, Ilya 1980 *From Being to Becoming   Time and Complexity in the Physical Sciences*, San Francisco, W.H.Freeman and Company

一つの作品が誕生するプロセスは、作家自身にもそうはっきりとは自覚できないものだ。主題や、登場人物などについて、あれこれ考えたり感じたりしているだけではまだ駄目なのである。そうした意識的努力を重ねるうち、やがて自分の思考が濃縮され、過飽和溶液の状態になる。次に思いがけない飛躍の瞬間がやってくる。ちょっとした印象の破片がその溶液の中に落ちて核になり、結晶作用がはじまるのだ。

Even an author will find it difficult to form a clear idea about the processes in creating a literary work. He will consider and feel the theme and characters in various ways, but this is not sufficient. After such conscious efforts, his thoughts will be condensed and become a supersaturated solution. Then, in an instant, an unexpected breakthrough will come to him. A tiny fragment of an impression falls in a solution to form a kernel, and the process of crystallization will begin.

たとえば『方舟さくら丸』の場合だと、その核の役割をしてくれたのは、単に水洗便所に落ちて片足を吸い込まれてしまったナンセンスな夢だった。それまで準備したメモやノートが、とつぜんその夢の周囲に結晶し、構造を持ちはじめたのである。そこから先の展開は急激で、しかし論理的なものではなかった。はやりの言いまわしを使えば、きわめてアナログ的なのだ。創作は『まつ』ことだというのは嘘ではない。あとは計算を越えた直感が自由気ままに自己増殖してくれる。」

（安部公房『死に急ぐ鯨たち』）

For example, in the case of "Hakobune Sakura-Maru," it was a nonsense dream about falling into a toilet bowl and having one leg drawn in that played the role of the kernel. Suddenly, the notes I had prepared crystallized around the dream and began to take structure.

The development thereafter was rapid, but it was not logical. If I use an expression that is in vogue, it will be very analogous. It is not wrong to say that creation is "to wait." After that, intuitions will propagate spontaneously beyond calculation.

(Abe Kobo)

Q: Did you approach 'Invincible' with a single theme in mind?

MJ: **I never think about themes. I let the music create itself**. I like it to be a potpourri of all kinds of sounds, all kinds of colors, something for everybody.

Q: Has it become easier to write songs over time?

MJ: It's the most effortless thing in the world because **you don't do anything**. I hate to say it like that, but it's the truth. The heavens drop it right into your lap, **in its totality. The real gems come that way**.

You can sit at the piano and say, "OK, I'm going to write the greatest song ever written," and nothing. But you can be walking down the street or showering or playing and, boom, it hits you in the head. I've written so many like that. I'm playing a pinball machine, and I have to run upstairs and get my little tape recorder and start dictating. ***I hear everything in its totality, what the strings are going to do, what the bass is going to do, the harpsichord, everything***.

(Jel D. Lewis Jones, *Michael Jackson: The King of Pop*)

"People ask me how I make music. I tell them I just **step into it**. It's like **stepping into a river and joining the flow**. Every moment in the river has its song. So I stay in the moment and **listen**."(Michael Jackson 1992 'Dancing the Dream,' p.70)

Prophet and Prophesy

It Came through Us

"I think we were definitely a bit ahead of our time though, in that we were ***synergising something that was going to happen anyway***. It wasn't that these things were so influenced by us, just that ***that energy was being born anyway***, and ***we were one of the first puppies out***. I don't know if it came from us, but ***it came through us***. But ***it was trying to get out anyway***. Like a leak..."

(Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine)

They Came through Me

We sat on the patio outside his room and talked for two hours. I was really nervous, because he was one of my heroes. And I was also afraid that he wouldn't be really smart anymore, that he'd be a caricature of himself, like happens to a lot of people. But I was delighted. He was as sharp as a tack. He was everything I'd hoped. He was really open and honest. He was just telling me about his life and about writing his songs. He said, "**They just came through me, it wasn't like I was having to compose them. That doesn't happen anymore, I just can't write them that way anymore**." Then he paused and said to me with his raspy voice and little smile, "But I still can sing them."

(Walter Isaacson, 2011, *Steve Jobs*, Simon & Schuster, pp.415-16)

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