

How is Society Possible?

Two Approaches:

Functional-Structural Approach and Ethnomethodology

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Introduction

To understand and/or explain human behaviors or actions is a major purpose of social and behavioral sciences. The question, "How is society possible?" explicates their concern (e.g., Vaitkus, 1991). Another explication of the concern includes the maintenance of social order, structure, and organization. Sociology is certainly one of the disciplines that have considered this question. However, sociologists traditionally have mostly dealt with this question in terms of macro structures of society without a careful scrutiny of fundamental roles of individuals in society or micro aspects of society. They have assumed that human behaviors and actions should be explained in terms of social structures, values systems, etc. The sociology in this view of social phenomena is called "normative" or alternatively "functional-structural" approach, and is based on assumptions of "positivism."

A different and new approach to social phenomena is called "interpretive" view. This approach has emerged as a part of criticism of the positivistic view of social phenomena. There are many variations in this approach. However, phenomenology and ethnomethodology as a partial derivative from phenomenology are unique among those variants. The interpretive approach is better understood in comparison with the normative, positivistic, functional-structural approach. Therefore, in this paper, I will focus on these two major approaches in sociology, compare them with each other, and finally critique the functional-structural approach to social phenomena. In doing so, I will first characterize the functional-structural approach, and derive three features of the view: (a) determinism; (b) subject-object dualism; and (c) abstractions of social reality. Second, I will delineate some characteristics of ethnomethodology, taking the above three features into account. Finally, the paper will formally compare between the two approaches based on the above three properties of the positivistic functional-structural paradigm.

Normative Paradigm of Social Actions: Functional-Structural Approach

The relationship of an individual and society has long been a major subject of academic scrutiny from ancient Greece to contemporary social sciences, such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. The restatement of this concern is (Douglas, 1980b): Can we explain an individual behavior in terms of individual factors (dispositions) or in terms outside of individual factors, such as culture and social structure? Psychologists have tried to explain human behaviors with the former approach, while anthropologists and sociologists have taken the latter approach. The approach in psychology is called "behaviorism." The approach in anthropology and sociology is, on the other hand, called "functional-structural approach." Although there is this difference between the two approaches, there is an important similarity between the two in their meta-theoretical or philosophical assumptions: both share assumptions of logical positivism and empiricism. There are at least three inter-related properties of the positivism and empiricism shared by both approaches for the relevance of this paper. First, both of the two approaches aim at explaining and predicting human actions or behaviors in terms of either personal factors or social factors. Although psychologists view the human being as an independent variable while functional-structuralists (e.g., anthropologists and sociologists) view the human being as a dependent variable, both approaches are "deterministic" in their nature, and assume that human behaviors and actions are systematic, but not random. This deterministic nature of the two positivistic approaches is also called "normative" approach in social sciences (Wilson, 1970), which is the terminology adopted in this paper. An interesting contrast becomes apparent when we characterize the "interpretive" paradigm.

Second, both approaches have in common the view of Cartesian subject-object dualism. In this view, social reality exists independently of individuals or subjects. As will be shown, functional-structuralists view society as "objective phenomena" in which roles of individuals are hollowed out from analyses (Durkeim, 1952). Finally, both behaviorists and functional-structuralists approach human phenomena in abstract forms, rather than in concrete or specific forms. Behaviorists concern themselves primarily with unobservable constructs, such as personality and IQ, in order to explain human behaviors (They make such constructs observable by operationalizations.). These constructs are highly abstract and have nothing to do with specific observations (because they are essentially unobservable). Functional-structuralists similarly deal with highly abstract forms of social phenomena. Such abstractions are called "social structures" and "value systems." They also have nothing

to do with specific social phenomena.

These three aspects of “positivism” (i. e., behaviorism and functional-structural approach) will be compared with ethnomethodology, and in so doing, I will shed light on weaknesses of these two positivistic approaches as well. In what follows, I will describe the “structural-functionalist” approach to human actions developed in sociology, rather than behaviorism, in part because (a) both functional-structural approach and ethnomethodology have been developed in sociology and (b) both have been concerned with structure, organization, and order of society. It enables us to easily contrast the two approaches.

Functional-Structural Approach to Human and Social Actions

As mentioned, while psychologists or Skinnerian behaviorists have sought to find law-like principles, focusing on individual dispositions, such as personality and intelligence (IQ), anthropologists and sociologists (more precisely functional-structural anthropologists and sociologists) have tried to explain human beings in relation to nonhuman factors, such as culture, social structure, and values, without neglecting individual roles in such structures. Although their specific foci are different, both view and assume human behaviors and actions as systematic and regular. Psychologists have tended to call such regularities of human behavior “law.” On the other hand, functional-structuralists have claimed that human actions are “rule-governed.” Functional-structuralists have attributed such regularities of human actions to social or cultural structures. They conceive that rules which such structures impose on people contribute to regulating human behaviors and actions. Before examining in detail how this relationship between micro human actions and macro structures works in the functional-structural approach, a brief historical development of the functional-structural paradigm must be described so as to shed light on the notions of culture, social structure, and value in the paradigm.

A Brief History of Functional-Structural Approach. The paradigm of functional-structural approach has its origin in social anthropology; namely, “functionalism.” Generally speaking, functionalism refers to the research paradigm of two British anthropologists: Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Functionalism developed through the significant influences of a French sociologist, Durkeim. Radcliffe-Brown was influenced by Durkeim, and introduced the ideas of Durkeim to Britain. Functionalism was also developed from the antithesis to the then popular approach to human phenomena, “evolutionalism.” Functionalism criticized evolutionalism because of its historicism; Euro-centric tendency (all societies attain the stage of European societies eventually); and non-empirical and thus non-scientific approach (critique to armchair investigations). Radcliffe-Brown (1952) insisted on “functionalism” as a branch of natural science; and thus he tried to apply the

methodology used in natural sciences, which was very successful at the time in biology and zoology, to social phenomena.

Roughly speaking, the basic idea of functionalism is summarized as follows (Kuper, 1983):

A social fact (exemplified by a grammatical usage, a taboo, a ceremony, a courteous gesture) was characterized by its external and coercive nature. It was prior to any individual, and exercised a constraint upon his behavior. One could not understand a mode of sacrifice, or a dietary custom, in terms of the psychological make-up of any individual. The custom existed before his birth and would endure after his death. Nor did he freely choose to adopt it, any more than he could freely choose to create a new language in which to communicate with his fellows... The set of social facts with which the analyst was concerned must be treated as forming a system, and the meaning and purpose of a custom could be understood only by relating it to the total set of relevant social facts. (p. 50)

This summary clearly indicates that social structures precede human behaviors, and that human behaviors are explainable by social structures and systems, such as values and customs. Furthermore, individuals' free will to act upon social reality is totally neglected in this approach.

By the same token, culture is defined in this line of theorizing: Culture is viewed as a system. The elaborated definition of culture in this paradigm is introduced by Kluckhohn and Kroeber (1952):

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i. e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (p. 181)

This definition of "culture" is certainly more refined and sophisticated than the view of "social structure," introduced previously, in that this definition acknowledges human's will to resist established structures and value systems. However, the fundamental paradigm remains the same—the "deterministic" nature of phenomena: Human behaviors and actions are explained and predicted in their relations to larger structures (i. e., cultural and social structures).

Contemporary Functional-Structural Approach. Thus far, I have introduced a brief history of the paradigm, and emphasized its deterministic nature, derived from the "positivistic" view

of the world. The functional-structural approach is further developed and made sophisticated by Talcott Parsons (1937, 1951), in that he further articulates human's active role in a society, as opposed to the view of actions determined by macro structures. In the following, I will delineate more specific principles, that is, how the paradigm works in real phenomena.

As mentioned earlier, the functional-structural approach views interaction as "rule-governed." Actions are repeated in the same way in a given situation; that is, actions in certain situations are "patterned" by rules of social systems. There are identified two kinds of rules: disposition and expectation. Dispositions are rules internalized in individuals, while expectations are rules institutionalized in a given society (i. e., systems) (Wilson, 1970). Interaction is viewed as normative or "rule-governed in the sense that an observed pattern of action is rendered intelligible and is explained by referring to rules in the form of dispositions and expectations to which actors are subject" (Wilson, 1970, p. 60). However, the question is how dispositions, internal to individuals, and expectations, external to individuals, correspond to each other. To put it another way, how do people in a given community differentiate a situation in the same manner?

In the functional-structural approach, the question is explained by socialization. Through socialization processes, shared expectations in a given society or culture are internalized, that is, they become "dispositions" (what Parsons calls "need dispositions"). It has to be assumed in the approach that people in a society have to share cognitive consensus to differentiate situations, and virtually act in the same fashion. The assumption of sharedness is called "culture" which includes "a system of symbols and meanings, particularly a language" (Wilson, 1970, p. 61). Although the functional-structural approach seems to espouse human's active roles in a society, it becomes clear that the approach in fact takes a position of "determinism" of actions by external factors of individuals (i.e., culture and society as systems); and it is not essentially different from the classical functional-structural approach (Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and Durkeim), in the sense that both more or less emphasize macrostructural systems to explain human behaviors and actions, and overlook individual active roles.

Natural responses to this paradigm are: Can we not make a choice in a given situation?; can we do nothing in the face of current situations except follow rules of a society?; and/or is an individual destiny completely predetermined by history or environment? Although exaggerated, these responses are appropriate as critiques to functional-structural approach. Where is a subject who produces "actions" in this approach? We, human beings, are not machines that just respond to something (e. g., stimuli; environment; social systems). Rather, we actively participate in our society. These critiques have led to alternative

views on the relationships between humans and societies, to which I will turn.

Ethnomethodology: An Alternative Approach

The weaknesses of the normative paradigm are exemplified by the following exaggerated statement based on the principle of positivism:

When we watch someone stop at “red” traffic lights, “redness” causes people to stop at an intersection.

Do we stop because we see red? Or do we stop because it is a rule that we stop at red? These two interrelated questions challenge positivists and positivistic sciences. The first question involves a challenge to subject-object dualism of Cartesian philosophy on which positivistic sciences are based: Does “redness” exist independently of contexts? If so, how can we discriminate red in traffic lights from red, say, in my sweater? — which is related to the second question (and this will be also elaborated later, in particular, in Gestalt perceptions). The second question involves a challenge to the deterministic nature of positivism: Can we proceed at red? Can we say that we interpret red light? If so, then we can differentiate two different kinds of redness by our interpretations. These two challenges are partly attributable to the fact that positivists eliminate “subjects” (perceptions and will) from their analyses.

Sociology of Everyday Life

The second challenge suggests that without our interpretations, we are left without social interaction and everyday life. As a matter of course, we can investigate social and everyday life in its own light. These sociologies are called “sociology of everyday life.” There are several variations within this tradition. However, all share the idea of interaction as interpretive processes, as opposed to interaction as normative processes, and thus sometimes are called “interpretive paradigm,” or “interactionist perspective.” The focus of analyses in this tradition is members’ meanings (i. e., interpretations) situated in specific everyday interaction, rather than macro and abstract aspects of society, with which functional-structuralists have been concerned, such as social structure and value system.

Douglas (1980a; also Adler, Adler, & Fontana, 1987) has identified six variations of sociologies of everyday life. He has first divided “interpretive” or “interactionist” approach into two broad perspectives: Symbolic interactionism (Cooley, 1902, 1909; Mead, 1934); and Phenomenology (or sociological phenomenology) (Husserl, 1970; Schutz, 1967). The former has been further developed into dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959) and labeling perspective (Becker, 1973; Erikson, 1966). The latter, on the other hand, has been

developed into existential perspective and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967).

Sociologies of everyday life have been developed in part due to dissatisfaction with the positivistic functional-structural approach dominant and traditional in sociology, particularly with its “deterministic” nature. As mentioned above, functional-structuralists view human actions as predictable, irrespective of specific situations, owing to value systems of societies. In terminologies of everyday life sociologists, the functional-structural approach contends that all human actions are “trans-situated,” “ordered,” and “unproblematic.” What everyday life sociologists argue in terms of human actions is that (Douglas, 1980a):

Life’s concrete situations are partially constructed in accord with our recipes for living, but they always remain partially open, uncertain, problematic and situated. (p. 15)

In the following, I will describe the ethnomethodological view of human or social actions more specifically. In so doing, I will contrast it with the functional-structural approach as well.

Ethnomethodology: Phenomenological Insights

In the development of ethnomethodology, influences from phenomenology (Husserl and Schutz namely) are indispensable. As ethnomethodology itself is so, phenomenology was developed as a critique of established methodologies of positivistic sciences (Husserl, 1970). As mentioned, the positivistic functional-structural approach aims at explaining and predicting human actions in terms of outside individual factors. Phenomenology, and ethnomethodology as its derivative, have challenged this view and turned their focus to individuals, particularly one’s interpretations, to consider social actions. In what follows, I will delineate phenomenological critique of positivistic science, and also its view of “how interaction is possible” and its implications to ethnomethodology.

Phenomenological Critique of Positivistic Sciences. Phenomenologists have explained the reality of the world in general and human (social) actions in particular, in terms of one’s subjective experiences, and emphasized active constructions of social reality in perceptions. In the phenomenological view, positivists’ subject-object dichotomy is severely criticized. Schutz (1967) argues:

Strictly speaking, there are no such things as facts, pure and simple. All facts are from the outset of facts selected from a universal context by the activities of our mind. They are, therefore, always interpreted facts, either facts looked at as detached from their context by an artificial abstraction or facts considered in their particular setting. In either case, they carry along their interpretational inner and outer horizon. (p. 5)

Regardless of natural or social/human phenomena, the world we perceive is the one interpreted in a certain way, but not the world per se, and hence not pure and real. What we call natural phenomena are not pure forms of the reality at all. They are rather selected and interpreted in a particular way to better capture the reality. In natural phenomena, the way we select and interpret is not important because the phenomena do not react to the interpretations (i. e., molecules, for example, never disagree with or argue against the structure we impose; besides, they are consistent and unchangeable in time and space; it depends upon human's decisions which interpretations or structures will survive. See Kuhn, 1970).

When it comes to human or social phenomena, however, researchers cannot impose certain structures upon phenomena, because we "have preselected and preinterpreted this world by a series of common-sense constructs of the reality of daily life" (Schutz, 1967, p. 6). These common-sense constructs (knowledge) are historically sedimented, and are transcended from the past—they already have a certain structure. The essential differences between scientific knowledge (the knowledge of natural phenomena) and common-sense knowledge (the knowledge of human or social phenomena) suggest that the latter cannot be grasped by the former method of science (subject-object distinction). It is in terms of common-sense knowledge that phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists conceptualize social reality in general, and interaction in particular.

Phenomenological View of Interaction. As mentioned above, the phenomenological view of reality heavily criticized the positivistic view of the reality. The shift in focus was made from subject-object distinction to "subjective experiences" of individuals. There has to be, however, "intersubjectivity" of common sense knowledge (rather than individuals' unique subjective knowledge) in order to make interaction possible in everyday life. In other words, the world in one's perceptions must be somehow shared (rather than private) with other members of a society. Schutz identifies three kinds of characteristics of intersubjectivity of common-sense knowledge: (a) the reciprocity of perspectives; (b) the social origin of knowledge; and (c) the social distribution of knowledge. For the purpose of this paper, I will describe the first and most important one below.

The reciprocity of perspectives consists of two idealizations of perspectives. The first idealization is the "idealization of the interchangeability of the standpoints." Schutz (1967) explains:

I take it for granted- and assume my fellow-man does the same- that if I change places with him so that his "here" becomes mine, I shall be at the same distance from things and see them with the same typicality as he actually does; moreover, the same things would be in my reach which are actually in his (The reverse is also true). (p. 12)

The second idealization, what Schutz calls “the idealization of the contingency of the system of relevances,” is described as follows:

Until counterevidence I take it for granted- and assume my fellow-man does the same- that the differences in perspectives originating in our unique biographical situations are irrelevant for the purpose at hand of either of us and that he and I, that “We” assume that both of us have selected and interpreted the actually or potentially common objects and their features in an identical manner or at least an “empirically identical” manner, i.e., one sufficient for all practical purposes. (p. 12)

Schutz further argues that as a result of two idealizations of perspectives, knowledge known by me and by co-participants is considered as “objective” and “anonymous.” However, it is noted that such objective and anonymous knowledge does not exist independently of individuals (subjects), rather it is just *conceived* and *interpreted* as objective and anonymous.

These two idealizations (the reciprocity of perspectives) are a critical challenge to the Cartesian philosophy of object-subject dualism and of determinism. For the subject-object dualism, phenomenologists have evidenced that objects cannot exist unless subjects interpret, or alternatively that objects cannot exist independently of subjects. Individuals actively constitute/interpret social reality in their minds, rather than passively responding to objective social reality. This aspect is further exemplified with gestalt perception, which is derived from phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

All popular gestalt pictures show human tendencies to actively constitute the reality. For example, the picture perceived both as faces of man and woman and as vase is empirically speaking, one object. Then how can we see one empirical object as two different objects? How can positivists explain this with object-subject distinction? The fact we perceive one empirical picture as two different pictures suggests that we actively constitute the surrounding world as meaningful. We consciously or unconsciously pursue meaningful gestalts in reality, which are acquired and internalized as transcended knowledge from the past through our socialization. In other words, when we see the world, it is not already a pure form. Rather, it is a transformed version of the reality in one’s mind that consists of knowledge transcended from the past and shared with others. This suggests that conceptualizing subject-object duality is completely wrong.

Ethnomethodology: Extensions from Phenomenology

Phenomenological insights into interaction and social reality comprised a strong critique to positivism in general, and to the positivistic approach to human phenomena in particular, including behaviorism and the functional-structural approach. Ethnomethodology views interaction and social reality in the same way that phenomenology does. I will describe

Garfinkel's ideas of "documentary method of interpretation" and "indexical expressions" to shed light on ethnomethodology's differences from the positivistic functional-structural approach to social action. Both aspects clearly reflect phenomenological influences on ethnomethodology.

While several differences between the functional-structural and the interpretive approaches have already become clear, the ethnomethodological view of social organization or structure sharply contrasts with that of the functional-structural approach. Specifically, ethnomethodology concerns how social regularity (structure, organization, order) is maintained in the course of social interaction. As previously described, the functional-structural (normative) approach contends that the maintenance of social structure is attained by the observance of rules internalized as "need dispositions" in social members. In this view, external forces contribute to sustaining the social order. It is, as it were, "from the top down" or "from above" (Heritage, 1984).

By contrast, ethnomethodology views it as "from the bottom up." Garfinkel (1963) argues:

[S] tructural phenomena...are emergent products of a vast amount of communicative, perceptual, judgmental and other 'accommodative' work whereby persons, in concert, and encountering 'from within the society' the environments that the society confronts them with, establish, maintain, restore and alter the social structures that are the assembled products of the temporally extended courses of action directed to these environments as persons 'know' them. (pp. 187-188; cited in Heritage, 1984, p. 84)

Garfinkel's argument clearly demonstrates the phenomenological shift of attention to subject's cognition and perceptions to conceptualize social reality. More specifically, while functional-structuralists view social structure as the one that objectively exists external or outside subject's perceptions, ethnomethodology conceives of social structure as the subject's "common sense knowledge" shared by other members of a society. This leads to his conception of the "documentary method of interpretation" and "indexical expressions."

Documentary Method of Interpretation. Garfinkel's "documentary method of interpretation" clearly indicates phenomenological influences including gestalt perceptions or cognition on ethnomethodology. As mentioned, Garfinkel equates social structure with common sense knowledge. In his discussion of the documentary method of interpretation, Garfinkel conceptualizes common sense knowledge as the underlying pattern of overt actions. Adopting the idea originally from Karl Mannheim, Garfinkel (1967) formally defines the documentary method of interpretation as follows:

The method consists of treating an actual appearance as “the document of,” as “pointing to,” as “standing on behalf of” a presupposed underlying pattern. (p. 78)

This definition suggests that social structure exists not outside our mind but inside our mind as common sense knowledge of social structure. Furthermore, our action and/or interaction is not made possible by mutually following rules, but rather it is “locally produced” in each specific occasion through (mutual) applications of the documentary method of interpretation of occasions.

Garfinkel further elaborates the specific process of the documentary method of interpretation. It is this process that clearly explicates influences of phenomenology including gestalt perception and cognition on Garfinkel and ethnomethodology. Just as by our active (though maybe unconscious) applications of consciousness, we constitute in our mind the meaning of the intended object, some parts of which we cannot empirically observe (i. e., we cannot see, say, the whole table at once in our perspectives; but we perceive it as a table by actively supplementing or assuming missing parts in our view), we do the same thing to social objects. When we encounter a social occasion, we actively constitute a meaning of the situation by supplementing unobservable aspects, which can be, for example, unspoken messages in conversation.

Furthermore and more importantly, Garfinkel (1967) argues:
 Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of “what is known” about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other. (p. 78)

The argument above is heavily phenomenological and gestalt perceptual; it is consistent with Gurwitsch’s (1996; cited in Wilson, 1970) treatment of gestalt phenomena. It is phenomenological in that the argument involves: (a) the whole defines and is defined by the parts; and (b) the same figure or phenomenon could be seen totally differently, which indicates “gestalt switch.” Garfinkel has particularly evidenced the latter with his experiments in which subjects were continuously faced with counter-evidences to what they had assumed previously. Whenever they faced counter-evidences, they reconstituted their interpretations. The shift from one interpretation to another was just like “gestalt switch” perceptions: they assembled the whole interpretation, changing or re-organizing interpretations of the parts totally differently.

Indexical Expressions.

Another unique aspect of ethnomethodology in contrast to the functional-structural approach is its argument of “indexical expressions,” also influenced by the phenomenolog-

ical view of language. Garfinkel's view of "indexical expressions" distinctively indicates anti-positivistic view of language. Positivistic view of language, including the functional-structural approach, insists on the correspondence between a word and an object. This view is the early Wittgenstein's perspective, which argues that "the name means the object" (Noth, 1995, p. 96). It was adopted by positivists. Furthermore, in this view, language exists independently of contexts, and meaning is fixed across situations. Semiotically speaking, the signifier always signifies the same signified or referent. It explicates the Cartesian subject-object dualism.

If a word always has the same referent, however, we cannot explain such an expression as: I like it. The "I" refers to different persons depending on situations. By the same token, the "it" refers to various things. In a situation where a couple is looking at watches at a mall during Christmas season, "it" might refer to a specific watch in a show case, and furthermore this might be an indirect suggestion for a Christmas present by the speaker. Indexical expressions such as "I" and "it" in the above, and also "here," "there," "you," "s/he" etc. challenge the positivistic view of language, because a word has multiple referents; the referent varies across situations.

Given this disadvantage of the view of language, Garfinkel alternatively proposes that "the intelligibility of what is said rests upon the hearer's ability to make out what is meant from what is said according to *methods* [common sense knowledge] which are tacitly relied on by both speaker and hearer" (Heritage, 1981, p. 144; emphasis in original). Unlike positivists, including functional-structuralists, ethnomethodologists view meaning as locally produced or situated rather than trans-situated. The documentary method of interpretation is the method to produce the meaning by indexical expressions and indexical actions. All expressions and actions have potentially an indefinite number of meanings. They have no one-to-one correspondence or objectively determined relations. Rather, such a large number of potential meanings are specified and produced by mutual applications of the documentary method of interpretation.

Discussion

I have delineated both traditional (normative; positivistic functional-structural approach) and radical (interpretive; ethnomethodology) (Garfinkel, 1988) sociology. Although, either explicitly or implicitly, I have already described the differences between the two approaches, and some aspects of differences of the two would be already obvious, I will formally compare both paradigms based on the three characteristics, as suggested earlier, of the functional-structural approach (positivism) : (a) determinism; (b) subject-ob-

ject dualism; and (c) abstractions of social reality.

Determinism

The deterministic nature of positivism explicated in the functional-structural approach is severely criticized in ethnomethodology. As described above, the functional-structural approach views social phenomena as objective reality. In this perspective, individuals are viewed as simply responding to the objective reality. Social structure organizes one's actions in such a way to maintain the structure. To put it another way, society is conceived as "rule-governed." The maintenance of such structure, organization, and order is made possible by rule following actions of socialized individuals. In the functional-structural approach, human beings are treated like machines; humans react to the same phenomena in the same way.

The functional-structural approach, however, totally neglects taking account of subjects' will to act in society. Ethnomethodology, on the contrary, focuses on subjects' perceptions of social reality, and rejects the idea of objective social reality. In this view, subjects *actively* constitute social reality in their perceptions. Social reality only exists in our "interpretation," instead of outside our mind and body. It is called "objective" in this perspective only because members of a society employ "common-sense knowledge," which is historically transcended and thus shared by other members of the society, to seek interpretation of interactions.

While individuals can do nothing in the face of social structure in the functional-structural view, ethnomethodology emphasizes active aspects of the human being in the face of social phenomena. Given these two different paradigms, there are severe disadvantages to ethnomethodology in the functional-structural approach. The latter cannot explain problematic situations where members of society actively decide what to do in the course of interaction, which sometimes happens in real life. It seems that this view cannot assume such situations, because this approach contends that situations are dealt with by members' rule following actions, and that those situations do not and cannot exist for socialized members.

Ethnomethodology, on the other hand, explains the problematic situations rather sophisticatedly. Since this approach looks at social phenomena from social members' interpretive perspective, such situations are actively interpreted, negotiated, and collaborated with co-participants by the mutual documentary method. Thus, in this view, situations are constituted and elaborated by social members in particular occasions, rather than externally existent in the world.

Subject-object Dualism

Subject-object dualism of the functional-structural approach has been criticized from ethnomethodological perspective in this paper with respect to its view of reality and of language. As to the former, as just mentioned above, social reality does not exist objectively, but is rather co-constituted. The invalidity of subject-object dualism has been evidenced in this paper with Schutz's reciprocity of perspectives; gestalt perceptions; and Garfinkel's notion of "common sense knowledge of social structure." All of these three suggest that social interactions or phenomena are actively constituted and interpreted by social members, and thus that those are not considered as an objective reality.

With respect to the view of language, ethnomethodology challenges the positivistic idea of correspondence between object and meaning: Garfinkel's idea of "indexical expressions" and "documentary method of interpretation." Garfinkel reconceptualizes the relation between the two: What is said is collaborated, negotiated, and managed with co-participants, employing each other's methods. Thus, meaning, in this view, is locally produced in each specific occasion by participants of interaction, rather than having a fixed and stable meaning across situations.

Abstractions of Social Reality

Functional-structuralists use macro social structure, or value systems, as an independent variable to explain the dependent variable, micro human social actions. Such macro structures or systems are highly abstract, and have nothing to do with social reality. Ethnomethodology, on the other hand, approaches social phenomena in their own light. This is because ethnomethodology views social phenomena as emergent products of interpretations of social members (Garfinkel, 1963). As mentioned, meaning is locally produced each time in each specific situation, and thus is situated in contexts, rather than trans-situated. Ethnomethodology seeks to find members' interpretations as common sense knowledge and does not employ any kind of abstract forms as a descriptor of social phenomena.

I have compared the two perspectives based on the above three properties of positivism. In doing so, I have shown also weaknesses of the functional-structural paradigm. The considerations based on the three interrelated properties strongly suggest that the positivistic view of social reality has some conceptual difficulty, given the nature of human's perceptions. In other words, the method widely used in natural sciences cannot capture precisely the social world. We cannot conceptualize social phenomena in subject-object terms. Subject-object is simply a false dichotomy in the face of reality.

The ethnomethodological view, including phenomenological influences, better conceptualizes our social phenomena. There seems to exist no logical and conceptual incon-

sistency. The phenomenological shift from objective reality to co-constitutive perceptions captures individuals' relations to social phenomena rather well: Such reality is produced and emerges rather than objectively existing. This radical shift of perspective enables us to better comprehend the relationship between human beings and social reality that was once misrepresented by positivistic view of world.

Concluding Remarks

I have discussed two sociological but quite different approaches to social phenomena: the functional-structural paradigm; and ethnomethodology. They differ fundamentally in their meta-theoretical assumptions. Positivistic approach might work well in natural phenomena, since they do not have structure unless we, human beings, impose it (But, keep in mind that the imposed structure is not objective, but interpretive. Also, natural phenomena are consistent and resistant to change). Social reality, however, is not like this, because human beings are not consistent and always changeable.

Throughout the paper, I have attempted to explicate misrepresentation of social reality by positivism, and to clarify advantages of the ethnomethodological approach over the functional-structural one. The three properties used to examine both approaches clearly have indicated both the conceptual difficulty of positivism vis-à-vis social phenomena and the heuristic conceptualizations of social reality in the phenomenological and ethnomethodological view. Although this radical but logically valid view has not been dominant in current social sciences, it must be considered and treated seriously and sincerely.

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