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## **"Social" and "Policy" in Theories of Social Policy**

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## Introduction

The Society for Studies of Social Policy in Japan was established in 1896. Japanese theories of social policy have their origin in those of Germany. Leading members of *Verein für* established in 1873 had a crucial influence on scholars, statesmen and bureaucrats in our country. As in both countries these theories were constructed at a time when industrialisation had just started, their main concern was with present or future labour problems. Therefore, the core of the social policy was considered as labour policy.

On the other hand, social policy in the U.K. was born in the 1950s, in the days when the social security program had already been realised. Its concern was thus never with labour policies but exclusively with policies concerning people's lives. So Japanese theories of social policy have a different origin and character from those of the U.K..

The most representative exponent of social policy in Japan was Kazuo Ookouchi whose theories had a great influence in 1950s and 1960s. According to his ideas, theories of social policy had hitherto been based on moral or political concepts, that is to say not on science but on value judgements. He attempted to put these theories on a sound footing, as part of the social sciences. He felt that the need for social policy lay in the necessity to guarantee a continuous supply of labour power in order to ensure the reproduction of capital. Without any constraints, competition among individual capitals would lead to an attrition of labour power, while capital in general, whose rationale and vision were embodied in the state, would be compelled to protect it, restraining the instinct of individual capital. This is only a part of his argument, but should be sufficient to indicate its essence. He defined social policy strictly as labour power policy. His ideas are therefore typically of economic reductionism in nature.

The mainstream of social policy studies in Japan has been also labour-oriented, even though not so narrowly defined as Ookouchi's. In recent years another stream is emerging. Its main concern is with policies relevant to citizens' lives. Its proponents argue that the theories of the mainstream are already out of date and have neglected international trends in social policy thinking in the U.K., Germany and the O.E.C.D. (social policy, *Gesellschaftspolitik* and integrated social policy). And some in the traditional stream are also seeking new methods and principles which, in theoretical terms, can relate labour policies to policies relevant to the lives of the people. But I think their efforts have not been successful yet in either faction.

I will look at how scholars of social policy have considered "the social" (society) and try to get some suggestion and ideas on it. Moreover I would like to find a meta-theory of policy, different from that of reductionism.

## 1. "The Social" in the theories of social policy

### (a) State vs. Society (the social)

In former days a state and a society were thought to stand on different and opposite principles. In this case society (the social) is not society as a whole but the qualified one as its subconcept. However this concept is still comprehensive, lacking only a state.

Lorenz Stein (*Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung in Frankreich von 1789 bis auf unsere tage*, 1850) maintained firstly that in society, interests were its principle of activity, and so the economy could have a dominant place, secondly that though interests were driving forces to develop individuals and societies, they also brought about struggles between capital and labour and necessitated social reform as the most effective means of resolving these problems, and thirdly that as society was a self-organizing system, social reform programs must be implemented only through the power and principles of society itself, while a state, though its principles was oriented to equity, can only aid or stimulate it from outside. His ideas were the source of theories on social policy in Germany.

Otto von Zwiedineck-Südenhorst (*Sozialpolitik*, 1911) considered a social policy as depending on the principle of societalization (*Vergesellschaftung*). Societalization promotes the abilities of individuals or organizations. But at the same time, in capitalist society, it accompanies confrontation between capital and labour. Therefore it creates a need for social policy, which aims at ensuring the lasting accomplishment of social purposes. He inherited Stein's principles, but rejected Stein's idea concerning the state as an embodiment of the common will, considering it rather as an organ grasped by those in power. Furthermore he explained this policy and related issues far more fully and explicitly.

Leopold von Wiese (*Einführung in die Sozialpolitik*, Zweite Auflage, 1921) saw society as a whole as consisting of four main systems: state, church, enterprise and family; he then went on to consider their interrelationship. Secondly, he understood social policy as trying repeatedly to secure balances among everchanging power struggles and also among the everchanging relations among different social associations. Thirdly, he thought that social policy was the coordinated complex of political, economical and ethical principles. His argument is more elaborated than those of his predecessors, and well suited to the situation in the postwar period.

In Japan, Kumazo Kuwata published his papers on a theory of social policy in the 1890s. To put it simply, he followed Stein's model, and developed it so as to fit the contemporary situation in Japan. He proposed three main principles: social reform from above (reform by the state), from below (reform by voluntarily established associations such as trade unions, consumers' unions and producers' cooperative unions), and from within (reform for employees by their employers).

Tokuzo Fukuda (*Social Policy and Class Struggle*, 1922) found the essence of society in social movements, whose main force was the labour movement. According to his theory, earlier states protected the right of property and therefore suppressed social movements to the advantage of the owners of property. But from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, the social movement forced states to open their doors, while states decided to take the social movement under their protection, with certain qualifications. Fukuda saw the significance of social policy in this interpenetration

between the social movement and states.

To sum up, theories of social policy first saw its significance as lying in the amelioration of the harmful effects caused by interests and competition in a society, using the power of the state in the cause of equity. Then, gradually de-deifying the state and recognising the importance of the social movement, they went on to the idea that social policy be given a place relating it to confrontation and interpenetration between the state and society. Though there were many differences among these theories, they had the common idea that society as a whole consisted of two opposing components, a state and a society, that the economy occupied the central part of society and that the easing of strained relations between capital and labour was a main object of social policy. For them the main social problem was a labour problem, the main social movement was a labour movement and the main social policy was labour policy.

#### **(b) Economy vs. society (the social)**

The theories in the former section considered that society (the social) included the economy as its main component. But now a new idea which distinguished the economy (the market economy) from society (the social) appeared.

Karl Polanyi, though he did not intend to study social policy itself, was able to indicate a new direction to this theory. Polanyi (*The Great Transformation – The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 1957) emphasized that the market economy was nothing more than a historically created organisation. But it had turned itself into a powerful self-organizing system. It had changed and was changing the political, social and cultural situation in which it functioned in order to obtain a suitable environment, while at the same time it was forced to conform to them. In this dual movement between the development of the market economy and self-defence on the part of society, we could find a new clue to our theory.

Polanyi observed the Speenhamland System started in 1799 as the defence of traditional local communities against violation by the market economy. Ookouchi evaluated the significance of the Poor Law only in its relations to the acquisition of

labour power, but from Polanyi's suggestion we can get another understanding, namely that people's lives in local communities themselves are also objects of the theory.

Polanyi thought that the New Poor Law in 1834 brought about the establishment of a competitive labour market and then the supremacy of the market economy. But it also brought about social enactments (Factory Acts and so on), and political or labour movements as new forms of social resistance. The door to a new field of social problems and social policies has been opened.

Though he did not deal much with the local community and households of later days, his tools for anthropology can serve to elucidate it. On the basis of his assumptions, we are able to identify two main spheres of social policy.

However, because Polanyi laid excessive emphasis on his concept of the relationship between economy and society as being one of opposition, his ideas invited many critics. Enzo Mingione (*Fragmented Societies – A Sociology of Economic Life beyond the Market Paradigm*, 1991) argues “ it is a matter of defining one of the organizing factors of contemporary society, often considered the most important in societies called "free market" societies, as subject in turn to being organized by externals. ” (p.24). He emphasizes the dual role of organizer and organized. To put it in my own words, in order to establish and maintain the self-organizing system of the capitalist economy, it must actively create a political, social and cultural environment suitable for itself. At the same time it must accommodate itself to its environment. In other words, it must externalize the internal and internalize the external.

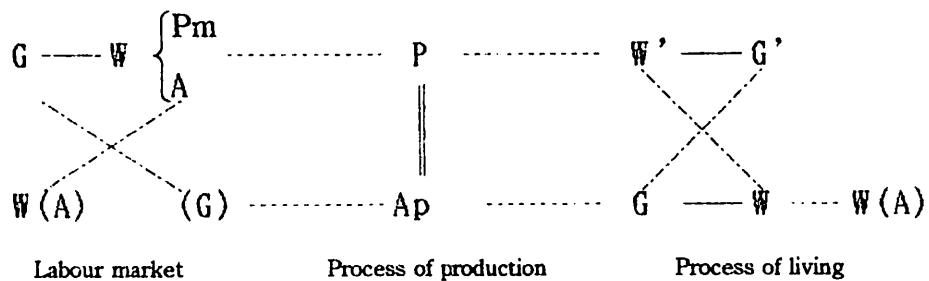
He further argues that economic life in the industrial age should be interpreted, combining three interdependent variables, namely "factors and behavior of the communal or reciprocal type", "factors and behavior of the associative/redistributive type" and "competitive market tensions and behavior". (p.6) These interdependent variables lead to social strain and unstable social rearrangements, that is to fragmented societies. This provides us with an effective suggestion for understanding modern social policies.

**(c) Capital–Labour Circulation Diagram**

Here we will look at the fields of social policy from another perspective. According to Mikio Sumiya’s ideas (*History of Wage Labour in Japan*, 1955), wage labour should be considered not just as labour power but in terms of workers who were producers and consumers. And enlarging Karl Marx’s circulation diagram of production capital, he presented his own circulation diagram of wage labour (Diagram 1). He perceived there three fields for wage labour, (a) labour market, (b) process of production and (c) process of living and illustrated their respective characteristics.

I think we can and should push his ideas further. We must consider which field should be chosen as the point of origin, as the starting and also returning point of the circulation. If we choose (a) as the point of origin, the circulation as a whole would represent the self-development of relations in the labour market, being mediated by relations at (b) and (c). Here workers strive to get the most advantageous conditions of employment, and employers to obtain the necessary labour power on the most profitable terms. I call such understanding of the circulation **(a)base-integration**. If we choose (b), it would represent the self-development of relations in the process of production, being mediated by other two. Here workers take this circulation as processes of being ruled and exploited and would aspire to the idea of industrial democracy, while employers endeavour to maintain and strengthen the system of rule and control against employees’ disobedience. This I refer to as **(b)base- integration**.

**Diagram 1 Capital-labour circulation diagram**



If we choose (c), it would represent the self-development of relations in the process

of employees' living, being mediated by the other two. Workers earn their wages, securing their jobs and working under the rule and control by employers. Workers and their families spend these wages to support their family lives and recreation. This is **(c)base-integration**. The family is also a self-organizing system which has its own structure and functions, its own autonomy and its own self-development. As a self-organizing system its relationship to the local community should also be considered.

Though family and local community are dragged into the circulation of commodities, money and capital and then compelled to reform themselves in obedience to its demands, on the other hand, as self-organizing systems, they compel the economic system to adapt to their demands. And here we can guess the possibilities of friction between the economy and families, or between the former and local communities including families as their participant systems. Wage labour is their important point of intersection.

#### **(d)Theory of life-structure**

In the war years of the 1930s and 1940s, Japanese scholars of social policy began to turn their attention to the structure of people's lives. In order to secure able-bodied workers and soldiers under severe conditions where resources were in extremely short supply, they were interested in improving the people's way of living to remove waste as much as possible. Therefore life-structure was considered not for itself but as subordinate to policies for production and war.

But after the war a life-structure was beginning to be considered as an independent field. Masami Chuubachi (*Structure of Family Life – An Introduction to the Theory of Life-structure*, 1956) understood life-structure as a system of family life which possessed a driving-force of its own in the pursuit of meeting human needs, separate from that of economic system, whose objective was the pursuit of profit, and considered that each system had its own organisation with its own driving-force, though both were tightly bound in with each other. He did research into the dynamic development of life-structure in Japan and obtained good results, using his unique model of household



economy.

I think Chuubachi's theory should be revised at three points. First, we must put it in the **(c)-base integration** in order to grasp its full dynamic characteristics. As a matter of fact, because he confined his analysis to household economy, he could not get an overall image of family lives. So secondly I think we could utilize the AGIL schema of structural functionalism here, though of course we must beware of falling into a static understanding. Thirdly, we must take further our research on the system of the local community. We must recognise how occupations and industries are arranged here in the national and international environment, how social institutions are established, how they operate, how power and resources are distributed, how families are stratified, how this community is integrated and so on. We must synthesize these aspects from the viewpoint of local administration or from the standpoint of families. This will enable us to consider the present welfare society as well as the former poor law administration. I expect we can learn much from social policy studies in the U.K..

Now we can identify the fields of social policy. They are the industrial relations and the family lives or local communities which have families as their participant systems. But how can we treat problems generated out of these fields, from the political point of view ?

## **2. "Policy" in the Theories of Social Policy**

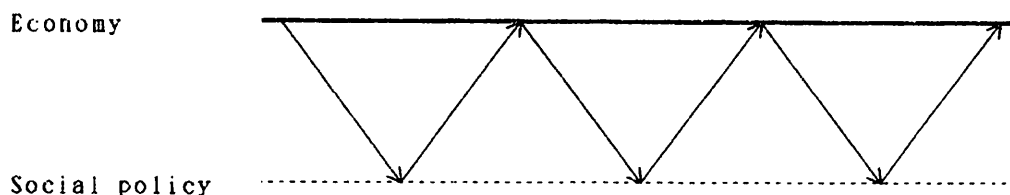
### **(a) Starting from social policy itself**

I have already referred to Ookouchi's theory and criticized it as economic reductionism. He thought social policies had significance only insofar as they were concerned in the circulation and development of an economy (**Diagram 2**).

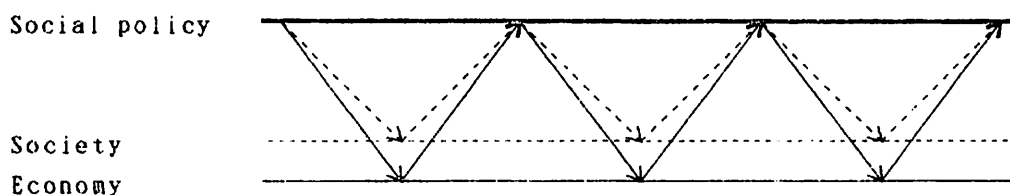
Though I do not deny that many important characteristics of social policy were elucidated by this method, those features that he understood were not social policy itself but remained only parts cut off from it. In order to recognise this policy itself, we must adopt a reflexive method that considers it as starting from itself and

returning to itself. It has its political, economical, social and cultural conditions of existence. Therefore we must understand its relationship with the systems of an economy, a society and others from standpoint of the social policy itself (Diagram 3).

**Diagram 2 Social policy viewed from economic reductionism**



**Diagram 3 Social policy viewed for itself**



**(b) Weber's method**

Max Weber (*Die "Objektivität" sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis*, 1904) emphasized the importance of not starting empirical science-based studies of policies from scholars' own norms or ideas. He proposed taking up the given ends and verifying adaptability of the adopted means to them, to elucidate the possibility (impossibility) of the achievement of ends and the relevance(irrelevance) of the establishment of the ends, to investigate whether or how expected results for the intended ends were attained or not and to measure the opportunity costs of adopting these ends. He also proposed to find out "ideas" underlying actual ends and to evaluate the significance of the latter more accurately.

He set the starting point of policy studies in its proper place. But he did not explain explicitly the competitive relationship among different policy programs and their connection with their conditions of existence.

### **(c) Ujihara's method**

Shoujiro Ujihara (*A Loquacious Argument on Social Policy*, 1971) explained the characteristics of the policy programs of associations which reflected the interests of respective social classes. Many of their characteristics were derived from Weber's explanation, referred to above. But he added three further points:

(1) To ascertain the accuracy of their assessment of the situation, depending on the results of scientific analyses.

(2) To explain objectively the significance and historical roles of values or social views of these associations underlying their programs.

(3) To analyse scientifically social phenomena recognized as social problems by these values and social views and elucidate their significance.

Ujihara then considered the actions of the state. He especially emphasized their relationship with political, economical, social and ideological causes and results. But he did not recognise an active role in the state's actions. He argued that the actions of the state were merely results of political practices by associations and parties and were then indeed only the results of political compromise.

Ujihara recognised the relationship between social policies and their conditions of existence far more explicitly than Weber did. But I think he underestimated the roles of the state. Sometimes a state acts as he depicted, but sometimes it acts more actively and consciously.

### **(d) Summary and some other considerations**

How does the state (its agents) set about its political tasks? At first it must meet problems posed by political, economical, social and other self-organizing systems or associations. In some cases these problems involve no political discourse and the state is pressed by the social problems themselves to resolve them. Then it seeks a possible and effective program of social policy and decides upon it.

Weber's methods are effective, when we consider their functional aspects. But we must furthermore consider other social aspects. We must inquire into relations to existing systems of social policies (their continuity and discontinuity), to confrontation of

interests among classes and associations, to balance or imbalance of their powers, to other competing programs, to a whole program of a state in which program of economic policy is the most relational and to the international circumstances.

We must consider moreover how some particular program of social policy obtains hegemony over other competing programs. In general its adaptation to the conditions of existence, mentioned above, is the most important factor. Among others are its skilful presentation as the most effective and equitable program, and whether it displays careful consideration for the interests of other powers (defending basically the interests of major powers). If there is a stable social bloc supporting it, a program will be able to achieve hegemony more securely.

The state, the economy, the society or another social component is a self-organizing system which is self-circulating and self-developing. For such a system to be maintained, it must arrange its political, economic, social and cultural circumstances and also adapt itself to these circumstances. Each self-organizing system relates to other self-organizing systems which together make up its environment, and thus to society as a whole. So it can recognise a whole society from its own standpoint and form an image of it. It would be possible to have various images from various viewpoints of systems (I call them a **system-monadology**). Therefore it is possible for an economic system (its agents) to recognise social policies from its own standpoint. And as it has very strong influential power, this recognition is most significant. However its image of social policy is not that of this policy as it is. It is just an aggregation of pieces cut from it from the standpoint of the economy. As long as we stay there, we cannot escape from economic reductionism. As I pointed out earlier, we must start from a social policy itself. If we realise what the results of perceiving problems in terms of economic reductionism are, our understanding of social policies will surely become deeper. But we must not lose our own viewpoint. There can be no recognition by a third or a transcendent party.

As the result of this type of research, we should be able to identify the society (the social), the objects of social policy, that is the system of an industrial relation, of a family life and of a local community including families as its participant systems.

They are respectively self-organizing systems with their own characters and power, while having the other systems as their closest, most important and indispensable circumstances. A state is forced to meet the problems posed from these areas, but the way in which it responds to them depends on the ideas or policy projects adopted. For studies of social policy it is important to investigate and understand the hegemonic social policy project actually adopted by the state and also its counter-hegemonic projects, and to elucidate their conditions of existence.

The proportion of employees in the working population is consistently increasing in most countries. They have one common personality but at the same time are members of plural systems. For example they are workers and members of labour unions, members (and the main bread-winners) of their own families, and members of several organizations in local communities. How they or their associations perceive and meet the problems proposed from several fields depends on the strategies they adopt. They can adopt a strategy which is mainly based on labour problems. They can adopt a strategy which is mainly based on the problems of households or those of local communities. Though they would relate themselves to each problem of each field, it is their basis of consideration and practice that decides their strategy (a **strategy-monadology**).

No social policy projects, no programs of working people (their associations) and no studies can achieve a sole, absolutely right and necessary strategy. They must be all regarded as contingent, though we can contend with each other for the depth and righteousness of our understanding. Students of social policy can only investigate the possibilities of their realization, indicate their outcomes and present their own projects from their own viewpoint, utilizing those outcomes.

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