

ANTHONY GIDDENS'S THEORY OF STRUCTURATION

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The seven books written by Giddens in the years 1971 to 1979 are a remarkable appraisal and reworking of the major currents of existing social theory. The critical part of his work begins with the founders of social science in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and goes on to what he has called "the orthodox consensus" of the period from the end of the Second World War until about the late 1960's. The constructive part of his work can be divided into two. One is his reconciliation or blending of elements of positivism, structuralism, hermeneutics and Marxism in his theory of structuration and the other is the application of this methodology in his theory of industrial society. The latter, although begun with his book on class structure (Giddens 1973) and continued in chapters 4, 5 and 6 in *Central Problems in Social Theory* (Giddens 1979), took a large step forward in 1981 with the publication of volume one of *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. A second volume is to follow and so Giddens's theory of industrial society must be regarded as incomplete. For this reason comment on and criticism of it is premature and can only be tentative. In this paper I have chosen to deal, for the most part, with his epistemological undertaking or the "clarification of logical issues" (Giddens 1976:8); the outcome of which is his distinctive theory of structuration and will draw most heavily on the three books published in 1976, 1977 and 1979. However, because some of the papers in *Central Problems in Social Theory* as well as volume one of *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* are avowedly based on the theory of structuration, I shall include a short treatment of the links between the two parts of Giddens's work at the end of the sections of the paper on the theory of structuration.

As introduction, it may be helpful to try to place his work against the backcloth of other more established social theories and of some of the recent developments in them. In a very broad sense, Giddens's writings can be seen as a fresh attempt "to bridge the gap" between the positions in the long-standing debate over whether social practices are best explained by some kind of natural science of society or by some version of the interpretative process of understanding. All serious social theory has been concerned with this bridging operation, but two circumstances give special significance to Giddens's attempt to do so. One is that it is taking place at a time when naturalistic social theory has been considerably undermined, not only by the failure to deliver adequate explanations, but also by the attack on its underlying epistemology which has been mounted by contemporary philosophy of science and language. So Giddens has been able to use new means for the old task.

The other circumstance which makes his work unusually significant is its relationship to recent social theory in both its "academic" and Marxist forms. In

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respect of the former, Giddens's writings represent a decided break from the predominantly naturalistic tradition of English sociology. The criticisms of his theory of structuration which have come from this quarter, for example, that of M.S. Archer (1982), would seem to bear this out. As would the uneasiness among some of his other critics in the face of Giddens's readiness to accept a large measure of doubt and contingency in the matters of either philosophical or sociological certainty (J. Bleicher and M. Featherstone, 1982:72). Giddens's relationship to Marxism is, of course, an important issue in both his theory of structuration and his theory of industrial society and will be dealt with at the appropriate points in the body of the paper. Here, it should be pointed out that Giddens, while building on some elements in Marx's thought is not a "Neo-Marxist" of any kind and "in diverging from Marx, wants to propose the elements of an alternative interpretation of history" (Giddens 1981:3). Such a thoroughgoing "deconstruction" rather than a "reconstruction" (Bleicher and Featherstone 1982:63) is bound to be rejected by all those who wish to retain those elements of Marxism which Giddens rejects.

More specifically, the work of Giddens can be seen as following up several strands in existing explanatory and interpretative social theory. He draws substantially from phenomenology (including ethnomethodology), hermeneutics, structuralism, systems theory and certain aspects of Marxism. He takes little, if anything, from functionalism as it developed in American sociology and British anthropology and, while recognizing the affinity of his ideas to symbolic interactionism, he is highly critical of that division of subject-matter as is suggested by the terms, "micro" and "macro" levels of analysis. At the same time, he is determined not to abandon the pursuit of that intersubjective causal analysis which is necessary for any critical stance in social theory. Obviously, neither the simple juxtaposition of hermeneutics and naturalistic causation, nor the easy choice of one or the other, will do. Only a satisfactory integration of both will suffice and it is no less than such a thoroughgoing integration which Giddens presents in his theory of structuration.

Preliminary Overview

By reason of its integrative task, Giddens's theory of structuration is an exceedingly close-knit one which does not allow itself to be broken down into parts which are readily comprehensible in isolation. This is especially so when one tries to present an abridged account of what one takes to be the essentials of the theory and its implications. So it may be advisable to begin with a brief and dogmatically expressed overview of what Giddens finds wrong with "the orthodox consensus" and how he proposes to set it right. Thereafter I shall attempt a more detailed statement of his views of social action, of structure and of how he makes them into a whole. That done, I shall turn to the links between the theory of structuration and the theory of industrial society. Finally, I shall elaborate some of the implications of the theory along with some possible criticisms.

In the final chapter of *Central Problems in Social Theory*, Giddens lists five shortcomings of mainstream sociology which I shall repeat and then try to reduce even further. The first weakness of most, if not all of it, is its "mistaken self-interpretation of its origins *vis-à-vis* the natural sciences" (1979:240). Seeing itself as a newcomer and claiming its youthfulness as the reason for its difficulties, sociology, in the rather less than innocent sense referred to by Giddens (1979:8), doggedly strove after general laws of the same logical form and predictive power that the natural sciences were considered to possess. It thus remained blind to the differences between nature and society. Its second weakness was its "reliance upon a now outmoded and defective philosophy of language" (1979:245). That is to say that language was seen simply as a means of description and communication without adequate recognition of how it played a crucial part in constituting and perpetuating social life. Third, "orthodox sociology relied upon an oversimple revelatory model of social science, based on naturalistic presumptions" (1979:248). So it dismissed the lay criticism that it was telling people things they already knew and misread the role of lay knowledge in producing social practices, which lay behind the criticism. In this way, sociology largely failed to deal with a vital part of social reality: its construction by actors; and thereby, lost a good deal of its subject-matter. Without this crucial element, it was possible for orthodox sociology to get by, almost without noticing, that it had a fourth shortcoming, viz., that it "lacked a theory of action" (1979:253). By this Giddens means that it lacked "a conception of conduct as reflexively monitored by social agents who are partially aware of the conditions of their action" (1979:253). As a consequence various more or less deterministic explanations were offered. These usually took the form of "structural" factors which in the short or long run were considered to determine people's conduct. The fifth and last shortcoming listed by Giddens is, in a sense an extension of the first one in that he seems to feel that not only the followers of the logical positivism of Hempel and Nagel, but also even some interpretative theorists, e.g., Winch and Habermas, have not entirely freed themselves from "the positivistic model of natural science."

For our present, introductory purpose, I wish to try to reduce (without distorting what I retain) the number of shortcomings to three. First, the "natural science" self-understanding is too deterministic and so leaves out the measure of autonomy possessed by social actors. Second, and as a result, the vital part played by language, consciousness and the consequent lay knowledge in the production of social reality is neglected. Third and for the same reason, the orthodox consensus has been unable to integrate adequately a theory of face-to-face interaction with one of institutional analysis.

What then does Giddens propose to do to remedy these shortcomings? First, he places people at the very centre of things by making them the active, skilled agents who actually produce, sustain and transform social life. Second, by using a notion of structure rather different from those used in orthodox sociology and one which was compatible with the role he gives to actors, he considerably reduces its determining effect, and gives equal importance to

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structure as means or resources. Third, he achieves the decisive integration of "action" and "structure" through their interdependence which is brought about in the production of structure (in Giddens's sense) by actors using it as a resource and at the same time repeatedly reproducing it as a constraining outcome of their interaction. In this way the "duality" of structure, which is simultaneously both the means and the outcome of action, links action and structure as integral parts of each other and replaces the separating "dualism" of face-to-face interaction and the constraining properties of the resultant systems of repeated social practices and relationships. With this crude indication of what is to come, we can now turn to a more detailed account of forcibly separated elements of the theory of structuration.

The Theory of Social Action

A fundamental criticism that Giddens makes of almost all existing social theories is that they do not have an adequate theory of social action, or agency (1976:93-98, 126; 1977:167; 1979:49-53, 253-257). Either they retain too much determinism (including even Parsons's would-be "voluntaristic" theory) and reduce the actors to mere puppets who respond more or less mechanically to the factors, forces and structures which are held to determine in various ways their actions. Or they make the opposite error and actors are endowed with nearly complete autonomy and full knowledge of themselves and their actions. In contrast, Giddens wishes to "promote a recovery of the subject without lapsing into subjectivism" (1979:44) and while recognizing the limits of our self-knowledge. In seeking to achieve this aim, Giddens turns initially to theories of mainly idealist origin, but then goes on to make certain additions of his own.

Although Giddens's theory of action owes much, as we shall see presently, to phenomenology, the philosophy of language and hermeneutics, he also notes its closeness to Marxian *Praxis* and to Marx's contention, in the introductory paragraphs of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please." While Giddens is critical of the positivist and functionalist aspects of Marx's writings, elements of his philosophy of history are decisively used by Giddens. However, Marx himself did not systematically develop this theme of the partial autonomy of human agents and it is to the later philosophers of language and hermeneutics that Giddens must go for a more adequate account of how it is possible for actors to "make their own history" even if within certain limits. Where does the partial freedom from constraint, or voluntarism of social actors come from? This question, of course, takes us all the way back to the roots of the gap between explanation and understanding which Giddens is trying to bridge. Very broadly speaking, all interpretative social theory makes the assumption that we do not have the more or less direct access to the objects and events of our experience which naturalistic explanations presume; rather, what is accepted as "knowledge" are the interpretations we place upon objects and events through the exercise of consciousness. Hence what we create in the first place we may,

although with difficulty, recreate and transform. This is what gives us a measure of freedom in making and remaking the social world within the constraints imposed by incomplete knowledge, nature and the social arrangements, both past and present, made to satisfy needs. Here, too, lies the essential difference between nature and society as seen by phenomenology and hermeneutics and which Giddens also accepts (1976:15-16, 160). However close and important the ties between the two may be in some respects, or in some ultimate sense, nature is not a human product whereas society is. The endlessly repeated social practices which comprise social life are not "given" as nature is, but brought about by actors endowed with consciousness, language and a body of collective lay "knowledge."

These three elements in interpretative theory are closely allied and the unravelling of their meanings and complex interrelationships would be an immense task. There is considerable overlapping in the usages of the terms but they can be loosely held together, as it were, by the inclusive concept of *Verstehen*, or understanding. Hence it is necessary and more useful here to distinguish the earlier usage of this term from that which is taken over by Giddens. People have probably always known about their awareness of themselves, their ability to reflect on their conduct and of the possibility of "self-fulfilling prophecies", and the attempt to take them into account when explaining social life is a long-standing one. Thus in the earlier notion of *Verstehen*, as generally understood in North America and usually attributed to Max Weber, "understanding" was the insight attained by putting oneself in another's place or reliving another's experience in some way. It was seen as a useful source of hypotheses which could then be put to the test of intersubjective causal analysis in one form or other. In this way the claims of interpretative theory were partially recognized but also relegated to a minor, preliminary role. Similarly, the ability of actors to monitor and modify their conduct in the light of their own, or others', expectations was dismissed as of minor importance.

In strong contrast, the more recent view of *Verstehen*, which Giddens applies, raises reflexive consciousness, language and collective lay knowledge to the utmost importance. For they become the very preconditions and means of any kind of social interaction whatsoever. "Understanding" is therefore the knowing, or having a competent grasp, of the collective lay knowledge, expressed in language, which is a precondition of our being able to interact with others. It is upon this stock of shared knowledge that actors draw in order to produce the social practices through which they pursue their interests. Giddens calls it "mutual knowledge" or "common-sense understandings possessed by actors within shared cultural milieux" (1976:88-89) and refers to it as "taken-for-granted" knowledge; or what any competent actor could be expected to know. Gadamer, a leading exponent of the philosophical hermeneutics on which Giddens draws, uses the term, "tradition" (1960), while Wittgenstein and his followers talk of "forms of life". But whatever name it bears, a competent, if not a wholly complete or even conscious, understanding of it is, in Giddens's words, "the ontological condition of human society as it is produced and reproduced by its members" (1976:151).

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Thus far in his theory of action Giddens has incorporated fairly well-established elements of interpretative theory. But he is far from being uncritical of hermeneutics and phenomenology and he goes on to make certain additions in order to meet some of his objections. I have chosen to deal with three of these which seem to me to be especially important, namely, his insistence on action as continuous *practical* intervention rather than concentrating on meanings and intentions; the inclusion of and stress on power; and the crucial question of the limits to, or the constraining conditions of action.

In his definitions of action (1976:75; 1979:55) Giddens calls it "a continuous flow of conduct"; a "stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events in the world"; and, a little earlier (1976:53), "the practical realization of interests, including the material transformation of nature through human activity". This definition makes several important points. The stress on action as a continuous flow or stream of acts precludes the breaking up of action into discrete, abstract and context-less acts so dear to analytical philosophers and others in search of examples. It emphasizes the practical nature of action and restores the notion of interests and along with them the weighty implications of the division of interest among individuals or groups. Perhaps most important of all, it establishes the voluntaristic capacity of actors to intervene in "a potentially malleable object-world" and to have "acted otherwise" should they have seen fit to do so (1979:56).

Giddens repeatedly insists on the need to take into account the difference of power in social relationships; not only because we have to know *whose* meanings, norms and rules are being made effective, or because interaction does not always take place between peers, but mainly because power is logically related to action by implying the application of means to achieve outcomes. True to his aim of reconstructing inadequate elements of social theory, Giddens proposes a composite view of power as the (sometimes latent) capability to use resources both in the sense of "transformative capacity" at the level of interaction and also in the sense of domination, or the power *over* people, at the "structural" level of established institutions and systems which arise out of repeated social practices. In the latter sense, power involves relations of autonomy and dependence in circumstances where the outcome requires the agency of others (Giddens 1979:91-94). In this way the Parsonian view of power as a facility and the over-simple, but useful, view of power as some kind of zero-sum game can be satisfactorily combined. For Giddens's theory of action, however, it is power in the sense of transformative capacity used in active negotiation among actors which is chiefly involved and is concerned with the continuous intervention by actors in events. At least *some* measure of this kind of power is inherent in the very concept of agency which implies the possibility that the actor could have done otherwise. So the actors do not just *know* the meanings and the rules, but have the capability of using them to negotiate the interactions and relationships they produce. They do not simply follow or apply fixed patterns which they have internalized or committed themselves to; they actively bargain using all the transformative capacity they have to produce

practices which are not simply slavish repetitions but contain new elements which alter the relationships as they reproduce them.

To back up this claim to a measure of autonomy for actors, Giddens turns to what he calls the "dialectic of control" (1979:6, 72, 145-150). All power relationships, whether in direct, face-to-face interaction or on the impersonal, institutional level, are a two-way affair in that almost always one partner has more power than the other, but almost never does one partner have no power at all. With the possible exception of someone in a strait-jacket, the subordinate partner in a power relationship has some measure of autonomy even if it is only the desperate act of suicide. Far more often subordinates do have a significant effect on what happens in society. This reinforces the actors' ability to intervene and accounts in part for the ever-changing content of social practices and the relationships built upon them.

The last respect in which Giddens reconstructs the hermeneutic theory of action is in the crucial question of the limits of action. Strictly speaking, this is a question of the extent to which actors are able to give reasons for their actions or what Giddens calls "the rationalization of action" (1976:83-5; 1979:56-9). Thus it bears on how far their "stocks of knowledge" will allow them to reflect on and rationalize their conduct. But there is more to it than simply being able to give accounts of why they acted in a particular way. For the same stocks of knowledge are used in *taking* action: in their reflexive monitoring and intervention in the course of events. So the limitations which Giddens sees as affecting the rationalization of action also affect the action itself. In his "stratification" model of action, Giddens sets two kinds of limits on actors: unacknowledged (or unconscious) sources of action, on the one side, and unintended consequences of action on the other.

A concept of the unconscious has an important place in Giddens's theory although, as one would expect, he warns against reducing the theory of action to the workings of the unconscious and leaves the conscious reflexive monitoring of action by active agents in pride of place. He does so by distinguishing "practical consciousness" from both the unconscious and discursive consciousness. Practical consciousness rests on the tacit, taken-for-granted "mutual knowledge" which actors use to produce social practices, but of which they cannot give a full, systematic, discursive account. Thus it is knowledge of which the actors are neither unconscious nor yet fully conscious. The measure of discursive ability to analyse and give coherent accounts of their conduct is also incomplete, but, Giddens suggests, is probably greater than is often realized by would-be revelatory social theory. Giddens's conclusions on the unconscious are, he says, rudimentary and for our purposes here it is perhaps sufficient to recognise that unconscious elements of motivation are present in social action and that this represents a limitation on the actor's consciousness.

With the notion of "unintended consequences" we return to firmer sociological ground. At bottom it is no more than the commonplace that our thoughts and actions have a way of escaping from our initial intentions and so producing consequences we did not expect but which we then have to take into

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account. Marx's theory of Praxis can, I think, be interpreted as an example of this: in order to provide people with their material needs, social arrangements are made which have unintended consequences which later become a hindrance to those very provisions for the satisfaction of material needs. Similarly, in the interpretation of written texts the intended meaning of the writer is only the beginning, as it were, and the text can quite legitimately come to have quite different meanings for later readers. Such facts have long been recognized in social theory and have been handled in a number of ways. Surely one of the best-known and sophisticated of these is Merton's treatment of "manifest" and "latent" functions and criticism of it can be used as a convenient means of showing the importance of unintended consequences for the theory of action as well as, incidentally, the grave weakness of the way they are handled in structural-functionalism.

Considerable portions of Giddens's writings are devoted to a detailed and devastating dismantling of functionalism (1976:21; 1977:96-129; 1979:111-115; 210-216 and elsewhere) and he bluntly says at one point (1979:7) that his whole theory of structuration can be regarded as "a non-functionalism manifesto". Nevertheless, he does concede that structural-functionalism recognizes the significance of unintended consequences of action and this is what we are concerned with here.

However, the treatment Merton gives is seriously marred in two ways. First, he wrongly tries to turn latent functions into causal explanations of manifest ones by assuming that the former fulfil certain needs of the reified group. Secondly, and more important, he fails to include in his notion of manifest functions the constitutive role of actors through their rationalization and monitoring of their conduct in the light of their mutual knowledge. So the agents are left out of the picture altogether and their behaviour is explained by assuming that societies have needs and are able to bring actors to fulfil them without knowing that they are doing so. In place of this Giddens argues that we have to recognize that actors know a good deal about their interactions, and that this knowledge enables them to produce social practices and to rationalize them. Yet at the same time, their actions escape, as it were, from their intentions and have unintended consequences which then become limiting conditions of future action. So in the famous example of the Hopi rain dance, the actors (or most of them) may well interpret the dancing as a way of making it rain but their action has consequences other than this, for example, perhaps great solidarity, which then becomes a condition of further action.

But there is much more to the notion of unintended consequences than the failure of functionalism to deal adequately with them; or even than in providing a limit to the effectiveness of the rationalization of action and the interventions of actors. For this escape from the intentions and purposes of actors is a chronic feature of social action and a major link between face-to-face interaction and the repeated, "deeply sedimented" social practices or institutions. I shall have more to say about this, the central issue of Giddens's theory of structuration, in the following section. Here, I want only to point out how unintended

consequences are a limitation on social action as conceived by Giddens. The other matters of its effects on the nature of social generalizations and the resultant precariousness of social outcomes I shall deal with in the third section of this paper.

Structure and its duality

Having, in his theory of action, reinstated human actors as the active, skilled agents who, within limits, produce, maintain and change social practices, Giddens has the task of providing a compatible conceptualization of "structure" and one which can be satisfactorily integrated with his theory of action. For, as already indicated (see above), the burden of Giddens's criticism of existing social theories was their inability to account adequately for the role of actors and to show how face-to-face interaction could be integrated with institutional relations. On this basis Giddens is critical of all three of the main frameworks of social theory. Interpretative theories and the closely allied philosophies of action which Giddens discusses do have a theory of action, or agency, but, Giddens argues, it needs to be complemented by the inclusion of the elements of power and temporality (1979:54). Even more damaging, of course, is the fact that they lack any serious theorization of institutions. This tends to give the impression of actors who are entirely conscious of their motivations and unaffected by the "escape" of unintended consequences. In contrast, functionalism has a theory of institutions, but a defective one. Nor is functionalism successful in generating an adequate theory of action. In functionalism, structure is most often a descriptive term used for the more or less static pattern or organization of social relationships while the more active, explanatory part of the theory is carried by the notion of function. It is this dichotomy, Giddens says, which prevents functionalism from having an adequate theory of action because the notion of function leads to the contention that systems have needs which actors must, willy-nilly, fulfil. As we shall see shortly, this same dichotomy precludes functionalism from developing a proper understanding of temporality in social life. In structuralism, while it has, of course, a very decided theory of institutions, structure appears in a variety of forms as some kind of underlying determinant of surface appearances and so leaves very little room at all for a theory of action. The final point of Giddens's criticism of both structuralism and functionalism is that they seem unable to sustain the distinction between structure and system which both of them make.

Given his aims and the weaknesses he sees in other theories, Giddens's reformulation of the concept of structure abandons the dualism of statics and dynamics and firmly separates structure and system. In place of the former he introduces the notion of temporality and he achieves the latter task by altering the concepts of both structure and system significantly. The distinction which Giddens makes between structure and system can serve as the starting point for the clarification of his conception of structure (1979: 64-66) because his view of

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social system broadly corresponds to the widely accepted (although also rather confused) picture of "structure cum system" as an observable pattern or organization of relationships. In Giddens's definition, systems are the "Reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organised as regular social practices" or, "Social systems involve regularised relations of interdependence between individuals or groups, that typically can be best analysed as *recurrent social practices*. Social systems are systems of social interaction: as such they involve the situated activities of human subjects, and exist syntagmatically in the flow of time" (1979: 66). So the all-important thing about systems of relations and social practices is that they are "the situated doings of concrete subjects" (1976: 128), and therefore exist in time and space.

This is what so clearly distinguishes system from structure which Giddens sees as an "absent" or "virtual order" of rules and resources which are "temporally 'present' only in their instantiation, in the constituting moments of social systems" (*ibid.*). In clarification of this Giddens refers (1976:118-9) to the difference between "language," as a set of signs and the rules of their use which is possessed by a community of speakers, and "speech" as concrete acts of communication performed by members of that community. Speech acts do exist in time and space and they draw upon and instantiate language as they do so. But language as a set of rules and resources has no existence except in the moments when it is being used to constitute speech acts. In the same fashion, structures exist only when they are drawn upon by actors to produce social practices. (Giddens is insistent that this is "not because society is like a language, but on the contrary because language as a practical activity is so central to social life that in *some* basic aspects it can be treated as exemplifying social processes in general" (1976:127). Thus social structure and language, when differentiated in this way from speech and social acts, can be said to be "subjectless" and therefore placed beyond any "subject/object" relationship which would tend to infringe on the measure of autonomy of actors essential to social agents. Structure as conceived by Giddens does not refer, as it does in some "Structuralist" thinking, to models constructed by observers, nor, as it does in functionalist thought, to the static description of the patterns of relationships found in collectivities. Instead it refers to the rules and resources used by actors in the production and reproduction of social practices designed to pursue their intentions and interests. The idea of social life as the reproduced practices of active agents is fundamental to the theory of structuration in that it shifts the focus of explanation in social theory from its existing concern with order and social control, with the relationship of individuals to society and the internalization of values and the functional needs of social systems and the determinants of behaviour, to the production and maintenance of social practices by the skilled and knowledgeable performance of its members within the limits set by nature and their own history. This means that "structural analysis", or the study of social systems, is "to study the ways in which that system, via the application of generative rules and resources, and in the context of unintended outcomes, is produced and reproduced in interaction" (1979:66).

Having established this shift in focus through his definitions of structure and system, Giddens devotes considerable attention to the dimensions or elements of the rules and resources which go to make up structures (1976:104-113; 1979:65-69, 82-94). He proposes that rules and resources be analytically separated into three kinds: the communication of meanings via interpretative schemes; the exercise of power as transformative capacity; and the evaluative judgement of conduct through norms and sanctions. He is careful to insist that in actual social practices there is intermixture of all three and also to ensure that "negotiable" quality of meanings, evaluations and even power is not overlooked. Thus the analogy with games and their rules is misleading because social rules are not altogether fixed but are amended as we go along. Or moral claims and obligations can be endlessly debated and redefined and even relations of power, as already indicated, are always, in some measure, two-way ones. However, important as this part of Giddens's treatment is, I think in a paper such as this, it is necessary to give priority to the matter of showing how the duality of structure and its binding of space and time enable Giddens to effect the vital linking of his theory of action with the analysis of institutions and social systems.

When actors as competent social agents draw upon their knowledge of structure in all three of its dimensions, they are using structure to produce the flow of their day-to-day interaction. *At the same time*, however, as structures are instantiated by being thus drawn upon, they are being reconstituted, or reproduced; just as language is kept in being as it were by the speech acts which draw upon it. Hence comes the crucial character of the "duality of structure" as both the medium, or means, through which social practices of interaction are produced and also as the outcome, or product, of such interaction. Says Giddens: "By the duality of structure I mean that social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very *medium* of this constitution" (1976:121). Or again, "By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems" (1979:69). The consequences of this duality are of the greatest importance. First, it reveals the essential recursiveness of social life as a series of repeated or reproduced social practices brought about by the interaction of actors equipped with "practical consciousness" and the capacity to intervene in events. This involves, as I have indicated, a highly significant shift in the focus of explanation in social theory: "Social analysis must be founded neither in the consciousness or activities of the subject, nor in the characteristics of the object (society), but in the duality of structure" (1979:120). Secondly, it means that structure must be seen as both enabling as well as constraining. We are certainly constrained by the interweaving of meanings, norms and power in regularised social practices of our own making, but such elements of structure also enable us to produce and transform social practices. This is perhaps more easily seen in the dual nature of sanctions as both inducements and coercion. Thirdly, the duality of structure "expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency" (1979:69). However,

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I wish to postpone discussion of this decisive point until after the theme of temporality, which also contributes to this end, has been brought in.

Giddens's treatment of "temporality" or "time-space" is complex and comes fully into the picture only in the third of the three books under discussion. But, as we shall see shortly, the notion of "time-space distanciation," as developed in volume one of *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, is central to his theory of industrial society. Here my concern with it is limited to the way in which it forms part of the theory of structuration. For it is clear that time-space intersections or relations are implicated in his theory of action as a continuous flow of day-to-day conduct, his view of structure as instantiated only in the moments of its use, and the way in which he brings together face-to-face interaction and institutionalized social practices. It is for this reason that Giddens considers that temporality is "integral to social theory" (1979:198) and that "in order to show the interdependence of action and structure" it is essential "to grasp *the time-space relations inherent in the constitution of all social interaction*" (1979:3).

Giddens traces the failure of both functionalism and structuralism in this respect to their use of the "statics/dynamics" dichotomy and the resultant tendency to identify time with social change in a simplistic way. So in functionalism and structuralism time and space are generally conceived as some kind of "environment" or "receptacle" of social practices which is in some sense external to them (1979:198-206). All this Giddens rejects and in its place proposes a conception of time-space as "the modes in which objects and events 'are' or 'happen' " (1979:54), or as the manner in which structure provides not only the "binding of time and space in social systems" (1979:64), but also their extension. These statements call for a good deal more in the way of clarification than we can give them here and my discussion will be restricted to but one aspect of Giddens's view of time-space as set out in his writings up to 1979 — the binding and the extension of time-space through structure.

If, following Giddens, social life is viewed as repeated social practices brought into being and made to happen by active agents, then time and space are inherent in, and constitutive of, such a process because interaction has to be carried on across differences in time and space which might otherwise disrupt it. Or, put differently, social life has to be sustained and transmitted across the "gaps" produced by differences in time and space (1979:103). Only by being able to "overcome" time and space, could individuals or groups maintain a "presence" in the social world and give some kind of form to their interaction. This is one reason why Giddens rejects the Parsonian version of the problem of order as one of social control or compliance. Rather, it is one of coping with, or "binding", the possibly disruptive effects of time and space differences in order to produce and sustain a form of social life. This is what makes time and space so much more than simply an "environment" of social action and it is achieved by the use of structure as an absent order of rules and resources available to actors. It is in this sense that time-space enters into the constitution of social practices and is, moreover, manipulated by actors in their relations with one another. For

example, in the ways described by Goffman of "front" and "back" regions (1959), or in Giddens's discussion of class relations (1979:206-10). Structure, in Giddens's sense, also extends the range of interaction across time and space. This has, of course, been the effect of much technological development from the invention of writing up to the present day of electronic communication. The "Great Transformation" to modern industrial society would be unintelligible without taking into account these changes in the way time and space are built into and dealt with by social practices.

We are now at last able to end this section of the paper by showing how, via the duality of structure, Giddens's theory of structuration brings together, in an integral way, his concepts of action and structure. It should be held in mind here that effecting this integration of action and structure is the more substantive part of the larger "bridging operation" referred to at the beginning: the reconciliation of interpretative and naturalistic methodologies. In order to clarify what is involved in "linking action and structure", I propose to distinguish also between the more formal conceptual connecting of an interpretative, active notion of agency to the concept of an "absent" structure, on the one hand and, on the other hand, the linking of "face-to-face" interactions with other "impersonal" interactions, both of which are nonetheless concrete forms of social interaction situated in time and space. After all, it was the failure of existing social theories to make this link which is one object of Giddens's criticism and it is therefore also an important task of his theory of structuration to tie all the forms of social interaction firmly together in a seamless unity. Thus, insofar as the formal connection of action and structure is concerned, it is no more than showing how the theory integrates the concrete acts of actors with the notion of an "absent" structure of rules and resources which actors draw upon, and is a relatively simple matter of conceiving of both action and structure in such a way as to render them interlocking and complementary. Then it is clear that action and structure are linked in the moments of instantiation when structures are drawn on by actors in the production of their day-to-day conduct. This is the sense in which it can be said that, "The duality of structure relates the smallest item of day-to-day behaviour to attributes of far more inclusive social systems: when I utter a grammatical English sentence in a casual conversation, I contribute to the reproduction of the English language as a whole. This is an unintended consequence of my speaking the sentence, but one that is bound in directly to the recursiveness of the duality of structure" (1979:77-8). This relation of moment and totality is very different from the relation of "parts" and "wholes" which is characteristic of functionalist theories (1979:71).

However, social practices are more complex than language and there is another and more important connection than the formal one between action and structure which has to be made. And that is the linking (or, better perhaps, the "holding together") of face-to-face systems of social interaction and those other systems of social interaction which do not involve actual physical presence, but nonetheless exist in time and space and are not "absent" in the

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manner of structure. The making of distinctions amongst possible kinds or levels of systems of social interaction on the basis of physical presence may not be the only or best way of doing it, but it is one which has often been used in social theory and which Giddens also incorporates in his differentiation of social and system integration with the former defined as "systemness on the level of face-to-face interaction" and the latter as "systemness on the level of the relations between social systems or collectivities" (1979:77-8). In passing it may be noted that this distinction is not altogether satisfactory as both face-to-face interaction and any other kind are all nonetheless social systems of interaction and so the distinction as made by Giddens becomes one of the difference between interaction among individuals and between groups or collectivities. Such a distinction is reminiscent of "the sociology of small groups" or of the "micro" and "macro" levels of analysis and Giddens is clearly uncomfortable about its use. I shall return to this point at the end of the paper. For the moment, however, we are concerned only with how the theory of structuration prevents this kind of fragmentation however it may be conceived, and holds all kinds of social systems of interaction together, even though it is often convenient, through the application of a methodological epoché, to "bracket" one kind or level of interaction in order to concentrate on another (1979:80-1).

So, whatever the differences between forms of social systems of interaction may be in other respects, and however these may be distinguished from one another, the decisive integration of them all lies in their common origin as the products of social actors consciously drawing upon an "absent" structure of rules and resources which is both the means of their being able to do so and also the reproduced outcome of their activity. This is what links the immediate face-to-face interactions of human agents with all other less personal, more institutionalised and "extended" forms of social systems of interaction. The face-to-face interactions underlie and sustain the recursive institutional forms. In Giddens's words: "The notion of the *duality of structure*, which I have accentuated as a leading theme of this book, involves recognising that the reflexive monitoring of action both draws upon and reconstitutes the institutional organisation of society" (1979:255).

It remains only to fit the concept of temporality as used by Giddens into this picture. Temporality operates not only in the moments of the instantiation of structure, but also in the longer duration of time and in the extension of space made possible by structure. This, joined with the repetition of social practices results in institutions, which Giddens defines as "deeply-layered" (1979:65) or "deeply-sedimented" (1979:80) social practices. As he puts it: "an understanding of institutional forms can only be achieved in so far as it is shown how, as regularised social practices, institutions are constituted and reconstituted in the tie between the *durée* of the passing moment and the *longue durée* of deeply sedimented time-space relations" (1979:110).

The links between the theory of structuration, whose essential features have been outlined above, and Giddens's theorizing of industrial society are close

and detailed. To deal adequately with them even in their present unfinished form would require another and different paper. All that can be done here is to point out in a rough way the major areas in which the two parts of Giddens's work are related. One way in which this could be done is to begin with the criticisms Giddens has of Marx's historical materialism and then go on to indicate what Giddens proposes in their place.

As early as in the *New Rules of Sociological Method* in 1976 (1976:12), Giddens made the distinction between Marx's writings as "a natural science of society which happened to predict the demise of capitalism and its replacement by socialism" and Marx's work "as an informed investigation into the historical interconnections of subjectivity and objectivity in human social existence." The former Giddens rejects largely because of its functionalist, evolutionary and Utopian implications. Elements of the latter are incorporated in Giddens's theory of structuration — for example, Marx's notion of Praxis; the measure of active intervention through which people make themselves and their history (even if only within limits); the analysis of historical specificity or situatedness and the importance of unintended consequences which "escape" and become constraints. Thereafter and notably in *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979:Chap.4) and in *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (1981: Introduction and passim), Giddens has set out in detail his criticism of Marx's views on a wide variety of topics bearing on the historical development of capitalism. Summarily stated, Giddens accepts and uses in his theory of industrial society very little more than Marx's treatment of modern capitalism as radically distinct from what went before. In his interview with Bleicher and Featherstone, Giddens puts this as follows: "... I think the importance of Marx is really to point up the differences between capitalism and pre-existing societies and not to try to compress them all into some overall scheme of evolutionary change" (1982:63-4).

In the place of other features of historical materialism and also to make good certain omissions in it, Giddens has put alternatives drawn from the theory of structuration. For example, the centrality of Giddens's treatment of time and space "distanciation;" the distinction between "authoritative" and "allocative" resources in domination; the crucial theorizing of power and the use of violence in the nation-state; the significance of surveillance and the storage of vast quantities of information in the modern state. Using these components, Giddens has produced a theory of industrial society markedly different from either historical materialism or those theories which simply substituted political power for economic power and left out some of the most decisive aspects of the modern industrial nation-state while, at the same time, making no allowance for skilled and creative agency.

Implications

To the extent that it is found acceptable, the theory of structuration offered by Giddens as an alternative to the "orthodox consensus" has important

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epistemological and practical implications. The first of these is for a closely-linked cluster of issues concerning the relation of the lay knowledge of actors to the technical knowledge of observers; the question of relativism; and the inherent critical stance of social theory. If the lay or "mutual knowledge" is that used by conscious agents in the production and reproduction of social practices, then it is not simply subject to correction by the revelations of the technical knowledge of observers. Rather, it has to be grasped by the observers as constituting the very object of their study. Without this grasp of the presuppositions and prejudgements which make social practices possible, they would literally not know what it was they were looking at. This Giddens refers to as the first stage of the "double hermeneutic" (1976:146, 162) which is required in the study of social life. It involves the *use* by observers of the agents' natural language and lay knowledge in order to generate adequate descriptions and explanations in theoretical terms. The impossibility of a pure metalanguage is ensured by actors' incorporating observers' technical concepts and "because the concepts invented by the social scientist presume mastery of concepts applied by social actors themselves in the course of their conduct" (1979:247).

In the process of mastering the body of mutual knowledge which constitutes a particular form of life, observers run the risk of ending up in the rather helpless position of being unable to escape from what they have come to regard as a closed system which is immune to critical evaluation from "outside," as it were. Giddens offers a way out of such historicism or relativism via the second stage of the double hermeneutic which enables observers to subject the mutual knowledge, beliefs and the practices based upon them to critical assessment in the light of their technical and comparative knowledge. In thus linking lay and technical knowledge, Giddens kills two birds with one stone. The temptation of naturalistic social theory to "correct" lay knowledge prematurely is arrested and at the same time the inability of interpretative theories to judge between differing stocks of mutual knowledge or frameworks of meaning is overcome. Or, put in another way, in his double hermeneutic Giddens has embodied both the claim of interpretative theory that social reality is a creation of human agents which rests upon "prior" meanings and presuppositions and has therefore to be understood before it can be explained, and also the positivistic demand for some kind of "external," non-relativistic explanation. On this basis, what Giddens calls "a sort of paralysis of the critical will" (1979:250-1) is avoided and the potential of social theory as criticism is grounded. For, as Giddens points out (1976:159) "social science stands in a relation of tension to its 'subject matter' — as a potential instrument of the expansion of *rational autonomy of action*, but equally as a potential *instrument of domination*."

The last epistemological implication of Giddens's theory is for the character of the regularities of social conduct and the kind of generalisations which can be made about them. Unlike the regularities of the natural world which are, in a sense, fixed and "given," social regularities are brought about by the actors who produce them. So they are essentially historical and unstable or mutable. This point of view provides a considerably more adequate explanation than is usually

offered for the failure of social theory to come up with the kind of generalisation and predictability of which the natural sciences are thought capable.

Before concluding with the practical or political implications of Giddens's work, I wish to deal here with two possible criticisms. One has to do with the distinction Giddens makes between social and system integration and the other concerns the second stage of the "double hermeneutic."

The first matter arises out of the way in which the theory of structuration achieves the all-important integration of the various forms or levels of interaction through the duality of structure. In the interpretation offered above, this integration comes about because action or face-to-face interaction, or "strategic conduct" is in a sense the originator of, or prior to, the other levels in that face-to-face interaction is presupposed when one thinks of the other forms of interaction or institutionalized social practices. Thus, in his discussion of social and system integration (1979:76-81), Giddens says, "it is extremely important, for the point of view developed throughout this book, to emphasize that the systemness of social integration is *fundamental to the systemness of society as a whole*. System integration cannot be adequately conceptualized via the modalities of social integration; nonetheless, the latter is always the chief prop of the former, *via the reproduction of institutions in the duality of structure*." So, as pointed out above, the decisive linking of all forms and levels of social systems of interaction lies in their common origin as the products of actors drawing on the structure of rules and resources in face-to-face interaction.

Having, in this way, thoroughly integrated all forms of interaction, is there any necessity for making further distinctions and divisions? Is there not some risk that rather doubtful divisions between individuals and groups, or "micro" and "macro" analysis might thereby be reintroduced? Giddens argues that he makes the distinction between social and system integration "in order to recognise contrasts between various levels of the articulation of interaction" (1979:74) and "as a means of coping with basic characteristics of the differentiation of society" (1979:76). I would suggest that the notion of "presence-availability" (1979:103; 206-7) along with the use of the methodological *epoche*, or bracketing (1979:80-1), should serve to meet these requirements and at the same time preserve intact the thorough-going integration of all levels of interaction; from the face-to-face form all the way to the most completely impersonal and highly institutionalized kind of interaction.

It is noteworthy that one of Archer's criticisms of Giddens's theory of structuration seems to be a version of this point. Within the framework of her broader criticism that the distinction between macro and micro "levels" must be sustained, she argues that the use of the *epoche* here "merely transposes dualism from the theoretical to the methodological level — thus conceding its *analytical indispensability*" (1982:467). Against Archer it could be argued that in view of the important similarities between her "morphogenesis" and structuration, the difference seems to be one of conceptualization only and therefore less serious.

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The second matter is probably more important and concerns the concept of the "double hermeneutic" or, more exactly, the second part or stage of that process in which the "technical conceptual schemes" (1976:79-80) of "social scientific analysis" (ibid:158) are called upon to make possible a rational and intersubjective evaluation of "mutual knowledge" and also to deal with "the problem of adequacy" (1976:148-154). Or, stated differently, the issue here boils down to the intention set out in the Introduction to the *New Rules*; to show how "to sustain a principle of relativity while rejecting relativism" (1976:18).

Despite the thorough treatment of these and other methodological matters in Chapter 4 of the *New Rules*, some ambiguity seems to remain over the question of whether or no the plea for a relativistic, "authentic" understanding applies only to the first part of the double hermeneutic (1976:148); thus accepting the logical objection to relativism (1976:145) for the second part of the double hermeneutic and thus also implying that the technical analysis done at the second stage is wholly objective. That this is not the case is strongly suggested, however, by Giddens's insistence that there is significant overlap, and a shifting relation, between lay and technical knowledge (1976:151; 153; 159). Such an overlap and shifting relationship between the two parts of the double hermeneutic makes it likely that even the second stage will display some degree of relativity and so weaken the efficacy of the second stage of the double hermeneutic.

In one sense, this criticism is the opposite of that made by those who, like Archer, want Giddens to provide more precise "theoretical propositions" about, for instance, exactly when actors will be transformative and when merely reproductive. For the gist of this argument is that *all* knowledge, technical as well as lay, remains more or less "seinsverbunden" in Mannheim's sense. Or, in Gadamer's terms, the presuppositions and prejudices of the constitutive "tradition" cannot be completely transcended. This throws doubt on the possibility of a second stage of the double hermeneutic being any more than the wider "inter-subjective criteria of validity" which Simonds argues was all that Mannheim was seeking (1978:19) and which Ricoeur also seems to be suggesting (1974:16-17).

It is probable that Giddens would not be satisfied with either of these two alternatives. In rejecting both the kind of certainty and definitiveness Archer is anxious to achieve and also the persistence of hermeneutic tradition, he would be remaining constant to his goal of blending the two. In any event, such criticisms do not detract from the importance of the practical implications of Giddens's work to which we now turn to end this paper.

The implications of a practical, political kind, which deserve to be recognised, flow from his determined recovery of the active role of individuals in social life and the consequent rejection of determinism. While actors are certainly far from all-knowing about themselves and are subject to constraints, including those of their own making, social existence is inherently contingent, uncertain and precarious. Possibly it is for this very reason that certainty has been so avidly sought after. But, however that may be, perhaps the most

unfortunate effect of existing sociology in all its more influential forms (not excluding Marxism) has been the support it gives to a deterministic view of social life. In many cases this has been contrary to the intentions of the theorists concerned and may be taken as evidence of the way in which texts and actions escape the original intentions of agents. Nonetheless, whether intended or no, there has been considerable support for a more or less thorough-going determinism.

The result has been what one would expect if the interpretative argument is correct: viz., that the deterministic "prophecy" has been fulfilled and the emancipatory potential of knowledge has been largely subverted or left unrecognised. To the extent that the technical knowledge offered by sociology has seeped into the mutual knowledge used by people, this has meant they have been able to talk themselves into a measure of unfreedom and pessimism about their chances of "making their own history" even if only within limits. In such a world-view are to be found "the paralysis of the critical will;" the purely "instrumental" conception of knowledge which members of the Frankfurt School have analysed; and also the overly simple notion of power as being all on one side and totally constraining. These are some of the things which have constituted the social world and made it as it is.

By insisting on the active role of people, by restoring the part played by mutual knowledge and by showing that structures are enabling as well as constraining, Giddens has renewed and given fresh thrust to the possibility of emancipatory knowledge and of human social life as at least partly open and amenable to the conscious efforts and hopes of those who live it. People have had a share in making the social world the way it is and can remake differently if they so choose and go about it in the knowledge that they can do so.

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