CHAPTER 3

Giddens's Structuration Theory

Giddens constructs his analytical-descriptive project of high modernity against the backdrop of a wide ranging, multilevelled and unfolding dialogue with supporters of postmodernism and poststructuralism. Pivotal to his theoretic project are his attempt to rework conceptions of the agent or agency, social reproduction and social transformation (Giddens 1984, xx) and his efforts to overcome dualism, neopositivism and full-blown subjectivity. These lead him to revisit the classical approaches to modernity, to emphasise independent ontological or sensitising concepts in their place and to de-emphasise epistemological issues like the validity of knowledge or kinds of evidence (Layder 1994, 129-130). At another level, his substantive and more recently political project aims to come to grips with the unwieldy dynamism, opportunity and threat of disaster that characterise contemporary global society (Beck et al. 1994, 184). Given his aims to transcend the dualism and to depict the need for 'and ethics of personal life' in a dynamic and uncertain world (Giddens 1994a, 224), he ought to have an account of agency adequate to both of these objectives.

Part One of my analysis outlines structuration theory briefly, and assesses how adequately Giddens's theoretic and sociological reconstruction of modernity conceptualises the agent or agency. My verdict is that a key flaw in Giddens's project is that the empirical agent or agency is disconnected from the system. Part Two will argue that this is due to the immanent logic of the duality of structure. Paradoxically, his strictly ontological and open approach

appears to disavow any requirement for such sociologically pertinent connecting mechanisms. My argument will be that the empirically empowered agent remains conceptually disconnected from the system because Giddens's 'theory of the stratified agent' and his notion of 'virtual structures' are conceptually without a clear statement of the mechanisms of interaction for connecting the two. Along with this weakness in structuration, the diagnostic force of his duality paradigm is compromised by the looseness and ambiguity amongst concepts around the core idea of the duality-of-structure. As a result of these weaknesses, Giddens arrives at an apolitical emphasis on agency, change and resistance; one with underdeveloped implications for emancipation. How satisfactory is this neutral conceptualisation of agents who, in everyday life, must encounter the dynamic uncertainty of late modernity? In Part Three I discuss the specific opportunities present in structuration theory for connecting the empowered agent or agency with system and in Part Four I discuss the possibilities available to this end without the diminishment of the notion of duality.

Part One: How adequately does Giddens's high modernity account for the agent or agency?

What are the main features of Structuration Theory?

Giddens's central interest is in transcending the subject-object polarisation in 'accounts of social causality' (McLennan 1984, 126). His intentions are to theorise without placing the solitary ego at the centre of the constitution of the lifeworld (Giddens 1984, xxii). He proposes instead to emphasise *reflexivity* of the subject and object or of agent and system/structure. He therefore conflates the polarities of the dualism by proposing a theorem known as the duality of structure (Giddens 1984, 25). By this concept he means

the recursive instantiation of social structures through the social practices of agents. These practices draw their substance from those self same social structures. This idea of structural mediation is reminiscent of that of the simultaneous reproduction of structures and values as understood within the historical materialist notion of praxis (Giddens 1984, 242). The difference is that Giddens's structures are 'virtual', not objective, and are unable to exist as cause - as, for example, do the means and relations of production in Marxism.

Giddens's theory is also an important form of social criticism and critique. He does not seek to ground his critical stance on a normative theory of society or on a very strong sociological theory or on an epistemological preference. Instead he follows a strategy of 'firing critical salvoes into reality' (Bleicher and Featherstone 1982, 72) - that of the late modern world - and of using facts as the final arbiter of relevance. He argues that to suggest some things are noxious and others desirable does not necessarily require a philosophical 'grounding' for these judgements to be deemed relevant. As individual agents are capable of only some degree of discursive penetration into their social relationships, Giddens's theoretic salvoes would suggest that the social or natural scientist has a privileged perspective over the 'man on the street' because ontological interpretations are normally unavailable to the ordinary everyday actor. However, he is inconclusive on the matter of any prescriptive process of interaction or emancipation (Craib 1992, 113-114, 185-186).

Recently, Giddens has suggested a combination of four characteristics of a critical theory. These are sociological sensitivity to immanent institutional transformation; political tact as opposed to or in place of 'good faith'; models of the good society; and the cohabitation of emancipatory and life politics (Giddens 1992a, 156). Here again, in place of a coherent normative or sociological or epistemological type of critical theory, Giddens tends to favour a blending of

several themes (Giddens 1984, xxii) - with the onus falling upon responsible agency and the spelling out of reasons in place of duty (Giddens 1994a, 21).

Structuration theory is anti-functionalist, anti-evolutionist, non-structuralist and non-positivist because all of these approaches deny any scope to the human subject. Giddens intends structuration theory to be a catalyst for addressing these key strategies which divide contemporary social theory (Bryant 1992, 139). To this latter end, Giddens continually synthesises, around the duality of structure idea, selected concepts and ideas from theoretic traditions as diverse as Merton's functionalism, Marxism, Heidegger's 'temporality' and time-space geography. What matters more than the origin of the ideas '...is to be able to sharpen them so as to demonstrate their usefulness, even if within a framework which might be quite different from that which helped to engender them' (Giddens 1984, xxii).

Overall Giddens's theory is a set of propositions (Giddens 1981, 26-29; 1984, 281-285) that does not reject the dualism altogether (Layder 1994, 126). It *revises established perspectives* in sociology to the extent that they overlook the role of reflexivity in modernity and globalisation (Giddens 1992a). As is becoming clear by now, the result is a conceptual framework articulated at several levels; at the level of ontology; at the historical level of conjunctural formulations and time space configurations; at the level of agency or personality; and at a mix and match level of these. A discussion for evaluating the adequacy of Giddens's account of agency or personality is, by these multi-level standards, expected to encounter repetitions of concepts and themes.

Then, structuration theory is relatively unschematic and flexible as Giddens seems to prefer this looseness in his theoretic writing in order to make practical sociological work achievable under a paradigm of transcendence of the dualism. At times structuration theory refers to the open ended conditions for understanding the reproduction of society - an 'absent totality' (Giddens

1987, 61), and at other times to a forceful statement of the precepts that social theory should meet - a quasi theory of theory and research (Bryant 1992, 142). At other times again, structuration refers to reflexivity, unpredictability and contingency in the self-direction of the individual (Bryant and Jary 1991, 29).

What is Giddens's sociological theory of modernity?

Modernity '...produces *difference*, *exclusion* and *marginalisation*' (Giddens 1991, 6). Giddens is pre-occupied with understanding the inner mechanism of 'high' or 'late' modernity (Giddens 1991, 3) in the way that Durkheim was pre-occupied with the problems of earlier industrialisation. High modernity is distinguished from pre-modernity by the tensions and conflict at the edges of the four principal institutional clusters of capitalism, industrialism, surveillance and violence. It is not a condition derived from the differentiation of indistinct features present to traditional society (Giddens 1991, 17-18) as Habermas would explain it. The institutional clusters are not confined to the boundaries of any nation state and may assume various forms. Capitalism, for instance, is not disappearing '...in the face of the emergence of another productive form' (Giddens 1985, 311) but is rather a 'generic type of productive order' that is no longer characterised by individual control of capitalist enterprises. Industrialism remains a type of work organisation that has related consequences for the environment and social habitation (especially urbanism). Surveillance is best characterised in the modern state organisation of information control, communications, transportation and policing. The control of the means of violence, in the context of the 'industrialisation of war ' or 'total war' (Giddens 1991, 15) is an extension of the access to surveillance by the State.

Modernity is extremely dynamic, '...a "runaway world": not only is the *pace* of social change much faster than in any prior system, so also is its *scope*

and the *profoundness* with which it affects pre-existing social practices and modes of behaviour' (Giddens 1991, 16). This dynamism has three integrated sources which transform institutions and the life projects of actors. These are time-space distantiation, disembedding and reflexivity (Giddens 1992a, 63; Turner 1992, 143). Time and space do not coincide in modernity as in pre-modern society; relations between 'absent' others locationally distant is possible, everyday and of 'indefinite scope'. Disembedding refers to the '..."lifting out" of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space' (Giddens 1992a, 21). This extraordinary feature of modernity is part of the globalisation of technological expertise. Reflexivity means '...that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character' (Giddens 1992a, 38). The dynamism of these three sources enables the simultaneous potential for 'risk/opportunity' and 'trust' in all instances of social action. This reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self (Giddens 1991, 32). Giddens also calls his concept 'radicalised modernity' (Giddens 1992a, 149-150), with the emphasis on processes of intentional change (Giddens 1994b, 57), shifting again later to the notion of post-traditional society and an emphasis on personal and global reflexivity (Giddens 1994b, 107).

Before his move to an emphasis on institutions and politics in post-traditional society, Giddens explores the psychological impact of modernity upon the agent self. While the keys to this explanation are the concepts of ontological security and practical consciousness, the outcomes for the agent are traced through the 'sequestration of experience' (Giddens 1991, 8, 166-167). This latter concept refers to the growing separation of morality from the decisions that agents' are confronted with in day-to-day life. This separation is because symbolic or expert systems (Giddens 1992a, 22) have, by virtue of their

own inner and reflexive dynamics, cut the agent off from existential issues that were once endemic to culture (Giddens 1991, 156). For example, in the dissolution of nature due to human intervention we '...have to make decisions, make choices, where previously things were fixed by a natural order;...' (Giddens 1994a, 217). The new opportunities presented by institutionally repressed existential questions promise a new dialectic between personal and global systems (Giddens 1991, 164-165). The compensation for the loss of existential sensibilities is that mediations - language, media of various kinds and imagery in literature and documentaries - provide new fields of experience for engaging existential issues (Giddens 1991, 169). Moral, ethical and existential questions are now negotiable in life politics (Giddens 1991, 223; 1992b, 96).

An important adjunct to the negotiation of moral and existential questions is what Giddens refers to as the 'death of nature' or '...: the infusion of human knowledge into the material environment' (Giddens 1992a, 124). Reflexivity in modernity and the growth of abstract systems has meant that natural phenomena and the body are no longer apart from the social but in fact admit to themselves the skill and knowledge produced in abstract systems. This means, for example, that the genetic design of the animal or human species can be manipulated to produce results not yet known or understood. These as-if possible outcomes are known as 'manufactured uncertainty' (Beck et al. 1994, 184). Numerous fields of choice are now opened up to the individual - which include 'new ethical spaces' (Beck et al. 1994, 190) - and these will become part of the formation of self-identity through life politics.

Further to the impact of abstract systems upon the conduct of everyday life, Giddens opposes the Gemeinschaft - Gesellschaft notion of the increasing isolation of the agent in modernity due to increasing complexity. His view is that new forms of social solidarity have arisen (Beck et al. 1994, 186) and that

communal life is multi-levelled (Giddens 1992a, 117). There are communal relations, kinship ties, personal intimacies and sexual relations. All of these are connected to abstract systems and all display reflexive adaptation and resilience. Community as space-bound has been destroyed but otherwise each of these elements has become transformed. In modernity it '...is not simply a diminishment of personal life in favour of impersonally organised systems - it is a genuine transformation of the nature of the personal itself' (Giddens 1992a, 120). The most important transformation for the agent is that of personal and sexual intimacy and these have consequences for the democratisation of abstract systems.

Postmodernity for Giddens then, refers to '...possible transformations moving "beyond" the institutions of modernity' (Giddens 1992a, 150). The key institutional axes will assume different and new forms within capitalist society. The prevalence of the 'formulaic notion of truths' of tradition are replaced by the 'propositional truths' of the post-traditional order (Giddens 1994b, 63, 65). Giddens's view of high modernity is in sharp contrast to the antidualist view of the post-modern 'as the end of epistemology/the individual/ethics' (Giddens 1992a, 150).

How has Giddens theorised the agent and agency ?

Perhaps the most important inclusion amongst the sensitising and loosely constructed framework of concepts is *a theory of the agent* or a 'stratification model of the active self'. In this model Giddens revives the autonomous agent who reproduces the 'virtual' structures of society through praxis. This model is taken up in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6. *Agency* is defined as the capability of an actor to 'make a difference' in a situation or circumstance as a consequence of personal skills and knowledgeability. *Knowledgeability* has roughly three components. The actor 'knows' how to produce acceptable modes

of action, how to sustain the social encounter and how to judge the acceptability of forms of activity. The acceptability of action refers to the typification of 'meaningful acts' and the normative evaluation of such acts. Knowledgeability presumably connects the actor to social action and the everyday situation.

In its turn, the *social action* of skilled and knowledgeable agents includes three processes: rationalisation, reflexive monitoring and motivation, all of which are executed routinely. Rationalisation is the point of origin for individual competence and means that actors '...maintain a continuing 'theoretical understanding' of the grounds of their activity' (Giddens 1984, 5). Reflexive monitoring is not merely self-consciousness but the continued casting of attention onto the otherwise continuous flow of conduct in human action. Reflexivity is a part of rationalised action and refers to the capacity to distinguish acceptable activities within the context of interaction with others (Giddens 1977, 130). Motivation refers to the wants that prompt action and it normally involves a break in routine. Social action is bounded by the unacknowledged conditions that form part of its context and by the unintended consequences that can ensue.

Structure, on the other hand, is comprised of rules and resources outside of time and space. Rules are the medium of what they in fact will instantiate and they include norms, conventions and linguistic syntax. Resources are either allocative (material) or authoritative (power over people) and they are enabling. This means that they are advantages that an actor can call upon to effect the outcome of interaction. Social structures are not external to the agent in the classical sense and neither do they have their own independent characteristics (Layder 1994, 213). They are 'virtual' (Giddens 1984, 17; Clegg 1989, 142-3); they exist in the memory traces of agents (Giddens 1984, 17; Layder 1994, 139); they should be regarded as processes and not as a steady

state (Sewell Jr. 1992, 4); and they are discernible through *sets of properties* that characterise the institutions evident in a social system. An example of a structural set is that of private property - money - capital - labour contract. The related and umbrella concept of *structural principles* or 'factors involved in the overall institutional alignment of a society' (Giddens 1984, 376) include tradition, kinship, urban versus rural areas and 'disembedded' economic and state institutions.

The agents relate to structures, in situations, as mediums for the production and reproduction of *social interaction* between themselves as actors. This social interaction in its turn is conceptualised as contributing towards an *integrated system*. When discussing the place of encounters from the work of Goffman, Giddens argues that encounters amongst agents serve as the crossroads for both social integration and for system integration. The concepts of *structure* and *system* are distinguished one from the other in structuration (Giddens 1986, 62) in preference to an interchangeable conceptualisation of these phenomena, and in deference to the disaffection with structure emerging from the antidualism critique. Social systems, or patternings of social relations, interrelate with each other in time and space (Giddens 1984, 377) and are attached to structural sets or principles via institutions. *Abstract* systems refer to expert technical (Giddens 1991, 30) or symbolic (1991, 134) knowledge and skills that are specific to modernity and in which individuals come to place varying levels of trust (1991, 22-23). Such specialised expertise is 'reflexively highly mobilised' (1991, 30-31) but tends as a result to become more narrowly focussed. Abstract systems compete with each other while simultaneously impacting upon the construction of the identity-self of the individual. They play '...an increasingly pervasive role in coordinating the various contexts of day-to-day life' (Giddens 1991, 149). Examples include modern money and the

expansion of water, power or health systems (1991, 134-135). It is institutions therefore that structure the social activity of the modern setting (Giddens 1992b, 28).

Life politics and *pure relationships* are two of the more recent sensitising concepts developed by Giddens to demonstrate the nature of the interconnections between agents and global systems. Life politics emerges from the shadow of emancipatory politics such as forms of new social movements (Giddens 1991, 9); it is about developing ethics concerning how we should live (Giddens 1991, 215); it is about individual autonomy and the decision making opportunities of the agent - '...it is a politics *of* choice' (Giddens 1991, 214). It refers to political issues that derive from the self-actualisation of actors in their day-to-day lives. Some of these political issues - political as in 'remoralise' (Giddens 1992b, 197) - include ecology, gender and emancipation. This self-actualisation occurs within the new post-traditional mechanisms of self-identity that exist in 'high' modernity. These mechanisms include the internal referential systems of the self or of institutions, time-space distantiation and the 'disembedding' mechanisms. Pure relationships, on the other hand, refer to the emerging spheres of life that originate in consequence to the new post-traditional mechanisms of self-identity. Pure relationships are social relationships entered into for their own sake and exist only for those rewards that the relationship can deliver to the actors or the collectivities (Giddens 1991, 6; Giddens 1992b, 58). Pure relationships are integral to the reflexive project of the self-identity of the couple involved and are constructed between autonomous actors (Giddens 1991, 88, 91, 95, 96). They are contradictory in that they require a commitment of openness to the other if they are to work, and yet the actors involved must maintain enough reservation to survive its possible dissolution. This relationship '...can be terminated, more or less at will, by either partner at any particular point' (Giddens 1992b, 137).

Further to this, pure relationships enact a model of *confluent love* which '...suggests an ethical framework for the fostering of non-destructive emotion in the conduct of individual and communal life' (Giddens 1992b, 202). Confluent love is opening oneself out to the other, rather than acting upon projections of what the partner should be according to a prior norm (Giddens 1992b, 61). It is active, contingent and between autonomous, equal actors. It is nurtured through communication, based on trust, and it is formative of the partners' mutual life projects. Here a person's sexuality is negotiated as part of the relationship (Giddens 1992b, 63). In these recent sensitising concepts, Giddens captures the political and ethical potential of decision-making in conditions of close interpersonal relationships but, as we shall see below, has stopped short of defining the processes by which decision-making and self-identity come to articulate with the abstract system.

How satisfactory is Giddens's account of the agent?

Giddens's theory of the knowledgeable agent or stratification model of the active self draws from his analysis of social action as the basic domain of everyday life and the social sciences. Here practical consciousness, discursive consciousness and unconscious motivation generate the day-to-day actions of a reflexive agent. Practical consciousness, or mutual knowledge, is not easily accessible to discursive consciousness because it is embedded in routine, but the two are not mutually exclusive. It is the case, for example, that social scientists make lay people aware of the discursive nature of what is otherwise taken for granted as routine behaviour in the social world.

While we are told that the philosophical or ontological agent is knowledgeable and capable of decision-making and choice, we are not given, in structuration theory, any more detail on the process of decision-making and choice or how it motivates practice (Porpora 1989, 208). What we are told is that

intended actions have unintended consequences. The result is that opaqueness persists around the concept of reflexive praxis. Then, Giddens's understanding of the unconscious as a source of motivation vacillates. At times it refers to repressed or distorted cognition (Giddens 1984, 4 - 5); at other times it refers to the very source of influences on the subject. 'The unconscious can profitably be regarded as the 'other side' of language, that which cannot be said in language because it is the foundation of linguistic usage' (Giddens 1987, 64). Either way, unconscious motivation is nevertheless the branch of motivation mostly addressed by Giddens (Turner 1987, 20; Giddens 1991, 35-69).

It is unfortunate for understanding these agent-system connections and the construction of the life project of agents, that Giddens says more about avenues of constraint upon knowledgeability than about the mechanisms of knowledgeability itself. Further to this he describes, without explanation, the connection between globalising tendencies and localised events in daily life as complicated and dialectical (Giddens 1992a, 123). He is similarly short on explanation of his claim about how the intermediate groupings and collectivities involved in this connection become reorganised and reshaped (Giddens 1994b, 58). A stronger awareness of the operation of the mechanisms of knowledgeability would facilitate the identification of points of entry into these intermediate groupings for the healing and transformative agent of society, for example, ethical or political action (without necessarily radical overtones).

Beyond the duality-of-structure, what explanation there is of the mechanisms of knowledgeabilty is derived from Goffman whom Giddens himself chides for not indicating '...in any effective way what are the limits or the bounds of such knowledgeability, nor does he indicate the forms which such knowledgeability takes' (Giddens 1984, 90). Giddens does not develop his own concept of 'knowledgeability' into a '...vocabulary for specifying the *content*

of what people know' (Sewell Jr. 1992, 7), and this is in keeping with his strictly ontological and minimalist approach. He appears to defer this question to ethnomethodology and its emphasis on the role played by seriality in sustaining the meanings in day-to-day life (Giddens 1984, 73-78).

In brief then, interpretation and perception by the agent are still deemed significant in structuration, but the emphasis of the theory is not on how the process of knowledgeability unfolds into action, interaction and system. The emphasis remains upon the ontological security of routine and the duality of social action and social constraint. More importantly, the agent is effectively disconnected by this lack of conceptual integration of knowledgeability, interaction and system at the level of encounters.

Part Two: How is the agent or agency disconnected from system?

This disconnection stems from Giddens's own conceptual strategies for realising his project, and especially in critically challenging the inherited dualisms. This immanent logic argument has a number of interconnected facets; duality of structure, loosely connected concepts, duality of domination, disjuncture of disjunctures, and disjuncture between ontology and epistemology.

By the duality of structure

The fracture between the agent and system in duality becomes evident in Giddens's explanation of social and system integration (Giddens 1984, 28). Integration involves reciprocity between actors and collectivities. Social integration has its roots in knowledgeability. This means that actors are tacitly, consciously and intuitively aware of their own situations and that of the reciprocal other. The crucial motivational ingredient is the ontological trust of the actor in the like knowledgeability and tact of other co-present actors. Social

integration occurs in face-to-face interaction and may be continuous or include disjunctures (Giddens 1984, 376). System integration, on the other hand, refers to the reciprocity '...between actors or collectivities across extended time-space, outside conditions of co-presence' (Giddens 1984, 377). It is mediated by structural sets. 'The mechanisms of system integration certainly presuppose those of social integration, but such mechanisms are also distinct in some key respects from those involved in relations of co-presence' (Giddens 1984, 28). Presumably, social and system integration come together in social encounters between agents but the process of their duality - of the system articulating into the life project of the agent and vice versa - as well as the nature of the subjective operations involved, goes unexplained. However, they are not entirely overlooked. For Giddens has suggested about social integration that '..., we should seek to identify the main mechanisms of the duality of structure whereby encounters are organized in and through the intersections of practical and discursive consciousness' (Giddens 1984, 72-73).

Giddens suggests that there are three 'modes of interaction' that serve as conduits to relate the knowledgeable agent to the structural features. They are 'signification' or the communication of meaning through interpretive schemes, 'domination' or accessibility to resources, and 'legitimation' or normative sanction. These structural elements, through their 'modalities' (Giddens 1984, 28; Bryant and Jary 1991, 10) are the dimensions through which the duality of structure is realised and, in some way, the knowledgeability of agents exercised. More can and needs to be said, through the duality of structure, on the execution of the links between the agent and the 'modes of interaction' if agents are to become connected. For instance, the place of encounters in this process, whether day-to-day or through position-practices, is particularly important because they are the crossroads for both social integration and system integration. However, the duality of structure is not

able to get into this very close type of direct connection-making between the agent and structure due to its purpose of by-passing the difficulties associated with this dichotomy. Giddens's interest in decentralising the subject and his understanding of structures as 'virtual' and non-causal must surely be part of the explanation for this impasse. For to label structure as 'virtual' generates substantive opacity '...because Giddens does not specify the concrete social elements which are to count as predominantly structural...' (McLennan 1984, 127).

By loosely connected concepts

The disconnecting of the agent or agency is exacerbated by the loose connection and potential for ambiguity between social systems and institutions as two sensitising concepts. Social systems refer to patterns of social relations that '...involve imbalances of power, regional disparities, divisions of interests between groups and so forth' (Giddens 1989, 256). Institutions, on the other hand, connect social systems and structure in a fashion that Giddens's duality does not spell out clearly: we are told that institutions are *structurally* sourced, that is, '...chronically reproduced rules and resources' (Giddens 1984, 375); later he defines institutions as *practices* 'which are deeply sedimented in time-space' (Giddens 1986, 80); then institutions also reflect organisational properties. For a theory based on the capacity of agents to make a difference, this desiderata type of approach to the link between systems and institutions is not helpful for understanding how agents or agency are connected to the production of society.

Then, in structuration theory, the sources of information for depicting societal change are historical conjunctures: and here reflexivity, agency and structuration are the keys to understanding change. Also, Giddens has developed a threefold typology for identifying social systems; they are tribal

societies, class-divided societies and class society. These distinctions are not due to an underlying 'mechanism' or 'autonomous evolutionary dynamics' (Giddens 1989, 263). In these two approaches, social change is identified when historical conjunctures of social systems are compared or when it is inaugurated by reflexive agents or leaders of social movements and others who monitor and institute change (Cohen 1989, 276). There appears to be no conceptual connection here between change that is due to the deconstruction of the history of the society and that which is due to the knowledgeable agent of the duality of structure.

Clegg (1989) reinforces the argument for 'disconnection'. His view is that the structuration emphasis on agency reduces the conceptualisation of structure and system to 'illusions sustained by their projective powers' (1989, 143). At least two other critics have made the same point. Baber (1991) argues that structural influences upon actors are difficult to objectify because such durability is not 'attached to the definition of structures' (1991, 227). Sewell Jr. (1992) argues that rules and resources are inadequately defined, as opposed to agency, because Giddens neglects to develop typologies of 'rules' as 'generalized procedures' or to formulate 'resources' in 'ordinary English' (1992, 9).

By the duality of domination

There is an important difference between Giddens's understanding of *domination* and that of historical materialism, and it relates directly to the duality concept. For one thing, as well as class, he includes violence, gender and ethnicity as the axes of exploitation. Domination is identified with power but the relationship here is without the necessary connotations of an oppressive ideology, injustice, anomie or economic determinism because '...exploitative domination is inherent in human social life' (Patomäki 1991, 242). Domination

is reflected in structural principles, in contradiction, in conflict, and in surveillance. It is reproduced through duality. Giddens does not provide a theoretic-pragmatic response to domination other than to endorse the free and responsible action of autonomous agents (Giddens 1991, 213), and to identify the 'structuring features at the core of modernity' that require attention (Giddens 1991, 2). His level of concern is more with the presence of differential power in the day-to-day existence of the social system (Giddens 1992b, 193, 195) than it is with providing a base for a theoretic-practical response to the presence of iniquitous dominance. He has no structural conception of power as constraining upon agency (Clegg 1989, 142) despite his extensive discussion on structures as enabling, and it appears that he also has no requirement of advocating what agents ought to do in praxis. Agents and systems co-exist and the articulations between them remain unclear.

Giddens acknowledges that social or political movements engender change in high modernity. They contest the location of power in surveillance or government by virtue of the 'counter-influences brought to bear in the dialectic of control' (Giddens 1985, 314). This dialectic involves: the State against democratic and peace movements; the propertied class of capitalism against labour movements; and the technology-fraught industrial organisations against ecological movements that want to conserve, restore and reshape the created environment. These movements and institutional axes overlap in their objectives and membership; the former are 'in a generic way connected to institutional features' of societies (Giddens 1985, 318). Giddens's adherence to sensitising concepts means that little is said directly to the impact of differential causal elements and processes here. But more specific to the disconnected agent or agency, it also means that duality of structure is unable to conceptualise the actual processes of agency that makes, sustains or

prevents the connection between actors in social movements and the institutional structures.

By identifying capitalism, industrialism, surveillance and violence as the sites for tension and for conflict, Giddens hints at an emergent ethical stance in structuration theory. This is implied also in the notions of 'choice' in life politics or 'integrity' in pure relationships (Giddens 1992b, 84). This is a new and developing precept of the theory and one that includes power as the object of critique (Giddens 1992b, 196-203; Swanson 1992, 148). This development in structuration theory away from neutrality and towards ethical and formulative (or intentional) as well as incidental change, invites my view suggested here, namely, that the mechanisms for judgement used by the knowledgeable and collective agents of structuration are in need of clearer conceptualisation. This is because Giddens's theory of agency has difficulty connecting the moral/ethical agent to the institutional axes of advanced capitalism despite his now familiar talk of universal values (Giddens 1994a, 20) and acknowledgement that an 'ethics of personal life' is necessary if one is to 'become someone' in late modernity (Giddens 1994a, 224).

By the disjuncture of disjunctures

The disconnection of the agent or agency in the immanent logic of structuration is traceable also to disjunctures within ontology and between ontology and epistemology. While such disjunctures in a project that spans multi-levels of theoretic and substantive propositions is understandable, their disarming impact upon the duality of agent and system should become evident in Giddens's discussion of social change.

Part of Giddens's ontology is the view that a theory of social change from a single set of mechanisms is not viable (Giddens 1984, xxviii; Giddens 1990, 303), and so he uses the conjunctural view of change '...which emphasises that

historical variations in several different kinds of circumstances may intersect and interact to influence the production of differing forms and outcomes of societal transitions' (Cohen 1989, 273). This genealogical methodology means that he slows system change down to centuries rather than moments of praxis: a contradiction now against his other explanation that change is through agent instantiation and empowerment. In this way macro and micro change act almost in semi-isolation of or disconnection from each other. Then, the uncertainty of this conjunctural versus instantiation (or system versus agent) approach to change is exacerbated first by Giddens's concession that change is inaugurated by leaders of social movements and others who monitor and institute change, and second by his later admission that the construction of the self is '...part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change' (Giddens 1991, 33).

In reply to these criticisms Giddens would suggest that what has been indicated here echoes the multi-levelled nature of modernity. Change occurs at the levels of conjunctures, position-practices in organisations, social movements, personality and in some complex blend of these. All of this makes sense in view of the duality of structure but not so much in view of how agents go about reflecting upon, agreeing upon and transforming systems and daily institutional imperatives that impact upon their lives in global 'risk' society.

Further to his avoidance of a theory of social change, Giddens substitutes by exploring the operation of contradiction between structural principles. This is undertaken alongside the principle of the duality of structure. System contradiction is '...a disjunction between two or more 'principles of organization' or 'structural principles' which govern the connections between social systems within a larger collectivity' (Giddens 1977, 127). Contradiction is an ongoing feature of late modern society and an instrument for change in that it inevitably reflects divergent interests. But it is not clear how agency relates

to or connects with the structural contradiction. On the matter of disconnected agents, Holmwood and Stewart go so far as to suggest that Giddens '...eventually comes to an alienation of human beings from their material circumstances' (1993, 155). What appears to be emerging in structuration theory is an explanatory scenario for agent interaction at the micro level of change that emphasises the resolution of conflict, and a separate scenario for systems of interaction at the macro level of change that emphasises contradiction. Emphasis is being placed on active micro change, with the macro level of contradiction and change being construed as commensurate with, even if not clearly specified or linked to agency. Not only is this double emphasis a setback in the urge to transcend the dualism via the duality of agent and system, but the explication of change becomes fragmented. When is it contradiction? When is it conflict? When is it due to agency? When is it due to structure?

By the disjuncture between ontology and epistemology?

There is no straightforward relationship between Giddens's conceptual framework and any actual empirical findings. Structuration concepts '...should for many research purposes be regarded as sensitizing devices, nothing more...,they may be useful for thinking about research problems and the interpretation of research results' (Giddens 1984, 326-327). Theory and practice, or ontology and epistemology, are relatively autonomous from each other (Giddens 1989, 294). So structuration theory seeks to invoke new interpretation to established empirical work, and verification is largely theoretic. Giddens bases his approach to knowledge and epistemology upon the claim that the first function of research is to communicate new knowledge in some sense or the other (Giddens 1984, 288). He has no alternative epistemology when examining the empirical work of Willis and of Gambetta

(Giddens 1984, 289, 305) but is clear that structuration theory can cast new light on Willis's (1981) ethnographic study on conformity and rebellion in a group of working class children in a poor area of Birmingham. That structuration theory does not posit an alternative epistemology is considered by Giddens to be helpful and appropriate, even freeing. His frugal and narrow perception of new knowledge means that he will emphasise either knowledgeability or duality or constraint. The potential here to dislocate agent from system and vice versa, due to an emphasis on one particular concept isolated from the set, has been challenged in my earlier discussion of social change. Nevertheless, Giddens's focus on 'new knowledge' as the desirable objective should be viewed against the backdrop of: (a) theoretic uncertainty caused by the critique of the logical form of positivism; (b) the problems raised for social sciences by the pervading presence of the double hermeneutic; and (c) by the focus of analysis on day-to-day life required by his emphasis on agency and social practice.

Part Three: What opportunities exist for connecting the agent or agency?

Despite problems with integrating agent and system, structuration theory does include concepts that, once made operational, can better connect the transformative agent and the structural modes of domination, signification, and legitimation. They include the dialectic of control, the double hermeneutic and historicity. This set of concepts provides opportunities from within structuration for reflexively integrating the agent, interaction and system. They enable substantive structural issues to be addressed without transgressing Giddens's own rules for epistemology. Their potential is pointed out now and confirmed later in Chapter 7.

In the dialectic of control

As a claim about real process, the dialectic of control is important because structuration theory is "...'thin' on the structure or institutional side of the action-structure problem" (Layder 1994, 143). This claim diminishes the sense of an 'absent structure' without obstructing the aim to transcend the agent-structure dualism. As a corollary to the discussion of the dialectic of control, the hierarchical advantage of particular agents over others to determine change will become clearer than has at first been evident in structuration theory.

Unlike the less definitive concept of the duality of structure, the dialectic of control sets out more clearly the mechanism that connects the knowledgeable agent and the structural 'modes' of interaction. The dialectic of control is where agent and agent, or agent and institution, encounter each other in a power relationship of autonomy-dependence. It emphasises the capacity of the knowledgeable agents to identify and engage in an autonomy-dependence dialectic. This encounter context is more tangible than that of the 'neutral' structure and the historic incidences of conjunctures. As a mechanism of action, it permeates each of social action, interaction and system.

The dialectic of control also describes the hierarchical relations between rulers and ruled. Operative to any historic circumstance is the capacity of the agents to resist authority and the inability of the superordinates to completely control the response of subordinates. When the capacity of an agent to make a difference is overtly denied in a situation or context, as may be the case in an institution, organisation or collective, then the choice to go along with the imposed dictate is not a denial of agency or of emancipation. Agency rather recedes into a 'back' region and there assumes a practical form familiar only to the actor or actors. The decision to comply may be made in deference to the

consequences that will follow in the event of not submitting, for example, degradation of the self in a prison (Giddens 1984, 156).

In addition to connecting agent and system/institution, the dialectic of control assumes that social change and contestable power are inherent to all social action (Giddens 1977, 123), and that knowledgeable and skilled agents initiate change in incremental doses as super- or subordinates. It follows then that the dialectic of control offers a more tangible and immediate explanation of autonomous social action and systemic change than does the duality of structure. The former concept has greater strength and relevance than the latter for identifying immanent change.

Furthermore, undercurrents of power and resistance or social control and emancipation are conceptually more discernible through the dialectic of control than they are through the duality of structure notion. This understanding of the dialectic of control and Giddens's concerns in *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) for the task of the construction of the self in the overbearing dynamism of high modernity, suggest that his preference for a merely sensitising and apolitical project was premature (Bryant 1992, 137).

In the double hermeneutic versus position-practices

The double hermeneutic means that the concepts and theories of the social sciences are applied '...to a world constituted of the activities of conceptualizing and theorizing agents' (Giddens, 1987, 70). The two levels of observer and actor are not mutually exclusive. Knowledgeable agents conceptualise and theorise their activities at the first level or as first order constructs, and social scientists employ or adapt these notions within their own theories at the second level or as second order constructs. The inverse is also true and so, in the cross-pollination of understandings and vocabulary between these two levels, meaningful and substantive social change is inaugurated. Transformations of

this double hermeneutic type present social change as incremental, ordered and normal activity mediated by interaction and communication. However, there is another more deliberate and purposive scenario of the experience of the double hermeneutic.

When a theory of a social science or a political ideology is purposively introduced into a situation by hierarchically placed agents, for example, a politico-economic theory or feminist ideology, then significant institutional and directed change will transpire through the medium of the double hermeneutic principle. Such change is less in the incremental, mutuality spirit of the duality of structure, as suggested in this sensitising concept of structuration, but more in that of the intentionality and will of organisationally resourced or institutionally privileged agents. Social change of this sort is no longer indeterminate, incremental, soft and incidental. In structuration theory then, it is the case that institutional change can be more pragmatically explained by the double hermeneutic when it is deliberately driven and *operating through the position-practices of agents*. These latter are allocative resources, so in this way agent-system duality can take on a more specific objective location. Such a shift to position-practices and the relational interaction between them is more easily tenable in Bhaskar's project.

Further to this, the concept of position-practices captures the link between agents, in positions, and 'rules' as structures; particular positions have particular normative and conventional practices prescribed, that is, identities. This proposed coupling of the concepts of the double hermeneutic and position-practices in 'identities' would operationalise social relationships more objectively. Here I have in mind Porpora's definition of social position as 'objective relationships' (1987, 134) and Bhaskar's system of position-practices (1979, 52-53) because both imply undercurrents of contestable power rather than

Giddens's sense of absent structures free of any inequalities. Position-practices do not deny the power of voluntary agency *per se* as confirmed earlier in 'the dialectic of control'.

In historicity

Historicity refers to a collective and reflexive awareness of past history and the will to use that knowledge to construct the present (Gregory 1990, 220) and to 'colonise' the future (Giddens 1994b, 58). It operates at the levels of everyday knowledgeability and of conjunctural analysis. Agent historicity is associated first with commonsense competence more so than with the capacity of an individual to bring about widespread and significant social change or reform. This first instance of historicity or reflexive awareness, that is, comonsense, is in harmony with the duality of structure as the reproductive force behind routine. Beyond this commonsense competence, Giddens (Cohen 1989, 276) later suggests that leaders, especially of the modern information oriented societies, use historical knowledge to bring about direct and wider system change. With this, ontological agency has now translated into a more substantive instance and one that allows for an agent connected to systems or institutions. This is because a leader's reflexive capacity for historicity-in-action provides a context of empirical action that is linked to conceivable outcomes for the system. The explanation of change via historicity is now due more specifically to the exercise of instrumental agency coupled with differential organisational power (Giddens 1992a, 155, 162). This shift erodes the centrality of the idea of duality of structures that are outside of time and space but moves closer to a substantive definition of the role of historicity in connecting agents and systems.

To take the point of inequality amongst agents of change further, the reflexive capability required to conduct a conjunctural deconstruction of society

is the preserve more of the intellectual than of the lay actor (Cohen 1989, 146; Holmwood and Stewart 1993, 40). This means that the task of interpreting and initiating institutional change then falls to 'more-competent' knowledgeable agents (Dietz and Burns 1992, 194; Sewell Jr. 1992, 4). This discriminatory division is reinforced by the varying levels of knowledgeability, of competence and of influence that are presumed of agents (Baber 1991, 226). Giddens's position is that these differences are inherent and produced/reproduced through rules and resources that are neutral or amoral in the perpetuation of existing interests. This apolitical position still leaves the responsibility for change or control to the social scientist as privileged agent. By requiring of the average agent knowledge far in excess of that available to those with limited access to the structural resources of education, politics etcetera, Giddens's conjunctural analysis tends to further stratify rather than embrace the widespread role of agency in constituting significant social change (Stones 1991, 676).

Part Four: Other possibilities for connecting the agent or agency

Knowledgeability can be opened out to tell us more about the connection of agency to system than is at first obvious in structuration. Agents' overt expressions of knowledgeability are attached to their manifest capabilities, as these exist in society and as they have been inferred from Cohen and Dietz and Burns in Chapter 2 (pages 57-58). These manifest capabilities or facets of knowledgeability are now extracted and distinguished from each other as possible avenues for theoretically and substantively connecting the agent and system in Giddens's theory.

Reflexivity is a part of rationalised action and refers to the capacity to distinguish acceptable activities within social interaction. This type of individual reflexive monitoring of action is not that of the reflexivity of

modernity. (Modernity's reflexivity refers to the chronic revision of aspects of social activity and the material relations with nature in the light of new information or knowledge (Giddens 1991, 20)). However, the larger reflexive project of the self is '..., an elemental part of the reflexivity of modernity;...' (Giddens 1992a, 124). Importantly though, individual and collective meanings and behaviours are jointly arrived at through reflexivity with the rules and resources.

A crucial and related element of reflexivity here is motivation. With Giddens, motivation is an underlying 'feeling state' of the individual '..., involving unconscious forms of affect as well as more consciously experienced pangs or promptings' (Giddens 1991, 64). It is located in the agent's primary 'needs' for ontological security and autonomy. These are the unconscious forces behind the conscious or reflexive and automatic behaviours. These needs are met by the routine day-to-day behaviour which then acts as the indicator or measure of the deeper ontological security (Johnson 1990, 111). It would appear feasible to acknowledge these needs as mechanisms that generate social action that reproduces society as well.

By the early nineties, Giddens's model of the reflexive monitoring agent includes the following understandings: that emotion and motivation are inherently connected (Giddens 1992b, 201); that ontological security is a key emotional (and unconscious) phenomenon (Giddens 1992a, 92); and that breaks in routine are the indicators of possible crises in ontological security. What is unclear in understanding the reflexive agent though is the link between emotion and reason in the subjective process towards social action (Giddens 1992b, 200-201). What is clear, is that the capability of self-identity is the visible location where ontological security, emotions and autonomy connect in the duality between the self project of the agent and the reproduction of the system.

Self Identity is constructed in a situational dialectic of the local and the global (Giddens 1991, 5) in which the personal power, or lack of it, of the knowledgeable actor becomes pragmatised and expressed in a particular ongoing narrative (Giddens 1991, 54). 'The achievement of a continuously validated self is for us a *project*, which has to be worked out and achieved' (Giddens 1989, 279). This narrative is not insular, '..., individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications' (Giddens 1991, 2). So self identity is the conduit of a reflexive connection between personal and social change (Giddens 1991, 33). Furthermore, and explicitly to Giddens, the practice of therapy is 'an expression of the reflexivity of the self' (Giddens 1991, 34) in modernity, and self-help manuals and therapeutic works are expressions of processes of reflexivity (Giddens 1992b, 64). Therapy is '...a methodology of life-planning' (Giddens 1991, 180).

Conversely to the praxis of the reflexive agent, the structural properties prevailing in the social system, organisations or institutions mediate the construction of self-identity. Social positions, and the associated roles, norms, obligations and sanctions, are important empirical contributors to the formulation of self-identity and they reflect the structural properties which become internalised by the agents' through reflexive monitoring. It would be helpful, for understanding transformation of life projects, if the process underlying the impact of these position-practices upon the knowledgeability and personal narrative of the agent could be spelt out. Giddens tells us only that this process involves duality and therapy.

Also operative in the situational dialectic of self-identity is the prevalence of a feeling of collective identity amongst a section of/or the whole of society. 'Such feelings may be manifest in both practical and discursive consciousness and do not presume a 'value consensus' ' (Giddens 1984, 165). Yet, how are

these mutual feelings constructed into the 'collective ritual' (Giddens 1994b, 103) of modernity and into the self project or identity of the agent? The duality between agent and structure replaces the classical notion of intersubjectivity by accentuating praxis, mediation and instantiation. Rather than the I-You dichotomy, social integration and system integration are emphasised respectively as regularised ties between actors or between groups (Giddens 1986, 76). These are achieved by knowledgeable actors whose social practice sustains both the social structures and the social interrelations. It follows from this approach to intersubjectivity that Giddens is unable to explain forms of collective identity if these are different from the regularised ties of social integration. Resolving these ambiguities of self and collectivity identity would act towards closing the gap between agency and system for structuration theory.

Normative critique. Giddens's reliance on the empowered agent leaves the door open for normative critique, especially because of his more recent focus on choice and decisions in therapy (Giddens 1994b, 74-75), but only just. In his wish to overcome functionalism and evolutionism, Giddens accords to agent knowledgeability an importance for the production of society over that of structure or system. There is no category of structural explanation '...only an interpretation of the modes in which varying forms of constraint influence human action' (Giddens 1984, 213). This situation of an actor having the capacity to transform reality without a category of structural explanation is not very clear of itself because 'transformative capacity', as a causal power, is also a property of non-human agency (Callinicos 1985, 146-147) and of systems/structures. Bryant and Jary for their part, reaffirm the argument of the great difficulty experienced by structuration theory of moving from the structures of rules and resources to actual patterns of interaction and vice versa (1991, 26). There is clearly a need to spell out and substantiate this

capability for normative critique amongst empowered agents, and with it the process by which this power is exercised at the level of decision-making in everyday life.

In summary then, structuration theory transcends the dualism but at the price of the agent or agency being substantively disconnected from system. Also, despite restoring the autonomous agent of modernity, Giddens does not establish how empirical actors set about the task of emancipation (blending the role of science, sexuality and pure relationships) inherent to his project. His emphasis on ontology, and duality of structure in particular, leaves structuration unable to connect the agent and system or to satisfactorily explain social change and collective action. However, the theory does include concepts that can act as a base for making the substantive connection between the agent and system. These concepts can reflexively integrate the agent, interaction and system and they include the dialectic of control, the double hermeneutic and historicity. On their own these concepts remain adrift and make little progress towards connecting the agent and system, but coupled overtly with the Marxian functional concepts of position-practices and organisations they can begin to make a clearer connection with the empirical, without negating the concept of duality. Along with the manifest capabilities of the agent or agency, they can also begin to clarify, 'the ever-present possibility of social transformation' (New 1994, 197). But in order to consolidate these opportunities/possibilities, to explain collective action and consensus in the dynamism and uncertainty of late modernity *and* to transcend the dualism, - all of which are some of Giddens's own aims - structuration theory could adopt into its ranks some pragmatic, emancipatory concepts from Habermas's theory of communicative action.