

Economic Sociology or the Economic Structure and the Non-economic Societal Structures as Conceived of by Socio-economic Structuralism

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Abstract

This is the continuation of the paper which appeared in the previous issue of WFES (7/1/4). In this article the author further develops the theoretical foundations of the socio-economic structuralism. In particular, the notions of economic and non-economic societal structures remain in focus. The author retains the economic determinist perspective and explores the ways through which the economic structure affects other structures of the society, including work in its many variations (material work, immaterial work, and quasi-work) as well as other aspects of social life such as culture in general and language in particular.

Key words: structure, work, ownership, economic sociology, social theory

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1. The Fundamental Thesis of Economic Sociology as a Theoretical-empirical Proposition

What Marx calls ‘the guiding principle of’ his studies in the Preface to ‘A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy’ can be considered a motto for economic sociology. This guiding principle can be summarised as follows:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness (Marx 1976).

Let us expand on the above statement and lay out some basic relations of dependence of non-economic structures upon – to use Marx’s phrase – their economic foundation. In this paper we will try to obey the guidance given in ‘The German Ideology’, according to which empirical observation must in each case demonstrate the relationship between the social and political structures on the one hand, and production without any speculation or mystification, on the other hand.

1.1. The Economic Structure as an Existential Basis of Non-economic Structures

The elementary yet vital mechanism of the dependence of non-economic structures on the economic structure is described by Frederic Engels as the fact that people have to, first and foremost, eat, drink, have a shelter, and, hence, work, before they are able to fight over power, deal with politics, religion, philosophy etc. By the same token, Engels maintains that those members of society that are members of non-economic structures and those who are engaged in the processes of production and exchange of material goods thanks to which politicians, artists, clergymen and other are in a position to do their respective kinds of non-economic work. This thesis implies

another one, according to which the means of material work must reach a definite level of development, allowing their operators to produce more than it is necessary for their functioning in that role i.e. manufacture the surplus product, which provides the indispensable means of subsistence for the agents of non-economic structures.

1.2. Material Work, Immaterial Work, and Quasi-work as Actions Performed in the Course of Definite Periods of Time

The above-mentioned claim entails the next one, which suggests that the magnitude of the surplus products conditions the number of people which can be released from the economic activity, as well as, more generally, the quantity of time that society can devote to scholarly, governmental, religious, sport and other non-material activities.

The more developed are the means of material work, i.e. the shorter the period of time is needed for the production of the necessary means of subsistence, the more societal resources, including time, can be allocated to the non-economic structures. This relationship, however, manifests itself not only at the global, societal level, but also at the nanostructural¹, i.e. individual level. Economic growth can be, amongst other things, taken advantage of in order to shorten the working time which, in turn, lengthens, proportionately, the quantity of time the individuals concerned can reserve for any kind of non-material work and, particularly, quasi-work such as theatre attendance, book reading, internet browsing, walking the dog or whatever. The opposite is true as well, that is to say employment restricts the quantity of time in which a person can engage in quasi-work. This concerns particularly, but not exclusively, working mothers who often have less time for their children and families in general due to difficulties in reconciling professional and household duties.

The relationship however, as hinted above, is broader. Everyone can in their everyday experience easily find examples of a negative impact of lengthy working time on the opportunities for leisure, participation in culture etc. The length of working time influences the ability to engage in most extra-substantive activities. Upon coming back from work, when one is very tired, one's leisure is, as a rule, restricted to the most passive forms of rest like watching television or listening to pop

¹ The concept of nanostructure is meant to underscore the fact that also the individual constitutes a social structure, at a lower level than a microstructure such as the family.

music, as opposed to the activities which require more active engagement, be it opera or theatre attendance, or reading books. Non-substantive activities also, naturally, take certain determinate time. This concerns for example political activity or self-education. A worker or employee whose wage or salary underprices her or his value of labour power has to take up some extra work in order to maintain their standard of living. This, as a rule, excludes any participation in the activities of political parties as well as self-development.

Shift-work hugely limits one's capacity to rear children and access to many cultural or sporting events which take place at a certain time of a day or week, unsuitable from the point of view of a given individual. It restricts, if not rules out entirely, any time spent together by the family. A more complete picture of how the work schedule affects individual and collective rhythms and patterns of life can be sketched when an extended week scale is taken into consideration. Introducing additional free day enables material or substantive employees to concentrate on book reading or on attending lectures or participating in talks, as well as enhancing one's opportunities to engage in, for example, tourist activity or physical exercise. The five-day working week also greatly exerts a positive influence on the organisation of time within the family. For example, a working woman can do her chores in one holiday day, which leaves still one weekend day which can be devoted to the entire family. The said work schedule influences, too, the organisation of collective life, e.g. working hours of people employed in retail or services, as well in educational outfits, the entertainment industry, etc. It is also the work rhythm on a yearly basis that is relevant to the worker. When one's holiday is cut into short sections, it makes it difficult, if not impossible, to regenerate one's physical and psychic forces, or, in other words, one's own the labour power.

1.3. The Economic Structure as a Source of the Means of Activity of Non-economic Structures

Our analysis of the influence of the economic structure on non-economic structures began by pointing to its form that consists in providing the latter the necessary means of subsistence. Material work processes, however, produce not only consumer goods, but also such goods that serve as indispensable means of non-substantive work and quasi-work.

‘For instance, in order to function efficiently the political structure needs a lot of the means of respective work processes: from police baton to a modern aircraft carrier. Engels points out that “This public force exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men, but also of material appendages, prisons and coercive institutions of all kinds” (Trotsky).

In today’s reality, apart from the traditional arms industry, a whole sector of high-technology material work developed producing ultra-modern means of coercion e.g. for the riot police. The use of these means has, it must be conceded, some humanitarian consequences for the participants of mass demonstrations or manifestations, as they allow for police interventions without any bloodshed.

Science, certainly, impacts the economy, even to the extent that many scientific outputs become part and parcel of the process of material work. On the other hand, it is this process – either in handicraft or modern industrial shape – that supplies fundamental means for development of natural sciences by which observations and experiments are carried out: from microscopes and telescopes to lasers and spacecrafts. In more general terms, one can borrow from Wikipedia, to claim that:

‘Scientific instruments are part of laboratory equipment, but are considered more sophisticated and more specialized than other measuring instruments. They are increasingly based upon the integration of computers to improve and simplify control, enhance and extend instrumental functions, conditions, parameter adjustments and data sampling, collection, resolution, analysis (both during and post-process), storage and retrieval. Individual instruments can also be connected as a local area network (LAN) and can be further integrated as part of a laboratory information management system (LIMS) ...’

Some scientific instruments can be quite large in size, like **particle colliders** that can be several miles in circumference or radio-telescope antennas and antenna arrays used in astrophysics. As you might expect, the converse or nanoscale also has been added to the list of the realm of scientific instrument applications and research, with much of the activity centered around the use of miniaturization in the field of medicine, particularly as non-invasive imaging has exploded on the diagnostic arts and minimally invasive tools and robotics have extended the reach of surgeons of every stripe. In fact, instruments on the scale of a single molecule may soon interact with our bodies at the cellular and biochemical level to collect diagnostic information and provide highly precise medication delivery mechanisms. Scientific instruments can be found on board sounding rockets, satellites or planetary rovers and controlled by radiotelecommunication (Wikipedia entry – ‘Scientific Instruments’).

To illustrate the dependence being discussed in more specific terms, the following are some of the products currently manufactured by only one firm, Scientific Instruments Inc.:

- Liquid level, temperature and density tank gauging systems;
- Cryogenic temperature sensors;
- Cryogenic temperature monitors and controllers;
- Industrial liquid level and temperature probes;
- Aerospace liquid level and temperature probes and transducers;
- Commercial aircraft temperature probes.

Temperature sensors include Silicon Diode, Ruthenium Oxide, and Platinum RTD sensors. These sensors are used in petrochemical, aerospace, laboratory and research, high energy physics devices and industrial applications.

As some of the previous examples show, the dependence under consideration concerns, too, medicine which is closely tied to science, but which in our terms is to be located within the framework of the reproductive structure.

It is also the educational substructure which, to increasingly greater extent, uses many products of material work. Certainly, that dependence manifests itself equally in the case of the chalk, board, or desk, which all have to be manufactured by material work. Nowadays, however, the dependence being discussed shows up not only in the form of these relatively ancient instruments, but also in modern computers, video equipment, language labs etc.

The same holds in the case of art. The existence of the huge industry of musical instruments may be mentioned here. Film and modern recording studios, CDs, DVDs, amplifiers, microphones etc. are all, of course, outcomes of material work.

Some strands of modern art provide even more apparent manifestation of the artists' reliance upon technology and material work. There are numerous cases of using the means of material production to manufacture installations or other modern art forms, whereas the creators often confine themselves to the role of a designer.

One specific example can be mentioned Bob Campbell, also known as Stig, is as much a metal sculptor, as he is an industrial artist or furniture designer. Using scrap metal parts from cogs and wheels to chains and treads, he crafts recycled one-off pieces and furniture sets that use a creative combination of manufactured pieces and built-from-scratch shapes. He incorporates leather, wood and other industrial materials if necessary but metal is always at the core of his work. He has sold his unique metal furniture pieces to all kinds of people through various venues, ranging from high-end luxury retail stores to music festivals, street markets and his own

personal private gallery. His work itself is open to interpretation but his unique style and curious material choices certainly set him up to be seen as existing somewhere between traditional arts and crafts and modern mechanical engineering (www.stig-art.co.uk).

A similar relationship can be detected with reference to the remaining forms of non-substantive work and quasi-work. Industrialised sports of today is a case. So is any contemporary household. Could one even imagine oneself functioning properly in every day life without such industrial goods as freezers, washing machines or, last but not least, garden lawns?

1.4. Socio-economic Conditioning of Language

The distinctiveness of the present subsection lies primarily in its focus on an ideal object, as opposed to the previous part of the text. The relevance of what follows to the broader topic of this chapter is hidden in the fact that language constitutes an indispensable instrument of work performed by the writer, the scholar, the journalist, the clergyman, the official, the military officer and the police officer alike. Now it turns out that the social sciences have collected a lot of evidence regarding socio-economic determinants of language. Language usage varies among social classes, and it is these *sociolects* which are under scrutiny sociolinguistic studies.

Sociolinguistics, as a field distinct from dialectology, was pioneered through the study of language variation in urban areas. Whereas dialectology studies the geographic distribution of language variation, sociolinguistics focuses on other sources of variation, among them class. Class and occupation are among the most important linguistic markers found in society. One of the fundamental findings of sociolinguistics, which has been hard to disprove, is that class and language variety are closely related. In what follows it is, of course, only such studies as are available can be used, and it would be rather pointless to criticise their theoretical framework (which, to be sure, leaves much to be desired in many cases) post-hoc as we have no other option than to take their results as given anyway.

Members of the working class tend to speak less standard language, while the lower, middle, and upper middle class will in turn speak closer to the standard. However, the upper class, even members of the upper middle class, may often speak

‘less’ standard than the middle class. That happens because not only class, but class aspirations, matter.

... It is generally assumed that non-standard language is low-prestige language. However, in certain groups, such as traditional working class neighbourhoods, standard language may be considered undesirable in many contexts. This is because the working class dialect is a powerful in-group marker, and especially for non-mobile individuals, the use of non-standard varieties (even exaggeratedly so) expresses neighbourhood pride, and group and class solidarity. There will thus be a considerable difference in use of non-standard varieties when going to the pub or having a neighbourhood barbecue (high), and going to the bank (lower) for the same individual (Wikipedia entry – sociolinguistics”)

According to Bernstein in *Class, Codes and Control* (1971):

‘Forms of spoken language in the process of their learning initiate, generalize and reinforce special types of relationship with the environment and thus create for the individual particular forms of significance’ (76). That is to say that the way language is used within a particular societal class affects the way people assign significance and meaning to the things about which they are speaking. Littlejohn (2002) agrees and states, ‘people learn their place in the world by virtue of the language codes they employ’ (178). The code that a person uses indeed symbolizes their social identity’ (Bernstein 1971).

The two types of language codes are the elaborated code and the restricted code. The restricted code is suitable for insiders who share assumptions and understanding on the topic, whereas the elaborated code does not assume that the listener shares these assumptions or understandings, and thus elaborated code is more explicit, more thorough, and does not require the listener to read between the lines.

Bernstein suggests a correlation between social class and the use of either elaborated or restricted code. He argues that in the working class you are likely to find the use of the restricted code, whereas in the middle class you find the use of both the restricted and elaborated codes.

Bernstein’s ‘code theory’ in the sociology of education has undergone considerable development since the early 1970s and now enjoys a growing influence in both education and linguistics, especially among systemic functional linguists. Maton & Muller (2007) describe how Bernstein argued that different positions within society, understood in terms of their degree of specialization, have different language use patterns that influence the ability of these groups to succeed in schools. These social positions create, as he later put it, ‘different modalities of communication differentially valued by the school, and differentially effective in it, because of the

school's values, modes of practice and relations with its different communities' (1996: 91). The notion was codified first in terms of 'classification' and 'framing', where classification conceptualises relations of power that regulate relations between contexts or categories, and framing conceptualises relations of control within these contexts or categories (1975). These concepts have been widely used to analyze educational contexts and practices and their relations to the dispositions (or coding orientation) brought to education by different social groups.

These concepts raised the question of how different forms of educational knowledge are constructed. Bernstein pointed to the pedagogic device as the cause (see Maton & Muller 2007). This forms the basis of his account of:

- the ordered regulation and distribution of a society's worthwhile knowledge store (ordered by a set of distributive rules);
- its transformation into a pedagogic discourse, a form amenable to pedagogic transmission (ordered by a specifiable set of recontextualising rules); and
- the further transformation of this pedagogic discourse into a set of criterial standards to be attained (ordered by a specifiable set of evaluative rules).

In Bernstein's conceptualisation each of these rules is associated with a specific field of activity:

- a field of production where 'new' knowledge is constructed and positioned;
- a field of recontextualisation where discourses from the field of production are selected, appropriated and repositioned to become 'educational' knowledge; and
- a field of reproduction where pedagogic practice takes place.

Together these three rules and their associated fields constitute an 'arena' of conflict and struggle created by the pedagogic device in which social groups attempt to dominate how educational knowledge is constructed:

Groups attempt to appropriate the device to impose their rule by the construction of particular code modalities. Thus the device or apparatus becomes the focus of challenge, resistance and conflict (Bernstein 1996: 193).

As Moore & Maton (2001) describe, having analysed the nature of educational knowledge, and then how knowledge is selected from fields of knowledge production and then rearranged and recontextualised to become educational knowledge, the next question is: what characterises the nature of these fields of knowledge production? Bernstein conceptualises these in terms of 'knowledge structures'. Bernstein defines a 'hierarchical knowledge structure' as 'a coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure, hierarchically organised' which 'attempts to create very general propositions and theories, which integrate knowledge at lower levels, and in this way shows underlying uniformities across an expanding range of apparently different

phenomena' (1999: 161, 162), such as physics. A 'horizontal knowledge structure' is defined as 'a series of specialised languages with specialised modes of interrogation and criteria for the construction and circulation of texts' (1999: 162), such as each of the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.

These concepts have formed the basis for a growing range of studies into knowledge in multiple fields, both inside and outside education and across knowledge production, teaching, and learning (see, for example, Christie & Martin eds 2007; Maton 2000) (Wikipedia entry – Basil Bernstein).

1.5. Social Consciousness as a Reflection of Material Work

This subsection is similar to the previous one in that it also deals with ideal structures. Illustrations of the title mechanism abound. Engles notices, for instance, that 'the theory of heat did not develop from pure thought, but from a study of the economic working of steam engines', and comes to the conclusion: 'Until now they have only boasted of what production owes to science, but science itself owes infinitely more to production' (M.E.A. Vol. 2: 195).

Or take the history of painting. From its earliest, prehistoric examples where the most common themes in cave paintings are large wild animals, such as bison, wild horses, aurochs and deer in relation to which Henri Breuil interpreted the paintings as being hunting magic, meant to increase the number of animals through ancient Egypt and, a big leap forward, in many paintings of the Dutch school to the modern times² painters commonly depicted various objects and means of material work, as well as its subjects, be it peasants toiling in the field, or factory workers. Themes related both to material work and quasi-work are to be found, for example, within the broad spectrum of works by one of the most-loved artists, Vincent Van Gogh such as *Peasant Woman Laundering*, *Potato Digging (Five Figures)* or *Auvers Wheat Harvest*.

In relation to another substructure of social consciousness 'Anti-Duehring' reads:

² To illustrate, Fernard Leger, 'upon his return to France in 1945, his work became less abstract, and he produced many monumental figure compositions depicting scenes of popular life featuring acrobats, builders, divers etc. Art historian Charlotta Kotik has written that Leger's 'determination to depict the common man, as well as to create for him, was a result of socialist theories widespread among the avant-garde both before and after World War II.' However, Léger's social conscience was not that of a fierce Marxist, but of a passionate humanist'.

‘... men, consciously or unconsciously, derive their ethical ideas in the last resort from the practical relations on which their class position is based—from the economic relations in which they carry on production and exchange

But nevertheless there is great deal which the three moral theories mentioned above have in common – is this not at least a portion of a morality which is fixed once and for all? – These moral theories represent three different stages of the same historical development, have therefore a common historical background, and for that reason alone they necessarily have much in common. Even more. At similar or approximately similar stages of economic development moral theories must of necessity be more or less in agreement. From the moment when private ownership of movable property developed, all societies in which this private ownership existed had to have this moral injunction in common: Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19). Does this injunction thereby become an eternal moral injunction? By no means. In a society in which all motives for stealing have been done away with, in which therefore at the very most only lunatics would ever steal, how the preacher of morals would be laughed at who tried solemnly to proclaim the eternal truth: Thou shalt not steal! We therefore reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and for ever immutable ethical law on the pretext that the moral world, too, has its permanent principles which stand above history and the differences between nations. We maintain on the contrary that all moral theories have been hitherto the product, in the last analysis, of the economic conditions of society obtaining at the time. And as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality has always been class morality; it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or ever since the oppressed class became powerful enough, it has represented its indignation against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed. That in this process there has on the whole been progress in morality, as in all other branches of human knowledge, no one will doubt. But we have not yet passed beyond class morality’ (Engels 1884).

This fairly brief sketch of the manifestations of dependence of various departments of social consciousness upon the economic structure is, of course, not meant as an exhaustive one. The same caveat applies to the whole section which is surely to be conceived of as an outline of some of the relevant processes and relationships in which further research is clearly both needed and desirable rather than as a comprehensive depiction of the topic.

1.6. Quasi-Work as Conditioned by Ownership of Capital and Labour Power

While language may be considered as a means of many types of work, including quasi-work, and various forms of social consciousness can perform that role as well, quasi-work is dependent on the economic structure in another important respect as well. Here, social classes as groupings of people of similar position relative to ownership of capital and labour power comes up as a mediating mechanism.

‘... in many of the areas central to sociological endeavour there is little evidence that the influence of class is declining and, indeed, some evidence that its influence is Growing. Shavit and Blossfeld’s (1993) edited collection shows that the influence of class origins on children’s educational attainment showed no decline over the course of the twentieth century in thirteen developed nations. The papers in Evans (2000) demonstrate that the much vaunted ‘general decline of class voting’ is an inaccurate description of the rather complex and cross-nationally varying trends in this phenomenon. Class voting seems to have weakened in Scandinavia, but in Germany, France and elsewhere no such temporal change is evident. Lastly, in the area of social mobility, Breen and Goldthorpe (2001) show that in Britain, during the last quarter of the twentieth century, there has been no change in the extent to which class origins help shape class destinations. This holds true even controlling for educational attainment and measures of individual ability. This result may then be added to the evidence of longer-term temporal stability in patterns of class mobility in Europe reported by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992)’ (Savage et al. 2006).

There are a number of studies depicting classes vis-a-vis dependent outcomes, such as educational attainment (Halsey, Heath and Ridge 1980), social mobility prospects (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992), voting behaviour (Evans 1999), health outcomes (Bartley 2004; Savage et al. 2006). Another such study of how work, position, life, social situation, etc interacted and combined. This analysis allows one to:

... nail the myth that top managers are prone to more heart attacks because of ‘pressure’. They are not and we now know why. With responsibility comes status, power, control, and the means to relieve stress (membership of the gym, a night at the opera, a holiday villa) is often arranged by your secretary and so on. As you move lower down, so people’s lives become more bound up with lower status, less control and the need to battle and juggle a host of other commitments. It is the harassed worker on the shop floor or in the office who is more at risk of a heart attack and,

beneath them, the cleaner doing two jobs on minimum wage. This also explains negative health behaviours and why these should give rise to different incidences of disease when the same immediate causal factors, e.g. smoking, appear to be present. But some readers may be puzzling about a theoretical problem in the link between social class and the health gradient. Those who insist that we live in a class society have to defend themselves not only against those who deny the reality of class but also those who want to define it simply in terms of hierarchy. It is here that we run up against the fundamental weakness of the argument about social gradients in health. It is clear that they exist, but what causes them? What is the 'cause of the cause'? To solve this problem we have to look behind the gradients and explore what determines the different incomes, jobs and degree of control that people have over their lives. This means that the central thing has to be class analysis and showing how any gradient is structured by ownership and control and not least, in capitalism, by ownership and control of the means of production.

Here several related concepts are absolutely central – alienation, exploitation, class and class conflict. Inequalities are a consequence of how these interact and it is from this that social gradients and gradients of ill health flow. Marmot makes occasional gestures towards this but they are weak and inconsistent. The same is true of Wilkinson even though he has a more systematic grasp of the social side. To insist on the importance of this is not just about adding an additional layer of possibly superfluous explanation. It makes the argument stronger in terms of its logic and explanatory power, and it gives it a clearer political thrust because it also forces us to consistently address the political economy of both health causation and the limits of reform within the system.

Alienation, for example, is fundamental to explaining both our loss of control of social processes and the way that they are turned against us, and our resulting inability to relate to one another as proper human beings. Exploitation gives us the possibility of understanding how and why the rewards go to the few who make so little contribution to our real wealth. And class and class conflict help us to understand the resulting texture of social relationships and their antagonisms.

We can make these arguments work in a more precise fashion too. As organisations have become more powerful the argument arises about who has effective disposition of capital and labour within them. The key social argument here is that the more your position gives you control over capital and labour, control over yourself, your work, the work and lives of others, the lower the levels of ill health. The more your life is controlled by others the less the level of health. The social gradient is not simply about

‘who has what’ but the capacity to command people and resources – the very issue that is at the centre of class analysis (Haynes 2009).

The same class approach fully confirmed its utility in my own research, proving that class and estate positions significantly influence voting, political and high-culture participation, religious behaviour, the extent of exposition to occupational diseases, hazards and accidents.

Conclusion

The present paper, comprising-as it does-the second part of the essay on the framework of socio-economic structuralism, its first part, published in the previous issue, being focused on what the author of the theory concerned terms sociology of the economy, or a sociological treatment of the economic structure sets out to develop a typology of a range of basic channels through which the economy affects the non-economic domain of society at large. It has been possible to specify a number of routes via which the economic structure exerts its impact on extra-economic structures, demonstrating that such an investigation has nothing in common with economic determinism, economism, etc. Quite the contrary, in the author’s view, the questions concerned constitute the very substance of economic sociology, which ignores them at its peril.

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Appendix

A Note on Giddens' Theory of Structuration

As the reader of especially parts of the text, referring to the dilemma of structure vs. agency may believe, its claims should be confronted with relevant approaches of other researchers. It seems useful, therefore, to analyse in more detail one such theoretical framework.

The theory of structuration, proposed by Anthony Giddens (1984) in *The Constitution of Society* (mentioned also in *Central Problems of Social Theory* 1979), is usually treated as an attempt (another one of that sort being offered by Pierre Bourdieu) to reconcile theoretical dichotomies of social systems such as agency/structure, subjective/objective, and micro/macro perspectives. Accordingly, the approach does not focus on neither the individual agent nor society as a whole "but social practices ordered across space and time" (1984, 2). Its proponents adopt this purportedly balanced position, attempting to treat influences of structure (which inherently includes culture) and agency equally.

To put it in a nutshell, the theory of structuration holds that all human action is performed within the context of a pre-existing social structure which is governed by a set of norms and / or laws which are distinct from those of other social structures. Therefore, all human action is at least partly predetermined based on the varying contextual rules under which it occurs. However, the structure and rules are not permanent and external, but sustained and modified by human action in a textbook example of reflexive feedback. The theory under consideration posits, and rightly so, that social life is not the sum of all micro-level activity (e.g. dyads). On the other hand, and this point is equally undisputable, social activity cannot be completely explained from a macro perspective.

What then is the relationship of the two to each other? The repetition of the acts of individual agents reproduce the structure. Social structures are neither inviolable nor permanent. The social structures constrain the actions of individual agents. Thus structure and action constrain each other in an evolving way. Structuration theory aims to avoid extremes of both structural (attributed to structural functionalism

and Marxism) or agent (supposedly displayed by so-called interpretive sociologists) determinism. The balancing of agency and structure is referred to as the duality of structure: social structures make social action possible, and at the same time that social action creates those very structures.

It is important to note that for Giddens, structures are rules and resources (sets of transformation relations) organized as properties of social systems. Rules are patterns people may follow in social life. Resources relate to what is created by human action; they are not given by nature (explained further below). Here one comes across the first limitation of the theory under investigation. As is apparent from the notion of material work introduced elsewhere (Tittenbrun 2011a), and is also evident from the discussion of economic property (Tittenbrun 2011a; 2011b), natural phenomena and processes are part and parcel of society. Raw materials are objects of work already transformed by human work, but for them to exist one must assume also the pre-existence of, for example, mineral resources from which such raw materials can arise. In short, neither the concept of society nor that of social structure is reducible to human action, even including its products. Theories that overlook this essential fact could be dubbed pan-humanist (anthropic) or over-antinaturalist.

The structuration theory employs a recursive notion of actions constrained and enabled by structures which are produced and reproduced by those actions. These features caused that Giddens' approach has been adopted by those with structuralist inclinations, but who wish to situate such structures in human practice rather than reify them as an ideal type or material property. Some of our suspicions regarding Giddens' actual failure to go beyond the antinomy: agency/structure are corroborated when we learn that the theory under investigation is different, for example, from Actor-Network Theory which grants a certain autonomy to technical artifacts. In turn, that the distinction between discursive and practical knowledge made by the theory of structuration is again irrefutable, but hardly eye-opening. Similarly, on the basis of mainstream sociology, it is commonplace to recognize that what knowledge social agents have, is reflexive and situated, and that habitual use becomes institutionalised.

According to the theory, a social system can be understood by its structure, modality, and interaction. Structure is constituted by rules and resources governing and available to agents (authoritative resources control persons, whereas allocative resources control material objects). This definition of 'resources' is rather unfortunate; one can detect here the trace of property rights theory but, to an even greater extent, influences of a position that can be described as pan-dominationalism, i.e. a kind of

reductionism where different social relations are treated as merely different varieties of the same essential core, i.e. power, control or authority.

Going further, the modality of a structural system is the means by which structures are translated into action. Interaction is the activity instantiated by the agent acting within the social system. It is murky, to say the least. Why should an act of a single agent be termed interaction given that the latter concept, by definition, refers to actions of at least two actors influencing one another?

Social systems have patterns of social relations that exist over time; the changing nature of space and time will determine the interaction of social relations and therefore structure. For example, nineteenth century Britain set out certain rules for that time and space. Those rules affected the action which determines structure and the structure was upheld as long as it was reproduced in action. It is a sign of an excessive self-confidence and over-estimation to claim that hitherto social structures or 'models of society' were taken to be beyond the realm of human control – the positivistic approach; the other social theory would be that of action creating society – the interpretivist approach. Accordingly, we had to wait many years for a sociological saviour to come.

It comes as no surprise that immersed in such euphoric proponents of the structure approach one can reach the Concomitantly, the duality of structure argues that they are in fact one and the same – different sides to the coin of a similar problem of order.

Agency, as Giddens calls it, is human action. To be human is to be an agent, although not all agents are human beings. Advocates of animal rights would certainly welcome that proclamation. Less so, we are afraid, any reader of Giddens capable of logical thinking. How to reconcile the latter claim with the definition of action as necessarily reflexive? Agents' knowledge of their society informs their actions, which reproduce social structures, which in turn enforce and maintain the dynamics of action. Giddens defines 'ontological security' as the trust people have in social structure; everyday actions have some degree of predictability, thus ensuring social stability. This observation is, again, a textbook commonplace. That stable predictability or predictable stability is not immutable, though, as the possession of agency allows one to break away from normative actions, and depending on the sum of social factors at work, they may instigate shifts in the social structure. The dynamic between agency and structure makes such generative action possible.

Thus agency can lead to both the reproduction and the transformation of society. Another way to explain this concept is by what Giddens calls the 'reflexive monitoring of actions' (1991: 36). Reflexive monitoring looks at the ability to judge actions'

effectiveness in achieving their objectives: if agents can reproduce structure through action, they can also transform it. The creator of structuration theory should be praised for distinguishing those two types of change, but otherwise this approach remains vague. To state that agents are able to act in such a way so as to transform social structures is one thing, to determine on what conditions and in what situations they are able to do so is quite another. Without this indispensable supplement, the theory hangs in the air, remaining an unsuccessful attempt to integrate action and structure, change and stability. Merely to pass such a judgment is hardly sufficient, though, as it is rather sterile. A fruitful approach is, instead, to look for the reasons of the project's failure. They seem to lie in its poor conceptual armoury. In particular, in the theory of structuration the notion of structural contradiction is missing. Contradiction is that link bridging statics and dynamics, reproduction and transformation or generation (a qualitatively new state of a given structure or a new structure). Before turning to an explication of the concept concerned, a comment regarding grounds on which to distinguish a birth of a new structure from qualitative changes remaining, however, within the framework of the structure concerned is required. In order to make this distinction an additional concept is needed, that of 'structural core'. This comprises a subset of those structural components that endow a given structure with its identity. For example, one can drive a car with broken glasses (non-core element) but without an engine any chance of a ride evaporates. So long as ongoing changes do not infringe the core, we are still dealing with the same structure, whatever secondary changes it has been subject to. The merit of the concept of contradiction stems from its dialectical character; contradiction may be defined as such relationships between components of a structure that the same phenomena that are responsible for its reproduction (simple or extended which refers to a quantitative change) cause its qualitative change or transformation. Such an approach forces one to search for, first of all, internal sources of change before trying to identify external ones. Moreover, the impact of the latter must always be investigated as mediated by the internal condition of a given structure, including its contradictions above all.

Our criticism levied at the existence of 'black holes' in Giddens' analytical framework appears to be an adequate metaphor considering the fact that damage to other areas of structuration theory, by those absent concepts, is aggravated by its next part. Giddens distinguishes three types of structures in social systems: those of signification, legitimation, and domination. These are analytical distinctions, rather than distinct ideal types, that mobilize and reinforce one another.

Signification produces meaning through organized webs of language (semantic codes, interpretive schemes and discursive practices).

Legitimation produces a moral order via naturalization in societal norms, values and standards.

Domination produces (and is an exercise of) power, originating from the control of resources.

To understand how they work together, consider how the signification of a concept (e.g. the use of the word 'patriot' in political speech) borrows from and contributes to legitimization (e.g. nationalistic norms) and coordinates forms of domination (e.g. a police state) from which it in turn gains further force.

Whatever merits there are to the above threefold taxonomy, it is miles away from constituting a fully blown theory of society. For this very reason an ambitious attempt made by one of Giddens' supporters, Sewell (1992), to specify what has remained an underspecified aspect of the theory: the question 'Why are structural changes possible?' is unsatisfactory. He argues that changes arises from: 'The multiplicity of structures—societies are based on practices that derived from many distinct structures, which exist at different levels, operate in different modalities, and are themselves based on widely varying types and quantities of resources'. The transposability of rules can be 'applied to a wide and not fully predictable range of cases outside the context in which they were initially learned'. This also takes account of the unpredictability of resource accumulation (e.g. investment, military tactics, or a comedian's repertoire), the polysemy of resources (e.g. to what should success in resource accumulation be attributed?), and the intersection of structures (e.g. in the structure of capitalist society there are both the modes of production based on private property and profit, as well as the mode of labor organization based on worker solidarity) (Sewel 1992: 16–19).

It is our contention that for the issue of causes of structural change to be effectively resolved, one has to dispose of a social theory worthy its name, inclusive of a rich set of conceptual tools that might serve to identify specific societal structures and the state of their internal and external relationships. The foregoing, including the final sentence, makes it clear that this is not the case; the aforementioned sentence reveals that proponents of the theory under investigation fail to comprehend certain concepts which they themselves employ, as the example of the 'mode of production' clearly shows. Otherwise, the aforementioned author would not compare the concept in question with one concerning a mode of workers' organisation; the latter, at first glance, is not concerned with relations of production.

The fact of the matter, however, is that the situation is even worse. The above-mentioned proponent of Giddens' framework unwittingly uses two related concepts, but remains blithely unaware of their intimate relationship. For this to come to his

knowledge he would have to, firstly, understand the role of property relations as a foundation of the capitalist mode of economic activity and, secondly, conceive of the latter in economic terms. Nothing betrays that either Giddens or his proponent really has such knowledge. The affinity mentioned above stems from the fact that whilst the former of the two concepts refers, of course, to private property of the means of production, the latter may in some situations, refer also to the relations of ownership, but this time it is collective ownership of labour power which is at stake. A defender of Giddens' theory might at this juncture object on the grounds that he is not obliged to be acquainted with the content of the above concepts, and he / she would be absolutely right were it not for one tiny detail. What is the point of using such concepts, the meaning of which one does not understand?

As it turns out, other scholars also find structuration theory implausible. Notably, Margaret Archer raises a similar point to our own observation put forward above. She, namely, draws attention to centralization as reducible to the exercise of power by determinate actors.

She charges Giddens with:

The voluntaristic bias [which] means that institutions are what people produce, not what they confront—and have to grapple with in ways which are themselves conditioned by the structural features involved.

For Giddens institutional recursiveness never reflects the durability of constraint: it always represents the continuity of reproduction. Only at this level does Giddens concede that 'unintended consequences of action' stretch beyond the recursive effects of the duality of structure ... producing what others would term 'emergent properties', but which he calls 'self-regulating properties'. Immediately and categorically he asserts that it is their facilitating effects upon which theory should centre – 'the self-regulating properties of social systems must be grasped via a theory of system contradiction' ... The reason for this one-sidedness is that to Giddens contradictions represent cracks through which radical change can be forced by social conflict – 'ceteris paribus, conflict and contradiction have a tendency to coincide' (1979: 144) (Archer 2010).

Thus, from Archer's analysis, it follows that the so-called duality structure is not the only dualism written into his approach. Contradiction is to account for transformation but has nothing to do with reproduction, so that the dualism of two types of change reasserts itself.

This refers back to our above comments on the dialectical notion of contradiction: one and the same phenomenon may, depending on conditions of time and place, lead to a quantitative or qualitative change, dsimple and extended reproduction

being cases of the former. And again it is not accidental that similar problems with accounting for different types of change are shared by the aforementioned French theorist, whose work is also marked by discord between rhetoric and reality.

In the face of such a powerful critique as one cited below, one wonders how Bourdieu's commentator can consider the concept in question an useful one:

"It is the absence of any real sense either of what drives the system to reproduce itself, besides the mechanical process of reproduction itself, or of what may subvert or revolutionise this process, which makes the otherwise fruitful concept of habitus appear trapped in a circular process, as Bourdieu's own explanations frequently seem to underline:

'Habitus is thus at the basis of strategies of reproduction that tend to maintain separations, distances, and relations of order(ing), hence concurring in practice (although not consciously or deliberately) in reproducing the entire system of differences constitutive of the social order'" (Wolfreys 2000).

Indeed, Bourdieu seems to focus on only one type of change, i.e. reproduction, whereas any qualitative transformation is difficult to articulate within his conceptual framework.

This suggests that the notion of habitus cannot be regarded as a successful attempt to go beyond the dilemma of agency vs. Structure. In depicting our own framework, it is useful to contrast an activist and contemplative approach to the concept of structure.

Marx's claim from *Grundrisse* that 'Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand' can be, on the basis of certain interpretations, understood incorrectly. While without a doubt it renders such characteristic of socio-economic structuralism (as our macro-theoretical framework is termed) as holism, in another respect it may lead to misleading conclusions. What we mean here is the fact that actually society does not simply consist of mutual relationships of individuals to each other, as the building blocks of structures properly understood are not individual persons, but their actions and their inter-relations. Taking this as its starting point, a more detailed discussion of a range of societal structures composing society at large can be found in (Tittenbrun 2011a).

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