
SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND SYSTEM INTEGRATION: DEVELOPING THE DISTINCTION

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Abstract This paper underlines the importance of the distinction between 'social' and 'system' integration (agency and structure) introduced by David Lockwood in 1964. Its four sections (i) examine the original difficulty of maintaining any distinction between the 'parts' of society and its 'people' against the social ontology of Individualism whose proponents argued that the former must always be reduced to the latter as individuals were the ultimate constituents of society, (ii) shows how collectivist opposition held 'systemic factors' to be indispensable in sociological explanations, but could not substantiate their ontological status against the charge of reification whilst empiricism held sway, (iii) explores how once the individualist/collectivist debate was superseded, Lockwood's distinction was redefined in structuration theory, where insistence on treating structure and agency as mutually constitutive effectively denied their independent variation and thus reduced the 'social' and the 'systemic' to differences in the *scale* of social practices; (iv) argues that social realism's ontology, in which 'structures' and 'agents' belong to different emergent strata of social reality, avoids reducing one to the other or eliding the two. Instead it supplies the ontological grounding for Lockwood's distinction and enables it to be developed into an explanatory programme – analytical dualism – whose central tenet is the need to explore the *interplay* between these two irreducible constituents of social reality in order to account for why things are 'so and not otherwise' and in a manner which is of direct utility to practical analysts of society.

Keywords: Lockwood, social and system integration, social ontology, analytical dualism.

The distinction between 'social' and 'system' integration was emphasised by David Lockwood in 1964 with the clear intention of increasing our ability to account for social change. It was used to define those states of the social system which *enabled* social conflict to be transformative, compared with those which constrained even profound social conflict to systemic reproduction. Correspondingly, it defined *when* social antagonism was a necessary but insufficient condition for transforming social structures and *why* a system could remain unchanged, despite containing tensions and contradictions, if not subjected to conflictual pressures.

The fourteen pages which spelled out the distinction contained all the elements of a nascent research programme: one which would be progressive, because it cut through the contemporary deadlock between partisans of normative functionalism (with their epiphenomenal view of over-socialised agency) and of conflict theory (where systemic features were seen as the inert

effects of agential interaction); propositional, because intended to account for why things were 'so and not otherwise'; and panoramic because applicable historically and comparatively, at the macro, meso, or, for that matter, micro levels. Yet, above all, it would be programmatic because this basic distinction between the 'parts' and the 'people' invited a non-reductive analysis of the *interplay* between 'structure and agency' or 'culture and agency', thus yielding a new form of non-conflationary theorising¹ whose explanatory power derived from treating their properties as *separable* and the interface between them as the locus of intensive investigation, since this is where outcomes for both were determined. Such a programme could broadly be termed 'analytical dualism': dualistic because distinguishing the 'parts' from the 'people', precisely in order to examine their interplay, but analytic rather than philosophical in its dualism since neither element can exist without the other, and over time they are responsible for their mutual elaboration (which is the explanatory point of accentuating the distinction).

Yet the research programme was slow to develop and this paper is devoted to tracing through the difficulties confronted over the last thirty years in: advancing the distinction in the first place against overt opposition; sustaining it in an empiricist environment, hostile to its substantiation; defending it against distorting redefinitions, intended to redeploy it in a mode of theorising which is explicitly opposed to analytical dualism; and upholding it because subsequent developments in the philosophy of social science, particularly Social Realism, now furnish it with secure underpinnings (its methodological utility was never seriously at issue).

Lockwood's prime aim was to improve explanatory power, but any kind of explanation necessarily involves ontological considerations. The social ontology endorsed plays a powerful *regulatory* role towards the explanatory methodology adopted because it conceptualises social reality in certain terms, thus identifying what there is to be explained, and also rules out explanations in terms of entities or properties which are deemed non-existent (as atheists, for example, cannot attribute their well-being to divine providence). On the other hand, regulation is mutual, for what is held to exist cannot remain immune from what really, actually or factually is found to be the case.

Therefore, the fact that Lockwood was primarily concerned with explanation did not mean that issues of social ontology could be by-passed, and, at the time, these were dominated by the rival claims of Individualism versus Collectivism. It is worth revisiting this traditional debate to demonstrate that the very terms in which it was conducted in the 1950s and 1960s were extremely hostile to establishing the distinction between 'social' and 'system' integration.

Advancing the distinction – in opposition to Methodological Individualism

Lockwood began by distinguishing the 'parts' from the 'people' and then

examining their combination in order to account for variable outcomes, which otherwise eluded theorisation. The increase in explanatory power derived from concentrating upon neither element, but rather from forging explanations in terms of their *variable* combinations. In an explicit rejection of methodological individualism in the form of 'conflict theory', his concern was to show that 'social (mal) integration' is a necessary but insufficient basis upon which to account for social change, unless this is complemented by examining its interplay with 'system integration'.

While social change is very frequently associated with conflict, the reverse does not necessarily hold. Conflict may be both endemic and intense in a social system without causing any basic structural change. Why does some conflict result in change while other conflict does not? Conflict theory would have to answer that this is decided by the variable factors affecting the power balance between groups. Here we reach the analytical limits of conflict theory. As a reaction to normative functionalism it is entirely confined to the problem of social integration. What is missing is the system integration focus of general functionalism, which, by contrast with normative functionalism, involved no prior commitment to the study of social stability (Lockwood 1964:249).

Opposition was guaranteed from Individualists whose commitment to empiricism reassured them that, however complex social structure might seem, there are only two possible ways in which it can be construed: either social organisation is constituted by things which are manifestly real or by reified entities, and of the two the former must be correct. Thus Watkins states: if "methodological individualism means that human beings are supposed to be the only moving agents in history, and if sociological holism means that some super-human agents or factors are supposed to be at work in history, then these two alternatives are exhaustive" (Watkins 1968:271). Ontologically then, social structure could only refer to the human or the super-human, as no other contenders then seriously figured on the lists. With empiricist confidence the Individualist thus insisted 'that the social environment by which any particular individual is confronted and frustrated and sometimes manipulated and occasionally destroyed is, if we ignore its physical ingredients, made up of other *people*, their habits, inertia, loyalties, rivalries and so on' (Watkins 1968:278).

This is simply an *ontological assertion* which requires *demonstration*. Yet demonstrating that the social context is epiphenomenal entails showing that every reference to it in explanations of social life (and no-one wishes to deny that we are influenced by our social environment) actually refers to 'other people' (under the 'inflated' description particular to Individualists).² Specifically this means showing that, in relation to people, *social structure is not*: (i) autonomous or independent, (ii) pre-existent, (iii) causally efficacious. Collectivists argued that they fail on all three counts, and their arguments are persuasive.

(i) If autonomy is to be withheld from the social context, which is to be denied any independence from people, this means the Individualist must vindicate the claim that it can be treated as nothing other than an *aggregate* of individuals, which as such has no independence from its constituents – therefore our social environment is constituted by ‘interpersonal relations’. It also follows that if the ‘social structure’ is only an aggregate, then ‘the group’ becomes synonymous with ‘the social’ to the Individualist. Here the Collectivist queries whether in studying society we are, can, and should be confined to the study of ‘groups’. When we examine a kinship structure, for example, we are not just investigating how that ‘group’ *does* intermarry, transmit property, have particular obligations towards specific others and so on, but what rules govern their inter-marriage etc. Comparison of kinship structures is to compare different rules not different groups, for the rules regulate what the members do. Certainly, the continued salience of any rule depends on people continuing to adhere to it (this is merely a statement of activity-dependence) *but* their adherence is not what makes the rule, otherwise rules just become descriptions of what people do and have no regulatory or constitutive function. The identical point can be made about all other social or cultural institutions.

The same Collectivist argument serves to show the defects entailed in viewing environmental influences as nothing but ‘interpersonal relations’. It insists that in dealing with the social context we are not paradigmatically concerned with groups at all. Roles, as Collectivists have often pointed out, are more important for understanding what is going on between landlords and tenants or bank cashiers and customers than their relations as persons. Moreover the role has to be granted some autonomy from its occupant or how else do we explain the similar actions of a succession of incumbents, or that when promoted to bank manager our original cashier now acts quite differently? Once again the fact that roles are necessarily activity-dependent is insufficient to deny them the independent capacity to structure individuals’ activities.

(ii) Yet the Individualist argues that ‘no social tendency exists which could not be altered *if* the individuals concerned both wanted to alter it and possessed the appropriate information’ (Watkins 1968:271). Thus the social context has become the effect of *contemporary* other people. For it follows that whatever makes up our environment (such as enduring roles, positions and distributions e.g. of material, cultural and human capital) are all things that the ‘people concerned’ now do not want to change/do not know how to change or do not think about changing. In other words, whatever the origins of the social tendencies and features we observe, their present existence is due in some way to the people present. Therefore, explanation of the social structure is always in the present tense and responsibility for everything present lies firmly on the shoulders of those here present. Now pre-existence, the fact that we are all born into an on-going social context, constrained to speak its language, take our places in a prior distribution of resources, be

sanctioned by its laws and confront its organisations is a powerful argument to the Collectivist for the existence of constraints and enablements which stem from properties of society. The internal and necessary relationships between social positions (landlord and tenant, MP and constituent, husband and wife) have developed from past interaction but form a context within which we have to live. Only if their persistence *can* be attributed to the sustaining behaviour of 'other people' may they be assigned an epiphenomenal status.

However, if we take the example of a demographic structure (which should be agreeable to Individualists since it is made up of N people of different ages), then the relevant population, that is those of child-bearing age who could change it, cannot significantly modify it for several years nor eliminate all its effects for many more. Yet more significantly, they themselves are constantly influenced by it since it has determined the size of this initial 'relevant population' to which they belong. Many distributions have this same property of taking time to change, even if all people present are consensually dedicated to their transformation. Their very resistance shows that they are not epiphenomenal. Moreover, desires for persistence or transformation (and knowledge of how to effect them) are not randomly distributed, but shaped by the advantages and disadvantages which the pre-existent property distributes differentially throughout the population – and cannot be understood independently of them.

(iii) Denial of the pre-existence of social forms was intended to deprive them of any causal efficacy, yet this claim also fails if such properties are resistant to change or take a considerable time to alter. Although many of them may *eventually* be changed by human action, nevertheless *while* such environmental factors endure, they can constrain and facilitate different activities and may have consequences which are not trivial for future social change. The Individualists, however, make the opposite assumption. In effect they argue that because such social tendencies are ultimately reversible, nothing of importance will happen *before* they are reversed. Matters of this kind cannot be decided by theoretical fiat.

This was the whole burden of the Collectivist critique, namely that references to these structural properties were often unavoidable and they were therefore necessary to adequate causal accounts. As such, this was a purely methodological critique which concluded that '*explanatory* emergence' must be endorsed contra Individualist reductionism, but one which did not move on to question the ontological foundations of the Individualist programme.³ Yet why stop there, winning the methodological point but conceding the ontological one, especially as the two are so closely intertwined?

Sustaining the distinction in the face of Empiricism?

Writing in 1964, Lockwood shared the difficulties of Collectivists in

establishing the existence of non-individual but also non-reified aspects of society. Thus he stressed that 'the vital question is, of course: what are the 'component elements' of social systems which give rise to strain, tension or contradiction?' (Lockwood 1964:250). The question is actually broader still, namely what conceivable kinds of properties can pertain to social systems which exert *any causal effects* whatsoever – in conjunction with people, but exerting an independent influence upon them? The irony for social theory at the time was that Lockwood had difficulty in answering his own question: he could and did justify the explanatory profitability of utilising his distinction but could not supply an ontological account of how it was possible to differentiate systemic properties from people and attribute causal powers to them.

This left the 'component elements' employed open to the charge of reification from the uncharitable, or their construal as heuristic devices by the more charitable. Lockwood was clearly aware of the difficulty: his first inclination was indeed only to be advancing heuristic claims, maintaining that his distinction is a 'wholly artificial one' (Lockwood 1964:245). (This interpretation has become widely diffused in the literature).⁴ Yet five pages later artificiality gives way to the ontological and methodological claim that the two are 'not only analytically separable, but also, because of the time elements involved, factually distinguishable' (p. 250). Once accepted as being real, the attribution of causal or generative powers to the 'component elements' quickly follows; 'there is nothing metaphysical about the general notion of social relationships being somehow implicit in a given set of material conditions' (p. 251). The problem remains and is becoming more pressing now that *specific* causal powers are being attributed to ontologically ungrounded 'component elements' whose mode of influence is also methodologically unspecified. However Lockwood remained crystal clear that his question could not be answered at the level of observable events and entities. Thus he rightly dismissed the 'institutional patterns' used by normative functionalists as an inadequate solution.

The irony of Collectivism was that whilst it defended the *methodological* indispensability of 'structural factors', no overall conception of social structure was advanced *ontologically*. Its over-riding concern is with explanation and particularly with the deficiencies of the Individualists' programme of reductionism. In criticising it, the Collectivists' case rests largely on the fact that references to the social context have to be included for explanatory adequacy. Otherwise accounts break down short of the goal (through failure of composition laws) and 'societal properties' are then needed to supply the deficit. Although the point is also made that 'chaps', their dispositions and their doings cannot even be identified, (i.e. described as 'believers' or 'voters' etc.) without further resort to the social context, this is not used to issue an ontological challenge to the Individualists' concepts of 'structure' and 'agency'. Consequently, Collectivists deal with the 'social structure' in the

most fragmented way, as a disparate collection of facts or factors, only adduced when Individualism fails. Yet when they are, Collectivists cannot evade the vital question which Lockwood had posed about their ontological status. Here the fear of reification made the Collectivist response as circumspect as possible.

Gellner, for instance, speculated that the patterns we are capable of isolating in our environment and reacting towards are not 'merely abstracted', not simply mental constructs. Instead, "The pattern isolated, however, is not 'merely abstracted' but is *as I am somewhat sheepishly tempted to say 'really there'*" (Gellner 1968:264). The origins of this 'sheepishness' are important for they were responsible for withholding full ontological status from 'societal properties' for decades. Tentativeness is rooted in two spectres of reification and the seeming difficulty of affirming the existence of 'societal properties' without invoking one of them. The first was J. S. Mill's (1884:573) old fear, namely that to acknowledge them was to countenance the existence of a new 'social substance'. The second was that talk about 'societal properties' was also talk about things produced or generated by Society, independently of the activities of people and therefore superordinate to actors.

Collectivists were perfectly clear that they were making no such claims; they were defending the irreducibility of 'societal facts' whilst *also* upholding their activity-dependence. Thus Gellner underlined that where properties of social complexes are concerned, 'these latter can indeed exist only if their parts exist – that is indeed the predicament of all wholes – but their fates *qua* fates of complexes can nevertheless be the initial conditions or indeed the final conditions of the causal sequence' (Gellner 1968:263). In exactly the same vein Mandelbaum maintained that 'one need not hold that a society is an entity independent of all human beings in order to hold that societal facts are not reducible to individual behaviour' (Mandelbaum 1973:230). Although such statements clear their advocates of reifying Society, it remained impossible to substantiate the existence of any non-observable societal property within the confines of an empiricist epistemology, where knowledge comes only from sense-experience.

For Individualists to conclude that, because of their observability, individuals were the only conceivable 'moving agents' (i.e. real and really causally efficacious) was pure empiricism. Instead Collectivists rejected the human and the super-human as exhausting the possible 'moving agents' in history and argued for the existence of a third type. 'Societal facts', referred to forms of social organisations, to social institutions, to persistent roles, that is to systematic and enduring *relationships*. In short, these were neither human nor super-human in nature but *relational*, and relations depended upon people but at the same time exerted an independent influence over their activities. However, given such a relational conception, 'one can still legitimately ask what sort of ontological status societal facts can conceivably possess if it is affirmed that they depend for their existence on the activities of human beings

and yet are claimed not to be identical with these activities' (Mandelbaum 1973:230). The question is answerable, but it cannot be answered within the framework of empiricism. Moreover, Collectivists were aware that the answer was 'emergent properties', for Mandelbaum actually refers to 'existential emergents' and Gellner mentions the 'principle of Internal Relations' for explicating their inner constitution. Significantly both insights are confined to footnotes, conveying the impression that to air them would invite a frosty reception, possibly withering Collectivism's more modest methodological attack upon the explanatory inadequacies of Individualism.

Most likely they were correct, for the notion of 'emergent properties' depends upon overturning empiricism itself. Instead of a one-dimensional reality coming to us through the 'hard-data' supplied by the senses, to speak of 'emergence' implies a *stratified* social world including non-observable entities, where reductive talk about its ultimate constituents makes no sense, given that the relational properties pertaining to each stratum are all real, that it is nonsense to discuss whether something (like water) is more real than something else (like hydrogen and oxygen), and that regress as a means of determining 'ultimate constituents' is of no help in this respect and an unnecessary distraction in social or any other type of theorising.

To talk about 'emergent powers' is to refer to a property which comes into being through social combination. They exist by virtue of inter-relations, although not all relationships give rise to them. Thus the increased productivity of Adam Smith's pin-makers was a power emergent from their division of labour (relations of production) and not reducible to personal qualities like increased dexterity which did not account for the hundred fold increase in output (mass production), i.e. the *relational effect*. By contrast the Ladies' Sewing Circle was doubtless a social relationship but not one which generated the emergent power of mass production, since each confined herself to her own work. In the development of such 'emergent powers' there is nothing mysterious, neither is there any mystery about their constituents and certainly no invocation of dubious 'social substances'.⁵

Such were the ontological implications of the insights which the Collectivists already had, but failed to pursue. And their reason for this was their full awareness that such efforts would come straight up against the brick wall of empiricist epistemology. Yet Gellner had seen a way round the epistemological difficulty constituted by non-observables, a method of securing the reality of relational concepts not on the perceptual criterion of empiricism, but through demonstrating their causal efficacy, that is employing a causal criterion to establish reality.

What precluded its exploitation was that the empiricist conception of causation, in terms of constant conjunctions at the level of (observable) events, constituted another brick wall. The trouble with 'internally related structures' is that their powers may not always be exercised because other contingencies intervene in society, which is necessarily an open system and

can never approximate to laboratory conditions of closure. Because of this, 'emergent properties' will not necessarily or usually be demonstrable by some regular co-variance in observable events. Hence despite their roles, bank tellers sometimes hand over money to masked-raiders and ideologies may be masked by tokenism. In other words, emergent properties rarely produce constant conjunctions in society and therefore generally fail Hume's test for they are usually incapable of predicting observable regularities.

On Humean terms, such 'structural properties' as could just earn their keep were ones which did make a contribution to accounting for a constant conjuncture, though most of the time, in open social systems, regularities at the level of events are just what emergent features *do not generate*. Therefore, those structural elements which can pass the Humean check-point only do so on an *ad hoc* basis, as fragmented 'variables', and, ironically, are also *atypical* 'of their own kind'.

Only after the empiricist hegemony had been challenged and the closely associated domination of positivism was similarly undermined did siding neither with Individualism nor Collectivism become a genuine option. Not only were the terms of the old debate between them rejected, but the debate itself was re-cast in entirely different ones. Nevertheless it remained a debate, with two new protagonists replacing the old pair, but one in which Lockwood's distinction was still entangled.

Defending the distinction against distortion: ontological elision and redefinition

The new 'ontology of praxis' as put forward in Structuration theory is intended to *transcend* the traditional debate through replacing the two sets of terms in which it was conducted by the notion of 'the duality of structure', in which agency and structure can be conceptualised only in relation to one another. From this, it follows methodologically that neither the reductionism advocated by Individualists nor the anti-reductionism defended by Collectivists can play any part in the Structurationists' approach to explanation – which takes up the novel position of *areductionism*. This is the direct logical consequence of their re-defining structure and agency as *inseparable*. Whilst this frees either from being an epiphenomenon of the other, it does so by holding them to be mutually constitutive (which is why this position is termed Elisionist here).

To treat 'structure' and 'agency' as inseparable is central to the notion of 'duality', and, as a method of transcending dualism it then produces an ontology of 'social practices' which are held to be the ultimate constituents of social reality. There is a decentering of the subject here because human beings become people, as opposed to organisms, only through drawing upon structural properties to generate social practices. There is an equivalent demotion of structure, which becomes real, as opposed to virtual only when instantiated

by agency. These ontological assumptions have direct implications for practical social theorising, for their corollary is that neither 'structure' nor 'agency' have independent or autonomous or anterior features, but only those properties which are manifested in and reproduced or transformed through 'social practices'. In other words, the very attempt to transcend the dualism of 'structure and agency' is incompatible with the distinction between the 'parts and the people', which is being defended here. We should not be misled by the continued use of the terms 'social' and 'system' integration for these are only retained within Structuration theory in a radically redefined form.

Now, the view defended throughout this paper is that conflation is always an error in social theory. The deficiencies of its 'upward' (Individualist) and 'downward' (Collectivist/Holist) versions were those of epiphenomenalism; that structure and agency respectively were deprived of relative autonomy and could thus be reduced to one or the other. Instead, the Central conflation of structuration theory deprives *both* elements of their relative autonomy, not through *reducing* one to the other, but by *compacting* the two together inseparably. Yet this very compression is what its advocates consider to be its strength – a method of conceptualising social life where there is no divorce, rupture or disjunction between the minutiae of everyday activities and the structures which are necessarily reproduced or transformed in the practices of everyday living. We do not intend to reproduce the English language each time we generate a grammatically correct sentence in it, but this is the inexorable consequence of our so doing. Enter the knowledgeable actor and exit the cultural dope; enter structure as a medium of action and exit structural properties as constraints upon it – these are the attractions of central conflation.

Since 'inseparability' is held to be a step forward it is important to note what this reconceptualisation has left behind. In particular it means that Elisionists deliberately turn their backs upon any autonomous features which could pertain independently to either 'structure' or 'agency'. Otherwise such features could be investigated separately, their distinctive properties would potentially make a difference and because of this the nature of their combination would become problematic, in view of which their interplay would require examination – and dualism would once more be the name of the game. In avoiding this turn of the wheel, 'structure and agency' become even more closely compacted together. Because 'structure' is inseparable from 'agency' then, *there is no sense in which it can be either emergent or autonomous or pre-existent or causally influential*. These implications derive directly from the assertion of the mutual constitution of structure and agency, where the "production and reproduction by active subjects are the constituting processes of structure. There cannot be one without the other . . . [because] They cannot refer to separate processes or separate structures" (Layder 1981:75). It thus remains to be seen *why* Giddens finds such virtue in his major premiss about inseparability as contained in the notion of the 'duality of structure'

when for his critics it merely throws a blanket over the two constituents, 'structure' and 'agency', which prevents investigation of what is going on beneath it – and where structuration theory leaves Lockwood's distinction (Archer 1982; Smith and Turner 1986; Thompson 1989).

Lack of emergence and lack of autonomy

Basically the answer lies in what Giddens hopes to wrest social theory away from – the reified notion (in his view) of emergent properties, as prior to and with relative autonomy from action, and the reductionist conception (in his view) of individuals, with personal properties which are independent and detachable from the social context of their formation and expression. The proposal is that all of this can be transcended by substituting a social ontology of praxis. Thus to Cohen, there is a real virtue in the idea that 'the non-emergent description of the structural properties of systems, all revert in one way or another to the central notion that institutionalised practices and relations may be regarded as more basic constituents of order than either individuals or the properties of collectivities' (Cohen 1990:42).

'Social practices' therefore are also the bedrock of 'institutions', for the latter are held to be nothing more than such regularised practices as structured by rules and resources. When 'structural properties' are drawn upon in routinised fashion an institution becomes 'sedimented' as a clustering of the practices constituting it. In turn this means that 'institutions' are never something concrete to which we can point but are essentially processual; ever in a fluid process of becoming and never in a (temporally or temporarily) fixed state of being, because all structural properties and all actions are always potentially transformational. Practical social analysts may want to insert their own question mark over how the investigation of processes within and surrounding an institution can proceed without the capacity to identify a relatively enduring institutional context through properties which are necessary and internal to it being what it is (while it lasts). Many of these would not be content to substitute a study of 'routinised practices' on the grounds that they would first need to invoke a structural context – e.g. educational or medical – to know which practices to examine.

Pre-existence denied

The only permissible way of examining the 'parts' and the 'people' apart from one another is via the artificial exercise of 'methodological bracketing'. Institutional analysis brackets away strategic action and treats structural properties as 'chronically reproduced features of social systems' (Giddens 1979:80). On the other hand, to examine the constitution of social systems as strategic conduct, Giddens brackets institutional analysis and studies actors' mobilisation of rules and resources in social relations. His justification would

be that since both recursiveness and change occur simultaneously in reality, then this merely reflects the inherently Janus-faced nature of society. However, what most of us seek instead of this truism are theoretical propositions about when and where reproduction rather than transformation, or vice versa, will prevail – a specification which would entail unravelling the relations between ‘structure’ and ‘agency’, as Lockwood had initially maintained. This Giddens refuses to give on principle because to specify their inter-relationship would entail dualistic theorising. Yet, ironically, his bracketing device does nothing other than traduce this very principle, since it merely transposes dualism from the theoretical to the methodological level – thus conceding its *analytical* indispensability.

More importantly, this bracketing exercise has serious implications concerning time which contradicts the stated aim of making time integral to explaining society and its properties. To Giddens what is bracketed are the two aspects of the ‘duality of structure’, institutional analysis and strategic conduct being artificially separated out by placing a methodological *epoché* upon each in turn. But, because they are two sides of the same thing, the pocketed elements must thus be co-existent in time. The symmetry of the *epochés* confines analysis to the same *époque*. And it follows directly from this that *temporal relations between* institutional structure and strategic action *logically cannot be examined*. Thus Lockwood’s fundamental insight is jettisoned, namely that it was their spacing across different tracts of time which enabled the two to be differentiated and their interplay examined – this insight becomes a victim of elisionism itself.

Withholding causal efficacy

Because of the commitment to inseparability, no state of the system can vary independently from that of agency. Since the ‘system’ merely refers to relations between larger numbers occurring at a distance, then ‘the basic definition of social integration is the reciprocity between actors; of systems integration, reciprocities between groups and collectivities’ (Craib 1992:58). In other words, while Lockwood saw considerable explanatory advantages deriving from *distinguishing between* ‘social’ and ‘system’ integration, insisting that the two could vary independently and that different combinations of them made for stability or change, this is explicitly precluded by elisionism. On the contrary, in structuration theory, they *must co-vary* because they are inseparable.

Hence Giddens writes that ‘the systemness of social integration is *fundamental to the systemness of society as a whole*’ (Giddens 1979:77). Cohen reinforces the point and in so doing, underlines the fact that this is a direct consequence of the ‘ontology of praxis’. Thus he argues that whereas Lockwood maintained ‘that for certain purposes system integration may refer to holistically conceived properties of systems, Giddens preserves his pivotal

emphasis upon structured praxis by maintaining that systems integration involves social reciprocities between agents at a distance' (Cohen 1990:45). Indeed he does, but some of us still want to question the price, in terms of loss of the explanatory power which Lockwood's analysis supplied by enabling one to distinguish between ubiquitous social conflict which generated no change, due to 'high system integration' (not, *pace* Cohen, conceptualised holistically, but in terms of emergence), and conflict issuing in transformation through actualising a systemic contradiction. This loss is the cost of sustaining 'duality' by focusing exclusively upon the amalgam of 'social practices' – which elides structure and agency or the 'systemic' and the 'social'.

Ultimately the price of redefining the distinction in line with the notion of 'duality' is the abandonment of any attempt to advance the theorisation of social change. For to Giddens, 'there is little point in looking for an overall theory of stability and change in social systems, since the conditions of social reproduction vary so widely between different types of society' (Giddens 1979:215). Thus instead of a research programme devoted to precisely that goal by exploring the interplay between 'social' and 'system' integration, the 'duality of structure' merely presents a 'sensitisation device' and never a corpus of propositions.

Upholding the distinction – grounding it in Social realism

The realist ontology furnishes that which Collectivism lacked, an activity-dependent concept of structure, which is both genuinely irreducible yet in no danger of hypostatisation, and a non-atomistic conception of agents, to rectify the deficiencies of Individualism's individual – without, however, regarding the two elements as part of an inseparable 'duality'. Thus in place of all three forms of conflationary theorising, the Social Realist substitutes *analytical dualism*. Because the social world is made up, *inter alia*, of 'structures' and of 'agents' and because these belong to different strata of social reality, there is no question of reducing one to the other or of eliding the two and there is every reason for exploring the interplay between them.

The differences between the Elisionists and Emergentists have often been obscured by their common rejection of the terms of the traditional debate, but what the two replace them by are grounded in antithetical conceptions of social reality – precisely because Structuration theorists explicitly *disavow emergence itself*. Such a viewpoint stands in the starkest contrast with the Realist assertion that 'it is just in virtue of these emergent features of societies, that social science is possible' (Bhaskar 1979:25).

When he first advanced the concept of 'system integration', it is clear from the examples given that Lockwood had systemic emergent properties in mind. Thus his examination of how Weber treated patrimonialism shows that he was acutely aware of dealing with the incompatibilities between internal and

necessary relations at the system level, that is treating it as an emergent entity, where the realisation or containment of the potential for breakdown is dependent upon the interplay with 'social integration'. Thus, 'the relationship between bureaucracy and taxation is a highly interdependent one' (Lockwood 1964:254) since the efficiency of the bureaucracy depends upon the effectiveness of its taxation system; and the effectiveness of the taxation system depends upon the efficiency of the bureaucratic apparatus. Thus the strategic problem is 'one of maintaining a taxation system that can effectively meet the material needs of a bureaucracy in the context of a subsistence, or near subsistence, economy. The centralising goal of bureaucratic institutions is constantly *liable to sabotage by the potential social relationship structure* of the subsistence economy which favours the decentralisation and "feudalization" of power relationships' (Lockwood 1964:254; my italics). Here we have the crucial notion that the fate of 'systemic' tendencies is at the mercy of their confluence with 'social' integration, resulting in containment and stability in the cases of Egypt and China but in breakdown of the later Roman Empire, where the defence mechanisms strategically introduced by the bureaucracy actually intensified the trend towards the subsistence economy and actualised the potential for decentralised relationships. All the other examples presented in the article indicate the same ontological affinity with social realism.

A realist ontology which regards structural and cultural systems as emergent entities is at variance with the Elisionists' view which holds, (a) that such properties possess a 'virtual existence' only until, (b) they are 'instantiated' by actors, which (c) means these properties are neither fully real nor examinable except in conjunction with the agents who instantiate them, and only then through the artificial bracketing exercise since the two are inseparable in reality.

On the contrary, their insistence upon the differentiation and stratification of the social world leads Social Realists to separate the 'parts' and 'people' in order to examine their *distinctive* emergent properties. As Bhaskar noted of Peter Berger's early and idealist version of an elisionist theory, its fundamental error is that 'People and society are not . . . related "dialectically". They do not constitute two moments of the same process. Rather they refer to radically different things' (Bhaskar 1979:33). Precisely the same criticism can be levelled at later versions like Structuration theory.

Hence the separability/inseparability issue represents the ontological parting of the ways between Emergentists and Elisionists. For the Emergentist, 'The importance of distinguishing, in the most categorical way, between human action and social structure will now be apparent. For the properties possessed by social forms may be very different from those possessed by the individuals upon whose activity they depend'. Hence the need 'to distinguish sharply then between the genesis of human actions, lying in the reasons, intentions and plans of human beings, on the one hand; and the structures governing the reproduction and transformation of social activities, on the other' (Bhaskar

1989:79). Why? Not simply because ontologically they *are* indeed different entities with different properties and powers, but because methodologically it is necessary to make the distinction between them in order to *examine their interplay* and thus be able to explain why things are 'so and not otherwise' in society. Conversely, from the stand-point of Elisionism it becomes impossible to talk about the stringency of structural constraints versus degrees of personal freedom, for in theories based upon central conflation, causation is always the joint and equal responsibility of structure and agency and nothing is ever more attributable to one rather than the other, at any given point in time.

The central argument of this paper is just the opposite, which is why it is vital to maintain Lockwood's distinction. It is only through analysing the *processes* by which structure and agency shape and re-shape one another over time that we can account for variable social outcomes at different times. This presumes a social ontology which warrants speaking about 'pre-existence', 'relative autonomy' and 'causal influence' in relation to these two strata (structures and agents) and an explanatory methodology which makes such talk practicable for the practising social theorist.

In relation to the latter, the argument is that 'analytical dualism' provides the most powerful tool in practical social analysis, yet one which has been slow to develop and whose full potential in terms of its theoretical purchase and practical utility have still to be fully recognised. The reasons for this delayed development are basically that both elements, that is *analytical separability* and *temporal distinction*, were needed *in combination*. Any attempt to make temporal distinctions without a complementary notion of the emergent nature of structural entities was ontologically ungrounded, leaving those who did so open to the charge of reification from others and themselves puzzled about *what* it was that they held to be prior to action or consequent upon it. Similarly, the reverse, that it is to endorse analytical separability without simultaneously recognising that any activity took place in a context of *prior* emergent structures and that determinate activities were *antecedent* to specific structural changes, missed perhaps the most profound methodological consequence of emergentism itself.

Until the analytical *separability* of structure and agency was explicitly acknowledged to entail temporality *rather than* simultaneity, realists did not radically recast the form of theorising about the relations between structure and agency. Instead they tended to be quite similar to central conflationary approaches.⁶ The tardy development of analytical dualism was due to the fact that the necessary recognition of the temporality *of* emergence was so long coming.

Temporality without emergence and emergence without temporality

What is of particular significance here was Lockwood's awareness that the distinction between 'social' and 'system' integration is more than an analytical

artifice when temporality is taken into account. Basically, analytical dualism is possible *due* to temporality. Because 'structure' and 'agency' are phased over different tracts of time, this enables us to formulate practical social theories in terms of the former being prior to the latter, having autonomy from it and exerting a causal influence upon it. In other words, we can talk about 'system integration' conditioning 'social integration' which necessarily confronts the former, and similarly we can speak of systemic elaboration being posterior to a particular sequence of social interaction.

Lockwood's insight was that '(t)hough definitely linked, these two aspects of integration are *not only analytically separable, but also, because of the time element involved, factually distinguishable*' (Lockwood 1964:250; my italics). Equally, in using the distinction for explanatory purposes, he relied completely upon the independent variation of the two in time. Hence when presenting his key Marxist example he stresses that 'it is perfectly possible, according to his theory, to say that at any *particular point of time* a society has a high degree of social integration (e.g. relative absence of class conflict) and yet has a low degree of system integration (mounting excess productive capacity)' (p. 250; my italics). Indeed the generic explanation of stability and change which he puts forward rests upon the historical coincidence or discrepancy between the properties of structure and those of agency. Since the two are not held to be temporally co-variant, examination of their variable historical combinations becomes a new source of explanatory power. Yet, as we have seen, in 1964, Lockwood himself was fully aware of the ontological difficulties outstanding, namely what exactly was the nature of the systemic 'entities' which he had analytically *and* temporally distinguished from actors and social interaction?

However, when a form of realism, specifically answering this question with respect to social reality, developed in the 1970s it was surprising to find that this strong ontological defence of emergence and of the stratified nature of the social world was not initially accompanied by an equally strenuous statement of the *temporal distinction* possible between two of the principal strata, structure and agency (Harré and Secord 1975; Harré and Madden 1975; Keat and Urry 1975; Bhaskar 1978; Outhwaite 1983). Yet the 'temporal distinction' between structure and agency is actually a matter of necessity in Social Realism itself. For it is precisely *because* of people being the way they are, with creativity, innovativeness and reflexivity figuring as *their* distinctive emergent properties, that the social system can never approximate to (laboratory) conditions of closure. Therefore people's properties and powers constantly intervene, interfering with the influence of emergent structures and the exercise of their properties and powers. In turn, the practical consequence for the generative powers of structures (as for any emergent property of society) is that the latter are 'normally out of phase with the pattern of events which actually occur' (Bhaskar 1979:9) *because* of people's doings. Finally, *it follows from this that the two cannot be co-variant in time*. Their being out of phase is, of course, identical with the distinction which Lockwood detected

between 'system' and 'social' integration, and used to such powerful explanatory effect.

Thus when Bhaskar maintains that in social theorising, 'the relations one is concerned with here must be conceptualized as holding between positions and practices' (1979:4), it must be the case that such an analytical separation *always* entails the temporal distinction between positions and practitioners, roles and their incumbents, the systemic and the social or structure and agency. Certainly this has not been common practice in social analysis. Generations of sociologists have made present tense distinctions between offices and their holders or formal role requirements and informal doings, but these are confined to the empirical level, they are based on observable current affairs and this will not do for the realist since it omits, *inter alia*, the powers of many role structures to pre-determine *who* was eligible to be an occupant and the powers of incumbents reflectively to re-monitor their activities. The former introduces the past tense and latter the future tense, but neither is observable in the present tense, if they are observable at all. Thus arises the necessity of the temporal distinction to the Social Realist. Structures (as emergent entities) are not only irreducible to people, they pre-exist them, and people are not puppets of structures because they have their own emergent properties which mean they either *reproduce* or *transform* social structure, rather than creating it. To explain which occurs, the realist examines the interplay between the two (endorsing and utilising separability) and in both cases, reproduction and transformation *necessarily refer* to maintaining or changing something which is temporally *prior* to these activities, and whose change itself is *posterior* to them (thus entailing temporality).

Undermining resistance to temporality

Why, then, has the temporal strand remained so implicit and underworked amongst Emergentists in general? Even Lockwood, who made great and important play of the temporal distinction between the 'systemic' and the 'social', actually confined his analysis to showing how the 'parts' and the 'people' varied independently of one another *over time* but in fact made little play of their being themselves prior and posterior to one another *in time*. Perhaps the reluctance to advance 'analytical dualism' forcefully was due to the enduring spectre of reification and to what has rightly been construed as the main bulwark against it, namely an insistence upon the activity-dependence of each and every social structure as indispensable to a non-reified ontology of society. However, what seems to have escaped notice is an extremely simple though profoundly important question which in no way challenges or weakens this ontological commitment, namely *whose actions?*

The assertion of pre-existence, far from nullifying activity-dependence, actually specifies upon *whose* activities the development of a particular structure depended, in contrast to those later agents who cannot be held

responsible for its genesis, but only for its maintenance, change or perhaps ultimate abolition. Activities of the latter of course engender new forms of structural elaboration which, in turn, their own successors confront as existing realities. No-one would seriously deny this in its common sense form; those whose activities generated the relations constitutive of industrialism, imperialism, political parties, a state educational system or a national health service, were quite different people from those who later had to live in a society made up of these structures amongst others.

The crucial element of this insight is a recognition of Auguste Comte's important aphorism that the majority of actors are the dead. Yet there is resistance to exploiting it which rests on the following argument about activity-dependence: (a) society is consistently dependent upon action and there can be no moment in time when action is suspended, therefore, (b) talk of the separate activities of generations or groups is only a heuristic artifice since generations overlap and groups are continuous despite the death and even complete replacement of their members. I want to contest the supposed derivation of (b) from (a) – for to challenge (b) in the above argument does nothing to impugn (a), the premiss that all aspects of the social world are activity dependent. Instead it usefully adds greater precision to it by specification of elements like 'whose' activities, 'when', and 'where'.

What needs to be rebutted here is the assertion that, whilst it may be true for each individual that a structure pre-exists them (a teaching post must exist before someone can be a teacher) or even for whole cohorts (schools have to exist before pupils can enrol), it is not true for 'the group'. Critics maintain that 'groups' can have greater permanence than structures, through replacement of their members, and therefore it makes no sense to talk of a structure pre-dating such a group. However my counter argument asserts that a position necessarily has to exist before someone can fill it and this *remains the case* even where certain individuals or groups have been able to define such things as new roles (or institutions) for themselves. Because here too *the defining precedes the occupancy* and occupation *then* embroils the incumbent(s) in a network of relations, their unintended and emergent consequences. Action is undeniably continuous (though it is *not* an *unbroken flow of activities*), but more importantly, 'the group' itself is discontinuous. For what I am criticising is the (implicit) notion *that the 'group' remains fundamentally the same*, that is, it refers to the same entity. If this were the case, as seems quite persuasive at first glance, then it would indeed prevent one from ever talking about a pre-existent structure and would also effectively demolish 'analytical dualism' by removing its temporal mainstay which is what makes events tractable to explanation. Thus we would be back to the simultaneity model of central conflation.

However this case is fatally flawed by the naive nominalism with which 'the group' is treated. It supposes that just because we can use the label 'working class' over three centuries of structural changes in Britain, we are talking

about the same 'group'. We are not, any more than this is historically the case for 'teachers' or 'doctors' after the elaboration of educational and health systems. Nominally one could still use the same words, 'teachers' and 'doctors', and practically some individuals made the transition, but none of that means that one is really talking about the 'same group', even if one is talking about some of the same people. For the group has changed profoundly, witness change in employer, accountability, activity and professionalisation, new vested interests, forms of organisation and values. In other words, as it reshapes structure, agency is ineluctably reshaping itself, in terms of organisation, combination and articulation, in terms of its powers and these in relation to other agents. Thus nothing but obfuscation attaches to regarding any group as continuous, simply because it bears the same name, yet regardless of all that which makes it anything but 'the same'.

Envoi: Analytical Dualism

To defend temporal separability where structure and agency are concerned, to state that some structures are pre-existent to determinate agents and their activities has no ontological priority over emphasising that specific agents are themselves prior to later structural elaboration. Thus the key point underpinning 'analytical dualism' is that it is fully justifiable to refer to structures (being irreducible to individuals or groups) as pre-existing them both, just as it is equally legitimate to refer to determinate agents being prior to the structures they transform, (though in the process they themselves are literally re-constituted as new groupings, whatever their nomenclature).

The importance of these two fundamental propositions of 'analytical dualism', that structure necessarily predates the actions which transform it and that structural elaboration necessarily postdates those actions is not confined to considerations about social ontology alone. Because what social reality is held to be necessarily influences how it is explained, then *maintaining* the distinction between the 'parts' and the 'people' simultaneously rules out any reductionist or conflationary programme of explanation. If structure and agency are indeed entities which possess their own properties and powers, then this precludes any explanatory framework which compacts them together or treats either as the epiphenomenon of the other.

Instead, *developing* the distinction which Lockwood ushered in between the 'social' and the 'systemic' has very different implications for practical social analysis. Once it is accepted that social transformation/social reproduction can only be explained by examining the *interplay* between two sets of emergent, irreducible and autonomous causal powers pertaining respectively to structure and agency, this introduces a non-conflationary approach in both theory and methodology.⁷ Thus analytical dualism represents a new explanatory framework where specific temporal sequences of structural conditioning → social

interaction → structural elaboration (preceded by anterior sequences and postdated by subsequent ones) account for why things are 'so and not otherwise', in the full range of substantive areas which constitute society and its transformations.

Notes

1. Conflationary theories and those which elide structure and agency in one of the three directions. Upwards conflationists regard social structure as the aggregate product of individual action without properties of its own. Downwards conflationists view social structure as dominant and agency as orchestrated by holistic properties. Both of these therefore hold structure and agency respectively to be epiphenomenal. However, there is a third and central version of conflation which does not entail epiphenomenalism. Instead both structure and agency are regarded as mutually constitutive, such that properties of the one are dependent on properties of the other and neither can be examined separately (nor therefore can their interplay be examined). Conflation is therefore regarded as the more generic fallacy than epiphenomenalism. The thesis behind this paper is that any version of conflationary theorising will be unproductive, precisely because conflation precludes the examination of the interplay between structure and agency, i.e. their *sui generis* properties.
2. Predicates acceptable to the Methodological Individualist can include "statements about the dispositions, beliefs, resources and inter-relations of individuals" as well as "their situations . . . physical resources and environment" (Watkins 1968:270). Since I would argue that none of these aspects of social reality are about *either* individuals *or* their dispositions, it would follow that these should not be construed as facts about individual people. To do so is to encumber the person with part of society and of nature.
3. Hence Gellner's well known summary of where the debate stood: 'Perhaps in the end, there is agreement to this extent (human) history *is* about chaps – and nothing else. Perhaps this should be written: History is *about* chaps. It does not follow that its explanations are always in terms of chaps' (1968:268).
4. See Nicos Mouzelis, 'Social and System Integration: Habermas's View', *British Journal of Sociology*, 43, 1992. Also Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, Stanford University Press, 1987, p. 250. Derek Layder makes the same point about Lockwood's distinction but continues to argue that 'social' and 'system' integration are both analytic and real aspects of society (1994:201–2).
5. For a clear exposition of 'emergent properties' see Sayer 1992.
6. Note the numerous sources which consider there to be marked resemblance between Bhaskar's 'transformational model of social action' and Giddens's 'structuration theory'.
7. For the development of this idea and of Lockwood's distinction as the basis of a research programme, (see Archer 1995).

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