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Creativity and Critique

Subjectivity and Agency in Touraine and Ricoeur

Glenda Ballantyne

BRILL

Creativity and Critique

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By
Glenda Ballantyne



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For my parents
Norman and Joan Ballantyne

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Introduction

In a recent discussion of Alain Touraine's contribution to social theory, one commentator notes that Touraine stands out among the social theorists who participated in the broad intellectual movement for the renewal of social theory which emerged in the late nineteen sixties. Confronting a theoretical landscape largely petrified in various versions of structuralism, functionalism, objectivism and empiricism, this project of renewal revolved around attempts to reintroduce agency, language and historicity into social theory, and notable contributions were made by theorists such as Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens. However, Peter Wagner suggests, Touraine alone has managed to keep this project alive in changing historical and theoretical contexts, and to develop his social theory while remaining faithful to its basic assumptions.[1]

If Touraine's theoretical trajectory has proved more responsive than other comparable projects to new social and intellectual circumstances, a closer look at the source of its strengths seems warranted. The crucial development in this regard is not difficult to pinpoint; as a number of writers have noted, Touraine's thinking took a new and particularly fertile direction in the early nineteen nineties, when the 'actionalist' sociology of society he had first elaborated in the early nineteen seventies was transmogrified into a 'sociology of the subject' and a historical sociology of modernity, most systematically formulated in *Critique of Modernity*.[2] However, while there is general agreement that *Critique of Modernity* marked a new intellectual period for Touraine, the innovations involved have not yet been the subject of the sustained analysis they deserve. It is such an analysis I undertake here.

The perhaps surprising conclusion of this analysis, I will argue, is that the decisive factor in the theoretical developments which find expression in *Critique of Modernity* is an implicit, but unmistakable, 'hermeneutical turn'; the most illuminating insights to be drawn from Touraine's new theoretical framework are related to a series of unacknowledged, but formative, hermeneutical premises underlying this work.

There is, of course, more than a little irony in attempting to distinguish Touraine's most important theoretical assets from those of Habermas and

Giddens by virtue of a hermeneutical connection. Where Giddens and Habermas explicitly incorporate a hermeneutical dimension into their social theory—Giddens has described his project as 'hermeneutically informed,' and famously coined the notion of the 'double hermeneutic', while Habermas' theory of communicative action is hermeneutically grounded—Touraine rarely mentions hermeneutics, and when he does it is often to repudiate it. But as I hope to demonstrate, although Touraine's hermeneutical turn is implicit, it is ultimately more far-reaching than that of either Giddens or Habermas. The potential contribution of a hermeneutical perspective is blunted, in Habermas' case, by an explicit delimitation of the domain of hermeneutics,[3] and in Giddens' case by his overarching concern with the "scientificity of sociology" and the "new rules of sociological method;"[4] Touraine's unacknowledged recourse to hermeneutical premises, however, has generated no systematic attempt to demarcate their limits.

The outcome, we will see, is that hermeneutical themes permeate his perspectival presuppositions, reverberate throughout his conceptual infrastructure, and animate the substantive concerns of his recent social theory. On the perspectival level, the hermeneutical cast of his epistemological and ontological premises is evident in his strategy of analysing social forms and dynamics through the cultural orientations which, he now clearly considers, partly constitute them. On the conceptual level, a hermeneutical sensibility underlies and directs the transformation of his actionalist sociology into a sociology of the acting subject. And on the substantive level, the hermeneutical theme of a tension between rationalisation and the emergence of the self-defining subject lies at the heart of his theory of modernity.[5] It is, I hope to show, this more thoroughgoing reception of hermeneutical premises which makes Touraine's project better equipped to challenge the formalised and objectivist modes of theorising which all three considered to be central to the petrification of social theory, and to meet the challenges of new historical and intellectual circumstances.

However, if Touraine's hermeneutical turn is unmistakable, it is also incomplete; his reluctance to identify with hermeneutics, even as he practices it, has meant that the logic of his hermeneutical premises is not systematically translated into his theoretical framework and detailed analyses. Touraine has not discussed his relationship to the perspective in detail, but it is not difficult to identify his main objections; it leads, he suggests, to a one-sided 'cul-

turalism' which dissolves society into tradition, and a conception of the subject as the self-image acquired through socially determined relations with others.[6] The former, he further infers, not only neglects historical dynamics, but also assumes a degree of cultural consensus which does not exist, and pays insufficient attention to the distortions of communication that arise from power and conflict, while the latter neglects the contestatory nature of the subject, and obscures the agency that is an essential component of it.

This repudiation of hermeneutics is, however, both precipitous, and unhelpful to his ultimate theoretical aspirations. It is precipitous, because it pays insufficient attention to an important current in contemporary hermeneutics which has broadened and radicalised the hermeneutical perspective. Like other critical theorists, Touraine's engagement with the tradition has been based primarily upon the canonical interpretations of 'philosophical' hermeneutics found in the inaugurating work of Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Georg Gadamer's now classical interpretation of its implications for the human sciences.[7] But an engagement with the tradition which focuses overwhelmingly on the contributions of Heidegger and Gadamer misses out on the developments and innovations to be found in the work of the third major figure within the tradition. Initially less well known, Paul Ricoeur is now widely recognised as one of the leading exponents of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, and his wide ranging and highly fertile contribution to it has become increasingly influential in a range of intellectual fields. Most importantly in this context, his interpretation of the core premises of philosophical hermeneutics has been distinctive enough to alter the terms of its debate with critical theory in general, and to shed new light on the issues which lie behind Touraine's ambivalence towards the perspective in particular.

At the same time, Touraine's reluctance to engage more systematically with the tradition is demonstrably unhelpful to his own theoretical project. As we will see, it leads him to cut short a number of lines of argument when their implicit hermeneutical logic threatens to come to the surface, and the outcome is a series of tensions—not only from a hermeneutical point of view, but also in his own terms—and a premature closing off of some potentially highly promising avenues of analysis.

It is in the hope of reopening and extending some of those avenues of research that the analysis of Touraine's recent social theory which follows takes the

form of a hermeneutical critique. Based on the premise that a more explicit development of the hermeneutical logic underlying his recent work holds out the possibility of rectifying the tensions and absences his analyses have encountered, and deepening the insights they have generated, this critique will establish the limits to Touraine's hermeneutical turn and pinpoint their ramifications for his social theory. Most importantly, however, it will seek in Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy theoretical resources which could extend Touraine's most fertile insights, in ways which are consonant with his deepest theoretical ambitions.

There are, in fact, several reasons to hope that the dialogue we will establish between Touraine and Ricoeur will be productive. In the first place, a number of Ricoeur's key innovations have a direct bearing on the concerns at the centre of Touraine's reluctance to identify with the hermeneutical perspective. Touraine's main objection, we have seen, is the over-harmonious conceptions of self and society he sees the perspective generating, and while he does not spell out the nature and source of his objections in detail, they are clearly connected to the perspective's core problematic of interpretive communities. This problematic emerges from the phenomenologically-derived 'ontology of understanding' with which Heidegger established philosophical hermeneutics.[8] Heidegger's founding premise is that understanding is not an isolated activity of human beings, but the fundamental mode of human being; the most consequential—and controversial—point to emerge from his elucidation of it, however, is the suggestion that human understanding is *anticipatory.* All explicit understandings build, Heidegger insists, upon an always already constituted horizon of meaning, and the ability of a subject to understand and reflect is therefore dependent upon the prior existence of a shared, socially constructed, interpretive framework. Touraine clearly believes, and many commentators have argued, that this problematic gives rise to conceptions of self and social relations which dissolve the subject into its historical and cultural contexts, and see societies as sets of shared practices held together by cultural consensus.[9]

A number of elements in Ricoeur's distinctive interpretation of the fundamental premises of philosophical hermeneutics have put this problematic in a new light. To begin with, he has always stressed the creative and enabling aspects of the subject's immersion in an interpretive community. He has made

this argument in general terms; against those interpretations of the relationship between self and discourse which ultimately dissolve subjectivity, he insists that it is through interpreting meanings that are embodied in world of culture that we become selves and agents.[10] His most detailed analyses, however, centre on the specifically linguistic dimension of the claim. On the one hand, his view of the hermeneutical thesis of the linguistic mediation of all understanding is distinctive for its focus on the creative and enabling dimensions of language; he stresses the agency involved in actualising language in speech, and the creativity of language that is ultimately imparted to the agents who deploy it, the and social practices it structures. Equally consequential, however, are the implications he draws from the *polysemy* of language and the meanings it embodies. The multivocity of meaning, Ricoeur insists, is such that the meanings which mediate understanding are open to an irreducible multiplicity of interpretations; we are condemned, not simply to interpretation, but to a 'conflict of interpretations.' As we will see, this 'Ricoeurian' theme puts Touraine's view of the hermeneutical perspective in a new light, because recognition of the permanent presence of rival interpretations within a field of meaning brings to the fore both the multiplicity and ambiguity characteristic of a given cultural framework, and the more active, agential nature of interpretation that such plurality throws into relief.

A second feature of Ricoeur's reformulation of the hermeneutical problematic which has a bearing on Touraine's view of the perspective stems from the more direct engagement with the question of human action which characterised his philosophy from the nineteen seventies on. Ricoeur's interest in the problematic of action was provoked by concerns external to his systematisation of his relationship to the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics—it was his increasingly active interest in moral and political philosophy which propelled him towards practical philosophy[11]—but its impact on his interpretation of the perspective was significant. As he has reported, his focus on action shaped his later philosophy at a number of pivotal points,[12] but its most significant outcome in this context is the translation of the problematic of interpretive communities into the terms of a philosophy of action which unfolds in *Oneself as Another*.[13] As we will see, this development will be highly relevant to our hermeneutical critique of Touraine's action-based social theory. More particularly, however, it will challenge Touraine's conception of the

hermeneutical problematic of interpretive communities by allowing him to incorporate in to it the issues of conflict and co-operation.[14]

The last feature of Ricoeur's interpretation of the hermeneutical perspective that is particularly relevant to Touraine's concerns is the importance he has attached to relating the analysis of understanding to *self*-understanding. This element of his philosophy has its origins in the philosophical commitment which preceded his encounter with philosophical hermeneutics; Ricoeur's first philosophical identification was with reflexive philosophy, and his abiding allegiance to it has shaped his engagement with the hermeneutical perspective, and given rise to some of its most distinctive themes. Its influence, however, has to be seen against the background of the radical transformation his hermeneutics has, in turn, wrought upon the reflexive tradition; his discovery that the subject knows itself only through the "signs deposited in memory and imagination by cultures"[15] led to the abandonment of the presupposition of the immediateness and transparence of the cogito that was present in his first, Husserlian, variant of reflexive philosophy. The hermeneutical turn brought about by the problems he encountered permanently reoriented the direction of his reflexive philosophy, but his connection to 'the question of the subject' it posed remained intact, and in *Oneself as Another* he returned, after a long 'detour through the multiple mediations which are interposed between the self and itself, to re-pose it on a hermeneutical basis.[16]

By directly re-posing the question of the subject of reflection in this way, Ricoeur has taken the hermeneutical perspective in a direction that is highly conducive to dialogue around the themes central to Touraine's recent social theory. It is, however, the intersection of this theme with his philosophy of action which will provide the richest points of contact with Touraine's work, and pose the most important challenge to the latter's conception of the hermeneutical self and its relation to interpretive communities. *Oneself as Another,* we have just noted, is a hermeneutical philosophy of the subject, and Ricoeur undertakes an indirect search for signs of the subject through an analysis of the mediations which stand between the subject and her reflection. In the wake of his 'actionalist' turn, however, action has become for Ricoeur the most important and comprehensive mediation of the subject, and as we will see, the 'acting' subject which his hermeneutics of action uncovers has strong parallels with Touraine's sociology of the subject.

Ricoeur's innovations within philosophical hermeneutics are not, however, the only reason for thinking that his philosophy may be more amenable to Touraine's concerns than Touraine has recognised. There are also some notable thematic affinities between Ricoeur's philosophy and Touraine's social theory which will make the dialogue we will construct between them particularly fertile. The first is related to a shared sensibility we could label 'critical.' Touraine's credentials as a critical theorist in the broad sense are manifest; from the outset, he has taken a critical rather than affirmative view of contemporary social formations, and he has systematically put the theme of social conflict at the centre of his social theory.[17] Ricoeur's critical orientation has not always been as conspicuous as Touraine's, but it is no less thoroughgoing; as we will see, the innovations we have outlined here have made his philosophy critical in the double sense of being self-critical in relation to the hermeneutical tradition, and open to critical theory. Ricoeur has, by his own account, adopted a critical rather than affirmative perspective on contemporary social life,[18] and as we have already noted, he has introduced the theme of conflict to his philosophy at a fundamental level. Just as importantly, however, his development of the hermeneutical perspective has involved a systematic thematisation of the possibilities and potentials for critique contained within it.

The difficulties Heidegger's and Gadamer's formulations of the hermeneutical problematic entail for the critical perspective on the epistemological level are well-recognised; the idea of the self immersed in always already constituted horizons of meaning calls into question the subject's claim to be a firm foundation for certain knowledge, and with it, not only the positivists' notion of 'objective knowledge,' but also critical theory's claims to reveal power relations and oppression for what they 'really are.'[19] As we will see, Ricoeur accepts that the anticipatory nature of understanding precludes the possibility of a definitive critique of the 'pre-understandings' upon which explicit understandings are built, but he insists that the conflict of interpretations which emerges from the polysemy of meaning legitimises a limited but definite 'moment' of critique within the arc of interpretation. And if we take the *textualisation* of language seriously, he argues, the conflict of interpretations not only justifies, but *calls for* a dialectic of understanding and explanation.[20]

The second thematic affinity which connects Touraine's social theory to Ricoeur's philosophy concerns human agency and social creativity. From the outset, Touraine's overarching meta-theoretical aim has been to go beyond the over-harmonious and over-integrated conceptions of social relations which, he argues, deny or obscure human agency, and by doing so, obscure not only the role of human agents in the creation and maintenance of social structures, but also the openness of those social strucutres to new and unanticipated developments. One of his most distinctive themes in this regard has been his emphasis on the role social and cultural conflict plays in social creativity, and as we will see, his recent work seeks to ground the analysis of social creativity in a theory of the self-defining and self-creating, and acting subject.

For a long period, this theme, too, was less explicit in Ricoeur's work; it was "despite appearances," he noted in the nineteen eighties, that creativity was "the one problem that has interested me from the beginning of my work as a philosopher."[21] The theme that was largely implicit in his earlier work has, however, become more explicit in his hermeneutics of the acting subject in *Oneself as Another,* and as it has, the affinities of his philosophy with Touraine's social theory have become easier to discern. There are, we will see, some striking parallels in the premises and ambitions of Touraine's sociology, and Ricoeur's philosophy, of the acting subject. Both connect the erosion of the sense of human agency in social and philosophical thought associated with conceptual frameworks loaded with unacknowledged but distorting premises, and both focus their attempts to conceptualise agency on the idea of action; more particularly, for both, it is rationalist and objectivist presuppositions dominant in Western thought which predispose prevailing conceptions to 'empty out' the meaning of action, and for both, it is an emphasis on the *subjectivity* of the actor which can restore the ambiguity and contingency which is inherent in the very idea of action.

These thematic affinities will play a central role in our attempt to use Ricoeur's distinctive interpretation of the hermeneutical perspective to extend the fertile but incompletely developed insights Touraine's recent work has generated. As we will see, Touraine makes significant perspectival, conceptual and substantive contributions, and on each level Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy has something important to add. Touraine's most important perspectival innovations in *Critique of Modernity*, we have already noted, are

largely implicit, but their impact can readily be seen in the eminently hermeneutical mode of analysis of elucidating the self-understandings of modernity in order to throw light on its dynamics, forms and conflicts. The outcome is a highly fertile analysis which is culture-centred while avoiding the kind of culturalism which sees social dynamics as the expression of self-enclosed cultural premises. As we will see, however, the epistemological premises presupposed by this methodological innovation are left almost entirely unexplicated, and it is on this level that we will find in Ricoeur's 'critical' hermeneutics an important means of extending the new avenues of analyses this development has opened up.

On the conceptual level, Touraine's most significant contribution is a development of his actionalist conceptual framework which has opened up new and far-reaching possibilities for a more adequate conceptual grasp of human agency. The innovation that sets this development in motion is his hermeneutical thematisation of the subjectivity of the actor, and the outcome is a potentially highly fertile conceptual infrastructure which situates action within a broader context analysed in terms of the principles and processes of rationalisation and "subjectivation." As we will see, however, the rearrangement of his conceptual apparatuses involved is unevenly developed, and their implications for the project to theorise human agency are unclarified, and it is in search of theoretical resources which could further develop them that we will turn to Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the acting subject in *Oneself as Another*.

On the substantive level, Touraine's major contribution is a rich interpretive prism for the analysis of the forms and the dynamics of modernity which brings to light new dimensions of the multiplicity and ambiguity of the modern constellation. Two Weberian themes structure this interpretive prism; at the centre of his account of the successive phases and likely trajectory of modernity are the idea that a tensions between the spread of instrumental rationality and a new consciousness of autonomy and creativity, and the thesis that there is a tension between a general dynamic of rationalization and the emergence of separate spheres of life and meaning. As Ricoeur does not thematise 'modernity' as such, his contribution on this level will be less direct than on the previous two, but it will be no less important; as we will see, his hermeneutics of action converges with Touraine's substantive analyses on

one, crucial, problematic of the theory of modernity. The problematic of *democracy* holds a central place in both writers' theories of the subject as the political and institutional pre-condition for the full realisation of the subject, and the parallels between their analyses will allow us to use Ricoeur's reflections to shed light on Touraine's fertile, but one-sidedly developed account of democracy as the only viable response to contemporary "crisis" of modernity. Where Touraine's distinctive, and highly productive, emphasis on the creativity of social and cultural conflict leads him to privilege relations of conflict over those of communication, Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics bring to light the dialectic of conflict *and* communication that characterises the social relations which are the necessary preconditions for democracy.

As we will see, the perspectival, conceptual and substantive innovations in Touraine's recent work, and the extensions to them suggested by Ricoeur's hermeneutics, are highly pertinent to a number of central debates in contemporary social theory. Before we explore them in more detail, a brief survey of these debates will help us to appreciate what is at stake. Recent trends on all three levels are usefully considered against the backdrop of the unsettling of prevailing orthodoxies that occurred in the late nineteen sixties. In that period, largely unanticipated historical developments called into question a number of widely shared and often taken for granted assumptions about 'modern society', and ultimately disrupted the perspectival and conceptual conventions on which prevailing theories of society were built. On each level of analysis, however, responses to the dissolution of erstwhile certainties have gone in a number of different directions, and the outcomes have been inconclusive.

On the perspectival level, the main direction of change has been a move away from the functionalist and structuralist premises, and the formalist, objectivist and empiricist epistemologies which dominated the post war theoretical landscape. As Peter Wagner's acutely observed surveys of the contemporary field show,[22] two more or less opposing trends can be identified: on the one hand, there has been a shift towards more 'culturalogical' modes of analysis that is closely tied to a move away from formalism and objectivism; on the other, a number of theoretical developments have rejected or transformed functionalist thinking, while taking formalism and in some instances objectivism to new levels.[23] As Touraine's trajectory is firmly within the former

category—his first theoretical synthesis was characterised by a definite, albeit limited 'cultural turn,' which his recent innovations have intensified—it is the strategies of those who took the culturalogical path which are most relevant here.

Wagner, with Friese, describes the common ground of the culturalological current as a shift away from the view that social life is something that happens in 'structures' or 'systems,' to the view that social life is ordered by meanings and beliefs.[24] Within this movement, however, they identify three distinct strands, each with specific motivations and objectives.[25] In the nineteen seventies, a number of theorists—including Touraine—turned to a more cultural-sensitive mode of analysis as a response to the deficiencies of structural reasoning. These 'agency theorists' attached importance to the meanings human beings give to their practices, insisted that social bonds are less clearly established and unequivocally identifiable than structuralist thinking supposed and, arguing for greater reflexivity, moved away from formalised and objectivist thinking. In a second current, postmodernists drew on the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault to stress the linguistic constitution of the world, and made contingency their central theme. They stressed the plurality of modes of representing the social world, and were involved in a more radical rejection of formalism. Most recently, cultural studies and cultural history—which emerged, Wagner and Friese argue, in response to the perceived over-emphasis on contingency—also rejected the notion of social structure, but stressed the solidity of ties of cultural belonging in the modern world.[26]

The outcome of all three trends, however, has been uncertain. The agency theorists' shift to a more cultural mode of analysis now looks tentative, and narrowly conceived. It has been argued that Giddens' cultural turn was limited to an emphasis on reflexivity, and that Habermas tended to reduce culture to knowledge and focused heavily on dominant patterns of rationality.[27] As we will see in more detail later, it has also been argued that Touraine's early work imposed a pre-determined and fixed structural relation between cultural tensions and social conflicts.[28] For its part, the postmodern construal of the linguistic constitution of social life focused on the analysis of the human sciences themselves as forms of writing, and culminated in a critique of epistemology and ontology which ultimately threw into question the very

possibility of providing a valid representation of the social world.[29] Finally, the concern in cultural studies and cultural history to counteract the overemphasis on contingency led to the preservation of many of the premises of structural thinking; culture in these perspectives is often treated as an objective, quasi-structure, with clear-cut and firm boundaries and a tendency towards integration.[30]

On the conceptual level, one of the most significant ramifications of the upheavals in post war paradigms has concerned the concepts of 'action' and 'system' (or, in the latter case, the homologous terms of 'structure' or 'society'). The conceptual field delineated by these terms has had a long history and a broad appeal, explained, a number of commentators have argued, by their resonance in relation to two of the most salient aspects of the modern world.[31] On the one hand, the concept of action has been widely seen as the appropriate conceptual response to the new levels of creativity, agency and control associated with modern life; as one commentator has put it, it was seen by many as "the immediate and the definitive sociological translation and embodiment of the problematic of human agency."[32] On the other hand, the idea of system or its variants seemed to speak to the intensification of new structures constraint. While the most perspicacious observers have been acutely cognisant of both sides of the modern experience, and often deployed both concepts in their attempts to reflect them conceptually, it is a sociological commonplace that the tradition very early on bifurcated into the rival perspectives of 'action theories,' which saw the 'social system' as the derivative of social action and interaction, and 'systems theories,' which saw social action as the product and derivative of the social system.[33]

One strand of the rethinking which has affected these concepts from the nineteen sixties on was propelled by a growing recognition that, as they had predominantly been articulated, these concepts had failed to do justice to the phenomena they were intended to illuminate. This assessment crossed the theoretical divide, and the predominant response on both sides involved an intensified conceptual reflection on unacknowledged assumptions built into the terms, and corresponding projects to rethink them.[34] For the new generation of systems theorists like Luhmann, the concept of system was radically rethought. More relevant in this context, however, is the diagnosis of the problem by the agency theorists of the sixties and seventies. Habermas,

Giddens and Touraine all deployed the conceptual pair of action and system (or structure) in their attempts to grasp the ambiguity of the modern experience, but as we noted at the outset, all three sought to challenge the dominance of structural and functionalist modes of thought which, they considered, ultimately hollowed out the notion of human agency. For all three, Parsons' influential systems theory was the immediate point of reference, and all three contrasted the culmination of his theoretical trajectory in the paradigmatic form of systems theory with its origins in action theory. His trajectory from action theory to systems theory, they concurred, was a result of inadequacies in his conceptual framework, and above all in the conceptualisation of action in his "action frame of reference". Their projects were all constructed, in turn, on a double sided strategy of conceptual renewal; they sought to relativise the concept of system, but above all, to thematise dimensions of action neglected or misrepresented by Parsons. Their specific strategies in relation to the concept of action varied, but all involved giving greater weight to the cultural dimensions of social life, and common ground emerged around the themes of reflexivity, cultural creativity and subjectivity.[35] As a number of commentators have argued, however, these attempts all proved to be less decisive than their authors had hoped: Habermas' attempt to combine his conception of the lifeworld with systems theory resulted in a capitulation to functionalist assumptions;[36] Giddens' notion of structure appeared as a prerequisite no action can do without, and no action can affect;[37] and Touraine's notion of the 'self-production of society' was circumscribed by a narrowly conceived conception of the "system of historical action."[38]

If the projects of conceptual renewal which took shape in the nineteen seventies were ultimately inconclusive, the strategy of rethinking the concepts of action and system held little appeal for the perspectives which dominated the culturalogical current of thought in the eighties and nineties. Emphasising the dissolution and dispersal of subjectivity, the postmodernists' had little call for the concept of action, and the idea of a social system was at odds with their emphasis on contingency. From the vantage point of the social sciences, however, this development was even more inconclusive than that of the agency theorists, as this break with *conceptual* tradition often went hand in hand with a rejection of the tradition itself, with many migrating into other genres of inquiry, including cultural theory and history.[39]

On the substantive level, the disruption of conventional wisdoms about modern societies has led to ongoing and evolving debates about the constitutive features and salient dynamics of emerging social configurations. The main trend since the nineteen sixties has been a growing recognition of the inadequacy of the over-unified images of society which predominated in the post war period. As a number of commentators have argued, the prevailing orthodoxies of the post war period—including both mainstream modernisation theory and mainstream Marxism—operated with the assumptions that modern societies could be identified with a given and identifiable social form, that such societies are the outcome of a single historical trajectory, and that modern society is—actually or potentially—a harmonious configuration.[40] However, attempts to better grasp and express the diversity and pluralities of contemporary social experience have gone in different directions, and have not, moreover, succeeded in preventing the re-emergence of assumptions about unity.

In the nineteen seventies, as Arnason argues, there was a widespread shift—it spanned the divide between 'action theory' and 'systems theory'—from one-dimensional, closed and unified models, to multi-dimensional, open and conflictual models.[41] But while these projects thematised new dimensions of plurality, and gave more weight to the historical openness of the modern trajectory, they were soon overshadowed by the postmodernists' claims that more radical forms and degrees of plurality and indeterminacy characterised contemporary social constellations. In response, the proponents of the idea of modernity,[42] (as Wagner notes, the idea of 'modernity' emerged as a rejoinder to postmodernists from those who rejected the idea of a new historical era, but also wanted to move beyond mainstream notions of 'modern society,')[43] argued that the pluralism and indeterminacy that are frequently taken to be the defining features of postmodernity are integral to modernity itself.[44] More recently, however, some of the most widely resonating approaches have returned to post war premises about unity. As Wagner has argued, the idea that 'globality' is the defining feature of the contemporary world implicitly relies on the assumption that all modern societies are embarked on a single historical path,[45] and while the idea of the clash of civilisations stresses the multiplicity of civilisations, it presumes the homogeneity of each civilisation.

Against this background, we can begin to gauge the import of the proto-hermeneutical developments in Touraine's recent social theory, and the extensions to them suggested by Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy. On the perspectival level, a specifically *hermeneutical* turn opens up two new possibilities for culturalogical modes of analysis in particular; on the one hand, it is well placed to grasp and express the formative influence of culture on social life while avoiding both cultural determinism and the tendency to subordinate culture to a broader logic; on the other hand, it offers an alternative to objectivism and formalism, without calling into question the very possibility of theorising. On the conceptual level, the hermeneutical thematisation of the *subjectivity* of the actor better grasps the ambiguity and creativity that is integral to very idea of action, and provides a stronger basis for intercepting the self-negating logic which has characterised much of the history of the concept. Finally, the hermeneutical thesis that modernity is constituted by rationalisation *and* subjectivation suggests that the constitutive cultural orientations of modernity are still operative, but also that they are more ambiguous and internally conflictual than dominant—especially rationalist—understandings have allowed.

We will explore the perspectival, conceptual and substantive developments in Touraine's recent social theory in more detail in the first part of this work. In chapter one, we will trace his shift from the "actionalist" theory of society in *Self-Production of Society* to the hermeneutical critique of modernity in *Critique of Modernity*, and explore the radicalisation of his cultural turn that it has entailed. We will also establish the limits of his hermeneutics, and discover that his ambivalence towards the perspective obscures a deeper affinity with the critical current within it. In chapter two, we will explore the conceptual renewal associated with his hermeneutical turn and identify its most significant limits. We will examine the critique of rationalist conceptions of action which sets his project to re-conceptualise the *acting* subject in motion, and discover that his tendency to privilege relations of conflict over relations of communication leads him to neglect the communicative and especially linguistic dimensions of the constitution of the subject. At the same time, we will see that his new interpretive prism of "the subject" has lead to a conceptual reorientation which pays more attention to the contexts in which action is situated, without providing a systematic clarification of

the innovations involved. In chapter three, we will examine the internally-conflictual image of modernity that emerges from his proto-hermeneutical, subject-centred and action-related theoretical framework. We will explore the insights which emerge from his argument that modernity is characterised by a tension between rationalisation and subjectivation (and a dynamic of fragmentation of the socio-cultural universe), and trace the implications of his partial retreat from the hermeneutical logic which underlies it.

In the second part of the book, we will attempt to deepen Touraine's insights by creating a dialogue between his proto-hermeneutical social theory and Ricoeur's fully-fledged hermeneutical philosophy. In chapter four, we will examine Ricoeur's thematisation of the critical potentials within the hermeneutical perspective, and discover that the crucial factor in this regard is his analyses of the creativity of language. In chapter five, we will explore the insights that *Oneself as Another* offers in relation to Touraine's project of conceptual renewal. We will see on the one hand that his hermeneutics of the acting subject succeeds in grasping the communicative dimension of subjectivity that Touraine neglects, without presuming the kind of deterministic or over-harmonious conception of communication Touraine wishes to avoid, and on the other, that the fully articulated philosophy of action in which it unfolds sheds light on the broader conceptual innovations this project has entailed. In both cases, his analyses of language play a crucial role. In chapter six, we will conclude the conversation we have constructed between Touraine and Ricoeur by considering what light Ricoeur's philosophy of action sheds on Touraine's theory of modernity through the central problematic of democracy.

Notes

1 P. Wagner, "Editor's Introduction," *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 163-164.

2 Touraine's first theoretical synthesis is presented in *Self-Production of Society*, trans. D. Coltman, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973. The action theory articulated in this work provided the interpretive framework for the work on social movements and 'post-industrial' society for which he is best known in the Anglophone world. *Critique of Modernity*, trans. D. Macey, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995, was originally published in French in 1992. It should be noted at the outset that

the English translation is questionable at a number of points, among the mot significant of which are translations which systematically obscure the distinction between 'modernism' and 'modernity' which is central to Touraine's argument.

[3] J. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. T. McCarthy, Cambridge, Polity, two vols. 1984-87, pp. 130-6.

[4] A. Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method,* London, Hutchinson, 1976.

[5] The idea that modernity is constituted by the tension between the spread of rationalisation and the emergence of the self-defining subject is the background to the hermeneutical challenge to rationalist modes of thought. Paul Ricoeur refers to it (P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. E. Buchanan, New York, Harper and Row, 1967, p. 349), but its most articulated exposition in found in the work of Charles Taylor (*Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[6] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, pp. 226-227.

[7] The key texts are M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarie and E. Robinson, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1962, and H. Gadamer, trans. Sheed and Ward Ltd., *Truth and Method*, New York, Seabury Press, 1975.

[8] The 'ontological turn' occurred in a tradition previously concerned, especially in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and Friedrich Schleiermacher, with epistemological questions concerning the interpretation of texts.

[9] See for example, the introduction to D. Hiley, J. Bohman and R. Shusterman, *The Interpretive Turn. Philosophy, Science, Culture*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991.

[10] As Ricoeur puts it, "Existence becomes a self—human and adult—only by appropriating . . . meaning, which resides first 'outside,' in works, institutions, and cultural monuments." P. Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," trans. K. Mclaughlin, in *The Conflict of Interpretations,* Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1974: 1965, pp. 3-24, p. 22. A terminological point must be clarified at the outset. One of the central arguments in this work is that Touraine and Ricoeur converge on a conception of the 'acting' subject. Their different starting points and concerns, however, have led to a difference in terminology. Touraine uses the term 'subject' to distinguish the self-defining and contestatory nature of the subject from the socially imposed forms of identity that he refers to as 'the self'. Ricoeur, in contrast, uses the term 'self' in the hermeneutical manner to make clear its divergence from the Cartesian conception of the self-founding, 'thinking' subject. Ricoeur's 'self' is immersed in always already constituted cultural contexts, but as we will see, it shares many of the characteristics of Touraine's subject. Both terms are used here, when acknowledgment of these broader contexts are required, but 'subject' is used when discussing the parallels between the conceptions of the two thinkers,

because it is Touraine's preferred term, because it is widely associated with claims to agency and because it is consistent with Ricoeur's ongoing allegiance to the tradition of reflexive philosophy. It does not entail any assumptions about the unity, transparence or self-founding of the cogito.

[11] P. Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography," trans. K. Blamey, in L. Hahn, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, Chicago, Open Court, 1995, p. 33.

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blamey, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992. P. Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography," trans. K. Blamey, in L. Hahn, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, Chicago, Open Court, 1995, pp. 3-53.

[14] P. Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography," pp. 37-8.

[15] P. Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography," p. 17.

[16] Ricoeur's studies of these mediations include myth, ideology, the unconscious, and above all language. See R. Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur," in *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986, pp. 91-112, p. 100. See also P. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. D. Savage, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970; *The Symbolism of Evil*; *The Rule of Metaphor. Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. R. Czerny with K. McLaughlin and J. Costello, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1978; *Time and Narrative Vols. 1 & 2*, trans. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984 & 1985; *Time and Narrative Vol. 3*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

[17] We will return to the distinction between critical and affirmative perspectives in chapter three.

[18] His "Intellectual Autobiography" gives a glimpse of his critical political orientations.

[19] This issue is not, however, Touraine's primary objection to the hermeneutical perspective. In fact, his attempt in *Critique of Modernity* to establish a critical perspective within the hermeneutical universe (in marked contrast to Habermas insistence that it is necessary to break out of the hermeneutical circle in order to establish a position of critique), is one of the indicators of his proto-hermeneutical premises.

[20] Ricoeur's return to the text (the locus of pre-ontological and especially Diltheyian hermeneutics) after the ontological turn is a further distinctive innovation that will be central to our analyses, See especially chapter four.

[21] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* Vol. 2, p. 222.

[22] See especially P. Wagner, *A History and Theory of the Social Sciences: Not all that is Solid Melts into Air*, London, Sage Publications, 2001.

[23] In this category, we can place both Luhmann's autopoietic systems theorising, and

more recently, and more influentially, rational choice theory's simultaneous rejection of functionalism and intensification of formalism. See P. Wagner, "Editor's Introduction," p. 163, and *A History and Theory of the Social Sciences*, p. 121.

[24] *Ibid*. p. 117.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] *Ibid*., p. 121.

[27] J. Arnason, "The Imaginary Constitution of Modernity," *Revue Europeenne des Sciences Sociales*, 1989, pp. 323-337, p. 329.

[28] J. Arnason, "Culture, Historicity and Power: Reflections on some Themes in the Work of Alain Touraine," *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1986, pp. 137-156, p. 145.

[29] Wagner, *A History and Theory of the Social Sciences*, p. 164.

[30] *Ibid*., p. 122.

[31] See for example, A. Dawe, "Theories of Social Action," in eds. T. Bottomore and R. Nisbet, *A History of Sociological Analysis*, London, Heineman Educational Books, 1979, pp. 362-417, and Z. Bauman, "Hermeneutics and Modern Social Theory," in eds. D. Held and J. Thompson, *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 34-55.

[32] Dawe, "Theories of Social Action," p. 379.

[33] Dawe, "Theories of Social Action," p. 365.

[34] An important exception to this trend is rational choice theory, which under the pressure of its individualistic premises, reverted to older, objectivist conceptions of action.

[35] Giddens underlined the agency of the knowledgeable lay actor, and the subjectivity inherent in the actor's capacities as a reasoning, reflexive being, Habermas situated action and interaction within a culturally transmitted and linguistically organised life world, and Touraine emphasised the social creativity of cultural and social conflict. To relativise the notion of social system, Giddens invoked the idea of 'structuration' to suggest that structure is not a barrier to action, but essentially involved in its production, Habermas asserted the primacy of the lifeworld over the social system, and Touraine subordinated the 'system of historical action' to the historicity of society. See Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action,* and Touraine, *Self-Production of Society.*

[36] H. Joas, *The Creativity of Action,* trs. Jeremy Gaines and Paul Keast, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996 pp. 216-219.

[37] Bauman, "Hermeneutics and Modern Social Theory," p. 45.

[38] Arnason, "Culture, Historicity and Power", p. 143.

[39] Wagner, *A History and Theory of the Social Sciences*, p. 164.

[40] See for example, J. Arnason, "The Multiplication of Modernity," in eds. E. Ben-Rafael and Y. Sternberg, *Identity, Culture and Globalisation*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, pp. 131-154, and Wagner, *A History and Theory of the Social Sciences*, p. 162.

[41] Arnason cites Habermas, S.N. Eisenstadt, Niklas Luhmann and the 'early' Touraine among others. See J. Arnason, "The Modern Constellation and the Japanese Enigma," part 1, *Thesis Eleven*, No. 17, 1987, pp. 4-39, p. 8.

[42] These included theorists who had participated in the first phase of the shift to multi-dimensional models. Habermas, Giddens and Touraine all shifted away from theories of 'society' to analyses of 'modernity'.

[43] Wagner, *A History and Theory of the Social* Sciences, p. 161.

[44] J. Arnason, "Modernity, Postmodernity and the Japanese Experience," in Eds. J. Arnason and Y. Sugimoto, *Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity*, London, Kegan Paul International, 1995, p. 16; P. Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. x.

[45] Wagner, *A History and Theory of the Social Sciences*, p. 167.

Chapter One

Proto-Hermeneutics

An enduring meta-theoretical objective has inspired Touraine's social theory; from the outset, his overarching aim has been to go beyond the over-integrated and over-harmonious image of society that functionalism had so widely promulgated in the post war period. For all the constancy of his purpose, however, he has been uncommonly willing to reconsider his conceptual and theoretical strategies; when unfolding historical developments called into question his first theoretical model, he undertook an extended period of reflection which culminated in the new intellectual period that will be at the centre of our analysis in these pages. In this chapter, we will trace his ongoing quest for the theoretical means to grasp and illuminate the conflicts and ambiguities of the modern world through three 'moments' in his theoretical trajectory: the 'actionalist' sociology of *Self-Production of Society,*[1] a transitional period of reflection on taken-for-granted but unacknowledged assumptions built into the conceptual infrastructure of the sociological tradition,[2] and the 'sociology of the subject' contained within *Critique of Modernity*. This trajectory is part of the 'cultural turn' that has

been one of the most notable, and fertile, trends in contemporary social theory; as we will see, however, in *Critique of Modernity*, Touraine's cultural turn became hermeneutical.

1. Actionalist Sociology

In *Self-Production of Society*, Touraine describes his theoretical project as 'actionalist sociology'. He does not by this term mean to suggest that the study of action can be separated from 'structural' or 'systemic' elements of social life; on the contrary, this work was conceived as an analysis of "what is commonly termed social structure,"[3] and as a complement to the study of social actors he had undertaken in *Sociologie de l'action*. Unlike those currents of social thought which succeed in focussing on the agency inherent in action only by concentrating on its internal structures and most immediate milieu at the expense of the broader social context,[4] Touraine's actionalist sociology belongs to the current of thought which connects action-theory with 'macro-sociological' concerns, using an action-based theory to conceptualise social relations on a societal level, and as a basis for understanding large-scale processes of institutional and social transformation.[5] Hans Joas has described the general theoretical aims of this kind of action-theory under the heading of "constitution theories."[6] Constitution theories, he suggests, "set out to make social processes intelligible in terms of the actions of the members of a society without assuming there to be some underlying transhistorical developmental trend," where making intelligible "in terms of action" means to be able to relate "the unplanned 'systems' of consequences of actions to the real actions of real actors."[7] More particularly, Joas suggests, constitution theories are directed against the functionalist image of society and the actor, and they attempt to construct their alternatives to them by combining an action-based conceptual apparatus with a 'realistic' use of systems models, and in this way to challenge functionalism without resorting to methodological individualism and its restrictive assumptions about action.[8]

To grasp the distinctive features of Touraine's version of constitution theory, it will be helpful to begin by looking more closely at the theoretical context in and against which it was constructed. In *Self-Production of Society*, Touraine takes pains to situate his actionalist sociology in relation to a range of socio-

logical currents which were influential at the time he was writing. As his project unfolds, however, its internal logic stands out most clearly as an alternative to two sociological traditions in particular. While the main adversary apparent within the pages of this work is without doubt Parsonian functionalism, Touraine also makes clear that his project is constructed as an alternative to historical materialism. We can, in fact, identify the central themes of his action theory directly from his critique of some of the assumptions of the two great 'post war rivals'. On the one hand, Touraine rejects all attempts to set up an "opposition between the fundamental reality of economic relations and representations derived from those relations artificially appearing to govern them;"[9] social conduct, he insists, must be comprehended in its cultural orientations.[10] On the other hand, he rejects the idea that these orientations can be understood as a system of values and norms; cultural orientations, he argues, must be understood in terms of a shared framework which is subject to a conflict of interpretations that is associated with social conflicts. At the same time, Touraine draws upon what he saw as the valid insights of each tradition in his attempt to construct an alternative to both; from Marx he takes an emphasis on productive activity and the conflictual dimension of social relations, and from Parsons an emphasis on the role of cultural orientations in governing social action. As we shall see, the outcome of this synthesis is a conception of society as "a set of cultural tensions and social conflicts."[11]

However, if the main themes of Touraine's actionalist sociology can be described in terms which refer in equal measure to Parsons and Marx, his elaboration of them exhibits a more asymmetrical relationship. Touraine makes it very clear that his actionalist sociology stands at a greater distance from functionalism than from Marx. Whereas his actionalist sociology is "most directly opposed to the sociology of functions,"[12] he distinguishes between the content of Marxism, which he considers too closely linked with the social configuration it was analysing, and its procedures—critique of ideology, investigation into the conditions of existence of social movements, and analysis of social change—which remain a source of inspiration.[13] But Touraine's allegiance to the underlying intentions of Marxian thought has consequences beyond those he acknowledges. Touraine borrows from Marx not only a general procedure but also the basis for his conceptual framework. The overarching impression

gained from *Self-Production of Society* is of an aspiration to reinterpret Marx's most important insights on a more adequate basis, above all through a process of 'culturalisation'; but as we shall see, his insufficiently reflective use of Marxian categories ultimately restricts his capacity to realise this project.

In what follows, I will focus on the adequacy of Touraine's conceptions of action and culture for his project to develop an anti-functionalist, 'culturalist' theory of action. The Parsonian conception of culture and Marxian conceptions of action form important points of reference for Touraine's conceptual infrastructure. But as we shall see, where his unequivocal rejection of functionalist presuppositions leads to a critical reflection on the premises of Parsons' concept of culture, he deploys Marxian models of action without a comparable process of reflection. Touraine draws on two Marxian models of, and metaphors for, action, and their adequacy for his broader project varies. On the one hand, his reliance on the dominant model of the 'paradigm of production' contributes to a restrictive interpretation of the most important dimensions of social structure; on the other hand, his adoption of the less developed model of 'class action' as the starting point for his analysis of conflictual action takes up the most flexible elements of the Marxian model. Ultimately, however, Touraine's conceptualisation of both culture and action prove inadequate to the most far-reaching intentions of his actionalist sociology.

We can sum up the central thesis of Touraine's actionalist sociology in both positive and negative terms. Put negatively, his central thesis is stated in an anti-functionalist vein—a society, he insists, "does not coincide with its functioning, its norms, its rules and its sanctions."[14] Put positively, however, his central thesis is couched in terms which evoke his Marxian conceptual legacy: "society is not just reproduction and adaptation; it is also creation, self-production."[15] Combined, they reveal at the heart of Touraine's action-theory, an attempt to go beyond the over-integrated image of social life which, he argues, finds a paradigmatic expression in Parsons' functionalism, through the adoption of a notion of creative social action based on the metaphor of production.

If Touraine's notion of the 'self-production' of society registers a general allegiance to Marx, it also points to his tendency to transfer Marxian categories into his new framework without an adequate reflection on their built-

in premises. This metaphor shapes the form his conceptual framework takes—largely without him recognising it. But to appreciate the influence of Touraine's over-reliance on Marxian categories we must first take account of the theme that decisively separates Touraine from Marxian discourse. A brief look at how he translates this central theme of the self-production of society into a detailed model will highlight his sometimes uncritical transference of Marxian concepts and paradigms into a new framework.

We can get an initial idea of both Touraine's reliance on Marxian ideas, and the main direction of his development of them, from his concept of historicity. He uses this term to refer to the three features of human societies which give rise to their capacity for self-creation. Societies produce themselves, he suggests, through

> *Knowledge*, which creates a state of relations between society and its environment; through *accumulation*, which subtracts a portion of available product from the cycle leading to consumption; [and] through the *cultural* model, which captures creativity in forms dependent on the society's practical dominion over its own functioning.[16]

The Marxian connection, it will be noted, is highlighted in the centrality Touraine attributes to accumulation as the motor force of heightened levels of production. But whereas for Marx, accumulation referred to the accumulation of capital, and specifically to the use of profits for the expansion and improvement of the conditions of production, Touraine assumes that accumulation is a characteristic of all 'historical' societies. More importantly, however, by including the 'cultural model' and 'knowledge' as co-constitutive components of the self-transformative capacity of society, Touraine is stressing that the form accumulation takes is always determined by a society's image of its own creativity, and the image it has of nature. For Touraine, a society produces itself through "both work and meaning;" accumulation is the 'material' element by which the process of the self-production of society occurs, but it is in the final analysis the image a society has of its creativity which allows it to use its knowledge and its material accumulation to produce its own social and cultural field. Economic production is central to the capacity of human society to create itself, but it is the capacity for symbolic creation which is in the last instance the determining factor.

It is the emphasis on the role of "the image they have of their capacity to act on themselves,"[17] which takes Touraine's conception of the capacity of human societies to form and transform themselves beyond Marxian conceptions; we will begin, therefore, with a consideration of Touraine's concept of culture, and the role it plays in structuring social action.

Culture

The role of cultural orientations in structuring social action plays a central and fundamental role in Touraine's social theory. As he sees it, societies produce themselves primarily through the conflict of social actors (in this text, classes) over the interpretation and implementation of the cultural orientations which define its image of creativity. Having made the cultural orientations of social actors central to the analysis of their action, we could expect an extensive treatment of the concept of culture underlying this idea. But while Touraine's analysis of the role of culture in social life is highly suggestive, it is not accompanied by a systematic treatment of the presuppositions on which it is based.

The main point of reference for Touraine's approach to the concept of culture is, as I have noted, primarily negative. Touraine draws on Parsons to the extent that he sees in his work a valuable emphasis on the role of cultural orientations in governing social action. However, notwithstanding this shared recognition of the significance of the cultural determinants of social action and social structure, Touraine's conception of the cultural foundations of social life and action is constructed in explicit opposition to Parsons. A critique of Parsons' concept of culture is important, Touraine argues, because his inadequate conception is a decisive factor in his tendency to reduce action to adaptation to a system. Parsons' emphasis on values, and more specifically his representation of society as a coherent system of values, is, according to Touraine, central to the functionalist image of society as capable of changing itself through a process of orderly adaptation. The representation of society as a system organised around its values, and its needs for integration, conflict management and adaptation to change, involves two specific reductions; on the one hand, 'society' is reduced to the idea of a collective subject or 'macro' actor; on the other hand, actors' orientations are reduced to a unified system of values. And these reductions are conducive to the further unwarranted

assumption that any conduct that is not in conformity with the rules of institutions constitute "disorganisation, marginality, deviance, anomie."[18]

In light of this critique, Touraine's main concern is to formulate the concept of culture in a way which grasps its formative influence, without positing a realm of shared and univocal values. The main strategy Touraine adopts is to replace the idea of a coherent system of values with a conception of a shared framework of cultural orientations that is subject to a conflict of interpretations. For Touraine, the most sociologically significant cultural orientations are those which constitute the image a society has of its creativity (they constitute the 'cultural model' of a society). But the cultural model is not a system of 'values' in the Parsonian sense. For Touraine, the cultural orientations of a 'historical system of action'[19] are never translated directly into norms and forms of organisation which define roles. He insists that the transformation of the cultural model into the values of social actors always occurs through the intervention of social classes.[20] Values and norms are not generated by the cultural model itself, but by the social actors struggling for control of it. For Touraine, then, the cultural model is an interpretive framework which defines a cultural field[21] and the 'thematic' of society,[22] but it is always in need of interpretation by actors. And as we shall see in more detail shortly, the social field is structured by actors' conflicts over the interpretation and implementation of these polysemic interpretive constituents. For Touraine, 'society' is both a unity that derives from a shared cultural field, and a set of permanent cultural and social conflicts.

Despite these significant developments relative to the Parsonian model, the conceptualisation and deployment of the concept of culture in *Self-Production of Society* remains problematic in important respects. In the first place, the idea that the cultural model can be limited to the self-image a society has of its creativity is an unnecessarily restrictive conception of the formative cultural orientations of social life. The idea that the ways in which a society conceives of its creative capacity is especially important is not objectionable, but the assumption that it can be singled out, and in particular that it can be separated from other dimensions of culture, is called into question by Touraine's own analysis. This can be seen most readily in his treatment of the component of historicity he refers to as 'knowledge'. Although this component of historicity is the most fundamental, it is, as Touraine sees it, the least

socially organised, and as a consequence he devotes little attention to it. A more systematic exploration of its role would, however, have raised questions about its relationship to the cultural model. Touraine uses the term knowledge to refer to a society's image of nature. It is a crucial element in a society's capacity to produce itself, because it sets the parameters of the interaction between society and nature and gives rise to the "set of means and technical operations" essential to it. Touraine argues, however, that the image of the natural order which governs these means and operations is based on the capacity of human language to structure the world, and its specific forms are culturally determined—'nature' is a cultural definition of matter.[23] On Touraine's own analysis, then, the cultural orientations that govern the self-production of society are broader than the image a society has of its own creativity.

Recognition of this complexity has implications for both his theoretical assumptions about culture, and his analyses of the substantive cultural orientations of modern societies. In the first place, it calls into question his presumption that the realm of culture can be compartmentalised in the way his positing of two distinct spheres suggests. The capacity of language to structure the world is as fundamental to the construction of the cultural model as it is to 'knowledge', and this factor alone points to a conception of a broader cultural framework of which the two differentiated spheres would be part. In the second place, by conceptually isolating the image of nature from the image of social creativity, Touraine absolves himself of the task of exploring the connections between them, and by neglecting the complexities which arise when the connections between them are considered, he simplifies his interpretation of each.

For example, in the case of 'industrial society', an examination of the connections between the image of nature and the broader cultural context brings to the forefront cultural complexities which cannot be assigned to specific class actors in the way which his model proposes. On Touraine's analysis, the core of the cultural model of industrial society is the idea of 'progress', and as he sees it, this idea is linked primarily to the idea of the control and transformation of nature; progress in the era of industrial society was seen as a matter of production, and the organisation of goods, wealth and human labour.[24] The main conflict of interpretation over this shared cultural orientation, he suggests, was between the industrialists' vision of progress which

was linked to free enterprise and the expansion of the market, and the workers view of progress, linked to the idea of either co-operative or collectivist association.[25] It has been argued, however, that the belief in progress was on both sides more differentiated than Touraine allows. Arnason shows that there was a divergence both between the ideas of the liberating influence of the expanding market and the conquest of nature, and between the ideas of a collective self-determination and the liberation of the productive forces from the constraints imposed by a privileged minority.[26] As Arnason sees it, Touraine neglects the fact that the idea of progress was accompanied from the outset by a *critique* of progress, and in privileging Enlightenment thought at the expense of the Romantic tradition, lost sight of the complexity of the cultural orientations of modernity, and imposed a too streamlined conception of the relationship between the cultural model and social actors.

Finally, Touraine's conception of culture suffers to some extent from 'over compensation' in relation to the Parsonian model. He succeeded in circumventing Parsons' conception of a society held together by shared values while retaining an emphasis on the formative influence of a shared cultural framework; but his alternative tends to reduce culture to the programming of *conflictual* action. To examine the ways in which Touraine privileges the conflict of interpretations at the expense of the equally fundamental processes of communication between them, we will look at his conceptualisation of action.

Action

If the very idea of the self-production of society draws in a general way on a central Marxian theme, Touraine's more detailed elaboration of the dynamics through which a society produces itself and the structures to which they give rise is also built on Marxian concepts. Touraine does not thereby reproduce Marx's fundamental assumptions; as we have seen, his emphasis on the formative role of culture clearly takes him out of the sphere of Marxian discourse. But in the absence of an adequately critical reflection, this 'paradigm appropriation' leads to the surreptitious adoption of some underlying assumptions which are at odds with the more flexible framework he is attempting to establish.

The extent of Touraine's paradigm appropriation becomes clear when we move from the abstract notion of historicity to the concrete social forms in

which it is embodied. As Touraine sees it, the self-transformative capacity of society is translated, not into a unified and coherent social system, but into a tension-filled 'field' constituted by two structures of social relations. The field of a society's historicity is characterised by both a relative unity which is derived from shared social and cultural orientations, and by conflictual social relations and social action. On the one hand, the cultural model is translated into a 'historical system of action,' which consists in the "set of social and cultural orientations by means of which a state of historicity controls and directs social practice."[27] The historical system of action defines the historical forms of the social 'structures' which shape the context of social action, but it does not unilaterally determine it; as we shall see it is also a 'stake' over which social actors struggle. On the other hand, the phenomenon of accumulation inevitably gives rise to social relations of power, and hence to conflictual relations between social actors. Touraine's elaboration of both dimensions of social life relies on Marxian conceptual categories. But as we shall see, they draw on divergent threads in Marx's thought, and have different consequences for Touraine's capacity to conceptualise the creativity presumed in the idea of the self-production of society.

The historical system of action follows the pattern Touraine established with the concept of historicity. He retains Marx's emphasis on the forms of labour as the most important and representative dimension of social practice, but insists on the formative role of cultural orientations in shaping its forms and their dynamics. The restrictiveness of his Marxian legacy, however, lies less in this culturalised notion of labour, than in his reliance on the structure of Marx's paradigm of production to elaborate the relationship between the most important cultural orientations and social practices. The historical system of action consists, he suggests, in four 'elements'. The cultural model itself is the most important of these, but to govern social practice it must be linked with social processes, and Touraine specifies three further elements—a pattern of hierarchisation, the mobilisation of resources and a system of needs. Touraine argues that these elements of the historical system of action are not themselves constituents of economic activity; rather they constitute the *field* of socio-economic organisation. But they do correspond to the elements of economic activity; more specifically, they correspond to the components of Marx's paradigm of production: production, the organisation of labour, distribution, and consumption.[28]

It is on the basis of the four elements of the paradigm of production that Touraine constructs his typology of four distinctive historical systems of action—'agrarian', 'mercantile', 'industrial' and 'post-industrial' or 'programmed' society. These historical systems of action differ according to which element of the production process the cultural model most directly affects. For example, in 'industrial' society, the cultural model of society interacts with work at the point where it is conducive to the permanent transformation of the organisation of labour, while in 'agrarian' society, the cultural model corresponds to consumption, and leads to the appropriation of surplus for either conspicuous consumption or symbolic creation.

Touraine's concept of the historical system of action is not an attempt to describe concrete societies; it is, rather, designed to analytically isolate a specific level within such complex historical formations. However, his attempt to establish the definitive features of societal types on the basis of this model imposed a restrictive framework from the outset. The first limitation of this model is the attempt to demarcate distinct types of societies, and to classify all historical societies, on the basis of these four socio-economic elements. There are both theoretical and empirical objections to this strategy. On the theoretical level, the closed model not only in principle limited the possible configurations to four, it also pre-supposed a constant structural correspondence between the cultural and economic determinants of societal types. On the empirical level, it is far from clear that this definition of the historical system of action is the most illuminating way to distinguish between socio-historical configurations. Touraine himself does not attempt to give detailed analyses of all four societal types—his focus is the social configurations of advanced and late modernity, and his most extensive analyses are of industrial society and what he saw as an emerging post-industrial society. As his own research increasingly tended to show, however, there is no clear evidence that an identifiable post-industrial configuration is emerging.

Also problematic, however, is Touraine's attempt to define societal types exclusively in terms of economic and social constituents, that is, without reference to the political sphere.[29] That this assumption has a Marxian provenance has been confirmed as recently as nineteen ninety-six, when Touraine restated his conviction that the activity of production is more fundamental than the organisation of political relations and, even more pointedly, that class relations—at least in part—govern political relations.[30]

If it is notable that Touraine has been more willing to 'culturalise' Marx than to 'politicise' him, 'the political' has an important, if subordinate role in the model of the *Self-Production of Society*.[31] The historical system of action is only one level of the systematisation of social life; subordinate to it are two further systemic levels of social practice which operate within the parameters set by the historical system of action, and the 'political system' is the first of these less autonomous systemic levels of social life. (The other is the 'organisational' level of social relations.) In this model, the political system is the set of social mechanisms by means of which the rules of collective activity are defined. Touraine does not suggest that the political sphere is exclusively determined by the structures and orientations of the historical system of action—political institutions are co-determined by a complex historical system which never corresponds entirely to a societal type, as well as imperatives internal to the political system, including political integration, management of change, and relations with other political units.[32] But his insistence on the primacy of 'the social' excludes 'the political' from the definition of historical systems of action.

This aspect of Touraine's thought has been criticised by several commentators,[33] and his own subsequent development suggests that the significance of the political should not be conceptually subordinated to class relations in this way. His increasing focus on totalitarianism and democracy reveals a recognition, in practice, if not in his theoretical statements, of the independent imperatives and central role of the political in constructing and defining the main contours of societal configurations. The restrictiveness of Touraine's analysis is intensified by the formalised and closed nature of the model. The framework he establishes on the basis of the model of the paradigm of production claims universal validity, and purports to exhaust the realm of possible social configurations. And as we shall see, it is based on a fixed pattern of relations between cultural orientations and social conflicts.

Touraine also relies on Marxian conceptual categories to elaborate the structure of the conflict between social actors, which constitutes the second pole of the 'field of historicity'. The idea that social life 'normally' revolves around conflictual social relations is one of the most distinctive themes of Touraine's social thought, and it has continued to play a prominent role in his social theory. In *Self-Production of Society*, his analysis of this feature of social life

begins with the observation mentioned earlier; the phenomenon of accumulation, he suggests, inevitably gives rise to relations of power and conflict between social actors. Society, as Touraine sees it, has a unity, defined and delimited by certain social and cultural orientations; but it is also composed of social relations. The social relations of a society necessarily have a co-operative element. But for Touraine, the most important social relations are relations of conflict.

To analyse the conflictual social relations which define this dimension of the field of historicity, Touraine again borrows a metaphor of action from Marx, and he again reinterprets it through a process of 'culturalisation'. In this case, however, he draws on a second metaphor for action which can be found in Marx, and he offers a more explicit reflection on it.

As many commentators have noted, alongside the dominant metaphor for action—the idea of labour and production—there is in Marx's work a less developed, but in many respects less restrictive metaphor for action. Joas[34] provides not only an account of these two threads in Marx's work, but also an analysis of their most important elaborations in twentieth century thought.[35] As his analysis shows, the two metaphors have distinct implications for the attempt to conceptualise the creativity of action. Notwithstanding Marx's early efforts to imbue the idea of labour and production with an anthropological notion of self-realisation, this metaphor ultimately fails to capture the diversity of forms of action, and, as consequence, reduces the creativity of action to one particular form, namely production. And as has often been noted, Marx's later development of the paradigm of production as a model for the social totality of human action lost sight of the idea of the self-realisation of individuals through their labour.[36]

In contrast, the idea of *class action* has been the basis for a less restrictive notion of creative, collective, political, and ultimately revolutionary action.[37] The greater potential for conceptualising the creativity of social life and action that Joas identifies in the metaphor of class action is visible in Touraine's *Self-Production of Society*. This more productive starting point is enhanced by a more explicit examination of the revisions required to transfer it into his own framework. The most important aspect of Marx's class analysis, according to Touraine, is his emphasis on class *relations*: against both earlier and

later tendencies to identify class with social groups, and to assign a class location to every group, Marx's fundamental contribution was to insist that classes exist only in and through explicitly conflictual relations with each other. For Touraine, Marx's understanding of class action is a useful model because, in contrast to the structural functionalist idea of stratification which sees class relations as relations of *competition* within a social order, and the idea of a 'class in itself,' which sees them as a relation of *contradiction*, he understands class struggle as a relation of *conflict*. Marx—at his best—saw classes as conflictual action, and existing only through that relation. This insight does away with the notion of class in itself, because there is no class reality behind or beneath the conflict. For Touraine, the conflict thus understood is not a contradiction, because one side is not a negation of the other; it is rather a dispute within a shared framework.

In Touraine's more culture-sensitive model, however, the idea of class conflict acquires a new connotation. Although for Touraine the opposition between classes is based on accumulation,[38] he does not see the relations between the classes as a simple or direct expression of a social relation in which a part of the collective product is deducted by a ruling class. As we have seen, for Touraine accumulation is inseparable from the cultural orientations which direct it, and in consequence, class conflicts concern not only the organisation of production and the appropriation of the surplus product, but also, and more importantly, the interpretation, control and implementation of cultural models. In this model, the most important 'stake' of the class conflict is historicity itself. A struggle of this nature is possible because the adversaries are participants in the same system of historical action, and in particular share its cultural model. Class struggle is a relation of *conflict*, because the classes share a common language,[39] and their struggle is ultimately a conflict of interpretations.

Touraine's inclusion of cultural determinants in the analysis of class relations calls for a more complex model of the dynamics of class conflicts than Marx offers, and he introduces the idea of a 'double dialectic' of class conflict to elaborate the complexity which attaches to conflicts which involve cultural orientations as much as material resources. In the model of the double dialectic, social actors are divided into two central classes which struggle over the control of culturally-directed investment. But the dynamics of their conflicts

are made more complex, because they can each adopt either an activist or a defensive role. In its activist role, the class that controls the cultural model and translates it into economic strategies is realising the cultural model, but it can also make use of the cultural model to constitute its own power and exert a constraint on society as a whole.[40] On the other hand, the class which is subordinated to the cultural model and the imperatives of accumulation also has both a defensive and an activist aspect; it both adopts a defensive attitude to resist domination, and contests the private appropriation of the cultural model by the ruling class.[41] On this basis, Touraine elaborates a complex model of the patterns of conflict which arise from different combinations of the two modes of class action.

It is against this background that Touraine first defined the social action which produces society as *social movements*. This concept, which has remained one of the most important concepts of his sociology, is introduced in the framework of *Self-Production of Society* to refer to the activist and contestatory dimension of the double dialectic. A social movement is "the conflict action of agents of the social classes struggling for control of the system of historical action."[42] As such it refers not to concrete social movements, which always involve a mixture of different levels of collective behaviour, but to that level of collective action which, by contesting the interpretation and control of historicity, is the primary mechanism though which a society forms and transforms itself.

The more reflexive process through which Touraine incorporates the metaphor and model of class action into his framework makes it in some respects less problematic than his deployment of the paradigm of production. However, his use of this model remains connected to some inherited assumptions against which we can again raise both theoretical and empirical objections. On the theoretical level, Touraine's insertion of Marx's model of class action into a general theory of society involves the generalisation of some assumptions which, closer analysis reveals, were tied up with the particularities of the historical experience it was first developed to interpret. In particular, Touraine generalises the prominence of the central defining conflict that characterised industrial society, into a model which presumes that all societal types are characterised by the same configuration of social and cultural conflict, and more concretely, by a single, central social conflict. The unsustainability of this over-generalisation of the dynamics of industrial society is evident at

both ends of the historical spectrum. Touraine neither offers a class analysis of pre-industrial societies, nor provides convincing evidence that the emergence in the twentieth century of the new social movements will conform to this model.[43] On the empirical level, as we noted earlier, even in the paradigmatic conflict between industrialists and workers, it can be argued that the double dialectic is ultimately inadequate to the relationship between the major classes and the cultural model of industrial society.

In conclusion, then, it seems that Touraine's attempt to go beyond both functionalism and historical materialism resulted in an actionalist sociology which is based on the fertile idea that the creative and self-transformative capacity of social action is rooted in the social conflict over the interpretation and implementation of central cultural orientations. It is, however, elaborated within a restrictive framework. In particular, his attempt to embed this insight in a formal and closed theory of society which relies on categories adopted from Marxian discourse is conducive to reductive accounts of his concepts of action and culture, most clearly evident in his four-fold model of the historical system of action.

2. Transitions

If the theoretical framework of *Self-Production of Society* was intended to provide a theoretical model applicable to all historical societies, its main aim was to make sense of the shifting constellation of socio-historical forces which characterised the industrialised world in the latter part of the twentieth century. In the period following this work, Touraine's primary focus remained the unfolding historical developments of late modernity, but he turned his attention to an ambitious research program aimed at getting a better understanding of their most conspicuous features. The parameters of this research program were set by the theoretical framework established in *Self-Production of Society*; Touraine developed its method—'sociological intervention'—as the complement to the theoretical system of actionalist sociology, and it was specifically designed to test the hypothesis of the emergence of post-industrial society.[44] The results, however, ultimately called into question the idea of a new societal type, and with it the theoretical edifice of his first major theoretical synthesis.

In the model elaborated in *Self-Production of Society*, the historical developments of the late twentieth century were interpreted as the emergence of a new type of society characterised by a distinctive mode of historicity and a new central conflict. In 'post-industrial' society, Touraine anticipated, "what is accumulated is the capacity to produce production" (knowledge), the cultural model—for the first time—recognises social creativity as the product of social action, and the most important form of social conflict is between those who manage the apparatuses of knowledge and economic transformation, and those who are striving from a disadvantaged position to gain control of change and enhance their expressive autonomy. Touraine's search for evidence of the emergence of this new societal type focused on the last dimension; it was designed in particular to identify among the 'new social movements' of the sixties and seventies—the student, feminist, regional and anti-nuclear movements—the social actors who might constitute the 'popular' social movement of post-industrial society.[45] The extensive research undertaken among these movements, however, failed to discover evidence of a new central conflict that would define post-industrial society in the way the conflict between industrialists and industrial workers defined industrial society and as McDonald has noted, Touraine eventually had to acknowledge that the socio-historical developments of the period amounted to a decomposition of industrial society and culture, occurring without clear signs of distinctive new forms of action and conflict.[46]

Despite his research findings, Touraine has been reluctant to give up on the idea of the emergence of post-industrial society; his response has been, rather, to argue that the transition from one societal type to another is always a long-term process. From this perspective, the developments which in *Self-Production of Society* were treated as an already existing post-industrial socio-cultural configuration reflect a tension "between a transformed culture and forms of social organisation and thought that remain attached to the past,"[47] and the socio-cultural mutations of the late twentieth century are signs of a longer process of transition to post-industrial society.

As Touraine recognised, however, the absence of clear trends along the lines he had anticipated cast doubt on the theoretical framework of *Self-Production of Society* more generally, and demanded a more comprehensive response. Touraine's initial response to this challenge was neither a simple re-adjustment

of the components of his model, nor an attempt to revise it in a project of comparable scale and comprehensiveness. Rather, he embarked on an extended period of reflection which involved a gradual, but thoroughgoing, examination of the fundamental premises of his theoretical framework. In this extended process, Touraine retained the core objectives and insights of his first theoretical synthesis. In particular, the task of replacing functionalist (and systemic) thinking with an image of the conflictual appropriation by social actors of the main cultural patterns remained central to his concerns. But he progressively reformulated the terms in which he attempted to achieve this objective, and the cumulative effect of these revisions has been the distinctive re-orientation of his thinking which, most commentators agree, marks *Critique of Modernity*.

Touraine registers the magnitude of the reorientation that has affected his work by giving it a new name; *Critique of Modernity* is no longer a sociology of action, but a 'sociology of the subject'. But if Touraine describes his new perspective in terms of its main theme, it is also, as I noted earlier, characterised by significant theoretical innovations. Touraine's new orientation, I will argue, constitutes an implicit, but unmistakable 'hermeneutical turn' in his thinking. As this shift has evolved from changes initially introduced within the old paradigm, it will be helpful to trace its origin in the transitional phase which separates *Self-Production of Society* and *Critique of Modernity*. The most useful text for this purpose is *Return of the Actor*.[48]

The aim of *Return of the Actor* was not to construct a new theoretical framework, but rather to facilitate a new representation of social life.[49] This more limited—and more reflexive—aim was not, however, without significant ramifications. In this work, Touraine both called for a radical re-conceptualisation of the object of sociology, and introduced the new theme which would dominate his sociology in the nineteen nineties. In the first case, a critical reappraisal of the underlying presuppositions of the sociological tradition led him to argue that 'social action' rather than 'society' should be the primary object of sociology. In the second case, he proposed to ground the analysis of action in a theory of the subject. Both of these developments played a role in Touraine's later shift of direction. The crucial factor was undoubtedly Touraine's discovery of the 'subject' as the ultimate presupposition of action,

but the more general shifts provoked by his critique of the deep-seated assumptions of the sociological tradition also played a significant role.

For Touraine, then, the first step in the process of rethinking his theoretical framework was a critique of unacknowledged presuppositions built into the sociological tradition itself. The main aim of this critique was to identify and neutralise the premises which underlay the over-harmonious conception of social relations, and the erosion of the sense of agency from the concept of action, widely characteristic of the sociological mode of thought. Touraine's reflection began with the most central of all sociological concepts; underlying otherwise divergent perspectives, he claimed, there is a shared image of 'society', which has built-in assumptions conducive to an over-unified image of the social field. Touraine's attempt to unravel the implicit assumptions connected with what he called the 'classical' concept of society focused on three such presuppositions. The first is the premise that society is in principle capable of changing itself without any fundamental disruptions. The classical concept of society, Touraine suggests, was based on the implicit identification of order and movement, and assumed that modernisation—and above all rationalisation—was both a principle of social structure and a force for change.[50] As he sees it, the implicit fusion of 'modern society'—understood in opposition to 'community', as freed from particularisms and functioning in conformity with universal values and norms—with the meaning of history was the main factor underlying the evolutionism which has characterised the dominant currents the of sociological tradition. The second assumption was the tacit identification of the idea of society with the nation-state. The sublimation of the nation-state into the idea of society was, he argues, a key factor in the tendency to conceive of society as a system, and hence as a super-actor with unified and consensual value orientations to act on and by. And the last assumption which predisposed concepts of society towards an over-emphasis on social integration was the idea that social actors could be defined by their level of social participation, and therefore in terms of the internal logic of the workings of the social system. In this regard, the "more one speaks of society, the less one talks of social actors, since the latter can be conceived only as the bearers of the attributes that are proper to the place they occupy in the social system."[51]

The main thrust of this critique can readily be seen as a generalisation and radicalisation of the critique he levelled against Parsons' functionalist conception of society in *Self-Production of Society*. On the first count, he argued that an over-unified conception of society underlies not only explicitly functionalist perspectives, but also sociological currents which have claimed to challenge it. In particular, he emphasised that—in the last instance—a unified image of society also underlies Marxism. Clearly, the Marxian image of society places a greater emphasis on social conflict than functionalism. But, Touraine notes, while functionalism and Marxist sociology eliminate action in different ways, they do so "with the same degree of efficacy."[52] And as Arnason adds, the ideas of the unrestricted development of the productive forces and the elimination of class divisions posit a post-revolutionary order that transcends the temporary antagonistic forms of progress, while the conflation of society and the nation-state takes a different but equally pernicious form in the idea that the state is an instrument of the ruling class.[53] On the second count, in *Return of the Actor*, Touraine argued that the presuppositions which were built into the dominant conception of society have *irretrievably* perverted it. In contrast to his earlier attempt to re-interpret the concept of society through the idea of the historical system of action, he argued, in the *Return of the Actor*, that its entanglement with distorted interpretations makes it necessary to dispose of the concept altogether, in favour of a sociology of *social action*.[54]

Touraine's critique of the classical image of society, and the re-orientation of sociology which followed from it, shaped the broad parameters of his ongoing theoretical innovations. It brought about both a reordering and reinterpretation of the conceptual key categories of *Self-Production of Society*, and the introduction of some new concepts. The most conspicuous conceptual consequence was that the concept of the historical system of action lost much of its previous significance. Touraine did not abandon this term, using it occasionally to refer to large-scale changes in social configurations, but it played no systematic role in his analyses. (The main reason for retaining this concept at all, it seems, is that it helps to describe contemporary developments in terms of the increasingly remote, but for Touraine still real, possibility of the emergence of a 'post-industrial' society.) This development did not signal a turn away from the analysis of 'macro-sociological' formations,

but it did involve several shifts in the way they were conceptualised. As the concept of the historical system of action receded, the space vacated was taken up both by new concepts which grasped previously unthematised dimensions of social configurations and their dynamics, and a compensatory emphasis on—and reinterpretation of—the other elements which made up the conceptual core of *Self-Production of Society*.

One of the most important new developments connected to the critique of the dominant image of society which encouraged the retreat from the concept of the historical system of action concerned Touraine's attempt to avoid the conflation of social change and social structure. This concern was evident in *Self-Production of Society*, in a rather artificial way, in the division between Touraine's analyses of social change and of social structure. In this transitional phase, his ongoing attempts to connect the historical and sociological perspectives without conflating them took the form of a new conceptual distinction between the 'mode of production'—a 'synchronic' mode of functioning and self-creation—and the 'mode of development'—a 'diachronic' mode of historical change. This distinction relativised the idea of a historical system of action, as concrete societies were no longer analysed exclusively in terms of their mode of self-production. The mode of production referred to the economic dimension of a historical system of action (industrial, post-industrial and so on), but this component was combined with other dimensions of social relations which Touraine analysed in terms of long-term patterns of change (as Touraine sees it, capitalism and socialism) which co-determine the transition from one societal type to another.[55]

At the same time, the significance attributed to the historical system of action also receded within Touraine's synchronic analysis of social structure as he put a new emphasis on the new concept of the subject, and a renewed emphasis on the concepts of historicity and social movements.[56] As we have noted, it is the introduction of the new theme and concept of the subject which plays the most decisive role in the reorientation of Touraine's framework, and this influence can be already discerned in *Return of the Actor*. However, although this theme is central to Touraine's concerns, it received surprisingly little systematic elaboration. (It is for this reason that the full implications of the new theme were not registered in this work; it was only as Touraine progressively

worked through its implications that its most far-reaching consequences were recognised.) It is possible, nevertheless, to see in this work the outlines of the concept of the subject that was elaborated in his later work.

The idea of the subject came to occupy a position of significance for Touraine through his discovery of the subject as a principle which can, for actors and sociologists alike, provide "a modern and entirely secular principle of unity for social life."[57] It is, that is to say, a principle that can sustain a cultural model that recognises human action as the source of social creativity, and at the same time, a concept that plays a pivotal role in a representation of social life that no longer revolves around over-integrated or evolutionist ideas of society. It is, in short, both an analytical and a normative category. It came to the forefront of his analysis when, following the inverse path to Parsons, he shifted his attention from 'action' to the 'actor'. Parsons began his theory of action with an analysis of the actor before moving to the level of social action. Touraine began, not least in order to circumvent Parsons' slide into the individualistic bias, with the analysis of action as the self-production of society. In *Return of the Actor*, however, he argued that an adequate conception of action depends on an adequate conception of the actor, and in turn, that an adequate conception of the actor depends on a recognition of his or her subjectivity.

The main themes of Touraine's later elucidation of subjectivity are present in this text in embryonic form. The essence of subjectivity, he argues, is not the capacity to dominate and transform the world,[58] but rather 'reflexivity', 'creativity' and 'consciousness'. The most distinctive aspect of his concept of the 'self-defining subject', however, is his emphasis on the capacity to disengage from the forms and norms of socially imposed patterns of behaviour and consumption.[59] For Touraine, the subject is defined, above all, by its capacity to distance itself from its works and the world in which it is situated. As he sees it, social action on the level of historicity only occurs if actors *distance* themselves from cultural models, as well as orienting themselves to them.

> Even before actors can recognise themselves as the creators of their own history, there must come what I have called the romantic moment, when subjects come to an awareness not of their works but of the distance that separates them from a hostile or meaningless order of things, in their desire for freedom and creations.[60]

In this first sketch of the subject, however, we can see already the bias that will continue to haunt Touraine's elaboration of it. From *Return of the Actor* on, Touraine's interpretation of the subject suffers from a tendency to one-sidedness that stems from his emphasis on the subject's capacity to distance herself or himself from social and cultural contexts. This emphasis is not in itself a problem if, as in *Return of the Actor*, the relative importance of distanciation and investment is treated as an empirical issue, which varies from epoch to epoch.[61] But as we shall see, as Touraine elaborates the idea of the subject in more detail, his emphasis on the capacity for distanciation from social and cultural contexts is pursued—and conceptualised—at the expense of the role of participation in those contexts. Touraine's interpretation of the subject was shaped by conjunctural concerns; in the wake of the history of the twentieth century, he suggests, the principle of self-determination is better realised by disengagement than participation in mass projects. However, this bias is built into the very idea of the subject; Touraine introduced the concept of the subject *in order to* put emphasis on the moment of distanciation from cultural models, and the subject is then *defined* primarily by this dimension.

Both the centrality that the idea of the subject would come to occupy within Touraine's conceptual framework, and the theoretical ramifications it would entail, are registered in a preliminary way in *Return of the Actor*. The introduction of the new theme played a significant role in his reinterpretation of both the idea of a central social conflict and the concept of historicity, but this formative role meant that these concepts suffered from the same one-sidedness that affects the concept of the subject; in each case there is an emphasis on distanciation at the expense of participation and investment.

The most obvious innovation in Touraine's analysis of the idea of a central social conflict was a shift of emphasis away from the category of class, to that of social movements. As we saw earlier, the notion of social movement was invoked in *Self-Production of Society* as a conceptual distinction within the framework of the 'double dialectic' of social classes. In *Return of the Actor*, the concept of social movement remains connected to that of class, but the centre of gravity has shifted decisively to the idea of social movement. The realm of social movements is the "conflictual action through which the cultural orientations of a field of historicity are transformed into forms of social

organisation" and Touraine's analysis of them is undertaken independently of the class structure.[62] This shift is partly due to his re-evaluation of the adequacy of Marxist discourse for contemporary social analysis that was also reflected in his critique of the concept of society. But it is also related to the changes brought about by the introduction of the problematic of subjectivity. If the social action which contests the interpretation and control of historicity depends on reflexivity, consciousness and the capacity for distanciation, the broader concept of a social movement is the more appropriate starting point. At the same time, however, the concept of social movement is redefined in keeping with the theme of the subject. Social movements, as action for control of historicity, are possible only if actors are producers rather than consumers of social situations; in short, social movements are possible only if actors are also subjects. More particularly, social movements are possible only if actors are capable of questioning social situations rather than merely responding to them, and have the capacity to disengage themselves from the forms and norms of socially sanctioned behaviour.[63]

The new emphasis on the reflexivity and consciousness of the subject also led to a refinement of the concept of historicity. When subjectivity was thematised, it appeared that the self-production and self-transformation of social life was achieved not only by means of cultural 'investments' and the conflict over them, but also by the "ever more acute consciousness of the actor-subjects who distance themselves from the products of their investments, recognise them as their own creations, and reflect upon their own creativity."[64] But as we have seen, for Touraine the main import of the emphasis on subjectivity is that historicity involves not only orientation to and by cultural models, but also distanciation from them. Historicity now consists not only in investment in cultural models, but also in distanciation from the norms and practices of social consumption.[65]

Touraine's new emphasis on subjectivity was also a key factor in a second line of reinterpretation which affected the concept of historicity. In this case, his new stress on the consciousness of the subject led to a more careful articulation of the cultural orientations over which social movements struggle, and the outcome was a further 'culturalisation' of the concept of historicity. In contrast to the trichotomy of *Self-Production of Society*—the presumably

'objective' realm of accumulation, the 'cultural' self-definition of social creativity and an ambiguous sphere of 'knowledge'—in *Return of the Actor*, he defined all three components of historicity as cultural patterns; historicity is comprised of cognitive, economic and ethical cultural models,[66] or in another formulation, "the cultural models of investment, knowledge and morality."[67] In this conceptualisation of historicity, the capacity through which social actors produce their social relations is more emphatically linked to the cultural context; it is the interpretive frameworks of social action which are in the last instance the source of its self-transformative capacity.

In terms of Touraine's ongoing theoretical development, however, the most important aspect of the shift in his definition of historicity is the more comprehensive notion of culture it entailed. His clearer statement of the cultural sources of social creativity was accompanied by a less compartmentalised conception of culture; the segmented conception of culture in which 'knowledge' was isolated from its broader cultural context was replaced by a conception which did not artificially separate the various dimensions of culture. At the same time, the more external relationship between accumulation as such, and the cultural model which shapes its forms, was replaced by a recognition of the intrinsic mediation of social action by structures of consciousness. And by including knowledge and 'models for investment' on an equal footing with the self-image of the creativity of society,[68] Touraine at least pointed towards a broader interpretation of the most historically effective cultural orientations of modern societies.

3. The Hermeneutical Turn

While Touraine's reappraisal of the model elaborated in *Self-Production of Society* brought about some significant changes to his theoretical framework in the nineteen-eighties, these innovations represented only a shift of emphasis relative to his 'actionalist sociology'. The most recent phase of his thought, however, involves a more decisive break with his earlier sociology. The concerns which animated Touraine's reflexive phase continued to reverberate throughout the pivotal text of this period; *Critique of Modernity* is a reflection on both the historical developments of the late twentieth century and the adequacy of received sociological modes of thought to comprehend them.

But the process of 'working through' the innovations introduced in his transitional period had far-reaching consequences. The conceptual framework established in *Self-Production of Society*, and revised and reinterpreted in *Return of the Actor*, was decomposed in this work, and despite his attempts to establish a continuity with his previous work, never fully reconstructed.

In *Critique of Modernity*, Touraine's starting point, mode of inquiry and underlying premises all underwent a radical transformation, and the outcome, as he sees it, is a 'sociology of the subject'. As I have indicated, however, I intend to argue that the developments which have taken Touraine from an actionalist sociology to a sociology of the subject also reflect a 'hermeneutical turn' in his thinking.[69] The full justification of this claim will unfold throughout the course of this book. To begin, however, it will be helpful to establish a preliminary idea of the hermeneutical dimensions of *Critique of Modernity*. At the same time, because Touraine does not acknowledge the hermeneutical dimensions of his project, and at points even repudiates the hermeneutical perspective, it is also important to get an initial idea of the limits of Touraine's hermeneutics. And in light of the fact that the hermeneutical reading runs against his self-understanding, an attempt to account for his reluctance to embrace the hermeneutical perspective is called for. In the remainder of this chapter, therefore, we will, first, outline the hermeneutical logic underlying *Critique of Modernity*, secondly, take note of the points at which it reaches its limits, and finally, consider the motivations underlying his attempt to distance his project from the hermeneutical perspective. We will find that an unmistakably hermeneutical logic underlies *Critique of Modernity*, and that when he retreats from it, he creates gaps in his analysis not only from the hermeneutical point of view, but in his own terms. Finally, we will discover that his precipitous rejection of hermeneutics obscures deeper affinities with the 'critical' current within the hermeneutical tradition. As we will see, Touraine's hermeneutical turn takes place within a theoretical framework shaped by his longstanding and abiding 'critical' orientation, and it makes sense to consider the outcome as a spontaneous 'critical hermeneutics'.

If the innovations involved in *Critique of Modernity* can be understood as a development of changes introduced but only partly explored in *Return of the Actor*, their novelty stands out most clearly against the background of *Self-Production of Society*. Touraine's central meta-theoretical concern in this work

remains the attempt to go beyond the over-integrated image of social life that finds its paradigmatic expression in Parsonian functionalism, and his main strategy still involves a more adequate conceptualisation of the problematic of action. But three shifts of focus stand out. The first is a shift of focus from the 'social' to the 'cultural' field. Touraine still sees social life as "constructed through struggles and negotiations around the implementation of cultural orientations",[70] but his earlier focus on conflictual social relations has given way to an exploration of the tensions within the cultural orientations of modernity. The second is a shift of focus from action to the actor. Where *Self-Production of Society* analysed the action through which societies produce themselves, *Critique of Modernity* is the working through of the project to ground the analysis of action in a theory of the actor as subject. The third is his shift from a general theory of society to a particular critique of modernity. Touraine's attempt to construct a general and exhaustive model of societal types has given way to a narrative reconstruction of the historical trajectory of the Western experience of modernity. A closer look at these developments, and the epistemological, methodological, conceptual and thematic innovations they touch upon, will give us a preliminary idea of the hermeneutical dimensions of this work.

In the first—and decisive—case, Touraine's shift of focus from the social to the cultural field brought with it both a more comprehensive and a more concrete account of culture, and as he has paid more attention to the substantive cultural domain, his implicit understanding of culture and its role in shaping social life and action have become unmistakably hermeneutical. The hermeneutical logic that emerges from this development is discernible across a number of the levels of his analysis, but we will consider here its impact on his fundamental premises.

In the first place, a hermeneutical logic is evident in his epistemological and methodological assumptions. We can, for example, see a more hermeneutical approach in the way he differentiates himself from objectivist and subjectivist perspectives. In *Self-Production of Society*, his alternative to both deviations rests on the idea of 'relational' sociology; the analysis of social *relations*, he claimed, was a mediation of both objective and subjective perspectives, because it privileged neither objective situations, nor subjective intentions. And this meant that the meaning of conduct must be explained

"not by the consciousness of the actor or by the situation in which he is placed but by the social interactions in which he is involved."[71] In *Critique of Modernity*, however, Touraine's alternative to objectivist discourse is based upon the recognition that the understanding and interpretation of social forms is inseparable from reflection on the structures of meaning which shape them, and through which they are apprehended; whereas in *Self-Production of Society* 'society' remained an *object* of study, in *Critique of Modernity* 'modernity' is an idea rather than a 'mere statement of fact.'[72] And where in *Self-Production of Society* he argued that "the meaning of events never coincides with the consciousness of the actors," in *Critique of Modernity* he insists that while the meaning of an action cannot be reduced to the actors awareness of it, "the meaning of an action is by no means independent thereof."[73] Hermeneutical premises are, moreover, presupposed in his primary mode of analysis, and, at one point, explicitly acknowledged; in *Critique of Modernity*, he elucidates the self-consciousness of modernity in order to shed light on the social forms, conflicts and logics it partly constitutes, and undertakes "a hermeneutical search"[74] for signs of the subject in the political, philosophical and social texts of modernity.

At the same time, the hermeneutical cast of his thinking is also reflected in the fact that he has become more sensitive to the ways in which cultural frameworks operate as *traditions*. Where his focus in *Self-Production of Society* was on the distinct 'cultural models' associated with societal types, his emphasis in *Critique of Modernity* is on the successive transformations of the constitutive cultural orientations of Western modernity. He analyses the 'historically effective' self-understandings of modernity in terms of the developments, transformations and specific combinations of concrete traditions, and in doing so, reveals that modernity is co-determined by 'tradition'. His attempt to 'rescue' modernity by reinterpreting it is also implicitly grounded in a hermeneutical conception of the 'traditionality' of culture; as he sees it, the traditions which co-constitute modernity can be "reactivated by a return to the most creative moments"[75] in order to generate new social and cultural possibilities.

In the second case, Touraine's shift to a sociology of the subject has strong affinities with the hermeneutical perspective which are registered on a number of levels of his analysis. His thematisation of subjectivity as the ultimate

presupposition of social action converges with the hermeneutical conception of the acting self; Touraine's conception of the subject, like the hermeneutical conceptions of Charles Taylor and Ricoeur, is defined—in opposition to the conventional notion of a being who *knows*—as a being who *acts*. Like both Taylor and Ricoeur, he conceives of the subject as a self-transcending being who is engaged in a permanent process of self-constitution. And his view that "meaning should not be opposed to consciousness,"[76] at least implicitly, accords with the hermeneutical view that consciousness is always already immersed in patterns of meaning which precede it, and which it is never capable of fully absorbing or mastering.

As we will see, Touraine's conceptualisation of the subject also diverges from conventional hermeneutical conceptions in significant ways. In particular, his subject constitutes him or herself not only through a positive relation to community and tradition, but also, and for Touraine more importantly, through a struggle against the 'apparatuses of social power' and the definitions of the self they attempt to impose. However, while the first component is hermeneutical in a conventional way, we will find that Touraine's notion of the construction of the subject through contestation also rests on hermeneutical premises. Touraine invokes a 'hermeneutical' interpretation of Freud to argue that the ultimate presupposition of the subject's ability to act freely is the capacity of the libido to transform part of itself into a subject.[77] As we will see, for Touraine, the importance of Freud's formulation is that he provides a conception of the subject as "an actor who is inserted into social relations, and who transforms them without ever identifying completely with any group or collectivity." The outcome, I will be arguing, is a potentially productive 'critical' development of the conventional hermeneutical conception of the subject, rather than a rejection of it.

Finally, the shift from a general theory of society to a more particular, historical, critique of modernity is consistent with the hermeneutical rejection of abstraction and scientism, and the hermeneutical image of modernity. Touraine's strategy to thematise 'subjectivation' as a counter to the dominance of over-rationalised images of modernity, and his argument that the emergence of the self-defining subject is as crucial to the unfolding of modernity as the rationalisation of social forms and institutions, have strong parallels with Taylor's hermeneutical alternative to objectivist and rationalist

images of modernity.[78] As McDonald has noted, Touraine, like Taylor, sees the emergence of modernity as coextensive with the secularisation of the idea of the subject embedded in Christianity, and like him, traces this development through the work of Augustine and Descartes.[79] And the conception of modernity as a tension between the principles and processes of rationalisation and subjectiviation which results also converges with Ricoeur's hermeneutical conception of modernity. As we will see, it is a version of the argument that modernity is defined by the split in modern culture between the emptying out of meaning that is the counterpart of the task of satisfying needs by mastering nature, and the renewed search for meaning that this destruction engenders.[80]

As we noted earlier, however, at critical points Touraine retreats from the hermeneutical logic underlying *Critique of Modernity*. Two such instances are illuminating; the first concerns his elaboration of his epistemological premises, and the second his treatment of rationality.

In the first case, Touraine's thesis that modernity is constituted by the cultural orientations of rationalisation and subjectivation entails a dualistic conception of modern thought. Thought is modern, he suggests, only when it gives up the idea of a 'general world order' that is both natural and cultural.[81] From this perspective, neither positivism nor scientism (including 'moderate' scientism, which takes its inspiration from a less rigid vision of naturalist determinism) nor, by implication, Parsons' conception of a general theory, is compatible with the modern standpoint. However, although Touraine insists on the essential difference between the natural sciences and an understanding of society, he argues not for their complete separation, but rather a coexistence where neither element absorbs the other. He is, then, presupposing a unitary, but pluralistic framework, and he endorses a methodological pluralism which ranges from the construction of models to hermeneutic interpretation. However, his analysis stops short precisely at the point where he would be obliged to acknowledge that the only kind of unitarian framework that could encompass the methodological pluralism he is proposing is a 'second order' hermeneutical framework of the kind that Ricoeur elaborates.

In the second case, while hermeneutical presuppositions are in evidence in his general approach to reason, at critical points he retreats to a conception

universal reason. Touraine's polemical concern—his thesis that modernity is constituted by the dualism of rationalisation and subjectivation is pitted against all versions of the view that modernity can be defined as the triumph reason—is such that he does not set out his conception of rationality in the same detail as his concept of the subject. He makes clear, however, that it is, like subjectivity, a mutable cultural orientation which is shaped by its traditional heritage, and influenced by its interaction with other cultural orientations, and its social and political context. He does not provide an account of the cultural embodiments of rationalisation to match his cultural history of subjectivation—in the Christian legacy, the specifically modern experience of social movements, and modern art—but in his general discussion it is clear that he is not resorting to an explicitly universal conception of rationality of the kind Habermas uses. He argues, for example, that in the case of Western modernity, rationality derived its specific characteristics from the legacy of the Greek and Christian ideas of objective reason, and that the historical process of rationalisation was shaped by the visions of modernity which identified with various conceptions of universal reason. Equally, the forms this cultural orientation took were influenced by its interaction with the orientation of subjectivation; in the early phases of modernity, rationality was in alliance with subjectivity, directed against the sacred order, while in the core period of modernity it was expressed in the idea of a rational world order, and a model of a rational society in which instrumental rationality was subordinated to broader social goals and 'rational' ends. More recently, rationalisation and subjectivation have increasingly diverged, leading to the impoverishment and particularisation of both. Increasingly disconnected from any ends or overarching framework associated with a social whole or universal values, rationality has become identified with particularised power apparatuses, and "is reduced to the search for the most efficient goals which in themselves escape the criteria of rationality."[82]

The difficulty arises when he turns to a consideration of the possibilities for a more productive relation between rationalisation and subjectivation. The question of the prospects for the re-unification of the constitutive elements of modernity is central to Touraine's project; although there is some ambiguity about the degree to which reintegration of the components of modernity is possible, the ultimate objective of the analysis in *Critique of Modernity*

is to foster a more viable model of modernity. But on the crucial question of the reconstitution of rationality that would be possible in less impoverishing circumstances, there is a conspicuous gap in the analysis. In a diagram, he suggests that the reconnection of rationality and subjectivity transforms 'instrumental rationality' into 'reason',[83] but in his text he does not even raise the question of what form a less impoverished mode of reason might take. Touraine's failure to canvass the consequences of the reunification he is attempting to foster is a major lacuna in his own terms, but it is also a point at which we can see that his own analysis calls for an extension of hermeneutical themes. As Touraine's framework rules out reliance on a notion of reason as technique or instrumentality, or a return to objective reason, it seems clear that a more comprehensive notion of reason could only be understood as hermeneutical reason.[84]

Finally, two gestures of 'hermeneutical refusal', paradoxically, illuminate something of the specific character of Touraine's underlying hermeneutical premises. Both arise in connection with his construction of the sociological tradition and his relationship to it. The first is implicit, and is evident in his interpretation of the classical sociological tradition; the second is explicit, and concerns his account of contemporary trends in social thought.

Touraine's reading of the classical sociological thought sets out from the hermeneutical premise that it is embedded in a tradition. Classical sociology came into being, not as the "study of social life," but "by defining the good in terms of the social utility of the modes of behaviour it observed,"[85] and as such was a continuation of the tradition which began with the idea of the common good of classical political philosophy (especially Aristotle), and underlay the sociologism of the political philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[86] From the most highly developed form of classical sociology, (produced in the twentieth century by Talcott Parsons and based on the idea that functionality is the criterion of the good) to Durkheim (the heir to the political philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) and the ancient Greeks, there is, as Touraine sees it, an uninterrupted tradition centred on the idea of social utility.

Despite this hermeneutical premise, however, his reading of the sociological tradition involves an implicit repudiation of the hermeneutical perspective

insofar as it by-passes the more conventional hermeneutical reading of the tradition of political and social philosophy. From the hermeneutical perspective, Touraine's interpretation involves a levelling of a more varied tradition, which ignores one of the most important aspects of classical political philosophy. In particular, it by-passes classical political philosophy's *practical* orientation, which has been important in the hermeneutical perspective's attempts to find a counterweight to modern scientism.[87] In contrast to the hermeneutical project to reconnect with the practical concerns of classical political philosophy, Touraine's construction of an uninterrupted tradition of social utility prepares the way for a radical break. Primarily concerned to distance himself from the functionalist assumptions of classical sociology, he repudiates the entire tradition as he has constructed it, including the distinctive practical orientation of classical political philosophy.

However, a closer look at Touraine's project reveals clear continuities with the practical concerns of classical political philosophy, and a closer connection to this tradition than this argument suggests. In general terms, Touraine has always emphasised the practical and contextual implications of sociology. Even when he was constructing a general theoretical model of society, practical concerns and conjunctural factors were in evidence. In *Critique of Modernity*, however, his practical concerns are central. Touraine's insistence that the possibilities inherent in modern culture have been only partially expressed in the historical experience of modernity is a propaedeutic to his attempt to re-interpret the idea of modernity in a way which could liberate those possibilities. More particularly, he opposes to the ideal of social utility, not a claim to scientificity, but another 'value-oriented principle'[88] which has a long history in the traditions of the West; for Touraine, it is necessary to reorient social life as well as social analysis around the principle of the subject.

More particularly, Touraine's epistemology has a strong affinity with the hermeneutical rejection of scientism. The extent of this connection is highlighted if we compare Touraine's relationship to the hermeneutical viewpoint with that of Habermas. From Habermas' only partly hermeneutical position, the main issue is to reconcile a practical orientation about what is right and just in a given situation with the rigour of scientific knowledge.[89] In contrast, Touraine shares with hermeneutics a more radical rejection of scientism,

describing his methodology as an attempt to "extract the meaning"[90] of new ideas and practices in order to reveal the issues, actors and conflicts of a new world. Touraine is, in other words, attempting to illuminate our present condition through the interpretation of the discourses and practices which partly constitute it. No longer engaged in the construction of a general theory, Touraine is involved in a critical interrogation of a multi-faceted tradition. And by the end of *Critique of Modernity* this becomes explicit; Touraine is 'becoming more and more clearly aware that I am part of a tradition'.[91]

In his reconstruction of the contemporary sociological perspective, on the other hand, Touraine explicitly repudiates the hermeneutical perspective. Hermeneutics, he suggests, is an inherently partial mode of social thought, which is incapable of grasping the complexity of the social world because it sees only one half of it.[92] To understand this view of hermeneutics, and to highlight the deeper affinity with hermeneutics which it masks, it is necessary to begin by situating it within his reading of contemporary social thought and its socio-historical context.

According to Touraine, classical sociology has not survived the historical developments that he interprets in *Critique of Modernity* as signs of the decay of the classical model of modernity. The concrete expression of this decomposition is a growing dissociation between culture and the economy, and a corresponding bifurcation of prevailing cultural orientations into economism and culturalism. Against this background, the functionalist image of the *unity* of actor and system has collapsed as the dominant sociological image of society, and has been replaced by two opposed images of the *separation* of system and actor: an image of a system without actors, and an image of actors without a system. The former dominated the nineteen seventies, primarily through the work of structural Marxists, but remains operative in an even more extreme form in Luhmann's system theory. It is, however, the image of actors without a system which he argues has been dominant within social thought since the nineteen eighties. There are, according to Touraine, two main versions of this image of the social field. Its dominant form (it both predominates in social thought, and serves as the ideology of the powerful) is neo-liberal rational choice theory, which dissolves society into the market. On the other hand, there is a 'culturalist' version of the image of society as actors without a system, which sees the actor as part of a tradition.[93]

It is in this context that he suggests that hermeneutics is a one-sided 'culturalism' which dissolves society into tradition. In this view, hermeneutics is a partial mode of social thought because it suggests that action can be analysed in terms of self-contained cultural premises, and in so doing, masks the operation of the system. As we noted in the introduction, however, this view of hermeneutics is primarily based on the canonical interpretations of the perspective found in the work of Heidegger and Gadamer; lying behind it is the view, widespread among critical theorists, that the Gadamerian tradition has paid insufficient attention to the operation of power within traditions. As Touraine does not spell out his objection in detail, we will look briefly at those who do.

In a survey of hermeneutical trends in social thought, Hiley et al note objections of this kind directed against Gadamer's interpretation of hermeneutics.[94] The core problematic of philosophical hermeneutics, which revolves around the idea of interpretive communities based on communication, is seen as portraying society as a set of shared practices held together by cultural consensus, and as paying inadequate attention to the distortion of communication that arises from power relations.[95] The most well known version of this criticism, from a perspective which accepts hermeneutics up to a point, but ultimately claims to stand outside the hermeneutical circle, has been elaborated by Habermas. In his famous debate with Gadamer, he articulated many of the objections which lie behind many critical theorists' view of hermeneutics. The most important is a profound suspicion about Gadamer's understanding of tradition; as Habermas sees it, Gadamer's stress on 'belonging' to tradition as the condition which founds the possibility of aesthetic, historical and lingual relations obscures the distortions of communication and understanding that arise from violence. More particularly, Gadamer's interpretation of the experience of belonging to tradition, precludes the possibility of gaining a critical distance from the oppressive and inhuman socio-cultural aspects of our traditions. What Habermas sees as the idea of a pre-existing consensus, based upon a "deep common accord" with tradition which precedes and envelops all criticism is, he insists, ultimately incompatible with the critical perspective.[96]

This reading, however, ignores an important strand of hermeneutics that has emerged alongside Gadamer's classical formulations. As we noted in the

introduction, Ricoeur's interpretation of the hermeneutical tradition is indebted to the work of Heidegger and Gadamer, but departs from both in ways which are highly pertinent to Touraine's project in particular, and the project of a critical hermeneutics in general. A detailed exploration of the new possibilities his work opens up for this project will be undertaken in later chapters, but two points are relevant here. Firstly, Ricoeur revisits the idea of interpretive communities based on communication in the context of his hermeneutics of action, and the outcome is a conception of society that is founded on a communicative bond, but subject to permanent conflicts and inequalities of power. And secondly, he argues that our relation to tradition is more dialectical than Gadamer suggests. Ricoeur accepts the idea of a fundamental participation in relation to history, and the broad epistemological consequences which follow from it but he argues that the relationship to tradition contains a moment of 'distanciation' which gives rise to the possibility of a limited, but definite and 'objective', moment of critique in relation to the traditions to which we belong.

A consideration of Ricoeurian hermeneutics will, then, place Touraine's reluctance to identify with hermeneutics in a new light. Touraine's reluctance to identify with the hermeneutical perspective stems from the same concerns other critical theorists have raised against the tradition, but his response has been quite different. Touraine shares Habermas' suspicion that the idea of a deep common accord with tradition obscures relations of power, but he does not share Habermas' epistemological response. For Habermas, it is possible to grasp the past through an 'explanation' which unmasks its distorting and oppressive features, and reveals them for what they 'really are'; Touraine, in contrast, analyses the power relations which mediate cultural traditions without instituting a radical break between structures of consciousness and social forms of power. The outcome, we will see, is that where Habermas insists that it is necessary to break out of the hermeneutical circle in order to establish a position of critique, Touraine is spontaneously engaging in a critical hermeneutics of the kind Ricoeur has elucidated.

Notes

[1] This was the most ambitious statement of the theoretical project which was initiated in *Sociologie de l'Action*, Paris, Seuil, 1965, and provided the framework for his

decade-long empirical research project devoted to identifying the new forms of cultural and social conflict in what he saw as the emergence of a 'postindustrial' society.

[2] The most useful text for examining the transitional period is a collection of essays, published in 1984, but spanning the period from 1976. The essays collected in *Return of the Actor*, Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press, 1988 not only encompassed the theoretical innovations first introduced in *The Voice and the Eye: The Analysis of Social Movements*, trans. A. Duff, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, but also introduced the themes which played the most direct role in his subsequent theoretical innovations.

[3] Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. xvii.

[4] These accusations are most commonly directed towards Anglo-Saxon philosophy of action and symbolic interactionism respectively, as for example by Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, pp. 49-50.

[5] W. Outhwaite, "Social Action and the Production of Society," in eds. J. Clark and M. Diani, *Alain Touraine*, London, Falmer Press, 1996, pp. 251-261, p. 252, stresses that Touraine's 'manifesto for action theory' in *Sociologie de l'action* was from the outset complemented by an emphasis on structural principles.

[6] Joas' *The Creativity of Action*, which includes Touraine under the heading of constitution theory, was published in the same year as Critique of Modernity, and therefore did not consider Touraine's most recent theoretical innovations.

[7] Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, pp. 231-232.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 223-223.

[9] Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. 60.

[10] Touraine is also implicitly rejecting the structuralist Marxist division of society into economic, political and ideological structures, as will become clearer later in this chapter.

[11] Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. 62.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[19] The term '*système d'action historique*' is mostly translated as 'system of historical action', but as Arnason has argued, 'historical system of action' seem more appropriate to Touraine's intentions. I have adopted this translation. In light of Touraine's distinction between social and historical movements, and social and historical

conflicts, the latter translation more adequately expresses the location of this concept in the same frame of reference as social movements. See Arnason, "Culture, Historicity and Power", p. 151.

20 Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. 133.

21 *Ibid*., p. 19.

22 *Ibid*., p. 20.

23 *Ibid*., p. 18.

24 *Ibid*., p. 96.

25 *Ibid*., p. 152.

26 Arnason, "Culture, Historicity and Power", p. 147.

27 Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. 69.

28 *Ibid*., p. 92.

29 Daniel Pécaut provides a systematic treatment of Touraine's subordination of the political to the social. As he notes, this does not represent a lack of interest in the political, but even when Touraine turns to a sustained analysis of democracy, in A. Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, trans. D. Macey, Boulder, Oxford, Westview Press, 1997, the primacy of the social is maintained. See D. Pécaut, "Politics, the Political and the Theory of Social Movements," in eds. J. Clark and M. Diani, *Alain Touraine*, pp. 159-171, p. 159.

30 A. Touraine, "A Sociology of the Subject," in eds. J. Clark, and M. Diani, *Alain Touraine*, pp. 291-342, p. 330.

31 Pécaut also notes the connection to Marx. Touraine is, he suggests, denouncing "what Marx calls the political illusion". Pécaut, "Politics, the Political and the Theory of Social Movements," p. 162.

32 Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. 175.

33 There is a strong case to be made for giving the political dimension of modernity an equal and autonomous status in the analysis of the advent of modernity. See Pécaut, "Politics, the Political and the Theory of Social Movements", p. 162; Arnason, "Culture, Historicity and Power"; and J. Cohen, and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1992.

34 Joas, *The Creativity of Action*.

35 In particular, he traces the use of this aspect of Marx's thought by M. Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. J. Bien, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1973, C. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. K. Blamey, Cambridge, Polity, 1987, and H. Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Faber, 1963.

36 Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, p. 99.

37 *Ibid*., p. 116.

38 Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. 117.

39 *Ibid*., p. 127.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 118.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 119.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 298.

[43] The divergence apparent between the contemporary experience of social movements and Touraine's model, and the tensions between the most productive aspects of his theoretical approach and the idea of post-industrial or programmed society have been noted by many commentators. See for example J. Cohen, "Mobilization, Politics and Civil Society: Alain Touraine and Social Movements," in eds. J. Clark, and M. Diani, *Alain Touraine*, pp. 173-204; A. Scott, "Movements of Modernity: Some Questions of Theory, Method and Interpretation," in eds. J. Clark and M. Diani, *Alain Touraine*, pp. 77-91; and Joas, *The Creativity of Action*.

[44] F. Dubet and M. Wieviorka, "Touraine and the Method of Sociological Intervention," in eds. J. Clark and M. Diani, *Alain Touraine*, pp. 55-75, p. 55, also provide a useful account of the research program initiated by Touraine, but executed and developed by others, including themselves.

[45] Dubet and Wieviorka, "Touraine and the Method of Sociological Intervention," p. 55.

[46] K. McDonald, "Alain Touraine's Sociology of the Subject," *Thesis Eleven*, No. 38, 1994, pp. 46-60, p. 48.

[47] A. Touraine, *Return of the Actor*, p. 159.

[48] *Ibid*.

[49] *Ibid*., p. xxii.

[50] *Ibid*., p. 3.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 4.

[52] *Ibid*., p. 5.

[53] Arnason, "Culture, Historicity and Power", pp. 138-9.

[54] Touraine, *Return of the Actor*, p. 8.

[55] Another important innovation which came out of Touraine's critique of the dominant image of society which is less relevant to our main concerns but will be pertinent to the discussion of democracy in the final chapter is the greater emphasis on the distinction between state and society and their autonomous and divergent imperatives. This development brought to the forefront the importance of the impact of interstate relations on both the internal functioning of a society and its historical development, but more importantly in this context, opened up a new line of analysis of the political sphere. Touraine now sees democracy as the separation of state and society, and totalitarianism as the predominance of the state over society.

[56] *Ibid*., p. xxiv.

[57] *Ibid*., p. 39.

[58] *Ibid*., p. xxv.

[59] *Ibid*., p. 1.

[60] *Ibid*., p. 160.

[61] *Ibid*., p. 67.

[62] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[63] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[64] *Ibid*.

[65] *Ibid*., p. 158.

[66] *Ibid*., p. 42.

[67] *Ibid*., p. 68.

[68] *Ibid*., p. 49.

[69] Alexander also argues that Touraine has established the foundations for a 'hermeneutically-oriented yet critical social science' J. Alexander, "Collective Action, Culture and Civil Society: Secularizing, Updating, Inverting, Revising and Displacing the Classical Model of Social Movements," in eds. J. Clark and M. Diani, *Alain Touraine*, pp. 205-234, p. 219. But Alexander argues that the thematisation of culture is very submerged in Touraine's early work. In contrast, I am arguing that Touraine's theory has always been 'culturalist', but that this orientation has become more productive as it has become more hermeneutical.

[70] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 358.

[71] Touraine, *Self-Production of Society*, p. 9.

[72] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 203.

[73] *Ibid*., p. 243.

[74] *Ibid*., p. 288.

[75] As Ricoeur puts it, in P. Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative," in eds. D. Woods, *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 20-33, p. 24.

[76] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 366.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 374. In contrast to readings which, by radicalising the distinction between the id and the superego, preclude all principles of coherence, the hermeneutical interpretation, as Ricoeur puts it, insists that 'the unconscious is homogenous with consciousness', and thereby makes possible a 'return to consciousness' P. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. D. Savage, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970, p. 430.

[78] C. Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 6.

[79] McDonald, "Alain Touraine's Sociology of the Subject," p. 52. However, Touraine's account sees a less straightforward process of the emergence of the subject. He gives more weight to the influence of the materialism of the philosophies of the

eighteenth and especially nineteenth century, and argues that the theme of the subject declines in the eighteenth century to the extent that it loses ground as secularisation spreads, and bourgeois individualism is increasingly subordinated to capitalist rigor. And as McDonald notes, the more specific conclusions Touraine and Taylor draw concerning the contemporary relation between the principles of rationalisation and subjectivation diverge. Taylor sees the weakness of contemporary society in the excess of instrumental reason, and Touraine sees it in the rupture between rationality and subjectivity.

80 P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. E. Buchanan, New York, Harper and Row, 1967, p. 349.

81 Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 216.

82 *Ibid*., p. 101.

83 *Ibid*., p. 219.

84 In the absence of a more systematic treatment of this question, Touraine persistently retreats to a conception of instrumental rationality. This tendency is apparent within Critique of Modernity (in contradiction with the clear implication that a more comprehensive form of rationality is possible), but it becomes the dominant and explicit argument in later texts. In his essay, 'Can We Live Together', he suggests that the dominance of instrumentalism in modernity could be qualified by a more flexible interaction with the complementary and conflictual orientation of subjectivity, but there is no suggestion that this could lead to a more comprehensive model of rationality A. Touraine, "Special Guest Essay: Can We Live Together, Equal and Different?" *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 204-208, p. 170.

85 Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 352.

86 *Ibid*., p. 17.

87 One, partly hermeneutical, interpretation of the tradition is found in Habermas' construction of a less continuous tradition, which emphasises the break between the practical concerns of Aristotle's classical political philosophy and the emergence of sociology—effected by the transitional work of Hobbes and Machiavelli—as a 'scientific' discipline. J. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. J. Viertel, Boston, Beacon Press, 1973.

88 Touraine, "Special Guest Essay", pp. 205-206.

89 Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, p. 79.

90 Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 371, translation amended. Many of the construals in the English translation are highly questionable.

91 *Ibid*., p. 369.

92 *Ibid*., p. 355.

[93] *Ibid*., p. 355.

[94] Hiley, Bohman and Shusterman, *The Interpretive Turn*.

[95] *Ibid*., p. 9.

[96] These are the terms in which Ricoeur sums up Habermas' position in the debate with Gadamer. See P. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. J. Thompson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 63-100.

Chapter Two

The Actor as Subject

With an initial idea of Touraine's 'proto-hermeneutical turn' established, we are in a position to look more closely at its impact on his social theory. In chapter three, we will consider its ramifications for his theory of modernity; before we do so, however, we will examine the reorientation of his conceptual framework it has prompted, and begin to consider its implications for the project to 'bring agency back in' to social theory. As we will see, Touraine's innovations in *Critique of Modernity* have opened up fertile new possibilities for conceptualising human agency, but they remain unevenly developed, and their broader implications are incompletely clarified.

The imbalance we will find in Touraine's analysis stems in part from the not altogether anticipated outcome of his initial strategy of conceptual renewal. The conceptual innovations which crystallised in *Critique of Modernity* were conceived as an extension of the 'actionalist' conceptual framework outlined in *Self-Production of Society*—they were invoked in an attempt to better achieve that work's meta-theoretical objective of going beyond

over-integrated conceptions of society, and the development which set them in motion was Touraine's decision to ground its action-theory conceptual framework in an analysis of the actor as subject—but in the process of thematising the subjectivity of the actor, what had begun as a subject-centred analysis of the actor tipped over into a theory of the acting subject. The result has been a not-insignificant not reorientation of his conceptual apparatus he uses to analyse large-scale social configurations; the analysis of the modes of action which produce distinctive societal types has given way to a demarcation of successive phases of modernity based on shifts in the relationship between rationalisation and "subjectivation." The ramifications of this greater than expected shift, however, have not been fully worked through, and while Touraine has provided a finely articulated elucidation of his new conceptual keystone of the subject, the shifts it has prompted in his broader conceptual apparatus are less systematically clarified.

Two issues in particular stand out in this regard. In the first place, while the conceptual framework elaborated in *Self-Production of Society*—revolving around the concepts of historicity, accumulation and historical system of action—has been dismantled, there is in *Critique of Modernity* no comparable attempt to specify the elements of the apparatus which has taken its place. The broad contours of his new conceptual infrastructure are clear; his thesis, that the 'production of the subject' is as central to modernity as processes of rationalisation, is built on the premise that rationalisation and subjectivation are not only social processes, but also, and in the first instance, cultural orientations. However, while his analyses contain some highly suggestive insights, the conceptual underpinnings of this approach are not explicitly clarified, and as we will see, one consequence is a significant imbalance in his new framework and substantive analyses.

The second notable absence is a reflection on the relationship between his new conceptual framework and the one it grew out of. As we will see, the idea of 'action' plays an important role in *Critique of Modernity* on a number of levels, but the introduction of the concept of the subject has unsettled the action-based conceptual infrastructure it was designed to strengthen, and despite the significance of developments involved, Touraine reflects on its ramifications for neither his action-theory framework, nor his broader project to conceptualise social creativity.

As we will see in the next chapter, although it remains in some important respects unfinished, Touraine's new conceptual apparatus has made an important contribution to the new light his analyses in *Critique of Modernity* have shed on modern social forms and dynamics. Equally, however, we will see that by not more thoroughly clarifying it, he has not only neglected some important elements, but also obscured some of his most fertile innovations, and left them insecurely incorporated into his conceptual apparatus. As we have anticipated, a closer look at Touraine's innovations will suggest that implicit but unmistakably proto-hermeneutical premises have played a crucial role in reshaping his conceptual framework and, in turn, in the expanded interpretive reach it has unleashed. The ultimate objective of our critique of his conceptual infrastructure, therefore, will be to identify theoretical resources that could deepen and extend these fertile premises, and as we have noted, we will find Ricoeur's philosophy immensely helpful in this regard. Before we turn to it, however, we need to consider the logic of Touraine's conceptual innovations, and pinpoint the most significant absences in their elaboration, in more detail.

We noted some of the background to Touraine's reorientation of his theoretical project in the introduction. His abiding meta-theoretical objective has been to rescue a more adequate conceptualisation of human agency from the dominance of functionalist and structuralist thinking, and his initial "actionalist" strategy followed a well-trodden path within the sociological tradition. As Touraine, among others, has been increasingly aware, however, despite its resonance as the appropriate conceptual frame for the experience of agency, the deployment of the concept of action has been fraught with difficulties. As Dawe has put it, the history of the sociological idea of action has been the "career of a paradox," because it "has always and everywhere generated its own negation."[1] From Marx, to Weber and Parsons, theoretical approaches which began as action-theories have culminated in a conception of a dominating and constraining social system. The theoretical difficulty which underlies this paradox has been neither peripheral nor neglected in social thought; as Zygmunt Bauman sees it, it has constituted *the* issue around which the tradition has revolved,[2] and as we noted earlier, its presence in Parson's influential work was the spur for a new set of attempts to transcend it among action (or "constitution") theorists of the nineteen seventies. In the period since, the apparent intractability of the problem has radicalised attempts to

transcend it, and Touraine's recent work can be seen in this light; his current work grew out of, and remains connected to, the idea of action, but he has sought to break more decisively with the premises of classical sociology, and conventional concepts and theories of action.

Touraine's starting point in this regard is an examination of the underlying assumptions which have exerted an unacknowledged but powerful influence on conceptual and theoretical edifices, and his main conclusion is that it is the *rationalist* premises that underlie dominant conceptions of action and the actor which are the ultimate source of the self-negating logic which has shadowed the concept of action. His constructive response began with the idea that to intercept the logic of self-negation, it is necessary to thematise the *subjectivity* of the actor. As we have noted, however, the shift of emphasis this theme prompted has had significant ramifications for the conceptual framework he deploys for analysing large-scale social configurations; his analysis modernity through the lens of the "the tense relationship" between rationalisation and "the production of the subject" has subordinated the analysis of modes of social action to that of social and cultural frameworks which are conceptually detached from the idea of action.

In what follows, we will examine these three moments in Touraine's argument in turn, paying particular attention to their implicit hermeneutical premises. In section one, we will examine his argument that the deep-seated and culturally-embedded conceptions of the actor as the embodiment of reason which is an important source of the self-negating logic which has undermined the sociological concept of action. In section two, we will explore his reactivation of the cultural currents which foreground the idea of *self-transcendence* to construct a conception of the self-creating, acting subject. Finally, we will consider the hermeneutical dimensions of the conceptual infrastructure with which he now analyses large-scale social configurations.

1. Critique of the Rationalist Conception of Action

A critique of prevailing conceptions of action has been an important part of Touraine's attempts to bolster the notion of agency from the outset. In the nineteen seventies, he argued that the self-negating logic apparent in the influential work of Parsons was connected with an over-harmonious con-

ception of culture, and in his 'transitional' period, he identified conventional conceptions of the actor as a crucial factor in a broader trend in the sociological tradition to 'empty out' the meaning of action. In *Critique of Modernity* he has introduced two new elements into his critique. In the first place, he now identifies underlying *rationalist* premises about the actor as the main source of the tendency towards self-negation which has haunted sociological concepts of action. The pervasive conception of the actor as the embodiment of universal reason, he argues, has long been conducive to conceptions which reduce action to meaning little more than adjustment to a rational system, and more recently to the equally impoverished conception of the rational actor *without* a system, characteristic of rational choice theory. In both cases the real content of the idea of action—the human capacity to transform the material and social environments—is lost.

The second new element of Touraine's critique is that he now locates the ultimate source of the rationalist presuppositions identifiable in sociological conceptions of action and the actor in deep-seated cultural orientations which underlie them. It is, he suggests, the pre-figuring of rationalist theoretical conceptions by more general cultural orientations which accounts for their widespread and longstanding plausibility within the sociological tradition.

Drawing the methodological implications of this—eminently hermeneutical—premise, Touraine's focus in *Critique of Modernity* is on the underlying cultural orientations which have lent themselves to inadequate conceptions of action and agency, and his—also unmistakably hermeneutical—strategy is to elucidate the most influential cultural orientations through an analysis of the dominant self-understandings of modernity. As we will see in more detail in the next chapter, he identifies three successive phases of modernity characterised by distinct self-interpretations, and his central argument is that the rationalist conceptions which came to dominate modernity in fact obscured a more varied and richer experience and self-understanding. This early self-interpretation of modernity is relevant in this context, because it embodied a more viable and productive conception of the subject. Christian thought is crucial in this regard, he argues, because it bequeathed to Western culture a non-identitarian conception of the subject based on the idea of self-transcendence.

This conception was, however, obscured by the rise of the rationalist self-conceptions of modernity, and in particular by the Enlightenment and historicist conceptions of the actor as the embodiment of universal reason in the form of the laws of nature, the meaning of history, or the acquisition of rational thought. He insists, however, that these images of modernity, which came to dominate the self-understanding of moderns, were selective, and ultimately unbalanced, reactivations of other Western cultural sources. Most importantly in this context, he argues, Enlightenment and historicist thought drew upon the tradition which attempted to construct a unified image of 'man' and universe,[3] and in so doing supplanted the non-identitarian conception of the subject tied up with self-transcendence with their *identitarian* vision of the actor.

It is, he suggests, this identitarian conception of the subject which had had the most significant influence on sociological conceptions of the actor. In particular, he argues, it led to a truncated conception of the actor which identified social actors with their works, or with society's rational responses to the needs and desire of individuals.[4] It underlay both functionalist assumptions about the relation between the actor and the system, and the rational choice theory image of the actor defined by calculation. Functionalist thought is an uncritical reflection of the idea and ideal of *social utility* which characterised the 'classical' conception of modernity;[5] as he sees it, the Enlightenment attempt to give good and evil *social* rather than religious foundations, created a value-vacuum which was filled by the idea of social utility,[6] and led to the eclipse of the notion of the human being was no longer seen as a creature made in God's image by the idea of a social actor whose behaviour contributes to the smooth workings of the social system.[7] And although rational choice theory does away with the idea of the system, its image of the actor defined exclusively by the rational—and therefore calculable and predictable—pursuit of one's own interests is conducive to functional reasoning.[8]

Touraine's elucidation of the rationalist self-interpretations of modernity suggests that rationalist premises underlying the idea of the 'system' have also played an important role in the self-negating logic that has afflicted the sociological concept of action. The most important assumption in this regard is the idea that modernity is the embodiment of universal reason; it lends itself, he argues, not only to a conception of the subject as the embodiment of uni-

versal reason but also to conceptions of the social system as the incarnation of universal reason, in ways which are conducive to the equation of action with behaviour that is in compliance with an order. The source of this dynamic was as the paradigmatic example found in Parsons' work clearly shows, it compounds the tendency to reduce action to adaptation to a systemic logic.[9] Parsons' combination of the idea of a norm-governed, integrated 'social system' and the notion of the actor socialised through the internalisation of values[10] results in a model in which the actor is defined by the functioning of society, and action is reduced to the workings of a social system governed by rationality.

2. The Subject as *Dissident*

If the central lesson Touraine takes from his critique of the rationalist tradition is that as long as action is seen exclusively in terms of the mobilisation of rationality, action will appear as the result of its impersonal logic, the main focus of his attempts to resist the conceptual slide from the idea of action as autonomous behaviour to that of adjustment to a system is a systematic thematisation of the subjectivity inherent in action. In order to grasp the meaning of action as something more than compliance with a social order, it is necessary to register the fact that action involves the mobilisation of reason, but also the mobilisation of the desire for self-determination and self-definition that he analyses under the heading of 'subjectivation'. Through this strategy, he (re-)introduces the idea that to be an actor is to be a *self-creating* and *self-defining* subject.

Touraine's elaboration of such a concept of the subject reflects some of the most distinctive features of *Critique of Modernity*. His explicit themes are related to his longstanding 'critical' focus on the conflictuality of social life and the ubiquity of power within social relations, but these concerns unfold on the foundation of his newer, but unmistakable hermeneutical premises, and the outcome is suggestive, but underdeveloped 'critical hermeneutical' conception of the subject.

Touraine's hermeneutical premises are apparent in a general sense in his strategy of reinterpretation and reactivation of the cultural traditions which have embodied the cultural orientation of subjectivation and rationalisation in a

productive tension. He locates the origin of his central idea—that the subject should be understood as the intersection and interaction of 'rationalisation' and 'subjectivation'—in Christian dualism, and in particular, in the Augustinian idea of the subject as a dualism of reason and faith. Augustine's idea of transcendence "made it possible to think about existence in non-rationalist terms,"[11] because he provided the basis for a non-materialist, non-naturalist and non-identitarian notion of the subject, without severing the connection to rationality. The ideas of the human subject as a worker, and as a moral conscience (they "give freedom a positive content through labour and protest"),[12] and most particularly, Freud's notion of the 'id' secularised the idea of transcendence, while keeping its central non-identitarian signification, and its connection to rationality intact.

Hermeneutical premises are also evident in Touraine's specific re-interpretation of this tradition. The subject is more than the appropriation or internalisation of rationality, he argues, because it also involves a contestatory 'quest for freedom', and a communicatively constructed sense of belonging to community and tradition. 'Subjectivation' from this perspective refers to both a permanently self-transcending 'project' of self-creation, and a 'cultural identity' forged in communicative relations.[13] This conception of subjectivity, then, incorporates a conventionally hermeneutical conception of the self as a member of a linguistic or cultural community, but it also, and for Touraine more importantly, involves an emphasis on the subject's capacity to *disengage* from that community. As we shall see, however, although the latter 'critical' dimension seems to be at odds with conventional hermeneutical conceptions of the subject, it too has an unmistakably hermeneutical dimension.

This combination of a distinctively 'Tourainian' emphasis on conflictual social relations—not only as the context of subjectivity, but also as constitutive of it—and unmistakably hermeneutical presuppositions leads to an innovative, and highly productive, perspective on subjectivity. At the same time, however, Touraine's deep suspicion of hermeneutics works against a satisfactory integration of the themes of conflict and communication that his dualistic conception throws up. Touraine rejects the hermeneutical conception of subjectivity because, he argues, it mistakes the self image imposed by social powers for the subject. But the outcome is a conception of the subject which privileges conflict *at the expense* of communication.

To explore this dialectic of conflict and communication more closely, we will look at Touraine's conception of the subject as 'project' and 'memory' before considering the main obstacles to a more balanced account of the two components.

Freedom

The idea of subjectivity as a 'quest for freedom,' effected through the contestation of socially imposed identities and roles and resistance to apparatuses of power, is not a conventional hermeneutical conception of the subject. Indeed, as we shall see, Touraine implies that his conception is at odds with the hermeneutical perspective. But closer inspection reveals that Touraine's elucidation of this idea is based on (critical) hermeneutical premises. We can see these premises, in the first place, in his general strategy. Touraine does not attempt to build up the idea of the subject in the Cartesian fashion, starting with self-reflection. He proceeds, rather, by appealing to the subject's experience of itself and the world, and, more particularly, he attempts to reveal its presence through the interpretation of key texts. This eminently hermeneutical strategy, however, is given a critical treatment; the signs of the existence of the subject are uncovered in "the rifts in the established order,"[14] and often in disguised forms which have to be deconstructed. His search for signs of the subject, however, is impressionistic rather than sustained; he sees opaque references to the subject in the psychoanalytic tradition's distinction between the subject of the utterance and the subject of the statement; he inverts Kant to reveal the subject, not in the human being as noumenon, but as phenomenon; he sees the subject in the increasing centrality of ethics, and in the concern with the connections and tensions between the moral and the social; and he sees evidence of the subject—often in confused forms—in parts of the sociological tradition, and in his own earlier work in particular.[15]

Touraine's more detailed development of the idea of the subject as a quest for freedom is also hermeneutical in that it draws on, and reinterprets, traditions which have embodied the cultural orientation of subjectivation. The most important aspect of the legacy which Touraine wants to reactivate is the idea of transcendence, but he also takes up the idea of the *personal* subject from Christian thought. The Augustinian idea that God is discovered by turning inwards, and Luther's appeal to experience and affectivity, he argues,

laid the basis not only for a conception of the *will*, but also a conception of subjectivity anchored in the idea of *personality*. The origin of these dimensions of the idea of the subject in Christian dualism is important to Touraine, but his most immediate interpretive resources come from the currents of thought which secularised the tradition inaugurated by Augustine. The crucial development in the process of secularisation was the translation of the idea of transcendence into the idea of *action*. For Touraine, the initial expression of this idea, which interpreted action in terms of labour, was an important stage in the evolution of the idea of transcendence, but the idea of transcendence came to be understood more generally as the 'will to act' and, in particular, to transform one's environment and oneself. More particularly, he draws on the Freudian current of the 'anthropology of the id'. As Touraine sees it, Freud combines the element of individuality that is implicit in the idea of the 'personal' subject, and the idea of transcendence through action. Freud's subject is, on this reading, the 'control exerted over lived experience' which, by giving experience a personal meaning, creates the unity of a person that transcends the multiplicity of lived time and space, and makes the person capable of producing and transforming themselves and their world.

Freud is more useful than Nietzsche, the other great 'anthropologist of the id', Touraine argues, because the conception of the subject that emerges from Freud's work has the advantage of neither collapsing the psychology of the subject into the unconscious, nor identifying it with the ego, which is no more than "set of social roles."[16] Touraine's conception of the individual subject as a particular unity where "life merges with thought,"[17] and which can be produced only to the extent that affectivity and the passions persists within the individual, is directed against the rationalist idea that 'passion' is a demon that has to be exorcised. Nietzsche 'clears the ground' for such a conception of the subject because, by locating the universal in the unconscious and its language, he destroys the rationalist conception of the ego and inverts the Enlightenment idea that what is universal in human beings is the reason which controls the passions.[18] But Touraine insists that the Nietzschean formulation is of only negative value, because it refers to an *impersonal* power of desire that exists within the human being; Nietzsche's supra-individual principle is not only de-individualised, it is de-subjectivised. In contrast, Freud's conception of the unconscious offers a positive foundation for the

idea of the subject, because it provides a basis for individuation that occurs through insertion in social relations.[19]

As we noted earlier, this reading of Freud is unmistakably hermeneutical. Touraine rejects the interpretation which radicalises the break between the id and the super-ego and thereby dissolves the subject into the realm of the unconscious, in favour of a hermeneutical reading which, by emphasising the continuity between the id and the super-ego, provides a basis for a concept of the subject. As we would expect, he interprets this hermeneutical starting point so as to maximise its critical and conflictual possibilities. His emphasis is on those aspects of Freud's thought which allows us to see the subject as the outcome of the transformation of the non-social force of the id, through social relations, into an actor who can transform the social relations into which s/he is inserted without identifying completely with any group or collectivity.

This reading of Freud relies, like Marcuse's, on the suggestion that there are ideas in Freud's later work that allow for a revision of his initial interpretation of the relationship between desire and civilisation. On this reading, Freud's later work modifies his earlier view of an unbridgeable opposition between the realm of the drives and that of the law which makes social life possible. In particular, it is Freud's introduction of the themes of libido, guilt and sublimation which transforms his conceptual framework, and most importantly, separates it from the Nietzschean subordination of consciousness to the unconscious which eradicates subjectivity and intentionality. Touraine argues that Freud's redefinition of his first topography of the agencies of psychical life—the unconscious, preconscious and conscious—as the id, the super-ego and the ego, creates more dynamic relationships than the simple opposition which pertained between the earlier categories. The theme of libido introduces a relational dimension into the analysis of desire, which brings in social action as a formative process in psychical development; the theme of guilt leads to a conception of the law that is not external to the individual; and most importantly, the idea of sublimation replaces the confrontational relationship between the id and the super-ego with the idea that part of the id is transformed into a super-ego which is capable of both meeting the demands of the id, and giving them a sublimated meaning. The super-ego is no longer

seen as the internalised representative of the law, but as an instrument of liberation from social constraints; and sublimation, and the libido it supplies, give the individual the ability to resist social seduction and manipulation. However, while Touraine takes up Marcuse's argument that the libido can be sublimated only if it becomes a social phenomenon, he resists the idea that there can be a definitive reconciliation between desire and civilisation; for Touraine there is only a constructive contestation between them.

The distinctively critical and conflictual twist Touraine gives to this conception of the subject can be readily seen if we compare it with more conventional views of the 'individual' and its relationship to society. For Touraine, individuality should not be thought of either in terms of the non-social individual who exists fully formed before s/he enters into social relations, or as purely socially-constructed. The rationally acting individual of utilitarianism, the sovereign individual of political liberalism, and the individual defined by social roles (whether construed critically or affirmatively) are unacceptable. Equally unacceptable are those conceptions which identify the subject with the self-image acquired through the socially determined relationship with others. As he sees it, this tendency characterises both Taylor's conception of the self as a member of a linguistic community, and G.H. Mead's distinction between the 'me' and the 'I'. Taylor's idea of the self existing within a world of communications mistakes the self-image imposed by social powers for the subject, and Mead's distinction between the 'me' and the 'I' presupposes a too harmonious relationship between social expectations and individual action. Both attribute the construction of the individual to the socially determined relationship with others, which defines roles rather than subjects.[20] The Freudian conception avoids both deficiencies because, by defining the individual, subject and actor in relation to one another, it conceives of the individual as an intersection of the social and the non-social.

The way in which Touraine demarcates his notion of the subject from mainstream conceptions of the individual is important, because his attempt to conceive of a principle of individuality that *is* consonant with the idea of the subject, as he wishes to construe it, is a crucial and distinctive part of his project. For Touraine, individuality is an important characteristic of the subject, which he defends against over-socialised conceptions. The idea of individu-

ality that is adequate to the subject, however, is very different from conventional conceptions. In fact, he stresses, dominant conceptions of individualism often have little to do with individuality. Enlightenment thought has frequently been seen as individualist in spirit, but was not,[21] and "nothing is less individual than rational choices."[22]

This view also has repercussions for the widespread idea that individualism is the founding principle of modernity. This idea is, he argues, doubly wrong because it minimizes the emergence of both new anti-individual forces—above all centralised production and management apparatuses with the capacity to constrain and normalise individuals—and the new forces capable of resisting these pressures in the name of individual self-determination. And against Louis Dumont's attempt to associate individualism with modern society, and holism with traditional societies, he argues that there are traditional and modern forms of both individualism and holism. In traditional societies, the ascetic who lives in God coexists alongside the individual who is identified with a social role legitimised by a natural or divine order and in the modern world, individual freedom coexists alongside individuality defined in terms of identification with social roles. The modern world both freed the individual, and made the individual submit to new laws.

Hermeneutical premises and conflictual themes also characterise Touraine's elaboration of the processes through which the 'anthropological' and 'psychological' potentials for subjectivity we have considered are realised. He stresses two processes in particular; the subject, he argues, constructs him/herself "through struggle against the apparatus and through recognition of the other as subject."[23] It is, however, the first—and the most conflictual—which is for Touraine the definitive component of the subject's self-construction.

As Touraine sees it, the permanent struggle against the apparatuses of social power and socially imposed self-definitions is the primary mechanism through which the human potential for subjectivity is realised. If the individual does not *constitute* him/herself as a subject through such resistance, s/he will be *constituted by* the economic, political and especially cultural power centres which define and sanction roles, and forced to consume rather than produce and transform society.[24]

This distinctive conception of the primary process of the self-construction of the subject—Touraine's subject is above all a *dissident* who resists power—brings with it a very particular conception of the relationship of the individual and social subjects. Touraine sees the quest for individual autonomy as a constitutive element of subjectivity, but he does not see the project of self-determination as a purely individual quest. As he sees it, the obstacles to the existence of the individual subject are overwhelmingly social, and for this reason, the quest for individual autonomy is greatly strengthened by collective forms of action. Clearly, however, only some kinds of collective action can defend the subject; mobilisations from above, and attempts to equate collective action with the meaning of history, subvert rather than defend subjectivity. Adapting his earlier analysis, he argues that it is *social movements* which provide the social defence of the subject.[25]

Touraine's new frame of reference has brought to the fore a number of dimensions of social movements and social action obscured in his earlier accounts. The most important new element of his analysis, however, is the more complex relationship between social movements and cultural orientations which emerges. Touraine still defines social movements by their role in conflicts over the social implementation of a shared cultural project, but as his analysis of the cultural model has become more complex, so too has his analysis of social movements. The important development is that the cultural model of modernity is now internally divided between rationalisation and subjectivation. As a consequence, social movements too are more internally divided. Touraine insists that all social movements appeal to the cultural model of modernity as a whole, and therefore reflect the tensions inherent in it. However, he adds that social movements cannot serve rationalisation and subjectivation at the same time in the same way, and therefore express them unevenly. Rationalisation finds its principle embodiments in its involvement in the management of the established order, and is closely associated with the action of ruling forces,[26] while the social movements which resist them are associated more closely with the orientation of subjectivation.

This less unitary view of social movements is evident in Touraine's account of the movements which have been central to the unfolding dynamics of modernity. As he sees it, the emergent bourgeoisie was the agent of ratio-

nalisation and subjectivation in equal measure when it combined both orientations in the struggle against the sacred order; it embodied subjectivation in that its members were the actors who achieved the autonomy of civil society from the state, and it embodied rationality to the extent that they were the main actors involved with the rationalisation of the economy. As the rationalist model of modernity became entrenched, however, it became increasingly capitalist, then managerial. On the other hand, while the workers movement was characterised by an appeal to both rationalisation and subjectivation, as its adversary became increasingly identified with rationalisation, its defence of the worker against the rationalisation of scientific management became the primary expression of the appeal to the subject.[27]

Touraine's conception of the subject as project, then, proposes a complex relationship between the individual and social dimensions of the processes through which the subject is produced. He argues that unless it can become part of a social movement which defends the subject against the power of the apparatuses, the subject is in danger of being dissolved into individuality. At the same time, he insists that unless the social movement defends the autonomy and responsibility of the individual subject, it is threatened by "the alienating temptation to conform to the meaning or direction of history."[28] As we can see, both critical and hermeneutical themes play a part in this understanding of the interplay between the individual + the social subjects, but it is clear that the former predominate. In particular, his emphasis on the conflictual sources of subjectivity overwhelms his analysis of its communicative origins. For Touraine, there can be no subject without social engagement, but in his analysis, the nature of this engagement is first and foremost contestatory; the most important aspect of the subject's involvement in social life is the fight "against established equilibria and ideologies,"[29] and as a consequence, Touraine stresses the reflexivity through which subjects *distance* themselves from the established order, and the social situations in which actors find themselves. The hermeneutical slant of his analysis, however, remains evident, to the extent that action requires a distanciation from the established order, but not complete disengagement.[30]

As we noted above, however, Touraine's subject is constructed not only through the struggle against apparatuses, but also through "respect for the

other as subject."[31] Touraine underlines the hermeneutical provenance of this theme when he notes that the idea of the recognition of the other also has a long tradition in Western thought, originating with the Sermon on the Mount, but his more detailed analyses exhibit his characteristic emphasis on conflict and contestation. To begin with, the dialogic dimension of the self-constitution of the subject is secondary; it receives less attention, and it appears to be 'added on' to a conception of the subject that is defined, beforehand, and in its essentials, by the conflictual relationship to the broader social context. In addition, the most important aspect of the relationship with the other, for Touraine, is that it helps the subject to project itself out of its social determinations.

Touraine's discussion of the dialogic relation involved in the constitution of the subject traverses both interpersonal and social contexts. Surprisingly, however, he gives most attention to the interpersonal level. He suggests that friendship, militant commitments (as long as they do not degenerate into unquestioning loyalty to an organisation or a party) and, above all, 'love' are the crucial dialogic experiences which contribute to the construction of the subject. His critical bent becomes evident again in his analysis of the love relationship. In a relatively unorthodox interpretation, he sees love as the definitive dialogic experience because it enables the subject to project herself out of her social determinations to "become freedom."[32] Because love involves a commitment which is "too absolute to be merely social" it can lead to the rejection of the patterns of consumption and adaptation that are so powerfully reinforced in modern society.

On the other hand, Touraine insists that "the encounter with the other never takes place on open ground, as in films where two characters meet face to face on an empty set."[33] The private dimension of the relationship with the other is always inserted into a social context, and therefore into a situation of unequal power. Despite this explicit reference to the broader social context of the dialogic relation however, he pays scant attention to the *social solidarity* that he argues is presupposed by the idea of recognition. In this respect, the deficit of institutional analysis that several of his critics have noted looms large.[34] Touraine knows that the idea of the recognition of the other is hollow if social inequalities are not taken into account, but offers surprisingly little analysis of the socio-political preconditions for dealing with them. As

we will see in chapter six, this absence in Touraine's analysis is partly rectified in his analysis of democracy, but not sufficiently to counter Turner's argument that Touraine's account of the institutional conditions which could support the production of the subject is inadequate.[35] It is important to note, however, that the possibility of a more extensive institutional analysis is neither excluded by Touraine's theoretical framework, nor considered unimportant. In his rejoinder to the accusation of a deficit of institutional analysis he insists that the appeal to the freedom of the subject implies an "unremitting" attempt to reconstruct a world, through its transformation into institutional devices and patterns of social relations.[36]

The logic which pushes Touraine away from institutional analysis resurfaces in his elucidation of 'being-for-the-other,' through a juxtaposition of Levinas and Ricoeur. As Touraine recognises, their philosophies point in divergent directions; Levinas' conception of the other as 'infinite distance' has "all the power of a religious rejection of an invasive power which seeks to impose a model for identity, participation and homogeneity",[37] while Ricoeur's elaboration of the promise made to the other introduces a notion of solidarity which can transform an ethical principle into institutional rules. Touraine does not choose between them, but he reveals a lingering preference for the philosopher of liberation over the philosopher of relationship.[38]

Memory

Touraine's subject, however, is not pure 'project'. If the subject is partly constituted by a permanent quest for self-definition and self-determination which projects it into the future, it also has a particular—personal and collective—history. This dimension of Touraine's subject is what prevents a slippage into the kind of purely universalistic conceptions he has denounced. The subject's quest for freedom is anchored in a cultural heritage which gives it depth, and prevents it from being absorbed into short term projects or instant actions, and its task of self-construction is made possible not only through the contestatory quest for personal freedom, but also through the mobilisation of cultural resources acquired from a community of origins and belief.[39] This component of Touraine's subject, we can readily see, is hermeneutical in the conventional sense, and as Touraine admits, because the quest for freedom is bound up with membership of a culture,[40] the subject is not only (partly)

self-created, but also partly *discovered.* As Touraine puts it in a later text, the construction of subject occurs through joining "a freedom affirmed with a lived experience that is assumed and reinterpreted".[41]

However, while Touraine suggests that "freedom and tradition must be united,"[42] in his detailed analysis, cultural identities and communities are seen—virtually exclusively—as a *threat* to subjectivity. On the level of the individual, there are no positive connections between cultural identity and the will to act, and on the social level, his analysis primarily concerns the socio-cultural and political obstacles that communitarianism poses to the constitution of the subject. In particular, the conditions conducive to the 'pitfalls of identity'—the degeneration and impoverishment to which cultural identity is prone when it is divorced from rational modes of thought and the processes of rationalisation—are emphasised to the exclusion of an analysis of the conditions under which cultural identity contributes to the production of the subject.[43]

More concretely, Touraine concentrates his efforts on a typology of the kinds of appeal to cultural identity which are manipulated by political powers. It is the dominated rather than dominant who are susceptible to communitarian appeals, but Touraine insists that such appeals are primarily voiced by political leaders and ideologues with their own agendas, including those of justifying nationalist policies, concealing the omnipotence of the militarised states, or legitimating populist regimes concerned with social and cultural integration. Authoritarian, communitarian, and above all totalitarian regimes all mobilise identity from above in ways which destroy the subject. And if the dominated countries are most prone to the instrumentalisation which turns cultural identity against subjectivity, in the developed countries, where the elite tend to identify with universals, 'freedom' is debased to meaning little more than a choice among the commoditities the market offers consumers. In both cases, the productive combination of memory and freedom is absent.

This legitimate and timely warning about the twin threats to subjectivity in the contemporary world does not, however, suffice as an elaboration of the potentially very fruitful idea that subjectivity depends upon the combination of cultural identity linked to traditions, and resistance to the apparatuses of

power. Touraine's attempt to combine a hermeneutical conception of identity with the idea of contestatory project is very suggestive, but his attempts to elaborate it are very one-sided. Given the not fully-realised potential contained in this concept of the subject, a closer look at the obstacles standing in the way of its further development seems warranted.

Communication?

It is not difficult to identify in broad terms the main obstacle to a more balanced account of the two components of Touraine's subject. Since his earliest sociology, he has tended to privilege the conflictuality of social relations over communicative relations, and the traces of this persistent privileging of conflict are clearly evident in his elucidation of the concept of the subject. In some key respects, Touraine's thematisation of the subject has brought communication to the fore in ways not evident earlier, but it remains for him a secondary phenomenon and consideration.

We have already noted several points at which his tendency to focus on conflict at the expense of communication has had an impact on his conceptualisation of the subject. In the first place, the dimension of the 'project' is privileged over the communicatively-based component of cultural identity. This dimension of the subject is not only treated more extensively than that of cultural identity, it is *conceptually* privileged. For Touraine, contestation is the primary—and active—orientation of the subject, and cultural identity is, at best, the defensive face of the subject. He sees communicative *milieux* of cultural communities more as a threat to, than constitutive, of the subject. In the second place, the communicative dimension of the project of freedom is also systematically downplayed. On the one hand, the most important aspect of the recognition of the other is the contribution it makes to the subject's capacity to break out of social roles; it is because "the love relationship does away with social determinisms, and gives the individual a desire to be an actor, to invent a situation, rather than to conform to one" that it is the most important case of the recognition of the other. On the other hand, although the communication that allows two human beings to recognise one another as subjects is an essential part of this experience, Touraine equally emphasises the "distance and the psychological non-relation" which

eroticism, like religious thought, creates. Above all, there is no real sense of the constructive role of communication in the process of the self-constitution of the subject.

If we are to attempt to develop his insightful but unevenly developed conceptualisation of the subject beyond these limits, however, it will be helpful to also identify the specific theoretical and perspectival tensions and absences associated with his privileging of the conflictual over the communicative.

Four issues stand out in this regard. The first concerns Touraine's understanding of the 'sociality of the subject'. Some critics have interpreted Touraine's attempts to distance himself from theories of communicative intersubjectivity of the Habermasian kind primarily as a legacy of the influence Sartre had on his early work.[44] It should be noted, though, that while Touraine does not want to treat subjectivity as a derivative of intersubjectivity, he is neither denying, nor ignoring, the sociality of the subject.[45] He is, in fact, posing the problem of the sociality of the subject in unconventional, but recognisably hermeneutical terms. Touraine understands the sociality of the subject, in the first instance, not in terms of intersubjective relations, but in terms of the subject's relation to the 'world'. This formulation is given a characteristically conflictual twist, in that the subject's relationship to the world is primarily negative and conflictual. The relationship of the self to the world is, as we have seen, a result of a permanent and ongoing struggle against socially legitimated and imposed conceptions of the self which are embedded in broader ideological and cultural frameworks. This distinctive, and potentially enlightening theme adds something to the hermeneutical perspective, but it is, on its own, an inadequate conception of the relationship between subject and world.

There are three further tensions in Touraine's analysis which are connected to his treatment of the theme of communication. The most directly connected of these is the absence in Touraine's analyses of a systematic account of the role of language, in social and cultural relations in general, and in the constitution of the subject in particular. Touraine's lack of interest in the linguistic dimension of social life is in some ways surprising. As we noted in the introduction, language was one of the three overlapping themes of the movement to revitalise social theory in the nineteen seventies.[46] Equally, his emphasis

on culture has, since from as early as *Self-Production of Society*, implicitly raised the question of language as the medium of its transmission and embodiment. The reasons for Touraine's disinterest in this theme are clear and, moreover, tied up with his ambivalence towards the hermeneutical perspective; as we have noted, he regards the sense of self acquired through participation in a linguistic community as a socially imposed self-image which is, by definition, not an expression of subjectivity. As we will see, however, Ricoeur's hermeneutics not only fundamentally challenges this understanding but also suggests that Touraine's neglect of language has deprived him of rich interpretive resources for the thematisation of human agency and creativity.

Ricoeur's analysis of language will also have a bearing on the second tension we can identify in Touraine's framework. This concerns his attempts to conceptualise the temporality of the subject. Touraine's subject is neither an essence nor a pre-given nature, and it does not derive a unity from the internalisation of universal reason, or the transferral of social or cultural order to the individual. But neither is it a pure multiplicity of events. It is, he suggests, a search for coherence which can never be final or complete. However, Touraine has difficulty in spelling out the mode of coherence which characterises this subject. Subjectivity is the outcome of "the attempt to piece together the scattered elements of modernity in the form of an individual life",[47] and involves the ability to "see and experience modes of behaviour as components in a personal life history."[48] However, he cannot provide a coherent account of how this experience is possible, or how it constitutes a mode of persistence over time. He rejects the most obvious—and most hermeneutical—solution to this problem because, he argues, the idea of a 'narrative conception of the unity of a life' reintroduces the idea that there is a correspondence between actor and system, and individual and history.[49] As we will see, however, Ricoeur's studies of the narrative structure put this view in a new light.

The final tension in Touraine's analysis that we need to note concerns the ontological status of the subject. We identified an implicitly phenomenological presupposition in the way Touraine locates the subject at the intersection of consciousness and experience. But in his explicit statements, Touraine both rejects and embraces a phenomenological description of the subject. At one point, he argues that the subject is not reflection on the self and lived experience.[50] His motive for this statement is clear: the *subject* cannot be

self-consciousness, because—as he sees it—such a self is no more than the internalization of social determinisms. But at other points he acknowledges that the presence of the subject within the individual can be seen as both distancing the individual from the social order, *and* as an immediate lived experience.[51] Despite these equivocations, Touraine's subject does seem to presuppose a phenomenological basis; it is, at the most elementary level, the self-transformation involved in the individual's attempt to construct the unity of a person that can transcend the multiplicity of lived time and space.[52] As we will see, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the subject will allow us to elucidate this point.

3. The Ambiguity of Action

As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, however, the ultimate objective of Touraine's thematisation of the subjectivity of the actor was to better conceptualise the ramifications of human agency on the societal level. The outcome in this regard has been a process of innovation within his conceptual framework for the analysis of large-scale social configurations which is potentially highly fertile, but remains largely implicit, and is in some important respects clearly unfinished. As we will see in the next chapter, Touraine's new conceptual approach has made some important advances in the project to grasp the openness of social constellations to new and unanticipated developments that less agency-centred frameworks often obscure by bringing new dimensions of multiplicity and ambiguity within the socio-cultural universe of modernity into focus, and in chapter five, we will turn to Ricoeur's philosophy in an attempt to shed more light on the role Touraine's proto-hermeneutical conceptual innovations have played in this regard. First, however, we need to look more closely at the logic underlying the implicit and incomplete process of conceptual renewal Touraine is engaged on this level in *Critique of Modernity*, and identify the most conspicuous gap evident in the form it takes in that work.

Touraine's new framework is built on the same basic conceptual infrastructure as *Self-Production of Society*; culture, action and its sedimentations in relatively stable patterns remain his main conceptual building blocks. In *Critique of Modernity*, however, both his understanding of these basic concepts, and

the higher order conceptual constructs built on them, have been transformed. We have already anticipated the most important development in relation to is basic concepts; as we have seen, his understanding of culture, action and its institutionalisation have all become more hermeneutical. The direction of his innovations in respect to higher order constructs built on them, however, has been set by the two themes which structure his analysis of the successive epochs of modernity. As we will see in the next chapter, Touraine now analyses modernity through the interpretive prisms of a tension between the spread of rationalisation and a new consciousness of human agency on the one hand, and a dynamic of fragmentation which breaks up the socio-cultural universe of modernity on the other, and these thematic innovations have brought new conceptual constructs to the fore. The first, and for Touraine primary theme of a constitutive tension between "rationalisation" and "subjectivation" sets the broad parameters of his new conceptual framework, and the key development in this regard is his conception of these forces as both cultural orientations, and social processes which sediment into practices and institutions. The most significant departure from the framework of *Self-Production of Society* that is involved is the decentring of the concept of action it has entailed. The idea of action remains an important component of his new conceptual armoury; it is integral to his conception of the "acting" subject, and evident in his insistence, against functionalist and structuralist logics, that social processes are carried out social actors. His analysis of representative modes of social action of modernity, however, is now subordinated to that of the interpretive and institutional/structural frameworks which transcend the projects of actors, and are conceptually detached from the idea of action.

If the main contours of his new conceptual framework are clear, Touraine has not attempted to codify them in the manner he treated his first conceptual framework, and as a consequence, they are far from fully clarified. Among the most serious difficulties which result is the notable imbalance in the attention he pays to its two central components; his analysis of the interpretive frameworks which determine the parameters of the modern social constellations plays a central role in his mode of inquiry in *Critique of Modernity* and is elaborated at length; in contrast, his references to the social processes and embodiments of rationalisation and subjectivation are omni-present but largely

unthematised. The gap which results in his analyses in *Critique of Modernity* is significant—what is absent is a sustained treatment of the range of, and relationships between, the institutional and structural complexes he previously treated under the heading of the "historical system of action"—but it is not, as some have suggested, an outcome intrinsic to his more subject-centred approach.[53] As his analyses of the relationship of the subject-actor to "apparatuses of power" and "social powers" clearly reveal, a more systematic treatment of the social structures and institutional forms which constitutes the social contexts of action and actors is *called for* by the internal logic of his argument in *Critique of Modernity*.

In light of the extended consideration we will make of his conceptualisation of the interpretive frameworks of rationalisation and subjectivation in the next chapter, we will restrict our discussion here to a discussion of the issues surrounding these potential lines of analysis concerning the social processes and embodiments of rationalisation and subjectivation called for by his broader innovations, and conclude with a consideration of the impact the introduction of these new primary concepts has had on his analysis of social action.

In contrast to his extended analysis of the interpretive frameworks which shape modern life, Touraine's analyses of the institutional and structural frameworks which co-constitute modernity are invoked in abstract terms, and remain underdeveloped. As I noted above, this should not be taken as an indication that this dimension of social relations has lost its significance for Touraine. From the outset, the very project of theorising human agency and social creativity acquired its significance and urgency for Touraine against the background of the existence and intensification of social constraints on them, and as his critique of the rationalist conceptions of action shows, he is, in his recent work as much as in *Self-Production of Society*, aware that a rethinking of the concept of "system" is as crucial to his project to return them to the centre of social theorising as is the reconceptualisation of the actor that he has put at the centre of *Critique of Modernity.* And there are, moreover, a number of underdeveloped but suggestive indications in *Critique of Modernity* of the main direction a more systematic account of this dimension of social relations would take within his new framework. The key problematic in this regard is the Weberian-inspired theme that modernity has been characterised by the emergence of separate and divergent spheres of life and

meaning which forms the second axis along which Touraine analyses modernity. Touraine has not attempted to link his analysis of the multiplicity of socio-cultural spheres to an explicit clarification of a concept of the system that would rival his notion of "historical system of action," but such analysis of the systemic nature of social relations that is contained within *Critique of Modernity* unfolds within this conceptual space.

This starting point has facilitated a number of important shifts in relation to his earlier understanding of the institutional and structural components of social relations. As we will see in more detail in the next chapter, the most conspicuous is that it has opened up a theoretical space for a conception of multiple, decentred and non-integrated institutional and systemic structures. Touraine's analysis of the break up of the socio-cultural universe of modernity into only partly co-ordinated spheres of life leads to a conception of multiple systemic structures—for example those connected with the nation-state and the enterprise—which are characterised by increasingly autonomous and divergent logics, and in turn only partly co-ordinated.[54]

Touraine's collaborator, François Dubet, has provided an illuminating analysis of the implications such a development entails for the conceptualisation of the subjectivity of the actor.[55] He shares Touraine's view that inadequate conceptions of the actor are involved in the emptying out of the idea of agency from conventional concepts of action, but he has also explored, from the new vantage point Touraine has established, the role that inadequate understandings of the system play. The main point he adds to the earlier critiques of conventional, and especially functionalist, conceptions of the system made by constitution theorists is that it is not only the idea that the subject is the product of the *internalisation* of the system that is involved in the erosion of a strong sense of agency, but also the idea that the system is constructed around a central principle. A conception of the system as a unity is incompatible with a robust conception of agency, he argues, because as long as the system appears as an organism, a structure, or a mode of production, the subject can exist only by being defined outside it, as a pure subject of knowledge, or by the consciousness of necessity as an historical subject identified with the meaning of history. Against the background of a 'system' which has no unity or centre, in contrast, the subject can be conceived as a principle that co-ordinates divergent logics of action, and utilises his or her capacity

for action and judgment to manage them, and agency can be understood as the capacity of the actor to distance him or herself from systemic structures.[56] Touraine's appreciation of this logic is evident when he argues that the subject constitutes a "field of action and freedom" by moving between the various spheres without identifying completely with any on the one hand, and striving to reconcile them on the other.[57]

The multi-focal conception of systemic complexes, however, also opens up new analytical opportunities on the societal level that are particularly relevant here. As we will see, the most significant development along these lines evident in *Critique of Modernity* is the new opportunities for conceptualising the openness of social constellations to new and unanticipated developments this approach has afforded. In this regard, it is not simply the multiplicity of spheres that is crucial, but their divergent logics. The significance of the conceptual shift involved stands out against Touraine's first attempt to develop a more adequate concept of the system. In *Self-Production of Society*, he had already sought to replace the Parsonian idea of a unified system with a more differentiated model, but the three-tiered conception of 'systemness' which resulted was a hierarchy which accorded only relative autonomy to the subordinate levels. And as we will see in the next chapter, the idea of multiple socio-cultural spheres with divergent logics has allowed Touraine to bring to the fore dimensions of multiplicity and ambiguity in the modern world which were obscured in his earlier analyses.

As I suggested at the outset, however, Touraine's broad conceptual shifts have been accompanied by a more hermeneutical understanding of his basic concepts. Two developments are particularly relevant in this regard. The first, and most straightforward, is to do with the cultural dimension of institutional spheres; there is, we will see, a more intrinsic relationship between cultural frameworks and institutional complexes in Touraine's analysis of socio-cultural spheres than was evident in his concept of historical system of action. There is an unmistakably hermeneutical dimension to his conception of the multiple socio-cultural spheres of modernity as both "social forces" which give rise to varying combinations of practices, institutions and 'apparatuses of power,' and cultural universes, and he implicitly attributes a constitutive role to the cultural dimension of the socio-cultural spheres when he analyses them, hermeneutically, through their cultural universes.

The second proto-hermeneutical development in Touraine's thinking is to do with the relationship between action and institution. There was already a connection to the hermeneutical perspective on this issue in *Self-Production of Society,* to the extent that he, like other constitution theorists, insisted that institutions are created and maintained by the actions of individual and social agents, even as they acquired logics which escaped the intentions of those actors. Indeed, as Arnason has noted, Joas borrowed the hermeneutical principle that the unplanned systems of consequences of action must be made intelligible in relation to the actions of real actors from Charles Taylor to define constitution theories. In *Critique of Modernity*, however, there are signs of a more flexible and fruitful account of the relationship between action and its institutionalisations. One issue concerns the relative merits of putting action, or institutions, at the centre of the analysis of modernity. Touraine has always stressed the analysis of modes of social action over that of the institutions into which they sediment, and as Knöbl has pointed out, this 'actionalist' strategy has had the important advantage of treating the future as an open horizon. He suggests, however, that it also has a significant drawback in that it cuts Touraine off from the analytic insights that can be derived from putting the comparative study of institutional differentiation at the centre of the analysis of modernity. Knöbl acknowledges that to avoid the evolutionist and deterministic traps to which the thesis of differentiation can lead, it is necessary to revise mainstream institutional analysis, but argues that, as Wagner's work has shown, by conceptualising the idea of institutional differentiation in terms general enough to avoid imposing a pre-determined definition of modernity on non-Western experiences, such an approach can give rise to analytical opportunities for specifying epochs within modernity that are obscured in Touraine's action oriented approach.[58]

Arnason's analysis, however, suggest that there are possibilities within Touraine's new conceptual framework of socio-cultural spheres for the kind of meeting between his actionalist sociology and the institutional analysis that Knöbl advocates and, importantly, indicates the analytical benefits to be derived from it. Arnason's own project to conceptualise modernity is instructive in this regard, because it draws on the same Weberian legacy as Touraine, and also takes it in a hermeneutical direction. It is, moreover, clearly designed to combine the advantages which stem from an emphasis on action with

those arising from the analysis of institutions. For him, the Weberian notion of socio-cultural spheres is the basis for a conception of 'structural spheres' which he conceives of as "interpretive horizons which are grounded in, but reach beyond, specific activities,"[59] and this formulation expresses well a number of important premises concerning the relationship between which are implicit in, or at least compatible with, Touraine's main line of analysis. To begin with, it stresses the role of real actors and actions in the creation and maintenance of institutions, and equally accords a constitutive role to the cultural dimension of socio-cultural spheres.

Most importantly, however, Arnason's analysis shows that, this more flexible conception of structural spheres is also conducive to an open-ended conception of institutional spheres.[60] He insists against mainstream versions of institutional analysis which define modernity by the differentiation of the market, the polity and the judicial system that the question of institutional complexes needs to seen as open in principle. And he points out, one of the major analytical benefits gained from such an approach in Touraine's elaboration of his central theme. Like Touraine, Arnason sees the socio-cultural tension between the expansion of rational apparatuses and the affirmation of individual autonomy and creativity as constitutive of modernity, and he finds in Touraine's elaboration of this idea an important insight that is absent from most other contemporary versions of it. As Arnason sees it, the dominant trend among theorists who have taken up this theme has been to tie the split to the tension between capitalism as the embodiment of rationality, and democracy as an expression of subjectivity in quest of self-determination and participation. In contrast, he points out, in Touraine's analyses the tension is manifested across the whole range of modern cultural frameworks, and is contextualised in a social field composed of interconnected but also divergent rivalries. As a result, the idea of a constitutive tension covers a broader field, and most importantly, is not tied to specific institutional spheres, or identified with paradigmatic forms.[61]

If Touraine's move towards a conceptualisation of socio-cultural spheres and the systemic complexes within them remains to be fully clarified, the impact of the new conceptual priority he gives to interpretive and institutional frameworks on his analysis of action is already evident. The most conspicuous shift

involved, we noted, is the decentring of his analysis of action that it has involved; while he still identifies representative modes of social action characteristic of the successive phases of modernity, his analysis of them is subordinated to that of the interpretive and structural frameworks which transcend the projects of actors. This development has also involved some more particular shifts in his analysis of social action. To begin with, there have been two important shifts in the way he conceives of the cultural determinants of action. In notable contrast to the external relationship between social action and the 'cultural model' which characterised his analyses in *Self-Production of Society*, the cultural orientations which influence representative modes of social action are now more deeply embedded and embodied in the practices they influence. And in contrast to the unified cultural models of the earlier work, in *Critique of Modernity*, the cultural determinants of action have become more internally conflictual; the "tense relationship" between rationalisation and subjectivation forms an internally differentiated and partly self-contradictory interpretive horizon for social action. At the same time, these shifts in his understanding of their cultural determinants have resulted in a more complex picture of social action. The conflictual action of social movements has become more complex, and the formalistic and rigid categories of social action that were derived from Marx's paradigm of production and codified in the concept of the system of historical action have been replaced by a more wide-ranging conception of representative practices.

As we have noted, one of the most significant outcomes of this unfinished, but clearly defined reorientation of his conceptual framework has been Touraine's capacity to bring to the fore new dimensions of multiplicity and ambiguity within the socio-cultural universe of modernity. In chapter five, we will use Ricoeur's hermeneutics of action to attempt to throw more light on the conceptual sources of Touraine's expanded interpretive power. Before we turn to this discussion, however, we need to get a more concrete idea of the insights Touraine's new approach has generated. In the following chapter, we will examine the new dimensions of multiplicity and ambiguity in the successive epochs of modernity which it brings into focus. First, however, we will survey the dimensions of multiplicity and ambiguity his new framework evokes specifically in relation to the dominant modes of social action.

The mutability of action comes to the fore in Touraine's survey of the dominant modes of action in the successive phases of modernity. As we will see in the next chapter, Touraine argues that the early modern period was characterised by an *alliance* between reason and the subject. In this era, many modes of action drew upon both orientations, while the practices primarily associated with one or the other were largely complementary. Representative modes included instrumental capitalist economic action and the rational action associated with the organisation of exchange, public administration, and science on the one side,[62] and practices associated with the discovery of self-consciousness, the development of the individual personality, and the idea and ideal of private life on the other.[63]

In contrast, at the high point of the rationalist, 'mobilising' model,[64] the alliance between reason and the subject gave way to the dominance of production and managerial apparatuses based on instrumental rationality which increasingly circumscribed the subject's capacity for free action. As Touraine sees it, this period was dominated by rationalist models in both the economic and political spheres, and representative modes of action were characterised by the increasing subordination of subjectivity to rationality. Instrumental action increasingly dominated the modern world, primarily through the spread of industrialization, and prevailing modes of collective action—especially national or revolutionary mobilisations—subordinated the individual to society. Modes of action which were characterised by an appeal to the subject—above all the resistance of labour to the mobilisation of society—were subordinated to the consolidation of industrial and national objectives.

The twentieth century, Touraine argues, saw a further mutation in dominant modes of action, notable for the new levels of ambiguity in relation to the potential for, and forms of, social action to which it has given rise. As Touraine sees it, the overarching rationalist framework of the productivist, national class society of the nineteenth century gave way to an increasing divorce between the economy and culture.[65] The model of modernity based on the integration of culture and economy in a national 'society' has been replaced by a rupture between the spheres of rationalisation and subjectivation, and the fragmentation of the socio-cultural universe of modernity into the spheres of consumption, the nation, the enterprise and the 'id'.

As Touraine sees it, this development is highly ambiguous in relation to possibilities for social action. The disappearance of the forms of social integration of the rationalist model of modernity both expands the field of action of individuals and social movements, *and* strengthens the mechanisms that subvert subjectivity and destroy social movements. On the one hand, the pluralisation and decentring inherent in these developments makes a 'return of the subject' possible, in social and personal contexts, and provides the ground for increasingly reflexive modes of action. On the individual level, he argues that the fragmentation of the cultural sphere allows a greater scope for subjects who do not identify with one sphere over the others, but find freedom in their ability to move between them; on the collective level, he argues that the decline of overarching socio-political forces of integration creates new possibilities for social movements. The demise of old political programs and the 'great political parties' which aspired to be the embodiment of societal projects opens up a space for social movements which appeal to the subject more directly than either the bourgeois and working class movements.[66]

On the other hand, these same developments have an increased potential to restrict the capacity for action on both the individual and collective levels. The fragmentation of cultural spheres produces impoverished modes of action to the extent that the subject does identify with a particular sphere. As we will see, the dominant modes of such action—or more precisely, pseudo-action—include Dionysian pansexualism, the defence of communitarian identities and communities, consumption, and the strategies of transnational companies.[67] At the same time, the rupture between the spheres of rationalisation and subjectivation leads to increasingly impoverished and fragmented forms of action. There is not only a split between one-sidedly rational and subject-centred modes of action, but also a proliferation of modes of action shaped by impoverished forms of rationality and subjectivity. He argues that rationality disconnected from subjectivity becomes increasingly instrumental and particularised, while subjectivity disconnected from rationality increasingly falls back on mythical identity, and the outcome is a fracture between two disconnected and conflictual modes of action: a disconnected instrumentalism serving particularised ends, and the defence of particularised identities. On a macro-social scale, this has led to a disjunction between the rational

mode of action associated above all with the global market, and the defence of identities within xenophobic communitarian contexts.

The consequences of these developments for the action of social movements are similarly restrictive. The new socio-historical constellation revolves around inclusion and exclusion rather than exploitation and oppression, and discourages collective action because those locked out of participation in production and consumption cannot challenge the social appropriation of the means of production through collective means.[68] At the same time, the divorce between the economy and the subjective quest for an identity dissolves the basis for socio-professional identities, such as 'peasant' or 'worker', and deprives those who are excluded from the processes of decision-making of the support of a class or popular milieu. These structural realignments have meant that the new social movements have not approached the strength that the European worker's movement, now incorporated into the economic and political decision-making system, once had;[69] they have revealed a new generation of social and cultural problems and conflicts, but are unorganised and have no capacity for permanent action.[70]

Notes

1 Dawe, "Theories of Social Action," p. 362.
2 Bauman, "Hermeneutics and Modern Social Theory," p. 36, p. 45.
3 These self-images are explored in more detail in the next chapter.
4 Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 29.
5 See next chapter for more detail.
6 Touraine, Critique of Modernity, p. 30.
7 *Ibid.*, p. 18. Touraine argues also that the influence of functionalist assumptions extended beyond the explicitly functionalist tradition; structuralism, he suggests, took to extremes the functionalist logic inherent in the sociologism of modernist thought, and radicalised the elimination of the subject and the actor that was evident in structural-functionalism in a more moderate form.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 209.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 209.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 352.
11 Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 36.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[13] As we shall see, the quest for freedom is, on Touraine's analysis, also directly linked with the mobilisation of reason (referred to in *Critique of Modernity* as 'critical' reason, although in later texts he refers to it as instrumental reason. See Touraine, "Special Guest Essay"; and A. Touraine, *Can We Live Together: Equality and Difference*, trans. D. Macey, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000. The threefold conception implicit here is made explicit in his later formulations where the subject is seen as a combination of a desire for freedom, the belonging to a culture, and the appeal to reason. As such, it involves a principle of particularism, a principle of universality and a principle of individuality (Touraine, *What is Democracy?* p. 15).

[14] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 288.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 289.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267. Touraine's interpretation of these, respectively, hermeneutical and pragmatic, conceptions of the subject can be contested. Calling the first into question is a central theme of this book, while the second is called into question by Joas, *The Creativity of Action*. But Touraine's intention is clear, and is summed up in his appeal to Castoriadis' distinction between the subject and the ego; the latter is capable of finality, calculation and self-preservation, while the former is a self-creation which gives a central role to the imagination. Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 270.

[21] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 254.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 286, trans modified.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 237.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 276.

[34] See C. Turner, "Touraine's Concept of Modernity," *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 185-193, and Knöbl, "Social Theory from a Sartrean Point of View."

[35] Turner, "Touraine's Concept of Modernity," p. 192.

[36] A. Touraine, "A Reply" *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, p. 205; Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 295.

[37] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 225.

[38] *Ibid*., p. 225. Knöbl is registering the same fundamental orientation in Touraine's thought when he attributes his disinclination to institutional analysis to the legacy of a Sartrean notion of freedom.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 296.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 315.

[41] This translation is from Macdonald's translation of the first chapter of the book *What is Democracy?* Entitled 'Democracy' in *Thesis Eleven* no. 38, 1994. It differs from the translation in the book.

[42] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 315.

[43] As I noted above, this bias is partly rectified by his analysis of democracy.

[44] Knöbl, "Social Theory from a Sartrean Point of View", p. 418.

[45] This feature of Touraine's thought has been partly obscured by his use of the term 'non-social' to emphasise the fact that the principle of the subject is a principle that opposes social determinisms. Touraine does not, as Fine suggests, argue that the subject is non-social in the sense that it presupposes a pre-formed and pre-existing individual prior to entering society. For Touraine, the subject is a non-social principle in the sense that it is defined by its resistance to the logic of all social systems; but it is a principle which is both socially (and culturally) derived, and the basis for a new kind of social relation. See R. Fine, "The Fetishism of the Subject? Some Comments on Alain Touraine," *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 179-184, p. 181.

[46] Habermas in particular has used this theme extensively to thematise agency. See Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*.

[47] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 295.

[48] *Ibid*., p. 207.

[49] *Ibid*., p. 295.

[50] *Ibid*., p. 233.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 292.

[52] *Ibid*., p. 208.

[53] Both Charles Turner and Wolfgang Knöbl imply this. See W. Knöbl, "Social Theory from a Sartrean Point of View: Alain Touraine's Theory of Modernity," *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1999, pp. 403-427, p. 417, and C. Turner, "Touraine's Concept of Modernity," *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 185-193.

[54] As we will see, not all of the socio-cultural spheres Touraine identifies are equally open to institutionalisation. Arnason's analysis suggests this is an important strength of the Weberian-inspired approach. See J. Arnason, "The Multiplication of Modernity," in eds. E. Ben-Rafael and Y. Sternberg, *Identity, Culture and Globalization*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, pp. 131-154.

[55] F. Dubet, "The System, the Actor, and the Social Subject," *Thesis Eleven*, no. 38, 1994, pp. 16-35.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[57] Knöbl also notes that within the framework of *Critique of Modernity*, the multiplicity of 'rationality complexes' is a precondition of the construction of the subject. See Knöbl, "Social Theory from a Sartrean Point of View: Alain Touraine's Theory of Modernity."

[58] Knöbl, "Social Theory from a Sartrean Point of View: Alain Touraine's Theory of Modernity." pp. 415, 422.

[59] Arnason, "The Multiplication of Modernity."

[60] As we will see in the next chapter, in some formulations, and in his key substantive analyses concerning this problematic, Touraine imposes an unduly restrictive grid over idea of the multiplicity of socio-cultural spheres. As Arnason's analysis has indicated, however, the sometimes restrictive formulations Touraine gives to his elucidation of the idea of a multiplicity of spheres is belied by his analyses more generally.

[61] Arnason, "The Multiplication of Modernity,"pp. 152-4.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[64] Touraine does not clearly label the successive forms of modernity, and some of his formulations leave room for confusion. I have used the terms 'early', 'mobilising' and 'fragmented' modernity, for reasons that will become clearer in the next chapter.

[65] This development has effectively brought about the disappearance of 'society', Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 355.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 356. The bourgeois and workers movements did—up to a point—appeal to the subject, but the new social movements have more to do with the defence of identity and dignity than the socio-political strategies or trade unions and pressure groups. *Ibid.*, pp. 230, 247.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Chapter Three

Horizons of Modernity

In this chapter, we will examine the impact of Touraine's proto-hermeneutical themes and premises on his theory of modernity. Our main focus in this regard will be the contribution they have made to his project to transcend the over-integrated images of social relations which have dominated the sociological tradition, and as we will see, the proto-hermeneutical dimensions of his mode of inquiry and basic conceptual infrastructure have played a central role bringing to the fore new dimensions of the mutability and the ambiguity of modern social forms. Touraine's proto-hermeneutical turn, however, has been tied up with a significant shift in the thematic focus of his analysis of modern social constellations, and our analysis of it is inseparable from these developments.

The main thematic shift evident in *Critique of Modernity* can be most readily seen in relation to his overarching meta-theoretical objective. Touraine's main concern remains that of challenging over-unified conceptions of society which obscure human agency, but he now locates their ultimate source in the one-sided self-conceptions of modernity as the 'triumph

of reason' which have underlain the dominant currents of the sociological tradition. From this perspective, the primary requirement of a less homogenising conception of social life is to challenge the idea that modernity can be defined exclusively by the spread of rationalisation, and to this end, he turns, not this time to Marx, but to Max Weber. As we saw in the previous chapter, he draws on two Weberian themes which call into question rationalist and identitarian conceptions of modernity; he takes up the idea that there is a clash in the modern world between the agencies of instrumental rationality and a new consciousness of autonomy and creativity to argue that modernity is characterised by the tension between the principles and processes of rationalisation and 'subjectivation,' and he takes up the idea that there is a tension between a general dynamic of rationalisation and the emergence of separate spheres of life and meaning, each tending to construe itself as a world apart, to argue that a dynamic of fragmentation has broken up the socio-cultural universe of modernity into only loosely co-ordinated spheres of nationalism, consumption, 'sexuality' and the enterprise.

Touraine has not been the only action-theorist to turn to these Weberian themes in an attempt to transcend the functionalist image of modernity;[1] Habermas and Giddens also drew on them in their projects to conceptualise modernity in terms of interconnected, but only partly coordinated, components.[2] But while Habermas relied primarily on the first theme, and Giddens on the second, *Critique of Modernity* is a systematic attempt to trace the intersections of the two dynamics across the course of modernity. As we will see, this double-sided interpretive prism has proved to be highly fertile, and one of its most important contributions is the new light it sheds on Touraine's long-standing theme of the creativity of social and cultural conflict. The outcome is a conception of modernity as a social configuration which, as Charles Turner has put it, "cannot and should not be unified,"[3] and which belongs to the category of theories Arnason has labelled "critical" to stress its distance from "affirmative" views of modernity as a unified and harmonious configuration.[4] We will discover, however, Touraine ultimately privileges the theme of a constitutive tension over that of a multiplicity of divergent socio-cultural spheres, and by forcing the latter into the frame of reference of the former, diminishes the insights that were promised by the more complex approach.

In what follows, we will trace the demarcation of distinct epochs of modernity which emerges from the intersection of these two themes. As he sees the tension between rationalisation of subjectivation as co-extensive with modernity, and the dynamic of fragmentation coming into play only after the construction of a relatively unified model, we will begin with his interpretation of the constitutive conflict of modernity.

1. Constitutive Conflicts

The idea that modernity revolves around a central conflict rather than a unifying logic has animated all phases of Touraine's work, and from the outset, he has emphasised both the social and cultural dimensions of this conflict. In *Self-Production of Society,* he attempted to grasp the non-identitarian character of social life by thematising the class-based conflict of interpretations over the social implementation of shared cultural premises. In his new framework, he still sees a cultural and a social dimension to the central conflict, but the emphasis has shifted and the picture has become more complex. In *Critique of Modernity*, the idea of a social struggle over shared cultural orientations is subordinated to a broader framework of cultural conflict and tension; modernity is irreducibly conflictual not simply or even most importantly because social actors struggle over the interpretation of the main cultural patterns, but because their shared interpretive framework is already conflictual.

For Touraine, as we have already seen, the core cultural conflict of modernity is that between rationality and subjectivity. As he sees it, the interplay between these cultural orientations is essential to modernity, and to the full realisation of each. The rationalisation of the modern world depends upon the formation of subjects[5] and the process of subjectivation depends upon the appropriation of rationality.[6] But despite this interdependence, the tension between them is irreducible—the 'divorce between these two faces of modernity is irrevocable'—because the ongoing process of rationalisation has created a world in which rationality is predominantly associated with power apparatuses which tend to suppress rather than promote the striving for freedom that constitutes subjectivity. As Arnason has put it, rationality "is the common denominator of the forces which have raised the pursuit of wealth and power and the extension of control to a new level' and subjectivity 'is

the focus of efforts to question and transform the restrictive and fragmenting rules which this process imposes on individual and collective action."[7]

As Touraine sees it, the conflict of interpretations over these orientations by social actors still plays a role in determining the specific forms of the modernising process, but whereas the cultural model of industrial society—the idea of progress—was open to a simple conflict of interpretations between rival social classes, the relationship between the orientations of rationalisation and subjectivation and social actors is less clear cut. To begin with, the orientations of rationalisation and subjectivation extend beyond the projects of actors, and the conflicts over their interpretations are not reducible to the conflicts between social groups. More importantly, the interpretive frameworks associated with particular social actors internalise the tension between these two orientations.

Touraine's new conception of the conflictual nature of modernity is, however, not simply more cultural, it is also more hermeneutical. In the first place, he justifies the thesis that modernity is constituted by the complementary and conflictual relationship between rationalisation and subjectivation hermeneutically, and in so doing assumes from the outset that modernity is co-determined by tradition. In particular, he grounds the claim that modernity is constituted by the "tense relationship" between rationalisation and subjectivation in an analysis of the specific features of the Christian traditions from which it emerged. The Christian legacy is important, as he sees it, because the Christian world was not a world which was at the mercy of the favourable or unfavourable intentions or hidden forces, but a world which was both created by a divine subject, and organised in accordance with rational laws. It was the break up of *this* world, which was both wholly created and wholly intelligible, which led to a separation of the order of objective knowledge and the order of the subject; the idea of the rational construction of the world was transformed into science, and the breaking of the link between the divine subject and the human subject set free self-expression.[8]

At the same time, hermeneutical premises shape the way his analysis unfolds. As we noted in the previous chapter, the key shift in this regard is that he now traces the history of modernity not, in the first instance, through culturally oriented modes of action, but through an analysis of the cultural ori-

entations themselves. More particularly, he attempts to shed light on the social forms, conflicts and logics of modernity through an analysis of the most historically effective self-interpretations of modernity. As we will see, moreover, he locates the analytical prism of the changing relationship of the core orientations of rationalisation and subjectivation in the concrete cultural traditions of the West, and treats the successive self-interpretations of modernity as a process of selective, and often conflictual, reactivations of these traditions, transformed as they are reinterpreted in the light of new historical circumstances.

In Touraine's new, more hermeneutical perspective, then, the criteria for demarcating distinct forms of modernity lie in the changing contours of the relationship between rationalisation and subjectivation. Variations in the way in which the two orientations are combined, in the self-understanding of modernity and in the social forms to which they give rise, give various modern constellations their definitive features. These criteria are, moreover, not only analytical, but also normative; the degree to which a specific configuration expresses rather than suppresses the tension and complementarity between the constitutive principles provides the normative yardstick for evaluating historical constellations. His central thesis is that the model which has dominated the historical experience of modernity has been one-sided in that it subordinated the principle of the subject to rationalisation, and it is in order to open up the possibility of a more open and liberatory combination of these principles that he appeals to an earlier model in which the tension between the two orientations was more open.

To get a more detailed idea of the insights to be gained from this interpretive framework, we will look more closely at the periods it demarcates. Touraine identifies three main phases of modernity. The first is the 'early modern' period which lasted till the end of the eighteenth century; the second is a period of relatively unified 'mobilising' modernity which spanned most of the nineteenth century; and the third is a more ambiguous period of fragmentation which characterised most of the twentieth century. As Touraine sees it, the early modern period was characterised by an open recognition of the tension between rationalisation and subjectivation, but it was in important respects a not fully-developed form of modernity. The dominant trend from the eighteenth century on was towards more one-sided interpretations

and models of modernity. Enlightenment thought increasingly marginalised the subject, but in important respects it kept the tension between reason and the subject operative.[9] With the nineteenth century's historicism, however, the rationalist conception of 'modernity triumphant' came to dominate the discourse of modernity. Denying the particularity of its interpretation of the constituents of modernity, it claimed to be a statement of fact, and succeeded in imposing its self-image retrospectively onto the early modern period, obscuring the latter's distinctiveness. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, this model entered an extended period of disintegration which culminated around nineteen sixty-eight in a complete 'crisis of modernity' which threatens its very existence.

The relatively open tension between rationalisation and subjectivation characteristic of the early modern period was most explicit, as Touraine sees it, in the contrast between the Renaissance and the Reformation in the sixteenth century. But it was also, he argues more contentiously, characteristic of seventeenth, and to a lesser extent, eighteenth century thought. To uncover this complex legacy, which has been so effectively obscured by the later dominance of rationalism, Touraine applies a deconstructive reading to the key intellectual and political texts of the period. At the heart of the works which have commonly been taken to be the classic texts of early modern rationalism, he argues, we can identify the dualism of rationalisation and subjectivation that originated in Christianity, and especially in its Augustinian current.

In this vein, he argues that Descartes is not simply the founding father of modern rationalism, but also "the principle agent of the transformation of Christian dualism into modern ways of thinking about the subject."[10] Descartes' break with pre-modern conceptions, which had defined the subject in terms of harmony with the world, led not to a world unified by reason, but to a dualism of the 'world of things' and an 'inner world'. And Descartes' subject, he insists, is not only a thinking subject capable of mastering nature, but also an assertion of the freedom of the human subject. More provocatively, Touraine applies his deconstructive strategy to the representative theorist of mainstream liberal modernism and individualism, arguing that while Locke is responsible for some of the most influential elements of rationalist thought—he formulated the conception of human beings as a materialist unity, for

whom self-consciousness is no different to the consciousness of things[11]—he also invokes a conception of natural law to defend the subject against the absolutism of the state. In fact, for Touraine, Locke is, along with Descartes, one of the most important agents of the transformation of Christian dualism into a philosophy of the subject and freedom.[12] Finally, he argues that the constitutive split of modernity is evident in one of the most important *political* documents of the era; the apparently consistent ideological manifesto of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, Touraine argues, on closer inspection also reveals the tension between rationalisation and subjectivation. The principle of the rights of the citizen, which ultimately involves the subordination of the individual to a rational social principle, is in tension with the principle of the freedom of the subject that underlies the assertion of the rights of the individual.

This dualistic mode of thought was, however, progressively marginalised throughout the eighteenth century, as the 'classical' self-understanding of modernity coalesced around Enlightenment notions of reason and progress. This interpretation of modernity held that there is an intimate connection between a scientific culture (which ensures the rational organisation of production and administration), a rational legal order and individual freedom, and its goal was to establish a fully rational society. As Touraine sees it, its main tenets constitute 'modernism';[13] the idea that rationalisation required the destruction of traditional social bonds and beliefs; that modernisation is the result not of the activity of social actors, but of reason itself, through the spread of science, technology and education; that the individual is subject only to natural laws; that the good is what is *useful* to society; and finally, that capitalism is *the* economic form of modernity. Touraine insists, however, that the modernist self-conception of modernity was a selective, and particularly one-sided, reactivation of Western traditions; it was both an attempt to preserve the traditional idea of the unity of man and the universe within a secularised culture,[14] and a rejection of the idea of transcendence. Enlightenment conceptions of reason were crucial on both counts; Enlightenment naturalism, which saw reason as a principle of order, was the foundation for the naturalist ethics based on the idea of the unity of man and world,[15] and the Enlightenment appeal to reason and nature against the authority of tradition was closely tied up with a struggle against the Churches. And the outcome

was a mode of thought which ultimately subordinated subjectivity to the idea of a rational order.

Touraine's early modern period, then, begins with an open recognition of the tension between rationalisation and subjectivation, which is progressively replaced by modes of thought which increasingly subordinate the subject to reason. As he sees it, this period ended with the French revolution and the beginning of industrialisation in Great Britain because the two revolutions inaugurate a period in which dualistic modes of thought and models of social organization which openly registered the constitutive cultural tension of modernity are eclipsed. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* was the "last text publicly to proclaim the twofold nature of modernity and to define it as a combination of rationalisation and subjectivation."[16]

An account of the characteristic models of social organisation of each of the eras of modernity he demarcates is not at the forefront of Touraine's analysis, but it is by no means absent. The beginning of the early modern period was characterised, he argues, by the spread of rationalisation in the forms of capitalism and science, and by subjectivation in practices associated with the discovery of self-consciousness, and an emphasis on individual personality and the importance of private life. They intersected in the practices of bourgeois individualism, which combined subjectivity with instrumental reason, and ethical thinking with scientific empiricism. As the modernist conception of modernity became increasingly dominant, however, its ideological projections increasingly played the key role in shaping the social forms of the modern world. The ideology of the endogenous unfolding of rationalisation provided a model for modernisation, even though in most countries social, political and cultural actors played a more important role than rationalisation, and even though in Europe actors were as important as technological progress and the diffusion of knowledge. Most importantly, 'modernism' shaped the emergence of economic modernity. The idea of a break between reason and belief was, according to Touraine, translated into the idea of the independence of economic activity from political and religious power, and the elimination of the effects of traditions and privileges.

The second identifiable socio-cultural configuration which emerges from Touraine's analysis was characterised by a very different relationship between

rationalisation and subjectivation. The crucial historical developments which transformed the relationship between them, we noted, were the French and industrial revolutions, and as Touraine sees it, their impact was registered above all in the transformation of the idea of *progress* that they provoked. On the one hand, the French Revolution introduced the idea of an *historical* actor, and on the other, the expanded capacity for self-transformation engendered by industrialisation transformed reason into a force that could transform history. After the revolutions, 'progress' was no longer simply a matter of knowledge; it was a matter of social and political mobilisation, aimed above all at the development of forms of production and labour.

The idea of progress, it will be recalled, was the core of the cultural model of industrial society in *Self-Production of Society*. The more hermeneutical treatment of it in *Critique of Modernity*, however, has generated a more differentiated, and more critical, evaluation of the impact of this key idea. The key development in this regard arises from Touraine's analysis of the concrete cultural traditions in which it was embedded. The most important features of the idea of progress which came to dominate advanced modernity, he now argues, stem from nineteenth century modes of thought which interpreted progress against the background of a philosophy of history. The forms which were to have the most influence were shaped above all by the historicist conception of history as a 'totality with a direction'; the conception of progress which it produced radicalised the image of a unified world, and in so doing, subordinated the subject to reason far more thoroughly than the Enlightenment inspired vision of progress. The historicist innovation in relation to the constitutive traditions of the West was to *fuse* into a single intellectual system what had been distinct traditions in tension in the early modern period. The synthesis of the liberalism of the rights of man and the idea of the 'general will' that resulted did not *eliminate* the subject, but rather *identified* it with the idea that history has a meaning and a direction.

As Touraine sees it, this fusion of the tradition based on the idea that man, society and universe form a unity and the idea of the subject is particularly destructive, because it is self-contradictory.[17] The identification of the subject with a historical totality ultimately led, intellectually, to the absorption of freedom into historical necessity, and practically, to the construction of an absolute and repressive power; historicism led in theory to the idea of the

unity of the natural laws of history and collective action, and in practice to the subordination of social actors to political elites, who proclaimed their legitimacy in the name of their supposed understanding of the laws of history.[18]

Historicist thought was multi-faceted, and Touraine separates out distinct currents represented by Comte, but more importantly, Hegel and, on at least one reading, Marx.[19] Hegel is *the* representative thinker of historicism, because his thought involves a rethinking of formative Western traditions, and in particular Christianity. From Touraine's perspective, the greatness of Hegel's thought lies in his attempt to integrate a vision of the subject and a belief in progress and reason, and its failure is that it rejected the dualism of Descartes and Kant, only to replace it with a new dualism, of state and society, which is 'as dangerous as Christian dualism was liberating'. Marx, on the other hand, rediscovered the subject inside the Hegelian synthesis, only to reconstruct the synthesis by transfiguring the subject into the class that holds the key to the meaning of history.[20] This line of argument is incomplete in Marx, Touraine argues, but it was completed in the Marxian tradition by Georg Lukács, for whom praxis is the identification of the interests of a class with a historical necessity. Such agency as exists in this vision is ascribed ultimately not to the class, but to the political action that is required to transform the proletariat into a subject-object whose praxis transforms reality. The Marxist version of historicism thus confirms the broader trajectory of historicist thought in that, in justifying the absolute power of revolutionary leaders, it confirms the domination of the political elite over real social actors. However, despite the attention he pays to Marxian historicism in which it is the universal class which is the concrete expression of totality, Touraine's analysis suggests that the idea of totality found its primary concrete form in the nation.[21]

Touraine, again, offers little analysis of the institutional forms characteristic of the century dominated by the historicist vision, and what he does present is sometimes ambiguous, and even contradictory. He is ambiguous about its geographical reach; his general statements clearly suggest that it was the unequivocally dominant self-understanding of modernity in the nineteenth century,[22] but in his detailed analyses, he argues that it was strongest in the margins of modernity—in Germany and the countries to its east—and never

completely dominant in the central modernising countries.[23] On balance, he suggests that the historicist idea of modernity was strongest in the regions where modernisation was most voluntarist,[24] while in the centres of Western modernity, where political power did not gain control over the economy and culture, a more moderate version prevailed. In addition, he makes only general statements about the social forms to which the historicist vision gave rise. Their main import is that it gave collective experience a basic unity. Historicism created a 'full, global model of modernity', which largely succeeded in integrating cultural, economic and political modernity into a whole that was organised around the project of modernisation within the framework of the nation. In this 'productivist, national class society', reason was a mobilising rather than organising force, and the mobilisation of social forces in collective projects for the modernisation and rationalisation of society dominated social life. The subject was suppressed, but not eliminated from the social field and its most important embodiment was the workers movement's resistance to the mobilisation of society.

As Touraine sees it, however, the vision of history moving towards a 'radiant' future began losing its mobilising power in the late nineteenth century, and its capacity to shape social forms was increasingly eroded over the course of the twentieth century. As I noted earlier, Touraine treats this period as an extended period of 'decomposition' rather than a new form of modernity, primarily on the grounds that no new unifying principle has replaced the idea of rationalisation that was at the centre of the historicist model—"no other civilisation has lacked a central principle to this extent"[25]—but as he sees the process of fragmentation reaching a new and more acute level in the post nineteen sixty-eight period, it seems reasonable to consider the first two thirds of the twentieth century as an era of 'fragmented modernity'. To explore this extended period of fragmentation, however, it is necessary to consider the second dynamic Touraine has identified.

2. Decomposition

The collapse of the self-understanding of 'modernity triumphant', Touraine argues, was a result of both intellectual and historical forces. The idea of progress was subjected to a sustained intellectual attack, begun by Nietzsche

and Freud, and continued by the Frankfurt School and Foucault. At the same time, the relatively unified socio-cultural universe of 'historicist' modernity was increasingly disrupted by the autonomous logics of the main agencies of modernisation—most importantly the nation, the enterprise and the consumer.[26]

This interpretation of the idea that the dynamic of rationalisation characteristic of modernity is in tension with, the emergence of separate spheres of life and meaning draws on, but also differs in some important ways from the Weberian model. Touraine follows the Weberian example in that he includes spheres associated with both rationalisation and the cultural movements which have contested the rational vision of modernity but where Weber saw the bureaucratic state, the capitalist economy, and in one account, organised science on the one side, and the erotic, aesthetic and religious spheres on the other, Touraine juxtaposes the spheres of nationalism, production and consumption-associated with what he sees as the three main agencies of modernisation of the nation-state, the enterprise and the consumer—and the sphere of 'sexuality' which has been the site of the intellectual and cultural forces which have resisted the process of rationalist modernisation. Moreover, where Weber made no suggestion that the fragmentation of modernity was limited to the dimensions he analysed, Touraine's spatial metaphor of the 'four cardinal points' of modernity suggests that his four fragments constitute the totality of the modern socio-cultural universe. And where Weber saw the emergence of these spheres as co-extensive with the emergence of modernity (and as a consequence, not fully modern), for Touraine, the process of fragmentation takes place after the construction of a unified model. Touraine does not justify his four-fold schema in relation to Weber's delineation of separate spheres, nor for that matter in any other way, and as we shall see, there is good reason to think that the fragmentation of modernity is more diverse, and the logic of fragmentation a more permanent part of modernity, than Touraine suggests. Before we consider these issues in more detail, however, we will look more closely at the insights which arise from Touraine's hermeneutical elucidation of the fragments within the confines of his four-fold schema.

The most important insights to emerge from Touraine's analysis of the fragments concern the *ambiguity* that they embody, and in turn lend to modernity. Against rationalist interpretations of modernity, he insists that the

fragments not only express modernity's rationalising demands, they also resist them: nations run administrations, but they also assert their independence and difference; enterprises are sets of production and communications techniques, but they are also agents of economic change; consumption can be based on rational calculation, but it can also express 'tribal' identities; and the 'pleasure principle' and the 'reality principle' remain in a tense relationship. And in contrast to the Frankfurt School's image of modernity as a self-defeating project,[27] his analyses of the fragments reveal that modernity is permanently and irreducibly ambiguous, because it "is both modern and anti-modern."[28] To the extent that the fragments embody the interpenetration of modernity and tradition, they resist the definition of modernity as a break with tradition and reveal the interaction of particularism and universalism in modernity.[29]

Touraine's capacity to illuminate the essential ambiguity of modernity is, moreover, closely tied up with his hermeneutical premises and methods. (He is, in fact, replacing the Frankfurt School's *vicious* circle with a *hermeneutical* circle.) To begin with, he sees the fragments as both social forces and cultural 'universes'. Nationalism, profit, needs and even sexuality are "real forces that are at work in industrial society,"[30] but they are also cultural spheres which aspire to absolutise their particular world view, and offer a "version of the one and only perspective from which the world might be justified."[31] And as we will see, he interprets these social-cultural spheres in the first instance through their cultural universes. This strategy takes on a critical slant, particularly in the case of the spheres associated with the agencies of modernisation, where he illuminates each cultural universe through a critical reading of rationalist interpretations. In the case of the fourth fragment, his elucidation of broader cultural orientations through representative thinkers is both critical and constructive. In each case, he identifies a particularistic logic which contradicts the rationalist view of modernity as the triumph of the universal over the particular.

The rationalist interpretation of modernity meets the greatest resistance, Touraine suggests, in connection with the nation. Against that interpretation, he insists that the nation both mobilises traditions in the service of modernisation, and pursues a particularistic logic. The particularist logic of the nation was visible throughout the era of nationalism, but it became more

pronounced in the late twentieth century, as nations increasingly became forces which resist modernisation and disseminate openly anti-universalist views. Moreover, rationalist theories of the nation forget that the nation is a *non-modern agent of modernity,* in that it relies on history and inherited particularisms to execute its modernising functions of mobilisation and integration. Nationalism opens up a territory's culture to modernity and rationalisation, but it also constructs a national identity which draws on premodern mythical or historical narratives and images, and these particularisms are used to both promote and resist universalism.[32]

The particularistic logic of the sphere of production comes most clearly into view, according to Touraine, when the emphasis is put on the *enterprise* as a strategic unit in a competitive international market. It is necessary, therefore, to challenge interpretations of the production unit as either simply an organisation which is the site of rationalisation, or the concrete expression of capitalism. Against both the sociology of organisations image of the enterprise as the embodiment of the general principles of organisation and management and the Marxist view of the enterprise as the expression of class rule, he argues that the essence of the enterprise is its pursuit of strategic action and autonomous and aggressive economic activity which disregards the broader collective.[33] In Touraine's analysis, the enterprise is the closest of the agencies of modernity to a purely strategic actor, but even it has a cultural dimension; the enterprise is animated by the warrior values of the aristocracy which, following Schumpeter, he suggests were reintroduced into the routinised world by the entrepreneurial spirit.

Against rationalist theories of consumption—whether positive or negative—he argues that in the era of consumer society, consumption has been invaded by non-rational and particularistic forces like narcissism and tribalism; consumption is now more a matter of seduction than rational choices.[34] Whereas traditional consumption was concerned with reproducing labour-power, symbolising status, and relating to the non-utilitarian world of ideas, in the era of mass consumption, physical and cultural reproduction has given way to the formation of communities or tribes, the social hierarchy of consumption has been disrupted by the commodification of more and more aspects of social life, and the appeal to high culture has been transformed into a defence and affirmation of the individual personality. In these circumstances, con-

sumption is opened up to new determinations which have a strong cultural dimension, and in addition to the old determinations of need and stratification, consumption has become an outlet for identities and orientations. Consumption therefore cannot be understood as either an attribute of a standard of living, or as the mode of the system's control over actors.

Touraine's analyses of these spheres are not without problems, and they are far from comprehensive. For example, in attempting to bring to light the particularistic features of the nation-state, his focus on the *nation* tends to neglect dynamics associated with the bureaucratic *state*, and at the same time, his emphasis on the production unit as *enterprise* screens out other economic phenomena, such as, the phenomenon of independently acting finance capital, on which Touraine himself has subsequently increasingly focused.[35] However, if these observations suggest that a greater complexity may be involved in the process of fragmentation than he suggests, they do not undermine his central thesis; the state is as ambiguous as the nation, and independently acting finance capital pursues particularised goals to the same extent as the enterprise operating in a competitive international market.

The socio-cultural sphere of 'sexuality' stands apart from the others in a number of respects. It is neither a social actor, nor connected to an agent of modernisation. Above all, it is the focus, and main source, of the resistance to the rationalising thrust of modernity. However, the autonomous logic of this socio-cultural sphere undermines the claim that modernity is the triumph of the universal over the particular in the same way as the other fragments, and it is also, like them, ambiguous to the extent that it is both modern and anti-modern. As this fragment has a particular significance in Touraine's analysis of modernity, we will consider it in some detail.

Touraine defines this sphere generally as the realm of "the vital energy that can break through the barriers erected by social conventions and moralising agencies," and argues that the intellectual cultural current most responsible for discovering and articulating it—and thereby in translating it into a social force—is the 'anthropology of the id', represented by Nietzsche and Freud. It is this current of thought that most effectively challenged the rationalist conception of consciousness. According to Touraine, it replaced Christianity as the primary source of resistance to modernism, for "when God is absent,

the only defence against invasive social power is the devil," and was central to the secularisation of the idea of a being made in the image of God into the idea of a being of desire.[36] It is modern in that it is anti-religious and anti-Christian, but it is anti-modern in that it privileges 'nature' over history.

There are, however, two significant difficulties with Touraine's more detailed elucidation of this fragment. The first is that the focus of his analysis constantly shifts. This tendency is apparent in the multiple terms he uses to refer to it; it is not only 'sexuality' or 'the id', but at times 'nature' and even 'nostalgia for being'.[37] The underlying problem, however, lies in his attempt to bring together as the representatives of this fragment, thinkers who, on closer inspection, are articulating quite distinct phenomena. His objective is to call into question the rationalist conception of consciousness, and to this end he invokes not only Nietzsche and Freud, but also Marx. But he can only bring these three together on the basis of a reductive and homogenising interpretation of each; Nietzsche's Dionysian principle, Freud's unconscious and a putatively Marxian conception of human nature are reduced to an amorphous common denominator of an anthropological force. The straining involved is most evident in relation to Marx. As Marx says nothing about the unconscious, he can only be construed as part of this fragment by interpreting it more broadly as 'nature'. But even so, Touraine's argument relies on a questionable interpretation of Marx, and in particular, the suggestions that Marx contests the existing order in the name of 'nature', and sees 'progress' as the liberation of a natural energy and natural needs that come into conflict with institutional and ideological constructs. This reading not only relies on the assumption that Marx had a firm account of human nature, it is also at odds with the reading of Marx as positing the subject through work that Touraine presents at other points. Most importantly, however, even if it was sustainable, this analysis evokes a concept of 'nature' which is quite distinct from the idea of the id.

Even Nietzsche and Freud provide quite different interpretations of the phenomena on which Touraine wants to centre this fragment. Both refer to something basic, natural and biological which can resist social determinations. But on Touraine's own analysis, the 'life' or 'energy' that Nietzsche interprets as a Dionysiac principle is not synonymous with Freud's unconscious. Although both see a conflict between utilitarian society and individuals driven by the

life-force of Eros, their analyses point in different directions, and have different consequences. Nietzsche's Dionysiac principle refers to an *impersonal* power of desire and sexuality that exists within the human being; it is a supra-individual principle—we have life "not as individuals, but as part of the life force with whose procreative lust we have become one."[38] As we saw in the last chapter, however, Touraine stresses that Freud conceives of the id as a force which, although impersonal to begin with, can be channelled, on the basis of relations with other human beings, into a contestatory and individual subject.

The second difficulty in Touraine's analysis of this fragment concerns its connection to Romanticism. Touraine implicitly identifies this fragment with Romanticism when he refers to it as a 'nostalgia for being'.[39] However, despite the fact that he sees Romanticism as the most important component of the cultural reaction to historicism and modernisation, the connection is never explicitly thematised. One of the main representatives of this fragment—Nietzsche—is held to be involved in a nostalgia for being,[40] while the term infers that Heidegger is the representative thinker of Romanticism.[41] The Romantic current in modern culture breaks through the surface of Touraine's main narrative at several points, but while his scattered comments are suggestive, they are not sufficient to account adequately for either the fragment of sexuality, or the cultural complexity of modernity. His interpretation of Romanticism as a nostalgia for the idea of the unity of 'man' and world that was lost in the transition from eighteenth century rationalism to historicism suggests that it was not, as other interpretations have it, *external* to the traditions which culminated in historicism, but an alternative transformation of them. However, the idea that the spectrum of cultural currents which make up Romanticism can be reduced to a nostalgia for a unified conception of the human being and the universe obscures the ambiguity of that cultural current, and hence of modernity itself.

Two general qualifications to Touraine's interpretation of the thesis of fragmentation are also called for. First, there is reason to doubt that the phenomenon of fragmentation was restricted to the twentieth century in the way Touraine suggests. Although he is sensitive to the uneven development of the separate spheres, he does not see the process of fragmentation beginning until the end of the nineteenth century. As he sees it, the 'decomposition' of

modernity began with the intellectual critique of consciousness and the emergence of nationalism as a potent force and it was only later that the enterprise became a centre for political rather than simply economic decision-making, and later still—in the second half of the twentieth century—that the impact of mass consumption and mass communications has been felt. But it has been argued that the dynamic of pluralisation has a longer history than Touraine suggests. More in line with Weber, Arnason argues that the pluralisation of modernity is *co-extensive* with the modernising process.[42] Arnanson emphasises that the two revolutions with which Touraine dates the end of early modernity were the outcome of autonomous processes of modernisation with long and complex histories. Against the widespread view that the political and industrial revolutions were complementary aspects of one modernisation process, and stresses not only the divergent logics of the developments to which they gave rise, but also the specific conditioning of the two processes; the two revolutions were the complexly conditioned outcomes of developments specific to each sphere—the experience of modern capitalism on the one hand, and the development of the absolutist state on the other.[43]

Secondly, there is no obvious reason why the fragments should be restricted to the four Touraine delineates. We have already noted some structural dimensions of the modern world which require a more distinct treatment than Touraine gives them, and a simple comparison with Weber's account of the divergent cultural spheres raises further questions about the adequacy of Touraine's list. Touraine's own analyses suggest that the state and religion require a more distinct treatment than his implicit subsumption of these phenomena under the heading of the nation allows, and his emphasis on the embodiment of subjectivation in modern art suggests more consideration be given to Weber's notion of a separate aesthetic sphere. Equally, the sphere of science would seem to require a more systematic treatment than Touraine gives it. As we will see, however, this simplifying tendency in Touraine's analysis is connected to a broader problem involved in his attempts to integrate his two main themes.

3. Intersections

The theme of a constitutive tension in modern life did not disappear from Touraine's analysis of fragmented modernity; as he sees it, the tension between

rationalisation and subjectivation is transformed but not eliminated by the historical process of fragmentation. His argument in this regard is tied up with his construal of fragmented modernity as a period of decomposition rather than as a distinct form of modernity. As Touraine sees it, over the course of the twentieth century, the subordination of subjectivation to rationalisation has been replaced by an even more destructive rupture between the constitutive cultural orientations of modernity. As 'mobilising' modernity has fragmented, the principles and processes of rationalisation and subjectivation have increasingly lost contact with each other, and without the productive interaction essential to the full realisation of each, they have degenerated into, on the one hand, instrumental rationality, and on the other, cultural identity. The primary concrete expression of this impoverishment is the bifurcation of social life into particularist identities and world trade flows which are increasingly unmediated by social relationships. The divorce between rationalisation and subjectivation, and the dissolution of the overarching framework in which they were once encompassed, has created a situation that is even more dangerous than the historicist fusion of rationalisation and subjectivation; where the social conflicts that tore apart industrial society were limited by the fact that the social classes shared the same values, in a world divided into 'markets' and 'ghettos', social conflicts are giving way to 'cultural wars' without limits.[44]

The two lines of argument Touraine has pursued have the potential to give rise to a rich interpretation of contemporary developments. In *Critique of Modernity*, however, he is ultimately unable to combine the two narratives in a productive way. In fact, rather than increasing his capacity to grasp the complexity of modernity, his attempt to bring them together in the end results in a simplification of both.

The first problem is that the theme of dualisation is privileged, not only historically and sociologically, but also conceptually, to the extent that the theme of fragmentation is forced into its frame. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the consideration underlying Touraine's four-fold delineation of the fragmentation of modernity is that such a framework allows for an easy—but simplifying—connection between the dynamic of fragmentation and that of dualisation. This over-simple connection is evident, for example, in his attempts to connect the two processes by associating subjectivity with the

spheres of 'individual desire' and 'collective memory', and rationalisation with the spheres of production and consumption.[45] It is also evident in his account of the contemporary 'crisis' of modernity. As we saw earlier, Touraine argues that by nineteen sixty-eight, the decay of the modernist model had reached a point of acute crisis. He defines this crisis of modernity in terms of both of his main themes; on the one hand, the break up of rationalist modernity becomes complete when the world of instrumental rationality is completely divorced from social and cultural actors, and the fragments are left 'drifting like icebergs', separating, colliding and joining up in more or less random ways;[46] on the other hand, modernity disintegrates when rationalisation and subjectivation become completely divorced, as for example, when a society splits into a 'market' and a 'ghetto'. However, the same simplistic and undifferentiated relation is established between the market and the ghetto and the four fragments, with enterprise and consumption on the side of rationality, and sexuality and the nation on the side of subjectivity.

The same reductive and rigid understanding of the relationship between rationalisation and subjectivation and the fragments is also evident in his analysis of the prospects for a more open and flexible model of modernity, and a brief examination of it will highlight the perplexing outcome of this tendency in his analysis. Touraine's starting point is that the subject-reason relationship is a principle which could re-integrate modernity.[47] In his discussion of a reconstructed modernity, however, he argues that the elements of this couplet are each connected with two fragments of modernity in the way mentioned above; subjectivation is associated with the nation and the sphere of sexuality, and rationalisation with production and consumption. The problem is that while he can argue up to a point that in fragmented modernity the forces of nationalism and sexuality are cut off from reason, and that production and consumption are reduced to the instrumentalism of the market, his suggestion that in a re-unified modernity this divide would be maintained, and in particular, that sexuality and nation would draw on the principle of the subject, and only consumption and the enterprise on a more comprehensive model of reason,[48] is not only implausible, it also contradicts the central premises of *Critique of Modernity*. He has argued repeatedly both that the tension between rationalisation and subjectivation that is central to

modernity is internal to each of the four spheres and, equally, that the principles of rationalisation and subjectivation must be kept in productive tension if they are not to degenerate into partial, and highly dangerous, forms.[49]

The second problem is that the weight of Touraine's analysis increasingly shifts to the 'continental drift' between rationalisation and subjectivation, and as it does he retreats from the hermeneutical strategy that has been so rewarding in his analysis, and his analysis becomes increasingly descriptive. His observation that societies are increasingly dissolving into uncoordinated sets of collectivities, subcultures and individuals, in which competition replaces social norms and cultural values and obsession with identity replaces involvement in society, is not developed hermeneutically, in terms of concrete traditions, and provides few new analytical or interpretive insights.[50]

As we will see in our final chapter this analysis of the crisis of modernity shapes the reconstructive project with which *Critique of Modernity* concludes. The rupture into two disconnected and impoverished realms of rationalisation and subjectivation, evident above all in the clash between a global market and a retreat into cultural identity, can be bridged, he insists, only by the reconstruction of political mediations. In particular, he calls for the revitalisation—and reinterpretation—of *democracy* as the only viable means for doing so. We will find that Touraine's analysis is, again, highly suggestive, but in some crucial respects unevenly developed. In particular, we will find that his analysis is restricted not only by his reliance on the over simplistic and predetermined interpretative grids which results in a conception of a rupture between unmediated realms of rationalisation and subjectivation, but also in part by the difficulties we have identified in relation to his basic conceptual/theoretical framework.

Before we do so, we will turn to Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics in search of interpretative resources which could deepen and extend Touraine's potentially highly fertile, but only partly developed insights. In the next chapter we will consider the perspectival premises which underlie Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics, and in particular their relevance to the debate between critical theory and hermeneutics, and in the following chapter we will explore conceptual and theoretical insights contained within Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the acting subject.

Notes

[1] Weber is the essential starting point for the analysis of modernity because he saw modernity not simply as the triumph of reason, but rather as a tension between rationalisation and two phenomena which were at odds with it; on the one hand, he saw a tension between rationalisation and the 'war between the gods', and on the other between rationalisation and charisma. See Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 34.

[2] J. Arnason, *Social Theory and Japanese Experience: The Dual Civilisation*, London, Kegan Paul International, 1997, pp. 356-7.

[3] Turner, "Touraine's Concept of Modernity," p. 187.

[4] J. Arnason, "Touraine's Critique of Modernity: Metacritical Reflections," *Thesis Eleven* no. 38, 1994, pp. 36-45, pp. 37-8. On this view, Habermas' notion of an unfinished project which could, in principle, be 'completed' by a more consistent application of its constitutive principles belongs in the category of affirmative conceptions.

[5] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 203.

[6] *Ibid*., p. 230.

[7] Arnason, "Touraine's Critique of Modernity: Metacritical Reflections, p. 40.

[8] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 205.

[9] *Ibid*., p. 64.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 47 trans. amended.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 13.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 48.

[13] Touraine distinguishes between 'modernism' and 'modernity' to emphasise the arbitrariness of the rationalist interpretation which claimed to be a statement of fact. The centrality of this thesis makes the many occasions on which the terms are mistranslated particularly unfortunate.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 23.

[15] *Ibid*., p. 15.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 53.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 64.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 85.

[19] For Touraine, Hegel and Marx are the most representative thinkers of historicism because Comte's positivism was too alien to the cultural traditions it was attempting to challenge to be an effective historical force. *Ibid*., p. 75.

[20] In this context, he sees Marx rejecting Hegel's synthesis of rationality and subjectivity—through the rediscovery of the subject as worker—only to re-synthesise them by projecting the subject into the impersonal logic of history. As we will see

later, however, he also interprets Marx as the 'first great post-modern intellectual' who contests the existing order in the name of nature.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 69. This ambiguity is repeated in his inconsistent statements about the influence of historicism in French thought, where he sometimes sees it as a dominant (*ibid.*, p. 67) and at others an insignificant (*ibid.*, p. 69) mode of thought.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 100. In this regard, the various strands of Weber's thought have given rise to divergent interpretations of modernity. Both Touraine and the Frankfurt School take off from the Weberian analysis of rationalisation, but by drawing on the theme of the 'return of the old gods' rather than the metaphor of the iron cage, Touraine draws sharply different conclusions.

29 To the extent that they pursue particularistic logics rather than implementing rationalisation, the fragments are also invalidating the rationalist self-image of modernity as the triumph of the universal over the particular.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

31 Turner, "Touraine's Concept of Modernity" p. 189.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

33 This view of the enterprise clearly influenced by the strength of the Japanese economy at the time he was writing—it was, he notes, the Japanese company which sees itself literally as enterprise *ibid.*, p. 141, and prioritises the definition of goals and the mobilisation of technical and human resources, in contrast to the American model which was more oriented to rationalisation and the market.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

35 See for example his essay in *European Journal of Social Theory* symposium on his work Touraine, "Special Guest Essay: Can We Live Together," p. 168, and *Can We Live Together?*, where it is a defining feature of the contemporary situation.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

38 F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golffing, New York, Doubleday, 1956, pp. 103-4.

39 Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 159.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 113. Touraine's reasons for this certainly have a political dimension in regard to Heidegger.

[42] Arnason, "Touraine's Critique of Modernity", p. 44.

[43] Arnason has also emphasised that among the most important developments in the ideological sphere which took off in response to these two developments was the emergence of alternative images of modernity and in particular the socialist project which rationalised itself as the working out of the inherent logic of the productive forces. See for example J. Arnason, "The Multiplication of Modernity," pp. 131-154.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[45] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 218.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[47] As Turner has noted, Touraine is ambiguous about the possibilities for reunification of fragmented modernity; sometimes the reason-subject relation is conceived as a principle of mediation struggling to hold together the forces of marketisation and ascribed cultural identity, and sometimes as a principle of integration. See Turner, "Touraine's Concept of Modernity," p. 191.

[48] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 219.

[49] The difficulty Touraine has in connecting his two main themes is also reflected in his treatment of the fragmented modernity of the twentieth century as "not a new stage of modernity, but its decay." *Ibid.*, p. 99. In the period in which the rationalist framework of the national class society was decomposing, the divergence of the logics of the fragments was limited by instrumental reason; with no substantive rational principle uniting the different spheres of modern life, rationality was reduced to an instrumentalism that was deployed in the service of particularist and 'irrational' ends. Rationality in this circumstance was a "residue," *ibid.*, p. 101 but it was sufficient to prevent the complete separation of the fragments, and to limit their attempts to proclaim themselves the central principle of the modern world. At the same time, explicit references to subjectivity tend to drop out of the picture (see diagram *ibid.*, p. 102). It is most conspicuously embodied in the fragment of sexuality, but Touraine is ambiguous about its effectivity in the contemporary period. In general, he speaks as though this fragment is still efficacious, but at times he argues that its power is exhausted. The main intellectual expressions of the critical anti-rationalist intellectual current—from the Frankfurt School to Foucault—have been isolated from social conflicts and debates, and as a generalised cultural orientation, eros has been absorbed by mass consumption; the predominant trend within 'consumer society' is towards the transformation of liberation into a desire to consume. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

[50] The interpretive depth latent in his hermeneutical approach is evident, for example, in his analysis of the modes of analysis which predominate in contemporary

debates, and in particular, of the "*fin-de-siécle* coexistence of neo-liberalism and post modernism". As Touraine sees it, the self-understandings of the contemporary world have become as fragmented as the reality they animate. With the complete collapse of the historicist conception of modernity, he suggests, two rival but partial images of society are dominant in the West; neo-liberalism describes a society reduced to a market with no actors (because behaviour can be predicted on the basis of the laws of rational choice), and post-modernism describes actors without a system who are trapped in their imagination and their memories, *ibid.*, p. 192. This interpretation of neo-liberalism contradicts a second argument which comes later in *Critique of Modernity*, but which we discussed earlier, where he argued that the liberalism of rational-choice theory represented a conception of actors without a system, *ibid.*, p. 354. And both, according to Touraine, are reflections of the fragmented socio-cultural universe of the contemporary world. Liberalism is constructing an economic society on the image of the market, not as the 'invisible hand', but rather as a generalisation of a more dynamic and savage idea of the market that is projected by the enterprise. It should be noted that this argument is a strong justification for Touraine's emphasis on the specific features of the *enterprise* as an important point of reference for the analysis of the system of production, even if this is an incomplete metaphor for the economic sphere. It is a projection of the self-image of the enterprise onto society as a whole, and as such, it is an inherently fragmented and partial vision of modernity which cannot explain either the defensive quest for identity or the desire for stability, *ibid.*, p. 182. The postmodernist response to the crisis of modernity reflects the fragmentation of modernity in a different manner, but it is an equally partial image of society. For Touraine, as we have noted, the crisis of modernity has ended the reign of modernism, but not modernity, and the idea of postmodernism is of little use in this circumstance. More particularly, however, he argues that it is as fragmented as the world it describes, and therefore lacks the resources to make sense of it. What is interesting here is that, as Touraine sees it, postmodernism is not a simple reflection of the historical situation of fragmentation, but a reflection of this historical situation through the prism of a particular tradition. Postmodernism, he suggests, is what emerges when the decomposition of what modernism tried to keep together is viewed through the prism of the tradition, inaugurated by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, which challenged technological and economic modernisation, *ibid.*, p. 186.

Chapter Four

Critical Hermeneutics

The tradition of philosophical hermeneutics has been both a source of inspiration and a target of suspicion for the critical theorists of the post war period. The challenge it made to the objectivist epistemologies which prevailed in the social sciences was seen as a valuable contribution to the project to revitalise social theory; at the same time, however, the radicality of this challenge also seemed to call into question the possibility of a critique of existing socio-political structures.[1] The predominant response among the theorists we have been most concerned with has been a limited incorporation of hermeneutical themes. As we noted in the introduction, in projects initiated in the nineteen seventies, Habermas and Giddens incorporated substantial but strictly delimited elements of the hermeneutical perspective into their theoretical frameworks, and more recently, Touraine has implicitly adopted proto-hermeneutical premises, while retreating from their logic at key points. For all of these theorists, any insights to be gained from the hermeneutical view point must be subordinated to the 'critical' perspective.[2]

As we have noted, however, these responses to the hermeneutical perspective were formulated primarily in relation to Hans-Georg Gadamer's classic interpretation of the hermeneutical position in *Truth and Method*.[3] This text was instrumental in introducing the hermeneutical perspective into the contemporary social sciences, and set the initial parameters of the dialogue between hermeneutics and critical theory. But as I have suggested, Ricoeur's innovations within the tradition have been distinctive enough to alter the terms of the debate.[4] Ricoeur remains faithful to the fundamental premises of philosophical hermeneutics, and in particular to the acknowledgement of the historical situatedness of all human understanding; as we will see, however, his search for forms of critique that are consonant with the recognition of the 'reign of finitude' has opened up new possibilities for a critically-orientate hermeneutics. In this chapter, we will use Ricoeur's philosophy to explore the possibilities for a new relationship between hermeneutics and critical theory from the hermeneutical side, and consider the light it throws on Touraine's reluctance to embrace the hermeneutical perspective.

As Ricoeur sees it, recognition of a critical moment was not absent from the hermeneutics of Gadamer or Heidegger, but it was in both cases a "vague desire constantly reiterated, but constantly aborted."[5] His attempt to bring out and extend the potential for critique that is available within the interpretative framework they established, therefore, involves a reinterpretation rather than a rejection of their core insights. Two 'Ricoeurian' interpretations of the core problematics within the hermeneutical perspective in particular are involved; the first is his notion of the *conflict of interpretations,* which reinterprets the hermeneutical circle itself, and the second is his theme of *textuality,* which shifts the locus of the hermeneutical theme of the linguistic mediation of the self. As we will see, each of these developments introduce 'critical' elements into the hermeneutical perspective on a number of levels. In the first instance, by foregrounding the irreducible and permanent presence of rival interpretations within a field of meaning, the notion of the conflict of interpretations underlines the multiplicity and ambiguity contained within a cultural field, and on the epistemological level, gives rise to a 'second order' hermeneutical framework capable of encompassing conflicting perspectives. In the second case, the shift to the problematic of the text as the privileged hermeneutical field makes possible a conception of interpretation

as a dialectic of "explanation" and "understanding," and creates a space for a relation of distantiation tin relation to tradition. To appreciate these innovations, we will consider them against the background of the tradition they draw on and reinterpret.

1. The Conflict of Interpretations

Ricoeur's most fundamental point of connection with the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics inaugurated by Heidegger is his allegiance to *phenomenological* hermeneutics. In fact, Ricoeur came to phenomenological hermeneutics independently of Heidegger's groundbreaking integration of the two traditions; his first philosophical identification was with a phenomenological variant of reflexive philosophy, and it was dynamics internal to it which provoked his own 'hermeneutical turn.'[6] As Ricoeur sees it, phenomenology and hermeneutics are compatible because they are both concerned with "meaning" rather than "knowledge;" more importantly, both gain something important from their union. As he discovered in the course of his *Phenomenology of the Will*,[7] Husserlian phenomenology, previously concerned with cognition and perception, gained the insight that meaning is polysemic and historical. And Heidegger's phenomenological discovery that understanding is not only, or primarily, a mode of knowing, but rather a mode of *being,* radicalised the hermeneutical critique of positivism and objectivism. Dilthey had argued that the human sciences had their own "interpretive" method that differed from the "explanatory" methods of the natural science, but he remained within the orbit of the positivist aspiration to objective knowledge, free from the contextual influence of the passions, the unconscious, history and tradition. In challenging the juxtaposition of "subject" and "object," Heidegger's "ontological turn" took both phenomenology and hermeneutics beyond the epistemological framework defined by the Kantian theory of knowledge.

Ricoeur embraced the radical ramifications of Heidegger's elucidation of this "Copernican revolution," accepting that the structure of understanding is *anticipatory,* and *projected* towards the future. In the first case, he takes up Heidegger's argument that it is *"being-in-the-world"* which makes understanding possible, and that because we are always already immersed in an always already constituted horizon of meaning, all explicit understandings

build on an always presupposed and never fully thematisable ground. In the second case, he takes up Heidegger's insistence that understanding is always a "projection" of possible ways of being, and its implication that what we most fundamentally *are,* is neither fixed nor given, but an 'opening' to what we can become.

Ricoeur also accepts the general epistemological implications of Heidegger's ontology of understanding. In particular, he accepts that it follows from the anticipatory nature of all interpretative understandings that any aspiration to surpass the problem of the hermeneutical circle by establishing objective knowledge is a misunderstanding of the fundamental nature of understanding. Following Heidegger, he argues that if the ontological structure of understanding is properly understood, it follows that *interpretation* is first of all the explication or *development* of pre-thematic or tacit understanding, which "does not transform it into something else, but makes it become itself."[8] And because "interpretation is grounded in something we have in advance—in a *fore-having*,"[9] interpretation is the 'working-out' of the possible modes of being that have been projected by understanding.[10] The hermeneutical circle, which appears within the framework of the theory of knowledge as a vicious circle, is within the framework of an ontology of understanding the reflection on the methodological plane of the structure of anticipation that characterises all understanding. Ricoeur insists, however, that the unavoidable circularity of understanding should not be understood negatively; it is generative in a fundamental way, because it is the condition of possibility of understanding anything at all.

As critical theorists have been acutely aware, however, the idea of the hermeneutical circle entails that a definitive critique of "pre-understandings" is impossible. Ricoeur accepts this fundamental limitation on the critical aspiration, but he insists that it does not preclude all meaningful critique. Arguing that Heidegger's ontology *dissolved* rather than *resolved* the problems that the idea of the hermeneutical circle creates on the epistemological plane—including the question of "the critical moment of epistemology"[11]—he put this issue at the centre of a systematic investigation of what "happens to an epistemology of interpretation . . . when it is . . . animated and inspired by an ontology of understanding."[12]

The decisive move in Ricoeur's attempt to elucidate the possibilities for critique is the emphasis he puts on the fact that it is *within language* that we understand and interpret. He knows that, for Heidegger, discourse "is existentially equi-primordial with . . . understanding,"[13] and language is the medium of understanding. But from Ricoeur's point of view, Heidegger does not acknowledge the most important implications of the linguistic mediation of all understanding and interpretation. The most general of these is that is only from *within* language that it can be demonstrated that understanding is a mode of being; 'existence' can only be reached by a 'detour' through the interpretation of the range of meanings, always embodied in language, which mediate all understanding. The ramifications of this argument are manifold, and they concern a number of problematics within Ricoeur's hermeneutics that are relevant to our concerns, including as we will see in the next chapter, the understanding of the subject. It has its full effect on the epistemological level, however, only when one of the fundamental features of language, and the meanings it embodies, is taken into account; language and meaning, Ricoeur insists, are essentially *polysemic,* and the logical consequence of the multivocity of language is that there is 'no general hermeneutics, no universal canon for exegesis, but only disparate theories concerning the rules of interpretation;"[14] because language is polysemic, it follows, we are condemned, not simply to interpretation, but to a *conflict of interpretations*.

Ricoeur's notion of the conflict of interpretations opens up a number of critical possibilities within the hermeneutical perspective. In the first place, by shifting the emphasis to the inevitability of the conflict of interpretations, he foregrounds both the creative potentials inherent in the polysemy of meaning, and the permanent presence of rival interpretations within a given field of meaning. As we have anticipated, this shift introduces a critical theme into the hermeneutical problematic by underscoring the potential for multiplicity and conflict within a shared cultural field, and by doing so, challenges the idea that the hermeneutical perspective necessarily leads to a conception of social relations as harmonious sets of practices based on cultural consensus. Ricoeur's most explicit discussion of the critical ramifications of the idea of the conflict of interpretations, however, has concerned its epistemological implications.

Ricoeur's first move in this regard is to put the methodological question of rival interpretations—which Heidegger had dissolved by relegating them to

'regional ontologies' concerned with particular kinds of being (the natural and social sciences, religion, psychoanalysis, linguistics etc.)[15]—at the centre of the hermeneutical problematic. From this point of view, the various exegetical disciplines are each deciphering (polysemic) language and meaning according to its particular frame of reference. As Kearney puts it, what Nietzsche interprets as the strength or weakness of a 'Will to Power,' Freud interprets as a transposition of the repressed desires of the unconscious libido, the theologician as a cipher of divine transcendence, the poet as a projection of the creative imagination, and Marx as an ideological disguise of class domination.[16] It follows that each interpretive framework can find only what it seeks. But Ricoeur insists that this is not a limitation that disqualifies specific interpretive methods but, on the contrary, the necessary consequence of the anticipatory structure of understanding. By re-interpreting the hermeneutical circle as a conflict of interpretations, in which various theoretical frameworks operate as the structure of pre-understanding, the epistemological and methodological frameworks of the various perspectives appear not as obstacles to interpretation, but as constitutive of interpretations, which are necessarily always made from a particular standpoint.

More importantly, to recognise that rival interpretative grids can be applied to the same symbolic field is to relativise *all* absolutist claims. Ricoeur's notion of the conflict of interpretations leads to a 'second order' hermeneutical framework, the primary task of which is to legitimate the claims of rival interpretations by showing in what way each method rests on specific theoretical foundations, and by the same token, to relativise their claims to be an exclusive and definitive interpretation. From our point of view, the most important consequence of the second order hermeneutical framework is that it opens up the hermeneutical perspective to a moment of critique by legitimating—within the limits that apply to all first order interpretative frameworks—'critical' modes of interpretation.

Ricoeur thematised two particular "conflicts of interpretations" which involved critical perspectives central to modern thought. The first was a conflict of interpretations relevant to interpretation generally, and the problematic of the subject in particular. This is the conflict between a critically oriented, 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and a more conventional 'hermeneutics of affirmation'. On one side were the *reductive* modes of interpretation that stood in opposition

to conventional hermeneutical styles of interpretation. Important currents of thought in this category include Freud's "demystifying" hermeneutics, and Marx's and Nietzsche's modes of interpretation directed towards the "reduction of illusion."[17] The hermeneutics of suspicion was *critical* in the sense that all three versions of it proposed a critique of *false* consciousness, and rejected the idea that a subject was capable of transparent self-knowledge.[18] Ricoeur embraced the multi-stranded 'critique of false consciousness' as a fruitful, and even necessary, component in the global interpretive process, arguing that it 'accomplished' concretely what Heidegger had only asserted—that consciousness is not the origin of meaning.

However, as Ricoeur's second order conception of hermeneutics only legitimated these critical modes of interpretations to the extent that their absolutist claims were relativised, he insisted that an "amplifying" hermeneutics of affirmation remained the necessary complement of the hermeneutics of suspicion. His own, and Gadamer's, hermeneutics—both 'attentive to the surplus of meaning included in the symbol'—along with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and reflexive philosophy more generally, were important expressions of this mode of interpretation. The hermeneutics of amplification remained an irreducible element of interpretation, Ricoeur insisted, because while the hermeneutics of suspicion demonstrates that consciousness is not immediate, it is the hermeneutics of amplification which reveals that consciousness is the appropriation of meaning which first resides "outside," in works, institutions and cultural monuments.[19]

The second 'front' of the conflict of interpretations that Ricoeur thematised concerned the interpretation of language, and it introduced an opening towards critique by legitimating a particular kind, and limited moment, of objectivism. On one side was structuralist linguistics' semiotic approach, and on the other, the semantic perspective of his own hermeneutics. The idea of the conflict of interpretations fore grounded the fact that their respective premises largely determine their ultimate conclusions. Structuralist linguistics' privileging of the system of language, understood as differential units operating within a system entirely made up of internal relations, and its assumption that the analysis of language could be confined to the structures of the text alone, determined its conclusions, as surely as his own phenomenological and hermeneutical presuppositions, which placed emphasis on the *actualisation*

of language by a speaker, saw the sentence as the key unit of meaning and held that all language refers to the "world," determined his.

Ricoeur insists not only that the conflict between these viewpoints is irresolvable, but also that it renders the passage through the objective and systemic viewpoint of semiotics a *necessary*, albeit limited, element of self-understanding. The most important consequence of the irreducibility of this conflict of interpretations in this context is that the moment of objective analysis it legitimates brings an opportunity for critique into the hermeneutical perspective.

The idea of the conflict of interpretations was not, however, the only Ricoeurian innovation to enlarge the scope for critique within the hermeneutical perspective, or to challenge over-harmonious conceptions of interpretive communities. Both facets of his philosophy were intensified when he brought the theme of textuality to bear on the hermeneutical thesis of linguistic mediation.

2. Textuality

While the idea of the conflict of interpretations opened up substantial new critical perspectives for hermeneutics, it did so largely implicitly. In contrast, Ricoeur's thematization of the textualisation of discourse was explicitly tied to his attempt to expand the possibilities for critique contained within the hermeneutical perspective. This theme did not arise exclusively through such considerations; his thematisation of textuality was prompted in the first instance by his ongoing dialogue with structuralism. As his essays 'The task of hermeneutics' (1973), 'Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology' (1973) and 'Phenomenology and hermeneutics' (1975) make clear, however, the theme of textualisation played a central role in his quest to explore the possibilities for critique contained within a hermeneutic framework founded on the premise of the finitude of understanding, and in particular, in his strategy to 'rectify' Gadamer's influential interpretation of the hermeneutical position in relation to the debate with critical theory.[20] His reversion to the problematic of the text—the focal point for traditional hermeneutics—unfolded entirely on the basis of philosophical hermeneutics' fundamental premises about the ontology of understanding, and as we will see, his argument that the embodiment

of language in texts introduces specific features into the experience of the linguistic mediation of the self opened up a number of new critical spaces within the hermeneutical perspective.

Critical theorists have raised two closely related objections against the hermeneutical perspective. The first is that it is open to overly harmonious conceptions of interpretive communities, and of the self's relationship to them. As we noted earlier, Habermas argues that Gadamer's stress on the "belonging" to tradition as the condition which founds the possibility of aesthetic, historical and lingual relations, obscures the distortions of communication and understanding that arise from violence. The second is the unpalatable epistemological implication which the first objection entails; as Habermas stresses, the relation of belonging to traditions removes any firm ground from which a definitive critique of distorted communication could be made.

The locus of Ricoeur's challenge to Gadamer's classic account of the relationship of belonging to traditions is the model of language Gadamer deploys. Gadamer, it is well known, thematised *conversation* as the primary model for analysis of linguistic mediation, and his analyses based on the structure of the dialogue have been both influential and fertile. Gadamer concludes from his analysis, however, that we "belong" to traditions before we can take an objective attitude towards them, and that this relation of belonging precludes the use of the objectifying methods on which the social sciences have traditionally founded the possibility of critique. As we will see, Ricoeur's argument is that this conclusion follows from Gadamer's particular model of language rather than the thesis of linguistic mediation itself. More particularly, he insists that when the mediation of our relation to tradition is by texts is recognised, so too is a more dialectical relation to tradition; where Gadamer sees only a relation of belonging, Ricoeur sees a dialectic of belonging and *distanciation*.

The theme of a dialectic of belonging and distanciation has a number of significant ramifications for the issues at the centre of our concerns. It introduces, for example, new considerations concerning the problematic of interpretive communities that are highly pertinent to Touraine's characterisation of the hermeneutical position. The weight of Ricoeur's analysis, however, is on its implications for the possibilities of critique, and his contribution

to the issues involved are best appreciated against the Gadamerian position he is challenging.[21]

The overarching thesis of *Truth and Method* is that the primordial relation of *belonging* to the world—the always already constituted horizon of meaning in which we find ourselves, and cannot but participate—renders the objectifying methods of the human sciences illegitimate. Gadamer's crusade against objectification traverses what he sees as the three privileged spheres of the hermeneutical experience. In the aesthetic sphere, he argues that the experience of being seized by the object precedes and renders possible the critical exercise of judgement. In the historical sphere, he stresses that it is the consciousness of being carried by traditions that makes possible any exercise of historical methodology at the level of the historical and social sciences. And in the sphere of language, he insists that any scientific treatment of language as an instrument is preceded and rendered possible by our "co-belonging to the things which the great voices of mankind have said." In this context, it is his analysis of the historical and linguistic spheres that are most relevant.

The objective attitude is illegitimate in the historical sciences, as Gadamer sees it, because it violates the relationship of belonging to tradition. His elucidation of this thesis moves, as Ricoeur has succinctly put it, from a phenomenological rehabilitation of prejudice, tradition and authority, through an ontological interpretation of these phenomena in the concept of the 'consciousness of effective history', to the epistemological consequence that an exhaustive critique of prejudice is impossible, since there is no zero point from which it could proceed.[22] The details of Gadamer's argument are well known. For Gadamer, prejudices, in the sense of pre-judgments, are not simply the opposite of a reason without presuppositions, but a constitutive component of understanding, linked to the finite, historical character of the human being. Authority cannot be simply identified with domination and violence, as its essence is not to do with obedience to command, but with recognition. And 'that which has authority', is that which is sanctioned by tradition and custom.

As Gadamer sees it, the ontological significance of these interrelated phenomena is that "our consciousness is determined by a real historical process,"[23]

and he invokes the principle of 'effective history' to refer to the fact that consciousness is inescapably affected by history in the form of the "authority of what has been transmitted."[24] The traditions which transmit the past are, however, not a fixed set of opinions and evaluations, but rather a *horizon*, which includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point, and which can, moreover, move and contract or expand. There is no single, overarching horizon which affects consciousness, nor are the horizons which affect consciousness closed—it is always possible to affect a 'fusion of horizons' with another point of view or another culture. The finitude of understanding consists in the 'standpoint' that determines and limits the range of one's vision. And as Gadamer sees it, the epistemological consequence of the exposure of consciousness to history is that this action of history upon us cannot be objectified, because it is part of the historical phenomenon itself. Scientific research does not escape the historical consciousness of those who live and make history, and because historical knowledge cannot free itself from the historical condition, the project of a science free from prejudices is impossible.

Gadamer insists, however, that the impossibility of an exhaustive critique of prejudice does not preclude a critical relation to tradition. It is, he has said,

> a grave misunderstanding to assume that emphasis on the essential factor of tradition which enters into all understanding implies an uncritical acceptance of tradition and socio-political conservatism . . . In truth the confrontation of our historic tradition is always a critical challenge of the tradition.[25]

The possibility of critique, he argues, stems from the power of language to transcend given contexts. In particular, it is the structure of the *conversation* which makes critique possible; it is he argues, the conversation which holds open "the possibility of going beyond our conventions"[26] and ensures "the possibility of our taking a critical stance with regard to every convention."[27]

As we have noted, most critical theorists have found this conception of critique insufficient. Ricoeur's thematisation of textuality, however, throws new light on the issue. In particular, the attention he pays to the textualisation of

language suggests a more dialectical relation to tradition. As Ricoeur sees it, Gadamer's reliance on the model of dialogue and conversation predisposes him to over-emphasise the *immediateness and directness* of communication in general, and the relation of belonging to tradition in particular. For Gadamer, dialogue is the privileged instance of linguistic mediation, because language "has its true being only in conversation in the exercise of understanding between people,"[28] and conversation is what "we ourselves are."[29] The conversation, therefore, is the model for the process of the 'fusion of horizons'—of the present and of the past—through which all understanding, and participation in tradition takes place. Ricoeur does not question the psychological, sociological or historical priority of speech over writing, nor the idea, common to *Being and Time and Truth and Method*, that discourse always brings into language a way of being-in-the-world which precedes it. But he does argue that the objectification of language in writing has inaugurated a change in our relation to the world (and hence traditions) which remains unexplored in *Being and Time*, and is insufficiently accounted for in Gadamer's philosophy of language.[30] In particular, by privileging the text, Ricoeur brings to the forefront the instance of language whichdisplays what he insists is the fundamental characteristic of the historicity of human experience—communication in and through *distance*. In contrast to the immediacy of conversation based on questions and answers, and located in a circumstantial milieu, communication through objectified texts is communication with no access to the intention of the speaker/author, or to the circumstantial world. But it is precisely because it is objectified that we can distance ourselves from it. For Ricoeur, if the mediation of texts is taken seriously, it is apparent that we belong to traditions through a relation which oscillates between remoteness and proximity, and our relation to tradition is therefore not Gadamer's unilateral relation of belonging, but a dialectic of belonging and distanciation.

From this point of view, moreover, distanciation is not, as Gadamer has it, alienating, but *productive*. A "genuine creativity"[31] arises from the capacity of a text to decontextualise itself—from the author's intention, its reception by its original audience, and the economic, social and cultural circumstances of its production—and to recontextualise itself differently in different situations through the act of reading. Particularly relevant here is Ricoeur's argument that an important form of the creativity that is generated by the distanciation

the text produces is the creativity of *critique*. Ricoeur specifies three distinct moments of critique which are entailed in the fixation of discourse in texts. The first two accentuate elements which are not foreign to Gadamer's hermeneutics, but which remain underdeveloped in his work, focused as it is on the relation of belonging to traditions. The third, however, directly challenges Gadamer's central thesis that the objectifying methods of the social sciences are illegitimate.

The first moment of critique arises from the new relation between language and the world that the text inaugurates. One of the premises shared by Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur is that language is not simply a self-referential system; it refers to the world. Ricouer insists, however, that the mode of referring of the text is distinct from that of oral discourse. In the conversation located in a circumstantial milieu, the world that is the referent of the discourse is present. With the text, however, the circumstantial referent of discourse is not present. This does not entail any notion of an 'absolute text', because while the first order reference to the real is intercepted and deferred, it is not obliterated; the 'world of the text'—the imaginary world projected by the text itself—takes the place of the circumstantial reality referred to by living speech. This replacement of the first order reference to the real by the second order reference to the world of the text is important, because the text is referring not to the world of manipulable objects, but to a possible type of being-in-the-world, and this power of the text to open a dimension of reality by projecting a possible world "implies in principle a recourse against any given reality, and thereby the possibility of a critique of the real."[32]

The second moment of critique opened up by the autonomy of the text concerns the critique of false consciousness. When the emphasis is shifted from conversation to the text, the critique of consciousness stresses that consciousness is mediated by language and culture through their embodiment in texts. As Ricoeur sees it, mediation by the text, and especially by *fiction*, contributes to the critique of the illusion that the subject is the origin of its meanings, by contributing to the exploration of the 'imaginative variations of the ego'. Selfunderstanding mediated by texts, he argues, occurs not by projecting oneself into the text, but by exposing oneself to it, in order to receive from it a self enlarged by the appropriation of the proposed worlds projected by it; it

is therefore necessary first to distance oneself from oneself, in order to appropriate the possible self proposed by the text.[33]

Finally, the most important moment of critique that is opened up by the distanciation that the autonomy of the text makes possible concerns the possibilities for 'explanation'. The objectification of discourse in texts, Ricoeur argues against Gadamer, justifies at least a 'moment' of objectification, and with it a moment of 'explanation'. In contrast to the discourse of conversation, which enters into the spontaneous movement of question and answer, discourse objectified in texts is produced as a *work*, and 'takes hold' in the *structures* of the text. This 'texture' of the text not only legitimates, but *calls for* description and 'explanation' to mediate the 'understanding' of the text.

With this notion, Ricoeur is extending the idea of a conflict of interpretations over the analysis of language. By shifting the locus of interpretation from the sentence to the text as a work, the conflict of interpretations between the 'semantic' and 'semiotic' modes of interpretation becomes an opposition between 'understanding' and 'explanation'. When the text is the object of interpretation, it is, Ricoeur argues, not only legitimate, but necessary to go as far as possible along the route of objectification, to the point where structural analysis discloses the 'depth semantics' of a text, in order to 'understand' the text. More generally, it is necessary to think of interpretation as a *dialectic of explanation and understanding*; where Gadamer's elucidation of the linguistic mediation of understanding based on the model of conversation led him to repudiate the objectifying methods as a whole, Ricoeur's focus on the text leads him to argue that although interpretation still involves grasping meaningful connections, the mediation of understanding by an analysis of structural connections makes the difference between a 'naïve' interpretation and a 'critical' interpretation.[34]

This pairing of the operations that Dilthey's hermeneutics of the text had radically opposed, requires however, a redefinition of both terms. Neither Dilthey's conception of explanation, derived from the natural sciences, and characterised by the analytic examination of causal chains, nor his concept of understanding as the appropriation of the external signs of mental life directed by an empathetic attitude is adequate to a post-ontological problematic of the text. In their place, Ricoeur put a model for explanation derived from the

domain of language and retained a hermeneutical notion of understanding inherited from Heidegger and Gadamer. Drawing on semiological models of explanation, he argues that 'explanation' includes a diversity of forms, including genetic explanation, explanation in terms of the underlying material, structural explanation, and explanation by optimal convergence.[35] And he replaced Dilthey's psychologistic idea of understanding as the re-creation of the intention of the author with the idea of the 'appropriation'[36] of the meanings projected by the power of the text to disclose a possible mode of being.

Ricoeur's thematisation of textuality, then, has allowed him to expand the scope for critique that the idea of the conflict of interpretations introduced into the hermeneutical perspective by articulating its methodological implications in more detail. In doing so, he has challenged Gadamer's canonical reading of the epistemological implications for the humanities and social sciences of Heidegger's ontological theory of understanding; where Gadamer's elucidation of the linguistic mediation of understanding based on the model of conversation led him to repudiate objectifying methods as such, Ricoeur's focus on textuality has allowed him to see between truth and method not a disjunction, but a dialectical process. Most importantly in this context, it has allowed him to make a distinction between "naïve" interpretation and a "critical" interpretation in which understanding involving grasping meaningful connections is mediated by an analysis of structural connections.

If the critical themes we have considered here have challenged a number of the assumptions which underlie Touraine's ambivalence towards the hermeneutical perspective, they also suggest a number of more immediate, and constructive, points of connection with his recent social theory. The first of these is the idea of a second order hermeneutical framework that the idea of the conflict of interpretations threw up. In its most general form, this idea has a direct point of contact with Touraine's suggestion that modern thought involves both the construction of models and hermeneutical interpretation, and more generally with the epistemological presuppositions presupposed but never systematically explicated in *Critique of Modernity*. Touraine's implicit epistemology presupposes a second order hermeneutical framework of precisely the kind Ricoeur has elaborated, and an engagement with it could not only give Touraine resources to deepen and enrich the explication of his perspectival

premises, but also bring out their affinities with the (critical) hermeneutical perspective.

The second important point of connection concerns the problematic of interpretive communities, and the relationship between self and society it entails. As we have noted many times, Touraine sees the conventional hermeneutical conception of this relationship as over-harmonious, and to differentiate himself from such conceptions, has often made the point that subjects construct themselves at least in part through *distanciation* from social and cultural contexts. Ricoeur's notion of a dialectic belonging and distanciation, however, suggests that the kind of emphasis Touraine has placed on distanciation is entirely compatible with the hermeneutical perspective, and opens up new avenues for the development of Touraine's highly fertile, but only partly elaborated, line of argument.

As we will see in the next chapter, however, the most significant contribution Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics will make to the concerns at the centre of our analysis will emerge from its application to the field of human action.

Notes

[1] This ambivalence has characterised contemporary theorists more generally. For at least some commentators attuned to the postmodernist critique of 'modernism' and 'modernist epistemology', Ricoeur's innovations are either based on a misdirected critique of Gadamer (see Madison, "Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur") or represent a retreat to the modernism that hermeneutics is seen to potentially contest, see S. Hekman, *Hermeneutics and the Sociology of Knowledge*, Cambridge, Polity, 1986, p. 141. Madison argues that Gadamer is not guilty of the conservatism of which he is accused and, more particularly, that his hermeneutics does contain a positive notion of distanciation, while Hekman argues that Ricoeur's innovations are flawed by a reliance on the Enlightenment conception of objective knowledge. On the other hand, while none of the critical theorists to whom Ricoeur's 'rectification' of Gadamer's hermeneutics was directed have made a systematic response to Ricoeur's innovations, John Thompson has, in this tradition, argued that Ricoeur still ignores the non-linguistic aspects of human life. See J. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics. A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

[2] See for example Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, pp. 102-141, and A. Giddens, *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*, London, The MacMillan Press, 1982, pp. 11-14. Habermas' debate with Gadamer gives a more extensive account of his position.

[3] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

[4] Habermas and Giddens are not unaware of the distinctiveness of Ricoeur's contribution, but their dialogue with the hermeneutical perspective has not encompassed a systematic response to his work.

[5] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 88.

[6] P. Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography," pp. 37-38.

[7] This was the general title of a proposed tri-partite work. The first part was *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and Involuntary* (1966). The second part, conceived as an exploration of the concrete will, appeared under the title of *Finitude and Guilt*, and was itself composed of two parts; *Fallible Man* (1965), and *Symbolism of Evil* (1967). The third part, which proposed to relate human will to transcendence in a poetics of the will, was never written.

[8] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 188 trans modified.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[11] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 89.

[12] Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 7. While this project is similar in form to Gadamer's hermeneutical project, it differs significantly in content.

[13] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 203.

[14] Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, pp. 26-27.

[15] Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur."

[16] Kearney, "Paul Ricoeur,"p. 101 "The phenomenology of religion deciphers the religious object in rites, in myth, and in faith, but it does so on the basis of a problematic of the sacred which defines its theoretical structure. Psychoanalysis, by contrast, sees only that dimension of the symbol . . . which derives from repressed desires. Consequently, it considers only the network of meanings constituted in the unconscious, beginning with the initial repression and elaborated by subsequent secondary repressions" Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 14.

[17] Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 330.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[20] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 91.

[21] It is worth noting here the resonances of this theme with Touraine's analyses generally, and his extensive use of the term in *Return of the Actor*.

[22] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 71.

[23] Gadamer, Kleine Schriften, cited in Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 73.

[24] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 249.

[25] H. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. D. Linge, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, p. 108.

[26] *Ibid*., p. 495.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 496.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 404.

[29] *Ibid*., p. 340.

[30] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 146.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 111.

[32] And for Ricoeur, the subversive force of the imaginary is strongest in the power of fiction to redescribe the world, *ibid*., p. 93.

[33] The emphasis that Ricoeur places on the role of fiction in these moments of critique reflects the central role he accords to the productive imagination in the interpretive process. As Madison has noted, this is one means by which Ricoeur defends hermeneutics against Habermas' charge that it is in principle conservative. See G. Madison, "Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur," in ed. R. Kearney, *Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 290-347.

[34] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 92-3.

[35] Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography", p. 31.

[36] As Madison notes, Ricoeur prefers the term 'appropriation' to Gadamer's 'application' because it underscores the central (and active role) that the reader plays Madison, "Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Ricoeur," p. 324.

Chapter Five

The Subject as Actor

If Ricoeur's 'critical' rethinking of philosophical hermeneutics suggests that the tradition is more consonant with Touraine's concerns than he has been inclined to think, a later development in his philosophy took the perspective into even closer proximity with Touraine's social theory. In the nineteen seventies, Ricoeur's hermeneutics underwent a further significant development when he shifted its focus, in the words of a representative work, "from text to action."[1] His initial work on action focused on the methodological implications of the parallels he discovered between the structure of texts and the structure of action.[2] For us, however, the most important outcome of his interest in the theme of action is the impact it has had on the problematic on the subject. As we noted in the introduction, Ricoeur's interest in the subject of self-understanding has been one of the distinctive features of his philosophical hermeneutics, but during the long period in which he was preoccupied with the mediations which intervene between the self and her reflection, the 'question of the subject' was deferred. The importance he attached to these mediations took his philosophy in many

directions, and led to a series of extensive and illuminating analyses of myth, ideology, the unconscious and, above all, language. In the nineteen seventies, however, he came to see 'action' as the most comprehensive mediation of the self, and its interpretation as the primary route to self-understanding.[3] As a consequence, when, in nineteen ninety, he did re-pose the question of subject, the outcome was a philosophy of the 'acting' subject.

The hermeneutics of the acting subject Ricoeur undertook in *Oneself as Another* was an attempt to transcend what he insists is the "sterile opposition" between Descartes' positing of the thinking subject, and Nietzsche's "merciless" deconstruction of it; in this context, however, its main significance lies in its notable convergences with Touraine's thematisation of the subjectivity of the actor. As we have anticipated, there are some striking parallels in their analyses of the nexus between action and subjectivity. Ricoeur's ultimate objective, like Touraine's, is to recover a viable conception of human agency and social creativity, long obscured in dominant trends in philosophy as well as social thought, and he has, like Touraine, found the idea of action to be an useful conceptual basis for achieving it. Equally, however, he shares Touraine's conviction that dominant conceptions of action have proved to be inadequate to this task, and more particularly, that the idea of action must be stripped of the rationalist presuppositions which obscure the subjectivity of the actor.

These parallels will allow us to use Ricoeur's philosophy of the subject, and the hermeneutics of action on which it is based, to shed light on Touraine's potentially highly fertile but unevenly developed proto-hermeneutics. There are, we saw in chapter two, two areas in particular which remain incompletely elaborated in Touraine's new conceptual framework: his pivotal concept of the acting subject is one-sidedly articulated, and the process of working through its ramifications for his the conceptual infrastructure for the analysis of large-scale social configurations is in some crucial ways 'unfinished.' To explore the contribution Ricoeur's philosophy can make to these issues in Touraine's social theory, we will examine his analyses in *Oneself as Another* under the three headings we used to explore Touraine's argument in *Critique of Modernity*. In section one, we will find that Ricoeur's critique of the analytic philosophy of action throws new light on the logic of self-negation which has afflicted the idea of action. In section two, we will discover in his elucidation

of the acting subject themes which offer means for extending Touraine's highly suggestive, but one-sidedly elaborated conception. In our final section, we will find that Ricoeur's analyses of the network of socially constructed and culturally mediated practices that constitutes the context of human action offers insights which will shed light on both the underlying premises of Touraine's new conceptual infrastructure, and the sources of its expanded capacity to conceptualise human agency and social creativity.

1. Critique of Rationalism

Ricoeur's hermeneutics of action begins, we have noted, with a critique of the rationalist philosophy of action. The specific target of his critique is the second generation of analytic philosophy known as ordinary language philosophy or conceptual analysis. Influential especially in Anglo-Saxon philosophy after World War II, this philosophical tradition shares with the phenomenological and hermeneutical perspective an emphasis on the importance of language in the constitution of social life, and a trajectory that has seen the emergence of a sub-discipline concerned with the question of action. However, these two currents of philosophy are based on divergent premises on fundamental issues which generated rival interpretations of language and action.

The rivalry between their respective interpretations has been central to debates about action (as it was in debates about language),[4] and one of the key points of contention has concerned the nature of the knowledge about action we can achieve. In particular, hermeneutical thinkers, like Charles Taylor, have objected to analytic philosophy's reliance on a causal concept of explanation; they argue that human behaviour cannot be explained in terms of a Humean concept of causation which presupposes an atomistic view of the world where events are separable and independent of each other.[5] Ricoeur's critique of analytic philosophy's conception of action stands in this line of argument, but it is notable both for its detailed and nuanced analysis of the analytic position, and a more specific thesis that is of particular relevance to our concerns. Ricoeur shares with Taylor three main objections. The rationalist and objectivist presuppositions of analytical philosophy, they agree, reduce the meaning-oriented element of action to an orientation to reason, largely exclude

the social context and temporal dimension of action, and fail to grasp the 'evaluative' character of action. Ricoeur's analysis, however, also traces the role of these problems in the self-canceling logic that has affected the analytic theory of action over the course of its evolution.

The analytic perspective, Ricoeur demonstrates, starts with a distinction in principle between actions and events, and cause and motives but, under the influence of its rationalist presuppositions, culminates in an 'agentless theory of action' which reduces action to an impersonal event. Ricoeur's elaboration of this critique is inseparable from his phenomenological and hermeneutical premises. His two-fold critique suggests, first, that the *impersonal* conception of action that emerges from the analytic perspective is phenomenologically implausible, and second, that this phenomenological implausibility is the consequence of the failure to distinguish between two meanings of 'identity'. More concretely, his phenomenological analysis reveals that action is 'subjective' (or 'personal') in the sense that it is *essentially dependent* on its agent; and his hermeneutical analysis reveals that analytic philosophy obscures this connection because its objectivist and rationalist framework considers the identity of the agent of action exclusively within a discourse of *sameness*. This discourse neglects, Ricoeur argues, an essential component of the actor's identity, and he uses the Latin terms 'ipse' and 'idem' to distinguish it. Ipse-identity refers to the sense of *selfhood* which emphasises the sense of 'ownness' and 'mineness' that adheres to the idea of identity, while idem-identity refers to the meaning of identity that is reflected in the idea of sameness. It is, according to Ricoeur, to the extent that the discourse of analytic philosophy subordinates 'ipse'-identity to 'idem'-identity that it paves the way for a restricted notion of the actor and, as a consequence, a self-defeating conception of human action. And it is to the extent that a phenomenological and hermeneutical perspective can reveal the ipse-identity, or selfhood, of the actor that the manifest meaning of action can be grasped.

As we will see, Ricoeur deploys this critique against both the semantic and pragmatic branches of linguistic philosophy, arguing that even the pragmatic current of analytical philosophy, concerned with the theory of utterance and therefore more directly related to the problematic of action, ultimately obscures the subjectivity of the agent and reduces action to events in the world. We

will, therefore, look at his analysis of the presuppositions of each of the branches of the analytic philosophy of language, before tracing their ramifications in the sub-discipline of the theory of action which draws upon the analyses of language, but has developed along its own lines.

The critique Ricoeur makes of the semantic framework of 'identifying reference' is straightforward: the analysis of the person encountered through the operation of identifying reference systematically privileges idem-identity over ipse-identity because it is based on an objectivist framework of a single spatio-temporal schema. In the representative case of P.F. Strawson, the most important consequence of this premise is that it accords persons and bodies priority over mental events and consciousness. As Ricoeur sees it, the phenomenological inadequacy of this priority given to the objective perspective of idem-identity over the ipse-identity perspective is two-fold. On the one hand, when we consider the question of the lived body, phenomenological analysis elicits that one's body is not only an objective body, but also one's own, in a sense that assumes that the logical force of the self.[6] On the other hand, the experience of consciousness that *is* phenomenologically tied to the sense of selfhood, is intercepted from the very start in a framework based on a single, objective, spatio-temporal schema which includes selves. As Ricoeur puts it, this 'enslavement of the person in the realm of objective time and space' excludes any examination of selfhood as it is evoked by self-designation.

Ricoeur's critique of the pragmatic branch of the analytic philosophy of language is necessarily more complex, because this perspective does, at least on the surface, evoke the selfhood inherent in the self-designation of the speaker. John Searle's classic analysis of the 'illocutionary' force of statements revealed not only 'the implication of doing in saying', but also that it is neither statements nor even utterances that refer to something, or mean something, but speaking subjects.[7] But on Ricoeur's analysis, even in this branch of the analytic perspective, underlying rationalist and objectivist presuppositions ultimately operate to reduce the identity of the actor to sameness. In this case, the elimination of the subject of speech acts is connected with several conceptual strategies which have characterised the pragmatic perspective: the choice of *act*, and not *agent* for the key term in the theory of speech acts; the definition and detailed topology of the illocutionary element without any

explicit mention of the author of discourse; and the stripping of the transcendental conditions of communication which neglects the role of psychological support, and are then held to be regulations of language (langue) rather than of speech. As a consequence, Ricoeur argues, the reflexivity of speech acts is attributed ultimately not to the subject of utterance, but to the utterance itself—what is initially termed a speech *act* turns out to be a *fact*, that is an event that takes place in a common space and in public time.[8]

If the fundamental premises of both branches of analytical philosophy thus subordinate ipse-identity to idem-identity, this reductionism is, Ricoeur argues, exacerbated in the theories of action based on them. Ricoeur's main focus on this level is the semantic branch of the analytic theory of action. Based on identifying reference, and making no reference to the self-designation of the subject of discourse, its focus is the 'conceptual schema' of action—the open-ended network including notions such as circumstances, intentions, motives, deliberations, voluntary or involuntary motions, passiveness, constraints, intended and unintended results—which determines what 'counts' as an action. Its foundational claim is that these terms constitute a coherent language game which is distinct from the language game of 'events', and hence that action is of a different order to events. But as I noted above, Ricoeur argues that although it begins precisely by distinguishing the language game of action from the language game of events, the trajectory of the perspective has been one of self-negation. In particular, it has culminated precisely in the reduction of 'action' to 'event'; the semantics of action begins with the argument that action and motive, on the one hand, and cause and event on the other, belong to two separate universes of discourse, but its underlying presuppositions predispose it to eliminate the agent from its analyses (*despite* the fact that agent and action belong to the same conceptual schema) and, as a consequence, to see what 'counts' as an action as *events in the world*, and more generally as *something that occurs*.[9]

On this level, Ricoeur argues, underlying rationalist and objectivist premises encouraged, without entailing, conceptual choices which concealed ipse-identity. At each of the key stages in the evolution of the semantic theory of action, conceptual choices were made which could have been replaced, within the analytic framework, with concepts less hostile to the idea of selfhood. To identify the precise conceptual choices to which the analytical perspective's

rationalism and objectivism led, we will look briefly at the three key stages in the perspective's evolution that Ricoeur delineates.

As we have just noted, the first phase focussed on the establishment of the dichotomies of action and event, and motive and cause. Here, it was argued that there is a logical gulf between happening and making happen; events simply happen, while actions are what make things happen. At the same time, the analytic insistence that to say what an action is, is to say *why* it is done, opened up a gulf between motive and cause: to say why an action is done is to specify a motive as distinct from a cause. But this dichotomous theory of action is, according to Ricoeur, 'barely plausible' phenomenologically.[10] He cites the phenomenology of *wanting* to argue that, phenomenologically speaking, there is no absolute separation between motive and cause. Wanting is not a category exclusively related to the language game of acting and motives, but a mixed category, which combines meaning and physical energy. As such, it is both motive and cause, as can be illustrated by at least three classes of 'affective' actions: an incidental impulse (that is, a drive in psychoanalytical terms), a disposition, or the object of an emotion, can all be both a 'motive' and a 'cause' of action.[11] The analytic perspective can maintain the distinction despite these counter examples only because it interprets motive as a *reason-for* acting, and wanting as what one would like to do.[12] In the first case, although the analytic idea of reason-for acting does not imply that every motivation is rational, nor exclude desire in principle, the rationalist presuppositions which underlie it have led in practice to a marked tendency to take reason-for acting in the sense of a technological, strategic, or ideological rationalisation, and thereby to neglect the passivity of affect that is involved in the relation of wanting to acting. In the second case, the interpretation of wanting in the broad sense of what one would like to do, reserving the idea of desire for alimentary and sexual wants, eliminates from all other 'wants' the dimension of affect and force that is, as Ricoeur sees it, essential to all wanting. Ricoeur insists, then, that acting can never be reduced to the justification a purely rational agent would give of his or her action, because all actions contain an element of desire, and "even in the case of rational motivation, motives would not be motives if they were not also its causes."[13]

The second phase in the paradoxical trajectory of the semantic theory of action is to be found, according to Ricoeur, in the conceptual analysis of *intention*,

and in particular in G.E.M. Anscombe's pivotal work of that name.[14] As Ricoeur sees it, Anscombe's analysis of intention represents a new stage in the semantic theory of action because it erodes the clear-cut dichotomies of the preceding phase in that it reveals many cases in which reason-for-acting and cause tend to merge. But it keeps the rationalist and objectivist presuppositions of analytic philosophy intact, and therefore continues to conceal the agent of action. Ricoeur's critique is again phenomenological and hermeneutical; there are, he argues, three meanings of the term 'intention', and Anscombe, under the pressure of her objectivist framework (she prioritises what is accessible to public language), privileges the uses of intention that exemplify in the least explicit way the relation of intention to the agent. More specifically, she privileges 'having done or doing something intentionally', and 'acting with a certain intention', over 'intention-to' because the latter—the meaning of intention that is phenomenologically primary[15]—is a phenomenon which is accessible only to private intuition. Anscombe's preference for objectivism also leads to other conceptual choices which conceal the agent; she privileges not only the objective side of action, which is seen as an event, but also the objective side of reason-for-acting; she systematically considers the gerund form of 'wanting', but never considers the expression 'I want'; and she focuses on the objective side of desire, in the form of the 'reason by which something is desirable'.[16] And on a more general level, Anscombe subordinates the sense of intention-to because she is preoccupied with *description*, and with the truth claims appropriate to description. As Ricoeur sees it, this preoccupation prevents the question of assigning the action to an agent from arising, as the problem of assigning action to an agent is a matter of veracity rather than truth.[17]

The final phase in the self-negating trajectory of the semantic theory of action, according to Ricoeur, can be found in Donald Davidson's *Actions and Events*. It is here, he argues, that the progressive encroachment of event onto action reaches its culmination. In making explicit the ontology that was implicit in the earlier versions of the semantics of action, Davidson shatters the dichotomy of the two 'universes of discourse' by including action as a subset of event, and inscribing motives within a model of Humean causal explanation.[18] As Ricoeur sees it, this development in the semantics of action is related to the gravitational pull of the same presuppositions that affected the earlier analy-

ses; in particular, the privileging of the adverbial form of intention, and an emphasis on *reasons*-for acting continues to facilitate the concealment of the self. As we have already seen, by treating intention as an adverb modifying the action, it is possible to subordinate intention to the description of the action as a completed event, and by equating intention with reason-for doing, it is also possible to avoid the sphere of affective 'volitions'. The new point introduced by Davidson's analysis is his argument that in describing an action as having been done intentionally, one is explaining it by the reason the agent had to do what she did, and on the basis of this equation, he claims that explanation by reasons is a subset of causal explanation.[19] Davidson's analyses have the advantage, at the end of the trajectory of the semantics of action, of laying bare the key features of the analytic perspective's obliviousness to the ipse-identity of the agent of action. In his treatment of the *intention-to* as derivative, Davidson reveals the attenuation of the *temporal* dimension of both the actor and action, as it is the intention-to, with its strongly marked orientation to the future, which expresses the temporal dimension of anticipation which accompanies the agent's projecting of himself ahead of himself. In including teleological explanation by reasons within the sphere of causal explanation, he has made explicit the effacement of the agent of action at the expense of a relation between impersonal events. For if the explanation of action by reasons is a species of causal explanation, and if causality operates between particular events, then actions must indeed be events. And in placing action within an ontology of events, which sees events as entities as primitive as substances and possessing the same ontological dignity, he has made the person appear only as bearer of the event.[20]

However, if the rationalist and objectivist presuppositions of analytic philosophy play an important role in the concealment of the agent of action because they predispose its adherents towards the series of contingent conceptual strategies that we have just outlined, Ricoeur argues that this is not the only level on which they operate; they are also involved in more fundamental limitations of the analytic framework itself. While the choices we have considered could be revoked within the analytic framework, Ricoeur suggests that the framework itself is implicated in the inability to grasp and express the selfhood of the actor. Analytic philosophy, *including* the pragmatic branch, is incapable of grasping this essential feature, he argues, because it

sees the relationship of action to its agent within the framework of an apophantic logic of attribution which attempts to encompass the relation between action and its agent within a framework of *description*.[21] The analytic framework of description is unable to grasp the connection between action and its agent, Ricoeur insists, because ascribing action to an agent goes beyond the descriptive viewpoint in two ways. In the first place, ascribing action to an agent includes an element of *prescribing*; in ascribing action to an agent, we are holding the agent *responsible* for those actions. In the second place, the ascription of action to an agent implies the *dependence* of action on its agent; the assignation of the ethico-moral responsibility of an agent for her action presupposes a causal tie, for in order to be blamable or praiseworthy, an action must depend on the agent.

The last element of Ricoeur's critique that is relevant to our concerns is his argument that the deficiencies encountered within the analytic framework require a phenomenological-hermeneutical perspective to do full justice to them. There are both epistemological and ontological claims involved here; Ricoeur argues that while the elucidation of the ipseity of the actor could be approximated in an analytic epistemology which replaced the Humean causal explanation with a conception of teleological causality, ultimately it can only be fully grasped by a phenomenology of 'intention-to', and an ontology of 'being in the making'. As Ricoeur sees it, the epistemology consistent with the recognition of the selfhood of the actor is one which *superimposes* rather than juxtaposes the two language games of action and motive on the one hand, and event and cause on the other. The framework that would be most appropriate in this regard would be based on the recognition of these phenomena as mixed categories which straddle the two universes of discourse. From this perspective, causality is construed not in the Humean sense, in which there is a logical gap between cause and effect, but in the teleological sense, in which the cause is not heterogeneous in relation to its effect.[22] And in order for the idea of action to refer to the capacity of the agent to intervene in the course of the world, it must also be seen as a conjunction of the causality of freedom, and causality in accordance with the laws of nature; it must include both intentional and physical elements.

Ricoeur suggests that the quasi-causal model in G. Von Wright's *Explanation and Understanding*, which joins together teleological segments amenable to

practical reasoning and systemic segments amenable to causal explanation is the best representation of this conjunction in conventional epistemology. Ultimately, however, the epistemological framework itself—and in particular, the aspiration to certain 'knowledge' that is based on the premise of a subject characterised by immediacy and transparency—is insufficient to grasp the connection between action and its agent. Von Wrights' dualistic epistemology is ultimately inadequate, Ricoeur argues, because it is unable to grasp the essential point of the connection between action and its agent, because although the teleological and the systemic components are intertwined in this model, they remain distinct. To overcome this discontinuity, it is, as Ricoeur sees it, necessary to thematise the *capacity to act* which exists at the junction of acting and the agent, which can be grasped only through a phenomenology of our experience of the capacity to produce changes in the world of the kind initiated in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the "I can."[23] And such a phenomenology presupposes an ontology which reflects the mixed character of action; it is, according to Ricoeur, a regional ontology of the two-fold structure of the 'lived body', a body that is both an objective body and an aspect of the self,[24] and a general ontology of *becoming* which can support a phenomenology of the power to act.

The details of Ricoeur's critique of rationalism, then, are closely tied to the particularities of the analytic conception of action; the main obstacles in this perspective to an adequate concept of action, it suggests, are the reduction of the intentionality of the actor to reason-for-acting, the reduction of causality to a Humean nomological notion of causal explanation, and an ontology of events. The implications of the critique, however, are far-reaching; these premises are inadequate to the idea of action, Ricoeur argues, because they reduce the meaning-oriented element of action to giving reasons-for and rationalisations, because they largely exclude the social context and the temporal dimensions of action from the analysis, and because they fail to register the fact that actors are responsible for their actions. A more adequate conception of action, it follows, requires a broader conception of the cultural determinants, and the social, temporal and ethical dimensions of both the actor and action.

2. The Situated Subject

Ricoeur and Touraine converge, we have already noted many times, on the idea that in order to transcend the difficulties to which rationalist premises give rise it is necessary to thematise the subjectivity of the actor. There are, however, also notable parallels between their more specific analyses of the subject; both propose a conception of a self-creating and self-constituting subjectivity defined by the capacity for action, and both locate the capacity for subjectivity anthropologically in the intersection of life and thought in the individual human being, and see its realization as dependant on the mediation of the "other" on both interpersonal and institutional levels. As we saw in chapter two, however, there are a number of difficulties in Touraine's conceptualisation of the subject. The most significant problem we identified was his tendency to privilege relations of conflict at the expense of relations of communication, but his analyses of the temporality, linguisticality and ontological status of the subject were also, partly in consequence, underdeveloped. As we will see, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the acting subject can help to extend the analysis of each of these problematics: the ontologies of becoming and the lived body will shed light on the ontological status of the subject; his thematisation of the creativity of language will put Touraine's interpretation of the linguistic mediation in a new light; and his conception of narrative identity will illuminate the temporal dimension of the subject. These analyses will also shed light on the communicative dimensions of the subject, but as we will see, the most significant contribution in this regard will come from his elucidation of the dialogic and particularist character of the self.

Ontology: Embodiment and becoming

Touraine, we noted, identified the intersection of 'life' and 'thought' in the human being as the precondition of subjectivity,[25] but stops short of a discussion of the ontological status of the subject. As we have just seen, however, Ricoeur identifies the kinds of ontology presupposed by such an understanding of the subject, and a brief consideration of them will shed light on a number of points in Touraine's analyses. Ricoeur's reflections on the particular ontology of the 'lived body' lead to two observations pertinent to Touraine's conception of the subject. Firstly, his elucidation of the two-fold

structure of the lived body allows him to stress the embodiment of the subject, while avoiding any form of mind-body dualism. Analytic philosophy itself reveals that the person is the 'same thing' to which physical and mental attributes are ascribed, and Ricoeur insists that the person is not a consciousness with a body added in a secondary role. The lived body is *both* an objective body and an aspect of the self, and hence both an "objective person" and a "reflecting subject."[26] Secondly, the ontology of the lived body provides a ground for Touraine's insistence that the subject is not constituted by the rational control of emotions; it is the intersection of meaning and desire in the lived body means that *all* action involves desire and affect, and it is because the intentionality of acting as such has an essential element of desire that acting can never be reduced to the justification a purely rational agent would give of his or her action.[27]

The details of Ricoeur's ontology of becoming are not relevant here,[28] but one point in particular concerning its scope and direction sheds light on Touraine's analysis. As we have seen, both Touraine and Ricoeur conceive of the subject as a being who acts, and Ricoeur stresses that the mode of being characteristic of the subject is tied up with the power to act.[29] His hermeneutical approach, however, adds a further dimension to the issue by stressing the *polysemy* of the meaning of 'action.' As Ricoeur sees it, there are four distinct connotations of action—it means, as it does for Touraine, "intervention in the world," but also speaking, and ultimately narrating and assuming responsibility for one's actions.[30] The multi-dimensionality this insight introduces into the conception of the subject is particularly pertinent in this context, because it challenges Touraine's view of the hermeneutical self as over-integrated and over-harmonious, by stressing the internal multiplicity and fragmentary nature of the subject. More particularly, however, it challenges Touraine's attempt to *oppose* the idea of a subject which 'exists at the centre of the world of action' to the idea of a self constituted though exchanges within a linguistic community.[31] As we have seen, Touraine's main objection to the hermeneutical conception of the self is the idea that it is immersed in and partly constituted by participation in a linguistic community, because, as he sees it, such participation involves the internalisation of socially constructed forms of identity. Ricoeur's thematisation of speaking as *action*, however, throws new light on the problematic of linguistic mediation by reinforcing

the emphasis he has always placed on the *actualisation* of language. His analyses on this point reinforce and continue the hermeneutical emphasis on linguistic mediation; the significance of linguistic mediation is preserved in his insistence that intervening in the world and speaking are equi-primordial dimensions of action, and hence of subjectivity. At the same time, however, Ricoeur's new theme lends this problematic a new connotation, insofar as the agency involved in actualising language is stressed. As we will see, this latter dimension of his analysis is grounded in and given its force through his extensive studies exploring of the creativity and agency to which language, and the subject's deployment of it, give rise.

Language

Touraine, has little to say about language, primarily because he sees the notion of linguistic mediation as a threat to, rather than constitutive of, the subject. Ricoeur, in contrast, undertook extensive studies in language, the guiding thread of which was, precisely, the thematisation of the creativity associated with language. His conception of language is hermeneutical in the sense Touraine objects to, at least to the extent that he sees the subject's first relation to speech as that of receptivity—we hear before we speak. But as Ricoeur stresses, and Touraine neglects, the hermeneutical perspective has also accentuated the *intentionality* of the speaking subject. Ricoeur in particular, has stressed the actualization of language in the instance of discourse. This stress on the agency of the speaking subject came to the fore in his debates with structuralism; it is, among other considerations, opposed to the structuralist privileging of 'langue'. For Ricoeur, language in general is only the 'system of systems' which makes discourse possible; the self is not, as the structuralists have it, dissolved into the structures of language, because speaking is always an actualization of language that depends upon, and reflects, the agency of a speaker. Even the speech *act* theory of Austin and Searle shows that it is neither statements nor utterances that refer, but the 'I'.[32]

Even more importantly, Ricoeur has thematised multiple dimensions of creativity associated with the deployment of language. Perhaps the most fundamental source of linguistic creativity is the polysemy of meaning that 'condemns' us to not only interpretations, but the conflict of interpretations; indeed, it is because language is open to multiple interpretations that sub-

jects must make that Ricoeur can claim that speaking is acting. As we have seen, Ricoeur also insists that language is creative in the sense that it has the power to imaginatively redescribe and critique existing realities. Ricoeur has also analysed the creativity involved in particular linguistic structures. His studies in this area include a major work on metaphor, but the most important and consequential are his extensive analysis of the narrative. As we will see in the next section, it is the intermeshing of the structures of language and social practices which gives human action its ambiguity and creativity.

Before that, however, we need to consider his analysis of the narrative in the constitution of the subject.

Narrativity

Both Ricoeur and Touraine insist that the subject is not an atemporal or free-floating abstraction. As we saw in chapter two, however, Touraine struggled to adequately conceptualise the mode of persistence in time that characterises the subject. He insisted that it is neither a pre-determined 'nature', nor the direct internalisation of social and cultural values, but neither is it simply a random collection of 'events'. And he rejected the most plausible notion of 'identity' that is consonant with these premises, on the grounds that the idea of a narrative identity reintroduces the idea that there is a correspondence between actor and system, and the individual and history. As we will see, however, Ricoeur's articulation of the notion of narrative identity places Touraine's view in a new light, and illuminates the modes of temporality of the subject. It not only avoids the difficulties Touraine sees with the concept, but also brings to light dimensions of creativity and agency of the subject which are consonant with Touraine's overarching project.

Ricoeur's understanding of the temporality of the subject is an alternative to conceptions which posit either an immutable substance, or see only an incoherent series of events. Its specific contours, however, stand out against the background of his critique of the one-sided, atemporal, rationalist interpretations of the subject/actor. The existential mode of the subjects permanence in time, he argues against the analytic perspective, cannot be reduced to 'sameness'; it consists, rather, in a dualism of sameness and 'selfhood'. At one end of the spectrum, the identity of the subject is maintained over time

through the "set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized;" 'character' is made up of both habits, and of identifications with values, norms, ideals, models and heroes.[33] Character is the dimension of the subject's persistence through time which reveals 'sameness', but although it has a certain stability, it is not immutable. It has a basic openness in that habits and identifications are *acquired*, and moreover, the appearance of the unchanging is in fact the result of a process of *sedimentation* which covers over the innovation inherent in acquiring new habits. At the other end of the spectrum, the permanence in time of the subject exists *in spite of* change. The 'self-constancy' that exists in the phenomenon of *keeping one's word*, Ricoeur argues, constitutes a mode of permanence in time which encompasses change; standing by one's word, "however much one's desires, inclinations or opinions have changed" is a mode of permanence in time which cannot be reduced to sameness. What ties these existential modes of permanence together in a meaningful way, Ricoeur argues, is the subject's creation—as we shall see, part construction and part discovery—of a 'narrative identity'.

The starting point of Ricoeur's elaboration of this conception of narrative identity is a particular, and particularly productive feature of the narrative structure that his studies of language had uncovered; the narrative, he argues, is a structure of language which can reconcile identity with what in a framework of sameness would be its opposites: diversity, variability, discontinuity and instability.[34] This remarkable feature of the narrative arises from its capacity to reconcile singularity with heterogeneity; the narrative synthesises heterogeneous elements into a singular totality, because the plot provides a series of mediations between the "disparate components of the action—intentions, causes, and chance occurrences—and the sequence of the story," and between "pure succession and the unity of the temporal form." The 'identity' which results is a singular totality which is internally heterogeneous. The ordered transformation from an initial situation to a terminal situation that constitutes the identity of the plot, consists, as Ricoeur sees it, in a dialectic of "concordance" and "discordance," in which the principle of order that presides over the 'arrangement of the facts' ultimately prevails over the reversals of fate.[35]

The dynamism of the narrative form has important consequences for the idea of narrative identity of the subject, and Ricoeur elucidates them systematically.

His starting point in this regard is that the process of emplotment produces a parallel dialectic of concordance and discordance *internal* to the characters within the narrative. The identity of the character of a story also combines a multiplicity of events and actions through the narrative form into a "temporal totality which is itself singular and distinguished from all others," but which remains permanently threatened by unforeseen events. The narrative requirement that concordance prevail over discordance means that the character is identified through the history of his or her life, and in this history, chance is transmuted into fate.[36] There are some important consequences of this analysis for the idea of the narrative identity of the subject. Firstly, it means that the person is not distinct from his or her "experiences." More importantly, however, it stresses that a narrative identity is not fixed, but on the contrary, an intrinsically open-ended and internally heterogeneous form of identity. A narrative identity is open-ended, because it is always possible to incorporate new elements into an ongoing story, and to reinterpret past events, and self-understanding more generally, in their light. Perhaps most importantly, it emphasises the internally heterogeneity of a narrative identity, by stressing the presence of multiple and contradictory elements in what remains a singular identity.

If Ricoeur's analyses of the structure of a narrative identity reveal the multiplicity, internal heterogeneity and open-endedness that Touraine's misses, it is his analysis of the *process* of identity formation which has the most direct bearing on Touraine's resistance to the idea. One of Touraine's main concerns about the idea of narrative identity, we saw, stemmed from his suspicion that it involves little more than the internalisation of socially sanctioned identities. Ricoeur's analysis of the processes through which the subject constructs his or her narrative identity, however, reveals a more complex—and more agent-centred—picture. Far from involving a passive or direct internalisation of 'grand narratives' of a subject's cultural world, Ricoeur stresses that the creation of narrative identities is a process partly of discovery, but also partly of (self-)construction which involves an act of the productive imagination. As he sees it, a narrative self-understanding is enabled and conditioned by the narratives proposed to us by our culture. The construction of a narrative identity involves "instruction by cultural symbols;" we apply to ourselves the plots we have received from our culture, and "try on" the

different roles assumed by "our favourite characters of the stories most dear to us,"[37] but the values, norms, ideals, models and heroes with which we identify in this process are always open to innovation, and identifications involve an active and imaginative process of selecting from and transforming the range of culturally available models.

It is this role that Ricoeur accords to the subject in the creation of their narrative identity that is one of the most important elements of his analysis. The distinctiveness of his analysis of this point stands out against the background of Alasdair MacIntyre's otherwise similar account of the "narrative unity of a life" as a simple *enactment* of narratives.[38] Ricoeur, in contrast, has distinguished more systematically between the structures of action and the structures of the narrative, and discovered in the relation between them a number of complexities which have resulted in a more agent-centred operation of the narrative construction.[39] Ricoeur and MacIntyre both understand life in practical terms, and both argue that the stream of action that constitutes a life is narratively structured; Ricoeur, however, argues that the practical field is narratively *prefigured*, and that the narratives present in an inchoate form in practices are *refigured* by the actor/subject in the process of constructing a narrative identity.

Ricoeur first pursued the theme of narrative prefiguration and refiguration in *Time and Narrative*, where it was tied up with theory of a reading. In that context he stressed the activeness of the process of reading, and the tension involved between the "willing suspension of disbelief" and the meanings the reader brings to the intended and unintended lacunae of the text.[40] In *Oneself as Another*, the idea of narrative "configuration" is more closely tied to his philosophy of action. His main focus in this context is on the problem of re-establishing the links between action and narrative, raised by his insistence on the break between them. We will return to his analysis on this issue in the next section; here, the most important points concern the processes in which we borrow forms and figures from literature, and from fiction in particular, in the construction of a narrative identity. The self-interpretations through which we construct narrative identities, he argues, borrow from both history and fiction to organise and interpret life retrospectively. However, fiction plays both a crucial and a pre-eminent role. In the first place, the features

of the narrative form, which structure both genres and also our narrative identities, are most clearly evident in fiction. It is from fiction above all that we gain the ideas of narrative beginnings and endings that we use to help to stabilise the real beginnings formed by the initiatives we take and to make sense of the experience of what is meant by ending a course of action. The self-construction of a narrative identity, he argues, an act of the productive imagination which results in an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience, and the narrative identities we construct are "fictional histories" or a "historical fictions."[41] On the other hand, as the realm of the irreal, fiction also and crucially is 'an immense laboratory for thought experiments' in which innovations are created, and which has the subversive potential to think of the world—and the self—other than it is.[42]

If this analysis of narrative identity suggests a more dialectical relationship to prevailing socio-cultural horizons than Touraine's conception implies, it has also pointed to a central social experience in which we can see the *constitutive* role of communicative relations in the construction of the acting subject. The process of creating a narrative identity—which is, he insists, central to the self-creation of the subject—draws on socially and culturally constituted resources, without being determined by them. As we noted earlier, however, Ricoeur takes up the analysis of the communicative sources of subjectivity explicitly in his analysis of the dialogic relation proper.

Dialogicity

If Ricoeur's account of narrative identity gives an indication of how due recognition of the role of communicative relations in the construction of the subject can be incorporated without succumbing to a deterministic conception of the subject of the kind that Touraine so assiduously attempts to avoid, his analyses of the dialogic relation proper, and of the dialectic of universalism and particularism characteristic of the subject, addresses the issue directly.[43]

Ricoeur and Touraine both argue that the relation with 'the other' is essential to the realization of the subject, and for both there are interpersonal and political dimensions to the issue. More particularly, both argue that friendship and love in the interpersonal sphere, and a democratic polity in the institutional

sphere, are essential to the full development of subjectivity. However, as we have seen, Touraine's central thesis—that the actor/subject constructs herself through *resistance* to social power—predisposed him to an emphasis on the conflictual dimension of the social relation *at the expense of* communicative elements. This tendency was apparent, for instance, when he stressed the role the relation with the other plays in the subject's capacity for *distanciation* from social norms, and it was reflected in his reluctance to explore the communicative dimensions of the institutional and political pre-conditions for the production of the subject. Most significantly it was visible in the very structure of his subject; for Touraine, the role of the dialogic relation to the construction of the subject appeared to be *added on* to the more fundamental processes of self-constitution that occur through resistance to social norms.

In contrast, Ricoeur manages to make the communicative dimension of the social relation an essential precondition of the realisation of the self, without positing a deterministic relationship between the subject and her or his interpersonal and institutional contexts. On the interpersonal level, his analysis of the dialogic relation is more extensive, and more nuanced, than Touraine's, and more attuned to communication. An indication of the differences between them can be seen in the relative importance they each accord to the experiences of love, and friendship. As we have noted, Touraine privileges the relationship of love, above all because it can transport the subject out of the sphere of social norms; Ricoeur, in contrast, makes friendship the focal point, and argues that it is through the recognition that we need friends that we recognise that the self is "another amongst others."[44] Moreover, for Ricoeur, friendship occupies a central place as the midpoint of a more general conception of the dialogic relation as *solicitude*. Solicitude is based upon the exchange between giving and receiving, and covers a spectrum that extends from the 'summons to responsibility', where the initiative comes from the other, to 'sympathy for the suffering other', where the initiative comes from the loving self. Friendship is the midpoint, because it presupposes equality between persons and reciprocity between giving and receiving. As such it highlights the *mutuality* that is for Ricoeur the most important aspect of solicitude.

Moreover, for Ricoeur, the dialogic relationship is not something 'added on' to subjectivity, as it appears to be in Touraine's account. The experience of the reciprocity and mutuality of friendship, of sharing and living together, is

a fundamental and multi-faceted element of the constitution of the self. On the level of interlocution, the *reversibility* of the roles of speaker and listener gives rise to the presumption of their equal capacity for self-designation; on the level of praxis, experiencing the loss of the loved other reveals one's own *nonsubstitutability*; and on the ethical plane, the exchange between esteem for oneself and solicitude for others reveals the *similitude* of self and other.[45] Perhaps the most telling indicator of the different sensitivities of the two accounts of the interpersonal dialogic relationship is in their attitudes to Levinas. As we saw earlier on, for Touraine, Levinas' conception of radical otherness is attractive because he is a "philosopher of liberation rather than of relationships."[46] For Ricoeur, however, Levinas' philosophy articulates only one end of the spectrum of solicitude.[47]

The full benefit of Ricoeur's more consistently hermeneutical approach becomes evident on the institutional/political level of analysis, where a distinctive dialectic of communication *and* conflict emerges. We will save discussion of this issue until our final chapter, where we will explore it at length. We will see, then, that Ricoeur and Touraine share the view that the realisation of a fully developed subject depends upon the mediation of 'the other' not only on the interpersonal level, but also on a more extended basis in 'institutions,'[48] including most importantly political institutions. Most significantly, they converge on the argument that a democratic polity is the ultimate pre-condition for the realisation of the subject. However, we will also see that while Ricoeur and Touraine share the view that democracy is the political system which institutionalises conflict, Ricoeur's thematisation of the communicative social bond which always underlies it highlights the paradoxes of democracy.

Universalism and particularism

Ricoeur's more systematic emphasis on the communicative dimensions of the constitution of the subject and the social relations in which s/he is inserted also sheds light on Touraine's analysis of the *particularist* sources of subjectivity. For both Ricoeur and Touraine, the acting subject is a combination of universalistic and particularistic components, and for both, the reconciliation of these two principles within the subject depends upon their reconciliation on the cultural and political levels. On each level, however, Touraine's reluctance to fully thematise the positive and constitutive roles of communicative

relations in the construction of the acting subject led to a one-sided focus on the dangers associated with degenerate forms of particularism.

We have already identified the main source of the one-sidedness of Touraine's conceptualisation of the interaction of universalist and particularist components within the subject; for him, the universalist 'project' of freedom of the subject is primary, and it was never really integrated with the 'particularist' component of 'memory' or cultural identity were, leaving the impression that the two principles are more or less separate aspects of the subject. Against this background, Touraine emphasised the vulnerability of the communicative spheres of culture and tradition to degenerations which threaten subjectivity, and give little consideration to their generative power; as we have seen, the subject's capacity for autonomy emerged overwhelmingly from *resistance* to social and cultural contexts which are involved in cultural identity.

In contrast, for Ricoeur, the tension between universalism and particularism is integral to the self, and the two components are more integrated. The key point in this regard is his conception of the subject's ethical project as a striving towards a universalist outlook, which is always undertaken from a particular situation. The *generative* power of particularist—and communicative—cultural orientations is evident in his argument that it is the historicisation of the self through the narration her life story—shaped but not determined by collective history and culture—that is constitutive of the self-production of the subject as an autonomous moral being, and who is able to put these particularisms into question by submitting them to the 'test' of universalism.[49]

On the political/institutional level, Ricoeur and Touraine agree that a productive tension between the principles of universalism and particularism is essential for the subject to flourish, and both see the need to transcend the 'sterile opposition' between universalism and cultural relativism as essential to a more productive tension. Both therefore insist on the legitimate claims associated with particular origins, but share the view that the accommodation of the claims of contextualism must be made without succumbing, as Ricoeur puts it, to the "apology of difference for the sake of difference, which, finally, makes all differences indifferent, to the extent that it makes all discussion useless,"[50] or as Touraine puts it, to "absolute differentalism" and

"multiculturalism without limits." Both by the same token see an important but limited role for universalist principles.

Touraine's analysis on this level, however, suffers from the same imbalance that affected his treatment of the universal and particularist components of the subject. The contextual factors shaping his line of argument are clear; he is concerned above all with the increasing polarization of universalist and particularist modes of action, and the increasingly unproductive and dangerous opposition between the principles of universalism and particularism, that characterises the contemporary historical conjuncture. But the outcome is an analysis in which particularist cultural identities and traditions are considered overwhelmingly in negative terms, as socio-political obstacles to the emergence of the subject and the reconciliation of rationalization and subjectivation.

Ricoeur's less hostile view of the communicative dimensions of social life is an important factor in his more balanced analysis of the tension between universalism and particularism, but he also brings three more specific insights to bear on his search for a more productive way of integrating their partly conflicting claims. The first is that the tension between universalism and particularism in human life and action is itself universal; the tension between these principles, he points out, is an irresolvable and unavoidable characteristic of all human action. The second is an insight that emerges when the conflictual dimensions of social life are taken into account; the irreducibly 'agonistic' nature of human experience, he argues, is such that universal principles themselves are irreducibly multiple and conflictual. The Greek tragedies—Sophocles' *Antigone* in particular—teach us not only that all human experience is characterised by 'interminable confrontations between man and woman, old age and youth, society and the individual, the living and the dead, humans and gods,' but also that against this complexity of life, all moral principles claiming universality are one-sided, and come into conflict with each other.[51] The third is that universalist principles are inseparable from their particular localizations, and are always applied in particular historical and cultural situations.[52]

The conclusions Ricoeur draws from these observations are necessarily in tension; on the one hand, he accepts that the 'test' of universalism is a moral

imperative which must be given its place; on the other hand, he insists that the multiplicity, contradictions and localizations of universalist principles must be taken into account. And to accommodate these divergent claims, he sets out to articulate a 'third way' between the universalist, deontological and the contextualist, teleological approaches to the ethico-moral realm, through the idea of 'moral judgement in situation' guided by the Aristotelian notion of practical wisdom.

The principle he proposes in this regard is a *dialectic of argumentation and conviction*, and like Habermas' discourse ethics on which it draws, Ricoeur's concern is to elaborate a principle which is applicable on the individual, interpersonal and institutional levels. He concurs with Habermas' defence of argumentation as the most appropriate means to 'settle conflicts of action by consensual means' but it seeks to situate Habermas' universalist ethics of argumentation within a framework which takes into account the irreducibility of the particularist situations from which and in which all argumentation takes place. More particularly, he argues that Habermas' universalist discourse ethics is only partially valid; it is adequate to the justification of moral maxims, on which Habermas concentrates, but it is not adequate to deal with the conflicts which arise in the course of their realisation in concrete historical and cultural situations. Habermas' exclusive focus on the problem of justifying the principle of universalisation, Ricoeur argues, not only neglects, but obscures the conflicts that are inevitably encountered in the actualisation of practical discourse in specific historical conditions, and this failure to take into account the particular contexts of the realisation of moral norms means that the ethics of communication loses its hold on reality.[53]

As Ricoeur sees it, the rectification of Habermas' one-sidedness requires a more adequate recognition of the claims of particularist orientations, which in turn requires a thoroughgoing reform to Habermas' framework. The recognition of the specific historical conditions of the actualisation of universal norms is not only neglected, but precluded, by Habermas' ethics of argumentation, because it systematically *opposes* argumentation to the influence of historical and communitarian evaluations (or in Habermas' terminology, *convention*). For Habermas, these evaluations are what is to be surpassed by argumentation. And behind the opposition Habermas constructs between argumentation and convention, Ricoeur argues, is Habermas' interpretation

of modernity as the break with tradition; for Habermas, traditions are by definition subservient to the principle of authority. Ricoeur's argument is that once this conception of modernity is rejected, it is possible to pose a new relationship between argumentation and the historical and cultural evaluations that Habermas seeks to root out. If modernity is seen to be co-determined by traditions, the antagonism between argumentation and convention must be replaced by a *dialectic of argumentation and conviction*. From this vantage point, historical and cultural orientations are not relics of heteronomous tutelage, or unexamined conventions, but the expression of the necessarily particular situations which are the only place from which the search for universal agreement can take place. And argumentation becomes not the antagonist of tradition and convention, but a critical agency which can take them to the level of 'considered convictions'.

If Ricoeur's elucidation of the subject has shed light on Touraine's new central concept, the hermeneutics of action from which it emerges is highly pertinent to the broader innovations Touraine's new concept has wrought on his conceptual framework for the analysis of large-scale social configurations. Touraine's thematisation of the subject, we saw in chapter two, has led to a significant but incomplete reorientation of his conceptual framework, which has opened up, but not fully exploited, new possibilities for conceptualising human agency and social creativity. I have argued throughout these pages that his proto-hermeneutical premises have played a key role in extending his interpretive reach in this regard, and that his tendency to retreat from them has been a factor at the points at which his expanded theoretical power has reached its limits. In this section, we will attempt to pave the way for a more thoroughgoing hermeneutical turn in his work, by pinpointing more precisely the elements of the hermeneutical perspective which have proved to be so productive in relation to his main themes. For this purpose, Ricoeur's fully-fledged hermeneutics of action will be the most useful reference point, and to bring out the specificities of his hermeneutical understanding of human agency and social creativity, we will consider it against the background of Hans Joas' rival, pragmatist-inspired interpretation of "the creativity of action."[54]

Before we embark on this line of analysis, however, we need to consider one further element of Ricoeur's analysis. For Ricoeur, as for Touraine, the question of human agency acquires its significance against the background of the social

contexts which enable, but also constrain it, and a closer look at these contexts is crucial to our analysis. We have already examined a number of Ricoeur's analyses with a bearing on the issue, but what remains to be considered in more detail is his conceptualisation of the field of praxis which, in his philosophy of action, constitutes the social contexts in which subject act. His analyses in this regard will also shed light on some of the underlying issues we have identified in relation to Touraine's 'unfinished' problematic of institutional contexts. There is a direct connection between the two on this issue around the hermeneutical principle that the unintended consequences of action must be made intelligible in relations to the actions of real actors. Ricoeur's reflection on this issue starts from the premise that the actions of human agents sediment in social practices and ultimately in socio-cultural institutions which have a logic outside of individual intentions—as he puts it, "our deeds escape us and have effects which we did not intend"[55]—and as we will see, his clarification of the interrelations between culture, action and its institutionalisations that it entails lends itself to a conceptual reflection on underlying premises that is the necessary starting point for any further development of Touraine's problematic.

Among the most important contributions Ricoeur's reflections have to offer such a project is a systematic conceptual response to the rationalist perspective on action. Ricoeur's analysis, like Touraine's, is directed against the rationalist conceptions of action which empty out the meaning of agency, but where Touraine's main critical focus is on the cultural orientations which underlie explicit conceptual constructions, Ricoeur provides a 'from the ground up' alternative conceptualisation.[56] In what follows, we will follow in Ricoeur's footsteps, tracing the points at which his analysis breaks with the rationalist paradigm on this fundamental level.

Horizons of meaning

The most important shortcomings of the rationalist perspective from the hermeneutical point of view have been well summed up by Taylor. The individualistic and objectivist bias of rationalist approaches, he argues misrepresent the nature of action and therefore fail to grasp the most important aspects of social life and relations they seek to explain.[57] Human action

"cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions," both because it is essentially dialogically structured, and because it embodies shared meanings. And because the meanings and norms which shape action are "not just in the minds of the actors," but are "out there in the practices themselves,"[58] the pursuit of putatively brute actions is fundamentally misconceived. From the hermeneutical point of view, Taylor points, the proper object of the social sciences are the shared meanings and dialogically structured actions in which individuals are immersed (and which give rise to socio-cultural institutions and ultimately to social orders) and for this purpose it is necessary to begin with a conception of human action as socially constructed, dialogically structured and culturally mediated "practices." Ricoeur's interpretation of the hermeneutical conception of the field of praxis Taylor has outlined stresses, as Taylor does, the essential sociality and meaning-oriented character of practices which distinguish the hermeneutical concept from the rationalist conception of action. As we will see, however, his distinctive themes take it in directions highly pertinent to Touraine's concerns. Most importantly in this context, he thematises the permanent presence of relations of power, and the sources of creativity involved in the linguistic mediation of action. To appreciate his elucidation of these themes, we need to begin with his account of the complexity involved in practices.

Ricoeur objects to the analytic perspective's view that the complexity of the practical field can in principle be dealt with by extending the conception of a linear relation between means and ends to longer and longer "action-chains." To the extent that complex actions are taken into account at all, he argues, the analytic perspective conceives of the practical field simply as linear chains of means and ends, at each point of which the agent is capable of considering the effects of causation for the circumstances of decision making, while the intended or unintended results of intentional actions become new states of affairs entailing new causal series.[59] Ricoeur insists, in contrast, that the practical field is constituted not only by this linear intermingling of intentionality and systemic connection, but also by non-linear "nesting" relations of means and ends. The example he gives is the practice of farming; the work of a farmer includes subordinate actions, such as ploughing, planting, and harvesting which are in turn comprised of their own subordinate actions which ultimately reach basic actions such as pulling or pushing. This point

will be important later, because the subordination of partial actions to a global action gives a practice a "unity of configuration" which sets one apart from another in a way which is connected to the mediation of practices by meaning, and hence obscured in the objectivist idea of a linear "action-chain."

More centrally to our concerns, Ricoeur uses the concept of a practice to highlight the essentially interactive and social character of action. His analysis of this aspect of practices has much in common with Taylor's, but he stresses modes of action which are not dialogic in the narrow sense often cited by Taylor, but modes of what we could call "distanciated' or mediated interaction. His analysis in this regard takes off from Weber's contention that social action is action that takes account of the behaviour of others, but his most distinctive line of argument is a development of Weber's related suggestion that taking account of the behaviour of others "may be either overt or purely inward or subjective." The distinction he makes on its basis between "external" and "internal" ways of taking account of the conduct of other agents allows him to stress, in addition to the dialogically-structured actions Taylor often stresses, the sociality of apparently solitary action. His point is that "one can play alone, garden alone, do research alone in a laboratory, in the library or in one's office," but it is always "from someone else that the practice of a skill, a profession, a game, or an art is learned."[60] The paradigmatic case of "internalised interaction" in the relation of learning highlights two further points. Firstly, although the relation to the other in the context of learning may be another person in the figure of the teacher, learning can also be a more "distanciated" process mediated by texts. Equally, as Ricoeur stresses, the idea of learning points to the openness of practices to innovations; learning is an "apprenticeship" based on tradition, but traditions can, after they have been assumed, be violated.

The feature of Ricoeur's conception of the sociality of the practical field which is most central to Touraine's concerns, however, is his thematisation of *power*. One of Touraine's main objections to the hermeneutical perspective, we noted in the introduction, is the over-harmonious conception of social relations he considers it to entail. We noted at the same time, however, that one of Ricoeur's reasons for shifting the locus of his hermeneutics to the realm of action was the opportunities it brought for thematising conflict as well as cooperation within the problematic of intersubjectivity. The outcome in *Oneself as Another*

is an analysis which systematically incorporates a thematisation of conflict and power into the hermeneutical perspective. It is evident, for example, in his analysis of the "external" ways of taking account of the conduct of others, when he stresses that interaction includes not only relations of co-operation, but also of competition and conflict. It is also evident in the weight he accords within his analysis of the sociality of practices to the phenomenon of *being acted upon*. Every action, he insists, has not only an agent, but also a "patient." In this regard, Weber's insight that social action "may consist of positive intervention in a situation, or of deliberately refraining from such intervention or passively acquiescing in the situation"[61] is his point of reference, but Ricoeur elaborates this insight into a more forceful recognition of negative modes of interaction. As he sees it, the negative mode of action has two sides: *omission*, when neglecting or forgetting to do something can be letting things be done by someone else; and *submission*, when keeping oneself, willingly or not, under the power of the other's action. It is the latter which constitutes *suffering*, and it brings to the fore the double-sidedness of the phenomenon of power. Ricoeur defines power in the first instance positively as the power-to-act, but his philosophy of action recognises at this fundamental level its negative side in the phenomenon of "power-over" others. On the individual level, the other side of the power-to-act is subordination to the power of someone else; power-over someone else exists in different forms, and in different degrees, but it culminates in *violence*, defined as the destruction of a subject's capacity to act. As we will see in more detail in the next chapter, on the institutional/political level, he stresses that the non-hierarchical "power-in-common" which founds a historical community is ineluctably traversed by the "power-over" of domination.

The second central theme in the hermeneutical conception of practices, we noted earlier, is that the sociality of practices is inextricably tied up with the shared meanings which are embodied in, and partly constitute, them. Ricoeur's argument against the analytic perspective on this point begins with the notion of "constitutive" rules. They challenge the very idea of a "brute action" and foreground the fundamental and inescapable ways in which the practical field is mediated by meaning, because they are what give *behaviour* the meaning that makes it an *action* – by ruling for example, that a particular hand gesture "counts as" waving hello, voting, or hailing a taxi.[62] He stresses that

constitutive rules are involved in defining the "unity of configuration" we referred to earlier, which sets one practice apart from another. More importantly, however, he emphasises the sociality of the "constitutive" rules; they exist only as long as they are socially maintained, and always "come from much further back than from any solitary performer."[63]

For Ricoeur, however, constitutive rules are only the first level on which patterns of meaning mediate action.[64] One of the most distinctive themes of his hermeneutics of action is the idea that the practical field is also structured in profound, complex and significant ways by the linguistic structure of the narrative. On this point, his analysis is closest to that MacIntyre, but as we noted earlier, where MacIntyre relies on an undifferentiated notion of practices as "enacted stories," Ricoeur distinguishes between the narrative "prefiguration" of the practical field, and the retrospective "refiguration" of the stream of actions into explicit narrative conceptions of a life. For us, the main significance of the idea of refiguration is tied up with the role it plays in social creativity which will be the focus of our analysis in the next section. To appreciate it, however, we need to consider here Ricoeur's understanding of the nature and scope of the narrative pre-figuration of action.[65]

The idea of narrative prefiguration concerns the meanings that are "in the practices themselves," and Ricoeur's analysis in this regard takes off from Aristotle's suggestion that "action" is a connection of incidents and facts of a sort susceptible to conforming to narrative configuration. His key point is that practices do not contain readymade narrative scenarios but, rather, that they consist in components which are *susceptible* to a narrative reading. He agrees with Louis O. Mink, therefore, that "life is lived and stories are told,"[66] but he insists nonetheless that the "narrative is part of life before being exiled from life in writing," and it is this primordial connection between human experience and the narrative which allows him to argue that while narrativity is not fully developed in practices, neither is it simply imposed on them.[67] There are, he suggest, three existential situations which reveal the susceptibility of action to narrative configuration: the everyday experience in which we spontaneously see in the series of events that constitute our lives a story waiting to be told; the psychoanalytic experience, where we create narratives to make sense of, and make bearable, lived stories, dreams and primal scenes and conflicts; and, finally, the situation in law, in which the judge who attempts

to understand a defendant by unravelling the skein of plots in which they are entangled. The idea of narrative prefiguration, then, adds to the idea of action mediated by meaning contents, the idea of pre-structuring of action by a linguistic form which makes it amenable to retrospective interpretation through culturally embodied forms and contents. To look more closely at the role it plays in his understanding of social creativity, we will turn to our comparison of Ricoeur's analysis with a rival project to theorise the "creativity of action."

The creativity of action

Hans Joas' *The Creativity of Action* has much in common with the projects of conceptual critique and renewal in which Touraine and Ricoeur are engaged; its aim is to establish stronger conceptual foundations for sociological action theories of the kind Touraine has been involved in, and it begins from the premise that the search for such foundations must start with a critique of the implicit assumptions about the actor which underlie the widely influential paradigm of rational action.[68] However, where Ricoeur explicitly, and Touraine implicitly, draws on hermeneutical themes, for Joas, it is American pragmatism which offers the most fertile perspectival resources for the rethinking of the idea of action. There is significant common ground between the two traditions; they are, it has often been noted, respectively the Anglo-American and continental versions of a common 'practic-interpretive turn' in social thought, sharing both a critique of 'angelic' conceptions of the self-founding and autonomous 'thinking' subject, and a focus on the immersion of the subject in interpretive frameworks, and networks of social practices.[69] There are, nonetheless, not insignificant differences in their interpretations of situated subjectivity and action, and this contrast will help us to throw the specificities of the hermeneutical approach into relief. To bring these differences into focus, we will take as our point of reference the three tacit assumptions of the rationalist conception of the actor that Joas has identified as pivotal in its failure to register the contextuality of the actor-subject.

As Joas sees it, the most problematic assumptions underlying the concept of rational action are that the actor is capable of goal-directed conduct, in control of his or her body, and autonomous with regard to other actors as well as the environment which present an obstacle to an adequate conceptualisation

of the creativity of action.[70] They are misleading, he argues, because they obscure the "interplay of the choice of means and clarification of ends" which is conditioned by a broader social context that is involved in the "intentionality" of the actor; the non-instrumental dimension to embodiment; and the "primary sociality" that lies behind the autonomy of the acting individual.

More particularly for Joas, it is a recognition of the "self-reflexive regulation of our ongoing conduct" inspired by Dewey which best grasps the interplay of means and ends involved in the intentionality of action, and a stress on the intersubjective constitution of both the subjective and objective pre-conditions for action inspired by G.H. Mead which best brings to light the primary sociality of the actor. His argument that a non-instrumental conception of the body is best achieved by stressing the "pre-reflexive intentionality" that prefigures more explicit levels of intelligence and creativity is less closely tied to pragmatist sources, and also draws on phenomenological and hermeneutical themes.

We have already encountered some of the hermeneutical themes that Ricoeur raises in his engagement with the issues Joas has put at the centre of his critique; as we have seen, he departs from instrumental conceptions of the body by stressing its importance as the site of the intersection between desire and meaning, and he thematises the primary sociality of the actor through his analyses of the narratively structured and meaning-saturated interpersonal and institutional frameworks which are essential to the realisation of the capacity to act. The specific issue of the interplay between the choice of means and the clarification of ends involved in the intentionality of acting has also figured in his analysis, and his response to it has been to incorporate a hermeneutically interpreted the Aristotlean conception of *deliberation* and practical wisdom, but his account of the issues concerning the situatedness of intentional action a social context more generally involves most significantly, his notion of narrative refiguration. As the differences between them in relation to the problematic of the body are less pronounced, and centre not on their understandings of "corporeality" as such, but on its role in the primary sociality of the actor and, more particularly, the analysis of the "situatedness" of intentionality, we will not consider it separately, and as the difference between them on the question of situated intentionality of action is most revealing, it will be our main focus.

At first glance, the main difference in this regard appears to be that between a non-teleological and teleological conception of the actor's intentionality; Joas describes his analysis of the intentionality of the actor as "non-teleological" to differentiate his understanding from the rationalist conception, while Ricoeur adopts an Aristotelian-inspired, explicitly teleological framework for the same purpose. Their respective analyses of the interplay of the actors determinations of ends and means, however, are much closer than these differences in terminology suggest; both argue that the relation between means and ends is more complex than the rationalists allow, and for both, the crucial point is that the intentionality of the actor must be understood as situated in broader social contexts.[71] The crucial differences, we will see, lie in their more specific understandings of intentionality and its contexts.

Joas describes his analysis of the intentionality of the actor as "non-teleological" because he wants to stress—against the rationalist conception of clearly defined goals and clear cut means to them—the reciprocal relation between an action's end and the means involved in achieving it. The goals of action, he reminds us, are usually relatively undefined, and often only become more specific as a consequence of the decision to use particular means. It is, moreover, only when we recognise that certain means are available that some goals which had not occurred to us before emerge. Nor, he insists, is goal-setting something that takes place by an act of intellect prior to the action; it is, rather, the outcome of reflection on aspirations and tendencies that are "pre-reflective" in the sense that they have "always already" been operative, and are normally at work without our being actively aware of them. Finally, and most importantly in this context, he insists that our perception of a situation in which action occurs already incorporates a judgment of the kinds of action which are an appropriate response; the reflective process that constitutes the intentionality of action takes place within a "situation" that has already been partly defined,[72] and "calls for" certain kinds of action.[73] As Joas notes, the idea of the situational context of action has not disposed of the need for a conception of ends because, as he puts it, "if the situation alone were regarded as constitutive of action, then the idea of intentionality would lose all meaning."[74] The real issue, he acknowledges, is that of the link between the situational orientation and goal-orientation; it is, he concludes, "[o]ur reflective response to the challenge presented to us by the situation [that] decides which action is taken."[75]

On this crucial issue, Joas' arguments revolve around the capacities and dispositions of the actor. He describes the situational context of action primarily in terms of dispositions towards goals,[76] unthematised aspirations,[77] and judgments about the appropriateness of a course of action which rely heavily on habits. This emphasis on the capacities of the individual actor culminates in a particular emphasis on the *corporeality* of the situation of action; the dispositions and unthematised aspirations which condition action, he argues, are located in the *body* of the human being; "our vague dispositions towards goals . . . are located in the personal body of the human being,"[78] and it is "the body's capabilities, habits and ways of relating to the environment which form the background to all conscious goal-setting;"[79] corporeality, he declares, is the constitutive precondition for creativity in action.[80] Joas' understanding of intentionality is similarly focused on the capacities of the actor; intentionality should be understood, he suggests, as the self-reflective control which we exercise over our current behaviour.

For Ricoeur, too, the rationalists' reductive conception of the relation of means to ends does not exhaust the meaning of the intention with which one acts, but as we have noted, he deploys an explicitly teleological mode of argument to stress that action remains related to ends in more complex ways.[81] His hermeneutical teleology brings to the fore a number of aspects of the relation between means and ends that are obscured in Joas' analysis. The first is the *polysemy,* and hence *multiplicity,* of the ends towards which a given action is directed; the relation between ends and means is complex, he insists, not only because there is, as Joas stresses, a *reciprocal* relation between ends and means, but also because the ends of action open to a conflict of interpretations. A second insight stems from Ricoeur's hermeneutical adaptation of the Arisotelian idea of deliberation to elucidate the interplay between the choice of means and the clarification of the ends of action. As Aristotle tells us, our evaluations of ends and means are not purely rational because they involve an element of *desire*; "when we have decided as a result of deliberation, we desire in accordance with our deliberation."[82] Finally, he stresses the *practical* character of deliberation; deliberation, he argues, is not a matter of following universal rules—such as those of rational calculation—but, taking up Gadamer's interpretation of practical wisdom, a process which involves

the active role of the particular person, and a consideration of the situation which is in each case singular.[83]

The most important point of contrast, however, concerns Ricoeur's broader analysis of the "situation" in which the intentionality of the actor is immersed. Like Joas, the weight of his analyses revolves around the idea that individual actions take place within a practical field which enables, but also sets the parameters, of action, and for him too, practical situations "call for" certain kinds of action. Ricoeur's interpretation of the situated intentionality of the actor, however, is more complex, and is tied up with the creative potential that linguistic and cultural mediation of the practical field.

The first way in which he conceives of the "situation" of action calling for certain kinds of action is through the constitutive rules which define practices, and generate stands of excellence which constitute what MacIntrye has referred to as internal goods, immanent to a practice. However, Ricoeur insists, it is important to note that although the ideals of perfection shared by a given community of practitioners are based on a common culture and a lasting agreement on criteria defining degrees of excellence, this commonality provokes rather than prevents controversy which generates a dynamic of innovation and gives standards of excellence their own history.

The second, and more distinctive, way in which he sees the situation calling for a particular range of responses is through the idea of the narrative prefiguration of the practical field; the susceptibility to narrative prefiguration which characterises practices calls for responses that are narratively structured, and as we will see, draw upon culturally embodied narrative forms and figures. The "intentionality" that is involved in this sense is culturally mediated in complex ways, and at the same time creative. Ricoeur's analysis in this regard starts from the observation that for the actor, the stream of action which constitutes the "fabric" of their life does not appear simply as a collection of practices; the multiple practices in which they act intentionally are, rather, integrated retrospectively by the actor into two higher order units of praxis. "Life-plans" are intermediary levels of action-configurations; they are global in that they apply to the person as a whole, and exist on the scale of a whole life, but are partial in that one may have multiple plans

simultaneously.[84] Ultimately, however, the subject-actor refigures their involvement in a multiplicity of practices and life-plans into a conception of their life as a whole, and Ricoeur like MacIntyre, uses the term "narrative unity of a life" to refer to the conception the actor has of their whole life as a singular global project of an existence.[85]

Ricoeur insists, however, that these higher order units are not simply the result of the summing up of practices in a global form; they are given their configuration not only by the practices which they gather together, and which have their own unity and embedded meanings, but also by a "mobile horizon of ideals and projects in light of which a human life apprehends itself in its oneness."[86] As Ricoeur conceptualises it, the ideals that guide action are our conceptions of the "good life," understood not substantively, but as a personalised conception of culturally embedded ideals. The horizons which shape action are, then, socially, culturally and historically determined, but also always "individualised" by actors.[87] The life plans and the narrative conceptions of life which result are therefore partly discovered and partly constructed. The point that will be important in our later analysis, however, is that the meanings which mediate and structure action are on this analysis not only those immanent to practices in the form of constitutive rules, but also those embodied in the orientations which constitute the horizon of action. For Ricoeur, our "reflective responses" to the challenges action-situations present are shaped by meanings embedded in practices, but also by our personalised versions of culturally embedded notions of the good life in light of which decisions about particular actions are made.

Ricoeur's emphasis on the linguistic and cultural dimensions of the situations which determine the parameters of action is thrown into relief against the background of Joas' approach. As we have seen, Joas does not ignore the cultural context of action, but it is not thematised in the same way or to the same degree as in Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach, and its role is as a consequence minimised.[88] Joas' main concern is to counter Parsons' reductive argument that actors choose goals by orienting themselves to commonly held values,[89] and to this end he insists that the relationship between values and human action and situations is as open as the situated-relatedness of prereflective aspirations, which themselves have an implicit cultural horizon.

However, neither opening to the cultural conditioning of action is thematised systematically.

A similar contrast in relation to the weight they attach to the culture is evident in their divergent conceptions of the primary sociality of the actor. Joas and Ricoeur agree that the realisation of the capacity for action depends upon the mediation of others, and they both argue that the social relations in which the actor is inserted enable action, and determine its parameters. This shared premise involves a rejection of the Cartesian conception of the relationship between the subject and the world; both insist that what Cartesians construe as the "objective world" is a social construction. Joas' reliance on Mead, however, leads him to privilege the specifically *dyadic* dimension of social relations in a way which leaves the cultural horizons of action underthematised. He draws on Mead's developmental psychology and analysis of human communication to emphasise that humans anticipate the potential responses of partners and gear their behaviour to the potential behaviour of partners, and under the influence of these themes his construal of both identity formation and social interaction are based on an essentially dyadic conception of intersubjectivity. He does not, of course, disregard the importance of social relations beyond the immediacy of face-to-face encounters, but his analysis of them is truncated, to the extent that the most obvious pragmatist opening in this direction—Mead's notion of the "generalised" other—receives little attention. And at the same time, his stress on Mead's explanation of the conduct of the individual in terms of the organised conduct of the social group does not focus on the cultural horizons of action.

Ricoeur's hermeneutical conception of the shared world of actors, in contrast, stresses its transsubjective dimensions in ways which make more room for the cultural dimensions of the social context. As we noted in the previous section, he distinguishes between the interpersonal and institutional dimensions of the social relations that are essential to the realisation of the actor's capacity for action, and this approach has led to the articulated conception of the social context of the actor that we have just traced. Central to it are the ideas that the practical field is composed of networks of meaning-oriented practices which have a longer history and a broader existence than the individual's participation in them, and that individual actions within them

shaped by transsubjective horizons of meaning which have a stability and longevity in the traditions which embody them.

As we noted at the outset, for us, the most important implications of these divergent conceptions of the situation, and the sociality, of action concern the understandings of human agency and social creativity to which they give rise. Ricoeur has not thematised the specific question of social creativity,[90] which is, we have seen, one of the theoretical issues Touraine's thematisation of human agency has been designed to illuminate. As we will see, however, we can draw some important implications in relation to it from his account of human agency. On this issue, our comparative strategy has thrown into relief one theme above all; from Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective, human agency is closely tied up with the creative potentials of culture and language. As we have seen, Ricoeur has more than Joas consistently made theoretical use the cultural determinants of action in his thematisation of human agency, and his distinctive take on the specifically hermeneutical conception of culture has played a key role in his elaboration of it. For Ricoeur, interpretive horizons set the parameters of social life and thought, but are always in need of interpretation by subject-actors; they precede and transcend the consciousness of individual actors, but are always open to new interpretations; and the fields of meaning they constitute are permanently open to multiple and conflicting interpretations. His more specific analyses of the processes through which subject-actors engage with the cultural worlds they inhabit have focussed on the agency involved in the actualisation of language, and the process of constructing the narratives. As we have seen, however, within the framework of his philosophy of action, human agency is situated not simply within cultural frameworks, but also in institutionalised patterns of action which acquire logics which transcend the intentions associated with the actions which created them. The practices and institutions into which meaning-oriented actions sediment constrain action, and as Ricoeur has emphasised, are traversed by relations of power, but they also enable action, and make "behaviour" meaningful.

A distinction Arnason has made between two conceptions of social creativity sheds some light on the understanding that follows from this conception of human action.[91] Arnason's discussion is particularly apposite in this regard, both because its comments on Joas' contribution to the debate will allow us

to continue our comparative strategy, and because its focus on the role of the concept of action in the project to theorise social creativity will shed light on the shift we have identified in Touraine's action-based conceptual framework; as we will see, for Arnason, the crucial issue is the connection posited between action and creativity.

As Arnason sees it, the conception of social creativity which emerges from Joas' pragmatist-inspired analysis of human agency and action is best described as "invention." Its salient feature, he argues, is that it sees social creativity as inherent in the internal structure of agency, Joas sees human agency, Arnason argues, mainly as a mode of intentionality that maximises the exploratory and anticipatory element in the regulation of conduct,[92] and from this perspective, social creativity is understood primarily in terms of the opening up of new perspectives on and possibilities for action.[93] As Arnason sees it, however, while this conception is superior to post-modern celebrations of creativity which, drawing on Bergson and Nietzsche, tend to separate creativity from action,[94] it reduces social creativity to action, and in doing so, misses some important insights.[95] As he sees it, a more adequate conceptualisation of social creativity requires a shift of emphasis away from the intended and unintended consequences of action, to its "pre-given contextuality," and the open-ended transformations which the latter makes possible.[96] This approach still sees the idea of action as a key component of social creativity, but it suggests that social creativity should be understood as the outcome of the complex, ambiguous and changing relationship between action and its open-ended contexts of culture and power. Such a conception, he argues, is best understood as "emergence," because it gives more weight to the fundamental novelty of the social world with regard to its natural background and the historical novelty of successive socio-cultural configurations,[97] and it is superior to the paradigm of invention because by better grasping the doubly emergent character of social creativity, it makes more allowance for the creation of radically new and unanticipated patterns.

Arnason does not elucidate the idea of social creativity as emergence in detail, and he makes no mention of Ricoeur's work, but his references to a (Castoriadian-inspired) conception of cultural horizons, characterised by indeterminacy and a capacity for novelty, and irreducible to rules, orientations or projects of action, and an (Eliasian-inspired) account of power as emergent

structures suggest some points of contact with Ricoeur's approach. As we have seen, Ricoeur has thematised multiple dimensions of creativity and sources of novelty inherent in meaning and language, and proposes a conception of practices which are structured by immanent meanings, but also shaped by (personalised versions of) transsubjective interpretive horizons which transcend the projects of actors. Equally, we have seen, his analysis of life-plans and narrative conceptions of a life points to the emergent character of higher order units of praxis, the coherence and meaning of which transcends the sum up of practices of which they are composed.

These observations also shed some new light on the sources of Touraine's expanded capacity to theorise social creativity. The proto-hermeneutical conception of interpretive frameworks (of rationalisation and subjectivation) which he has put at the centre of his analysis is clearly a crucial factor. Arnason's analysis suggests, however, that the decentring of the concept of action—and more particularly its subordination to the analysis of institutional and interpretive frameworks (of rationalisation and subjectivation) which transcend the projects of actors—has also played a role. Finally, it is worth noting that if Arnason implies that the notion of social creativity as emergence is not compatible with an action-theory framework, at least of the kind Joas is involved in,[98] Ricoeur's analyses suggest that it is possible to conceptualise the interaction of action with open-ended contexts of power and culture within the framework of a hermeneutical philosophy of action.

As we noted at the outset, however, the ultimate horizon of Touraine's project to "bring agency back in" to social theory is to better understand the dynamics and prospects of modernity, and to conclude our hermeneutical critique of his recent social theory, we will consider what light Ricoeur's philosophy can shed on this part of Touraine's analysis.

Notes

1 P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics* II, trans. K. Blamey and J. Thompson, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1991.

2 He argued that meaningful action shares the characteristics—the fixation of meaning, the dissociation of its meaning from the mental intention of the author, the

display of non-ostensive, and the universal range of the addressee (Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 210)—which constitute the objectivity of text. For Ricoeur, this meant that a moment of explanation is legitimated in the analysis of meaningful action as it was for textual interpretation, but this moment of objective analysis remains subordinated to the understanding of meaningful connections which requires the active involvement of the interpreter.

[3] Ricoeur, *Intellectual Autobiography*, pp. 31-32.

[4] R. Bernstein, Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971; F. Dosse, Empire of Meaning, trans. H. Melehy, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 144.

[5] C. Taylor, The Explanation of Behaviour, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954, p. 33.

[6] Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, p. 34.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 43.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 47.

[9] *Ibid*., p. 60.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 67.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 65.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 63.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[14] G. Anscombe, Intention, London, Basil Blackwell, 1979.

[15] In Husserl's phenomenology, intentionality refers to the aiming of a consciousness in the direction of something 'I am to do', and testifies to the self-transcendence of a consciousness.

[16] Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, p. 70.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 72.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 74.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 76.

[20] *Ibid*., p. 83.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 89.

[22] Taylor has elucidated a notion of teleological explanation, in which an event occur because it is intended as an end. See Taylor, The Explanation of Behaviour.

[23] Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, p. 181.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 33.

[25] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 208.

[26] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another.*

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[28] While Ricoeur remains committed to the general idea of ontology of becoming, he has distanced himself from some of the specifics of the ontology presented in *Oneself as Another*. See Ricoeur, "Intellectual Autobiography."

[29] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 303, p. 308.

[30] *Ibid*., pp. 19-20.

[31] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 267.

[32] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 48.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 122.

[34] P. Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative," in eds. D. Woods, *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 20-33.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* p. 147.

[37] Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative," p. 33.

[38] A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London, Duckworth, 1985.

[39] Ricoeur first pursued this theme in *Time and Narrative*, where his interest in the relation between narrative and action was subordinated to his primary theme of the connections between narrative and time. In *Oneself as Another*, in the context of the thematisation of the acting self, the relation between action and narrative is foregrounded.

[40] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 159.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 162.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 159.

[43] Touraine's tendency to see communication as a threat to the subject is also noted by Knöbl. See Knöbl, "Social Theory from a Sartrean Point of View," p. 418.

[44] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 192.

[45] *Ibid*., pp. 192-193.

[46] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 225.

[47] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 188. Levinas can not be a primary source for Ricoeur, because Levinas' vocabulary of the summons emphasises obedience to duty above the orientation to meaning in the form of a notion of the good life that is for Ricoeur the origin of the ethico-moral capacities of the self.

[48] *Ibid*., p. 254.

[49] For Ricoeur, the test of universalisation is a phase in ethical and moral judgment rather than a definitive standard against which contextually-derived orientations can be judged. As we will see, he insists that the universal principle is itself multiple and conflictual, and is therefore unable to provide an unequivocal principle of adjudication among historically and culturally conditioned evaluations; it remains however, a necessary consideration against which all such contextualist evaluations must be tested. It is the 'sieve' through which they must pass.

[50] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 286.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 249.

[52] *Ibid*., p. 243.

[53] *Ibid*., p. 286.

[54] Joas, *The Creativity of Action*.

[55] As we have seen, Ricoeur's primary focus in this regard is the analytic perspective on action, which shares the individualistic approach to action characteristic of Rational Choice Theory, and is increasingly replacing the over-socialised perspectives which predominated in the era of functionalism.

[56] C. Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," *Philosophical Papers Vol. 2*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 34.

[57] *Ibid*., p. 36.

[58] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* p. 153.

[59] *Ibid.,* p. 156.

[60] M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. G. Rothe and C. Wittich, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978, p. 1.

[61] *Ibid.,* p. 155.

[62] *Ibid.,* p. 156.

[63] The structuring of practices by constitutive rules is also the foundation on which action is made open to ethical evaluations, because constitutive rules generate 'standards of excellence'—rules of comparison applied to different accomplishments—that are internal to a practice. *ibid.,* p. 176. Ethical judgments founded on this basis are, as Ricoeur sees it, facilitated by narrative understanding, and made possible by orientation to an ideal of the 'good life'.

[64] Ricoeur first pursued this theme in *Time and Narrative*, where his interest in the relation between narrative and action was subordinated to his primary theme of the connections between narrative and time. In *Oneself as Another*, in the context of the thematisation of the acting self, the relation between action and narrative is foregrounded.

[65] L. Mink, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension", New Literary History, 1, 1970, pp. 557-558.

[66] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 163. In *Time and Narrative*, he argued that time is the referent of the narrative, and that the function of the narrative is to articulate time in such a way as to give it the form of human experience. It is, moreover, because practices are temporal that they need to be narrated.

[67] Joas, *The Creativity of Action*.

[68] See R. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971, pp. 5-6, and Hiley et al., *The Interpretive Turn*.

[69] Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, p. 147.

[70] Joas' non-teleological interpretation of action is opposed to Parsons' attempt to interpret action in terms of the means-ends schema. His critique is not suggesting that Parsons' claimed that all action phenomena could be interpreted in terms of means and ends, but rather that the means-ends schema is an obstacle to understanding the preconditions for goal-setting and goal oriented action because it treats these phenomena as given and self-evident. Joas, *Creativity of Action*, p. 149.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 155.

[72] And conversely, every habit of action and every rule of action contains assumptions about the type of situations in which it is appropriate to proceed according to the particular habit or rule. See *ibid.,* p. 160.

[73] *Ibid.,* p. 161.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid*., p. 161.

[76] *Ibid*., p. 158.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 161.

[78] *Ibid.,* p. 158.

[79] *Ibid.,* p. 163.

[80] Ricoeur's recourse to teleological arguments arises, as we have seen, in his argument for a teleological notion of causality. He also privileges a hermeneutically inflected, Aristotelian teleological conception of ethics to elucidate the ethical dimension of the self. See *Oneself as Another*, chapter seven.

[81] (113a9-11) Aristotle, Ethica Nichomachea (cited in Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 93.)

[82] Ricoeur is here arguing 'with Aristotle against Aristotle'. He is arguing against Aristotle to the extent that in his discussion of preferential choice, Aristotle excludes deliberation about the *ends* of action: 'We deliberate not about ends but about means'. This restriction of deliberation to means is for Ricoeur both inadequate to and misleading about the practical field. He is arguing with Aristotle in that it brings into this sphere the concept of deliberation related to concept of phronesis.

[83] *Ibid*., p. 177. Ricoeur cites as examples professional life, family life, leisure time and community and political life

[84] *Ibid*., p. 157.

[85] *Ibid*., pp. 157-8.

[86] *Ibid*., p. 172.

[87] Nor, we have seen, does Ricoeur neglect the corporeality of action.

[88] Joas, *Creativity of Action*, p. 162.

[89] As we will see in the next chapter, his analysis of democracy has a bearing on the issue.

[90] In action-based perspectives, it is axiomatic that social creativity is tied up with human agency.

[91] Arnason, "Invention and Emergence," p. 108.

[92] J. Arnason, "Invention and Emergence: Reflections on Hans Joas' Theory of Creative Action," *Thesis Eleven*, no. 47, 1996, pp. 101-13, p. 108.

[93] *Ibid*., p. 105.

[94] *Ibid*., p. 109.

[95] *Ibid*., pp. 108-9.

[96] *Ibid*.

[97] The shifts we have traced in Touraine's social theory confirm this view.

Chapter Six

Paradoxes of Democracy

The problematic of democracy is a pertinent touchstone for the concerns which have been at the centre of this work for a number of reasons. In the first place, recognition of the centrality and independence of the political realm was belated in the sociology of modernity, and initial attempts to rectify its undertheorisation in the classics proved inadequate. The incorporation of the problematic of democracy into the theory of modernity by theorists like Giddens and Habermas was characterised, on Arnason's analysis, by a tendency to reduce democracy to its preconditions or co-determinants.[1] A more adequate integration, then, remains to be achieved. Secondly, as Joas argues, the problematic of democracy acquires a particular significance in action theories which attach significance to the power of cultural traditions and innovations to make history.[2] Whether implicitly or explicitly, he suggests, culture-sensitive action theories share a normative commitment to the idea of self-determination which entails a concretisation of this ideal in a theory of democracy.

Touraine's early work, we have seen, also failed to treat the political realm in general, and democracy in particular, adequately; the political realm held a secondary importance, and the problematic of democracy did not figure at all in his first theoretical synthesis. In the theoretical re-orientation explored in these pages, however, the logic Joas has adduced has come to the fore. Touraine's social theory has from the outset been directed towards expanding the space for self-determination in the modern world, but in *Critique of Modernity*, for the first time, this project takes the form of a theory of democracy; the analysis of the crisis of modernity in this work forms the background to a normative project to reinterpret the idea of democracy, and revitalise its institutions. Most importantly in this context, however, putting the problematic of democracy at the centre of our concluding reflections will allow us to continue the dialogue between Touraine and Ricoeur in relation to substantive issues at the heart of the theory of modernity, and in particular, to consider the perspectival and theoretical/conceptual developments suggested by Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy on this level of analysis.

To begin, we will look at the analysis of democracy which has emerged from Touraine's implicitly hermeneutical, subject-based perspective. We will find some highly fertile lines of analysis but also some absences and tensions which derive from his reluctance to thematise the communicative dimensions of social relations. As we will see, Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy offers a number of specific suggestions for resolving the tensions generated in Touraine's analysis. Among the most important of these are insights that stem directly from Ricoeur's own analysis of democracy, their interpretive purchase strengthened by strong parallels with Touraine's analysis. Both see democracy as the political or 'institutional' context that is essential to the full realization of the subject, both are involved in a normative project to *reinterpret* democracy, and both argue that democracy is characterised by a 'conflict of interpretations' and defined by the institutionalisation of conflicts. At the same time, we are now also in a position to draw more broadly on the conceptual and theoretical resources we have identified in Ricoeur's critical hermeneutical perspective.

1. Conflictual democracy

The problematic of democracy has become the primary focus of Touraine's work since *Critique of Modernity*. Its sequel, *What is Democracy?*[3] was devoted entirely to continuing and expanding the analysis of democracy outlined in the earlier work, while his latest major work, *Can We live Together?* places the project for the renewal of democracy at the centre of a wide-ranging defence of multiculturalism.[4] The analyses in *What is Democracy?* involved some limited but not unimportant adjustments, but they remain largely within the framework set out in *Critique of Modernity*. In *Can We Live Together?*, however, both his theory of the subject and his framework for the analysis of modernity underwent a more significant revision, and the outcome is ambiguous in relation to our main concerns. Under the pressure of unfolding historical developments, Touraine pays more attention in this work to both relations of communication and hermeneutical sources. But rather than leading to a more explicit engagement with proto-hermeneutic premises, his conceptual apparatus and mode of inquiryhave become less rather than more hermeneutical. *Can We Live Together?* returns to the general themes of *Critique of Modernity*—in particular, the dynamics of modernity and the production of the subject—but they are treated in a more summary fashion, and he has retreated from the hermeneutical strategy of elucidating social and political forms through the analysis of their interpretive constituents. As the consequence is that these analyses do not have the theoretical density or interpretive penetration of the earlier, and richer work,[5] *What is Democracy?* will be our primary reference point.

In this text, Touraine undertakes a wide-ranging historical analysis of the idea of democracy and 'actually existing' democracies as the background to his attempt to reinterpret the idea of democracy, and construct a model that is adequate to the exigencies of the contemporary historical conjuncture. His reading of these exigencies is derived from his analysis in *Critique of Modernity* of the rupture of the socio-cultural universe of modernity into the disconnected spheres of the market and cultural identity, and his proposal for bridging the rupture is a development of the strategy outlined in the earlier work.

However, in a context in which accelerating 'globalisation'[6] is both creating more multicultural communities and strengthening cultural and communitarian

identifications, Touraine has become more interested in communication, and as he has moved in this direction, he has become more open to some central hermeneutical themes. This shift towards the hermeneutical perspective is evident in the first instance in his revisions to his concept of the subject, but these changes have in turn had an impact on his conception of democracy.

In *What is Democracy?*, as in *Critique of Modernity*, Touraine argues that democracy is most fully realised when it most adequately facilitates the emergence and existence of the subject. The revisions to his conception of the subject have, however, cast this definition of democracy in a new light. In *What is Democracy?*, the subject is still a multi-faceted being who mobilises reason and cultural identity for a contestatory 'project' of self-creation. However, his conception of the structure of the subject has become more streamlined, and in the process more integrated. The recourse to reason that was treated separately and less systematically in *Critique of Modernity* is now built into a three-fold conception of the subject as a composite of rationality, personal freedom and cultural identity. This revised notion of the subject is not elaborated to the same extent as his original conception, but the shift towards hermeneutical themes is clear. And the most significant shift in the understanding of the subject which follows is that Touraine now emphasises that the subject constructs him or herself not only through resistance to the apparatuses of power, but also through the effort "to transform events and experiences into a life-project."[7] Where his earlier conception of the subject consisted of two unevenly weighted and poorly connected parts, the new focus on the capacity of social actors to re-synthesise the contexts of meaning and experience into a life-project makes the work of *integration* itself a central process of self-construction. And this has led in turn, and in contrast to his earlier ambivalence, to a more positive reception of the concept of identity as "the narrative unity of a life."[8]

In this context, the most important consequence of this revision to his conception of the subject is the influence it has had on his understanding of democracy; in *Critique of Modernity*, democracy involved "the subordination of the world of works, technologies and institutions to the creative and transformational capacities of individuals and collectivities;"[9] in the later work, it involves the creation of an institutional space for the "recognition of the other"

who is also involved in the process of becoming a subject, and democracy is therefore now "a place for dialogue and communication."[10]

This move towards hermeneutical and communicative themes remains, however, firmly—and productively—embedded in a critical framework. Touraine continues to stress the existence and creativity of social conflict, and he sees the political representation of such conflicts as one of the defining features of democracy; for Touraine, democracy is inherently pluralistic, not in the liberal sense of a plurality of actors and interests, but because it is constituted by multiple overlapping but partly conflictual principles and institutions.

The combination of proto-hermeneutical premises, and critical orientation is as potentially productive in his analysis of democracy as it was in his more general analysis of modernity, and, in fact, his new hermeneutical themes have created an opportunity to address some of the tensions we have identified in *Critique of Modernity*. However, in his analysis of democracy, as in his critique of modernity, the hermeneutical and critical strands in Touraine's thought remain uneasily integrated, at least in part because his conceptual framework still privileges relations of conflict over relations of communication. In this context, the ramifications are most evident in his attempt to translate his key insights into a more concrete model; as we will see, in the process, a number of his most suggestive insights are filtered out. Before we examine these difficulties, we need to get an idea of his key insights.

The hermeneutical and critical strands of Touraine's thought come together in his understanding of democracy in terms of multiple and partially conflicting 'dimensions' which are interpretive as well as institutional. From this starting point, three important insights emerge. First, his focus on the interpretive element of the dimensions highlights the co-determination of democracy by tradition(s). Touraine does not stress this point, nor draw the implications concerning the possibility of multiple, culturally inflected forms of democracy. But this implication can be drawn from his understanding of modernity as co-determined by tradition, and he does explicitly recognise the cultural specificities—in particular the separation of temporal and spiritual power characteristic of Western thought—which were the cultural context of the birth of modern democracy.[11]

The hermeneutical approach also highlights the ambiguity of modern political discourse, and the fragility of democracy that is its consequence. Democracy, Touraine insists, is only one possible outcome of the interpretive components of political modernity, and the elements which combine in an open way in democracy can also combine in more restrictive ways in authoritarianism and totalitarianism. He also underlines the significance of the corollary of this point: far from being the 'natural' political form of modernity, often thought to develop more or less automatically alongside a capitalist economy and a secular culture, the idea that democracy is the 'normal' political face of modernity is "so flimsy we should find it worrisome."[12]

Most importantly, Touraine's critical and proto-hermeneutical approach brings to the fore the irreducible *conflict of interpretations* that characterises the democratic project. Competing interpretations of democracy are central to debates in political philosophy and practice; Touraine's lasting insight, is the idea that the tension between divergent conceptions of democracy is irreducible *within* all modern democracies.[13] His more specific arguments in this regard take off from the widely recognised tension between the ideas of 'liberty' and 'equality' within the concept and practice of democracy. However, while he argues that this tension has been, and must remain, at the heart of the modern democratic project,[14] he also insists that this particular conflict of interpretation does not exhaust the polysemy of the idea of democracy. For Touraine, a democracy must also recognise the inevitability of social conflict, and institutionalise means for their political and social expressions; democracy must reconcile liberty and equality, but it must also allow for the political representation of social conflicts. He insists, however, that such reconciliation does not involve a definitive resolution of the tension between rival conceptions of democracy.

These principles are not, however, directly translated into the model he constructs. Touraine argues that the reconciliation of equality and liberty is best approximated in a model of democracy which institutionalises three main principles. These are the limitation of the power of rulers, the political recognition and representation of social conflicts, and participation in a political collectivity, and he calls them *'basic rights'*, *'representativity'* and *'citizenship'*. As we will see, however, the unevenness with which he shifts from general

observations to his more particular model is a central factor in his loss of interpretive power.

The idea of basic rights has a certain primacy for Touraine. Against the background of the history of the twentieth century, he sees the liberal principle of negative freedom on which it is based as the ultimate guarantor of democracy, above all, because its defence of the right to individuation is the most effective weapon against the totalitarian threat to democracy that was so evident in that century.[15] He argues that when the principle adversary of democracy is no longer the *ancien regime*, but rather, fascist, communist and national third world regimes, the principle of negative freedom supplants the positive idea of popular sovereignty as the most fundamental connotation of democracy. More particularly, he argues that a democracy must institutionalise the defence of the individual against all power centres. This applies to churches, families, and companies, but above all to the state; the first principle of democracy is the limitation of the power of rulers and the state by the rule of law.

The importance Touraine accords to this principle should not, however, be overstated. It is, he argues, a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy, and liberalism as such remains unacceptable, precisely because it claims to be sufficient, and in so doing sacrifices "all for the sake of a single aspect of democracy."[16] As Touraine sees it, the principle of 'representativity' gains its importance from the fact that it responds to the most conspicuous lacunae in the liberal conception of democracy. Liberalism is insufficient, because it fails to recognise the domination of political life by the "masters of civil society."[17] It denies that elected representatives represent actors and social movements, and because it recognises only political organisations and interests, ignores the sources of influence and power based in the social—and above all economic—domain.[18] A true democracy, Touraine counters, must recognise and respond to the conflicts that take shape in civil society, and most importantly, represent them in the political sphere.[19] This means that democracy depends upon a correspondence between political choices and "the interests or values of social actors who are defined by their position in the balance of power."[20] 'Representativity' therefore refers not to conventional notions of political representation, but to the articulation of social conflicts.

Its central import is that conflict is not a threat to democracy, but its essence; for Touraine, democracy is weakened by the absence of conflict.[21] The corollary of representativity, moreover, is that social actors must be capable of giving a meaning to their action independent of the attempts of political parties to define it for them; for Touraine, democracy depends upon meaningful social movement activity.[22]

Finally, while Touraine insists that democracy is strongest in those countries where social conflict is most open, he also insists that the creation and preservation of democracy depends upon the participation of the governed in political life, and that such participation depends upon a sense of belonging to a political collectivity.[23] Touraine recognises that the sense of belonging that has historically supported the emergence and continuance of democracies has been tied up with the nation, but his main objective in elucidating his principle of 'citizenship' is to find an alternative foundation. Cognisant of the anti-democratic potential contained within the nationalist spirit, he argues that "rather than identifying society with the nation, as during moments of the American war of independence or the French revolution," citizenship involves the construction of a 'truly political' space that belongs neither to the state nor to the market.[24] Citizenship, as he sees it, refers to "a sense of belonging to a political collectivity, a feeling of responsibility for their government by citizens," which can be based on "membership in a community defined in terms of rights and guarantees."[25] The idea of citizenship has two primary connotations for Touraine. The first emerged from the French revolution, when the sense of membership of a political community was connected with the will to escape servitude to the absolute power of the *ancien regime.* The second came to the fore in contemporary contexts of multiculturalism, when it implies a generalised willingness for majority decisions to be accepted as legitimate by the society as a whole.[26]

The first indication of the difficulties that emerge in relation to this model arise with Touraine's attempt to justify these three components of democracy. His strategy is to connect them to his theory of the subject; the three dimensions of democracy correspond, he suggests, to the three dimensions of his (revised) conception of the subject—reason, personal freedom and cultural identity. As he sees it, trust in reason corresponds to the theme of citizenship, the appeal to personal freedom is related to restrictions on the power

of the state which preserve the basic rights of the individual, and the appeal to collective identity and memory translates into the representation of interests and values of different groups.[27] However, this is far from convincing. In fact, alternative correspondences seem just as, or even more, plausible; the appeal to collective identity has an affinity with citizenship if, as Touraine acknowledges, citizenship ultimately depends upon shared cultural orientations, and the idea of representativity is at least as compatible with reason as is the notion of citizenship.

However, if this ambiguity suggests that the connections between the problematics of the subject and democracy are too abstract and vague to allow such a direct correspondence, there is in Touraine's own analysis an alternative justification for the three institutional dimensions which is both more securely historically grounded, and interpretively richer. In his historical account of the modern conflict of interpretations over the idea of democracy, Touraine traces the evolution of the modern democratic idea through its origins in the republican assertion of the sovereignty of the people, its extension in the nineteenth century by the incorporation of the liberal principle of the restriction of power, and its expansion in the twentieth century to incorporate the idea of social democracy.[28] The idea of using this framework for elucidating the three components of his model is not extraneous to Touraine's analysis. In his broad discussion of the democratic project and the contemporary challenges it faces, Touraine draws on each of these principles, and a clear logic of correspondence emerges between the idea of popular sovereignty and citizenship, liberalism and basic rights, and representativity and social democracy.[29] However, while this alternative schema throws more light on the democratic project and his attempt to rethink it, it also throws into relief some tensions in Touraine's analysis. As we will see, in the absence of a systematic reference to these conceptions of democracy, the core principles which underlie them are only unevenly elaborated in his tripartite model.

If we take this interpretive grid as a guide, two absences in particular can be identified; one concerns *equality*, the other popular *sovereignty*. The tension that emerges concerning the principle of equality is that—rather surprisingly—Touraine subordinates social equality to the idea of political equality, and then only loosely incorporates the principle into his tripartite model. Touraine is not indifferent to social inequalities; as he notes a number of times,

the struggle against inequality is an essential aspect of democracy.[30] The tension in his analysis is, rather, to do with the relationship between, and the relative priority, of social and political equality.

Touraine is sensitive to the claims of both social and political equality; as we have seen, he rejects the liberals' exclusive emphasis on political equality,[31] and argues that equal political rights "would be no more than a hazy notion if they did not result in pressure for actual equality."[32] Equally however, he argues that "political equality . . . compensates for social inequalities among citizens in the name of moral rights."[33] He insists, moreover, that we must "attempt to reconcile the idea of social rights with that of political liberty;"[34] but he refuses to define democracy in any way in terms of economic equality because, as he sees it, to do so is to base justice and democracy on consensus. He insists that as social relations are always relations of inequality or control, the goal of the appeal to equality should not be to give everyone their due, but rather to struggle against inequality in the name of the dominated. The conception of equality that is consonant with this understanding of democracy refers not to distributive justice, but to a *conflict* and a compromise that is constantly being challenged.[35]

However, this principle of equality does not ultimately seem adequate to the broader connotations he invokes when he uses the slogan of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' to illuminate his model. And just as significantly, the principle of equality—in its broad or narrow construal—finds only a poorly defined and precarious institutional footing in his tripartite construction. Touraine suggests that fraternity is 'almost synonymous' with citizenship, liberty is self-evidently associated with the liberal notion of basic rights, and the principle of equality can be elaborated in connection with the idea of representativity. This institutional locale for the principle of equality is logical to the extent that Touraine has privileged the idea of political equality. But it is neither the central element of the dimension of representativity, nor anywhere systematically treated. What is more, in the earlier version of the tripartite model outlined in *Critique of Modernity*, the principle of equality was raised—equally sketchily—in connection with the sphere of citizenship.[36] This equivocation only reinforces the conclusion that, as it stands, Touraine's tripartite model simply does not offer a firm institutional basis for this dimension of democracy.

The second connotation of democracy that is raised in Touraine's general discussion, but not fully expressed in his model concerns the idea of the sovereignty of the people. Touraine is acutely aware of the historical importance of the idea of popular sovereignty, but he is highly ambivalent about how—and indeed if—it should be taken up in the contemporary context. He argues, on the one hand, that there "is no possibility of democracy without the idea of the sovereignty of the people," because it is "the reversal by which power is recognised as the product of human will rather than something imposed by divine decision, custom, or the nature of things,"[37] and on the other, that it has been surpassed and supplanted by a negative concept of freedom.

It is not difficult to identify the reasons for Touraine's ambivalence. The principle of popular sovereignty, he argues, is itself highly ambiguous; it is not in itself a democratic principle, and it has non- and even anti-democratic connotations. Hobbes, he notes, appealed to the sovereignty of the people, but was not a democrat, and while most revolutions have proclaimed the sovereignty of the people, they have often led to authoritarian regimes rather than democracies.[38] As Touraine sees it, there are two dangers in particular which are implicit in the idea of popular sovereignty; on the one hand, the notion of sovereignty is derived from the idea of royal power, and claims the same absoluteness,[39] and on the other, popular sovereignty is a collective notion which tends to subordinate the individual to the collective. Moreover, as he repeatedly stresses, the historical association of popular sovereignty with the nation as the emblem of the social totality has often led to the translation of these conceptual ambiguities into aggressive and destructive nationalisms.[40] The difficulty that arises in Touraine's analysis is that his primary response to these ambiguities has been to narrow the idea of popular sovereignty to a single dimension. Equating popular sovereignty with his notion of citizenship,[41] he reduces it to the sense of belonging that supports democracy. With this move, the broader meanings of popular sovereignty that have emerged over the course of the democratic project, and come to the surface in Touraine's more general discussion, are obscured.

A third difficulty with Touraine's analysis, with different origins, also concerns the idea of citizenship. The problem in this regard is that his analysis of participation in political life and the sense of belonging to a political

collectivity on which it is based is itself inadequate. The difficulty with Touraine's analysis is that his attempt to conceive of this bond in terms of a voluntary, 'civil' association sits uneasily alongside a historical experience in which identification with the nation has been—and continues to be—the primary basis for the exercise of popular sovereignty. He is acutely aware of the historical association of democracy with the nation, and he acknowledges that democracy depends upon "common cultural orientations"[42] and, at points, even that if democracy is to be strong there must be a national consciousness.[43] At the same time, however, he argues that democracy is based on "a political freedom of choice that exists independently of any cultural heritage."[44]

More recently, Touraine has appeared willing to at least partly revise this position. In fact, in the context of accelerating 'globalisation' which is eroding some aspects of the sovereignty of the nation-state, the positive role of the nation in fostering democracy has come to the fore in his analysis. In parts of *What is Democracy?*, he is attentive to the role of the nation-state, and even 'national consciousness', in the defence of democracy, conceding that "it is doubtful that democracy can in the contemporary world exist outside the nation-state,"[45] and in *Can We live Together?*, he concludes that "provided that it is oriented towards the struggle against exclusion, an awareness of national identity is essential" to democratic and social renewal in a context of economic globalisation and cultural fragmentation.[46] However, these developments, driven by historical and political rather than theoretical imperatives, have led to only tentative steps towards the kind of analysis of the nature of the shared cultural orientations, and in particular, forms of collective identity, which this development calls for. As he has increasingly seen the nation as a potential bulwark against the dissolution of modernity, he has distinguished between conceptions of the nation-state with which democracy is compatible—the self-instituting nation, in which "the state and individual, social and cultural actors are united within a free political society," and those with which it is not—the *volkisch* conception in which the state is the sole guardian of the interests of society.[47] He has also paid more attention to the task of disentangling national identity and nationalism.[48] But these developments have only thrown into relief the need for a more systematic treatment of the nature of the social bonds that could support democracy. And as I have repeatedly argued, Touraine's conceptual framework, oriented towards relations

of conflict at the expense of relations of communication, is ill-suited to this task.

2. Conflict and communication

Ricoeur's fully-fledged hermeneutical interpretive framework, in contrast, places communication at the centre of the analysis of social relations. As we have seen in previous chapters this has not involved resorting to a conception of society based on cultural consensus. And as we will see, in fact, far from dissolving into the difficulties Touraine fears accompany too great an emphasis on communicative relations, Ricoeur's analyses of the paradoxes of conflict and communication ultimately shed more light on the conflictual dimensions of social relations than Touraine's exclusive emphasis on conflict. Most importantly in this context, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of communication and conflict adds new dimensions to the analysis of the conflictuality of democracy, and helps resolve some of the specific tensions that have arisen from Touraine's neglect of communication.

To explore Ricoeur's contribution to these issues, we will begin by returning to the issue, anticipated in the previous chapter, of the political/institutional dimension of the mediation of 'the other' that is essential to the full realisation of the subject. The most useful starting point is the problematic of the primordial political institution. In this problematic, Ricoeur elucidates the dialectic of communication and conflict that characterises all human collectivities. His first claim is that in historical communities, communicative relations *precede* relations of domination and conflict; as he puts it, a bond of common mores and an *ethos* of living together is more fundamental than any constraints related to judicial systems and political organisation.[49] The hermeneutical provenance of this idea is clear; it is a translation of the hermeneutical understanding of an interpretive community into the terms of a philosophy of action. But Ricoeur's analysis departs from the conventional, linguistically-based conception in an important way. As we have see, the conventional hermeneutical conception has often been criticised for neglecting the relations of power which distort communication. In his hermeneutics of action, however, Ricoeur puts the issue of power at the centre of his analysis. He borrows from Hannah Arendt's reflections of power, also couched

within a philosophy of human action, to argue that a non-hierarchical and non-instrumental 'power-in-common' is the ultimate foundation of a community, and is more fundamental than power in the form of 'domination'.

This line of thought begins with Arendt's argument that it is *public* and *collective* human action which gives rise to power, including political power; power is defined by Arendt as the power to act, but she insists that it is a collective phenomenon, which both derives from "the human capacity to act in concert,"[50] and corresponds to "the human condition of plurality."[51] The power that lies at the foundation of a community, then, "is never the property of an individual," and as it belongs to the group, it remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. There is, however, "nothing nostalgic about this rehabilitation of the power of all." Arendt, and Ricoeur with her, insists that the communicative relations which found historical communities are always rent by conflict and domination. In fact, the stratum of power characterised by 'plurality' and 'action-in-concert' is ordinarily invisible, because it is so extensively covered over by relations of domination. Power-in-common is for the main part brought to light only when it is about to be destroyed,[52] and in ordinary times, all that is visible is its augmentation constituted by authority. Indeed, this is so much the case that Ricoeur gives it the status of something forgotten, and sees it more as a task to be accomplished than as something already existent.

The conception of political practice in general, and democracy in particular, that Ricoeur elucidates on the basis of this analysis of the political institution involves the same dialectic of communication and conflict. The outcome, however, is not a watering down of the conflictuality of democracy relative to Touraine's more one-sided emphasis on conflict; Ricoeur's thematisation of the conflicts of democracy is in the end more thoroughgoing than Touraine's, and the outcome is a more developed articulation of the indeterminancy of democracy.

Ricoeur not only shares Touraine's view of the inevitability and irreducibility of unequal power relations in human collectivities, he also agrees with Touraine that democracy is the political system which institutionalises conflict. And where Touraine's model conceives of the representation of social conflicts within the political sphere as *one* of the institutional dimensions of democ-

racy, Ricoeur identifies multiple levels of conflict, and sees them as the core of democracy.

As Ricoeur sees it, the origins of the conflictuality of democracy lie in a paradox which affects all political societies contained within a state. The 'political paradox' consists in the fact that the state is, on the one hand, the agency which—by unifying a multiplicity of roles and functions and spheres of activity—secures the realisation of human capacities and well being, and on the other, an agency of domination. The political paradox is not eliminated in a democracy, but it is given a specific form; the democratic state is one in which domination is put under the control of 'power-in-common'. And, Ricoeur argues, the subordination of domination to power-in-common is achieved through the construction of a political system in which conflicts are open and negotiable in accordance with recognised rules of arbitration.[53]

While this conception of the institutionalisation of conflict has strong parallels with Touraine's, it is more broadly conceived, and importantly, it brings to the fore more thoroughgoing dimensions of conflict and indeterminancy. Ricoeur identifies three levels of conflict within the sphere of political practice. The first level, closest to Touraine's notion of representativity, concerns the conflicts that take place within a state of law, with accepted 'rules of the game'. But where Touraine's emphasis is on the social conflicts that give rise to social and political movements, Ricoeur focuses on the inevitability of conflicts over the priority among what—along with the communitarians—he insists is the irreducible multiplicity of primary goods.[54] These two conceptions of the conflicts that must be given institutional expression in a democracy have different foci, but they are not incompatible. Ricoeur's hermeneutical sensibility, however, has the additional advantage of underlining the fact that the conflicts involved are undecidable, not only because of the multiplicity of goods, but also because the meanings involved in prioritising them are always open to interpretation, and inflected by the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they are located.[55]

However, Ricoeur also identifies two additional, and increasingly radical, levels of conflict. At the second level, he suggests, the 'ends' of good government are also subject to a conflict of interpretation that gives rise to equally undecidable social conflicts. At issue on this level is the preference for, and

justification of, a certain form of state. With this argument, Ricoeur more than Touraine makes explicit the irreducible multiplicity of forms of democracy, and the futility of a search for *the* model of democracy that could express the potential of modernity. Touraine's entire analysis is based on an awareness of the historical variety of forms of democracy, and his tripolar model gave rise to its own typology, based on the relative influence of the three principles. (He argues that the privileging of each principle gives rise to three types of democracies—'liberal', 'constitutional' and 'conflictual'—which define the field in which all historical instances of democracy have been constructed.)[56] But he does not stress the fact that his own model is open to multiple interpretations. In contrast, Ricoeur's hermeneutical emphasis on the mediations of language brings to the forefront the polysemy of the 'ends' of government. Debates on this level concern issues like 'security', 'prosperity', 'liberty', 'equality', 'solidarity', but these are always open to interpretation, and are influenced by broader historical and cultural contexts. Ricoeur also stresses the 'tragic' nature of the conflicts about and within democracies. The conflict of interpretations is not simply linguistic, and the multiplicity of values entails that choices have to be made; the historical realisation of one set of values can be obtained only at the expense of others.

Finally, Ricoeur argues that there is an undecidable conflict involved in relation to the *legitimation* of democracy. Citing Lefort, he argues that there is a fundamental indeterminancy in relation to the legitimacy of democracy, which cannot be definitively resolved. He does, however, argue—hermeneutically—that we have reasons for preferring democracy to totalitarianism, which have come down to us through traditions. In the Western case, these include the Enlightenment, Jewish, Greek, and Christian traditions.[57]

Ricoeur's dialectic of conflict and communication, then, reveals dimensions of conflictuality less visible in Touraine's more one-sidedly conflict-oriented analysis, and with it further axes of ambiguity in the modern world. But as I mentioned earlier, Ricoeur's focus on the layering of conflict and communication also sheds light on the particular tensions we have identified in Touraine's model of democracy.

The first problem was that while Touraine suggests that the tension between equality and liberty is constitutive of democracy, the principle of equality

appeared to be narrowly construed, and found little institutional support in his tripartite model. In contrast, Ricoeur's analysis of the fundamental structures of 'living together' gives rise to a conception of democracy in which the two principles are not only equi-primordial, but also enmeshed. More particularly, Ricoeur's analysis points to a reconsideration of Touraine's suggestion that the principle of *social* equality fails to adequately register the conflictual dimension of democracy.

This reconsideration can take place on the common ground that exists between the two thinkers; like Touraine, Ricoeur recognises the ethical as well as political force of the principle of equality, and like Touraine, he sees the appeal to the idea of equality, in the first instance, as a response to the existence of injustice and inequalities.[58] Ricoeur's account of the primordial political institution, however, suggests that the principle of social equality has a more organic connection to democracy than Touraine allows. It is true that Ricoeur's analysis leads to a notion of distributive justice of the kind Touraine eschews. But as we have seen, the notion of the institution on which it is based avoids many of the premises Touraine wishes to avoid. In this context, what is relevant is that Ricoeur stresses that a fundamental feature of institutions is the *apportionment* of roles, tasks, and advantages between the members of society. Institutions, he reminds us, are about sharing in *two* senses; individuals 'share' in an institution only to the extent that 'shares' are distributed, and participation in an institution means taking part, and taking *a* part.

Against the backdrop of this understanding of society/institution as a system of distributions, Ricoeur argues that 'justice in institutions' involves finding a balance between having too much or not enough, or more technically, a balance in the distribution of benefits and burdens. He acknowledges that there are difficulties involved in specifying the notions of proportional equality and distributive justice entailed.[59] Such distribution must be based on a principle of equality, but simple egalitarianism is not sufficient, and he turns provisionally to the Aristotlean notion of the equal as the intermediate between two extremes. For Ricoeur, and for us, the important point is that despite the difficulties involved in translating such a notion of equality into more concrete terms, and regardless of its precise interpretation, the recourse to the principle of equality is paramount, because it justifies the subordination of 'domination' to 'power-in-common' which defines democracy.[60]

Against this background, Touraine's dismissal of distributive justice appears precipitous.

The second difficulty in Touraine's analysis concerned the notion of popular sovereignty. As we noted, the most fundamental connotation of popular sovereignty tended to be obscured by Touraine's exclusive focus on 'citizenship' and the social bond on which democracy depends. As we will see shortly, Ricoeur's hermeneutics offer insights into the nature of this social bond that are highly pertinent to Touraine's concerns. Here, however, what is relevant is that Ricoeur's analysis of the institution suggests an interpretation of the idea of popular sovereignty which picks up on connotations which surfaced in Touraine's general discussion, but tended to disappear from his model. The key point in this regard concerns the form the political paradox takes in a democracy. As we have seen, Ricoeur argues that democracy is characterised—and ultimately defined—by the placing of 'power-as-domination' under the control of 'power-in-common'.[61] This formulation has a strong connection to Touraine's suggestion that the fundamental connotation of the idea of popular sovereignty is the "reversal by which power is recognised as the product of human will."[62] Importantly, Ricoeur's formulation, with its recognition of the inevitability of unequal power relations within social collectivities, as well as the necessarily imperfect nature of the mechanisms for its control, is in tune with Touraine's longstanding emphasis on the capacity of society to create itself. In fact, it suggests, in more 'Tourainian' language, an interpretation of popular sovereignty as the affirmation of the self-creation of society.

The third, and most significant, difficulty we identified in Touraine's analysis also concerned popular sovereignty. His analysis not only tended to reduce popular sovereignty to the sense of belonging to a collectivity on which democracy depends, but ultimately failed to do justice to this phenomenon. The problem in this regard is not that Touraine is unaware of the complexities surrounding the social bond that is essential to democracy, but that his response to that complexity is restricted by normative concerns that are arguably insufficiently grounded in empirical realities and, more importantly, by a conceptual framework that is ill-suited to exploring this problematic. Touraine's central concern was to find an alternative to 'national identity' as

the source of the kind of solidarity that could support a democracy, and his main strategy was to invoke the notion of a 'civil' political bond.

Ricoeur's analysis of the political institution also has a bearing on this issue, to the extent that it suggests that some caution is called for in regard to Touraine's attempt to base the social solidarity on which democracy depends on a purely civil bond. Ricoeur's insistence that the origin of political agency lies in power-in-common—"power exists only to the extent that—and only so long as—the desire to live and act together subsists in a historical community"[63]—suggests that the kind of common cultural orientations associated with 'basic' groups—religious, linguistic or territorial collectivities—into which members are effectively 'born,' are more likely to be involved in the kinds of collective commitment required by democratic institutions than the thinner bonds generated by voluntary associations which are formed and dissolved at will.

This observation, however, clearly constitutes no more than a point of departure for further analysis of the modes of social solidarity and collective identity that Touraine has increasingly put at the centre of his analysis of democracy, but which his conflict-oriented conceptual/theoretical framework has only partly elucidated. The issues involved in this complex problematic are many, and an adequate response to them must involve sociological and historical analyses of the kind Touraine's work on democracy has initiated. After our extended study of the affinities and parallels between Touraine's social theory and Ricoeur's philosophy, however, there is good reason to think that Ricoeurian themes and problematics could offer some valuable interpretive frameworks for such analysis. To conclude the dialogue between Touraine and Ricoeur, therefore, I will briefly indicate some of the avenues of analysis suggested by one of the key themes we have identified in Ricoeur's more communicatively-oriented hermeneutical philosophy.

An adequate treatment of the linguistic dimensions of the constitution of the subject and social relations, we have seen, was the most significant absence in Touraine's theoretical framework. Language was not entirely absent from his theoretical constructions; as we noted earlier, in his first theoretical synthesis, it was a core component of the capacity of societies to create themselves.

Yet it received virtually no elaboration in that work, or any since. Touraine's neglect of this theme is all the more notable in that it goes against a significant trend in twentieth century philosophy and sociology. In philosophy, the 'linguistic turn' was widespread and multi-faceted, encompassing Wittgenstein, Heidegger and hermeneutics more generally, as well as structuralism and post structuralism, and its influence on sociology was marked. We have already noted the interest of postmodernists in the theme, but it was also a significant presence in the work of a number of the agency theorists of the nineteen seventies.

From Touraine's conflict-oriented perspective, however, it seems that all variants on the theme of the linguisticality of experience are suspect, above all because they seem to him to misread the nature of subjectivity by giving it a too harmonious character. Yet as we have seen, one of the most significant contributions of features of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics has been a thematisation of the creative potential of language and the agency involved in its actualisation which challenges all interpretations of linguistic determination. More particularly, he identified the narrative as the structure of language which is fundamental to human experience, and structures the constitution of identities and institutions. Ricoeur's analyses of both dimensions have clear application to the analysis of democracy. Here I will consider some of the ways in which his conception of narrative identity opens up new avenues of analysis in relation to the particular difficulties we have identified in Touraine's analysis of the collective identities which help sustain democracies.

In our consideration of narrative identity earlier, we were concerned with personal identity. Ricoeur insists, however, that the concept can be applied to groups as much as individuals. Like individual identities, 'the identity of a group, culture, people or nation is not that of an immutable substance, nor that of a fixed structure, but, rather, that of a recounted story.'[64] The first conclusion to be drawn from this observation is that a narrative collective identity exhibits the same dialectic of idem-identity and ipse-identity that characterises personal identity. From this starting point, however, a number of more specific interpretive and analytical applications stem.

Firstly, the distinction between idem- and ipse- identity provides criteria for distinguishing between exclusionary and aggressive, and open and tolerant

forms of collective identity. From this point of view, for example, harmful forms of national identity are those in which distinctive traits are separated from the specificities of history and geography, and seen in terms of an immutable and innate national 'character.' Such frozen collective memories, Ricoeur argues, give rise to intransigent nationalisms, while defensible modes recognise the fact that every transmitted history is open to, and, more importantly, stands in need of, ongoing revision, particularly when cultural or material conditions change.

Secondly, the idea of narrative identity could make an important contribution in relation to the central but still under-theorised issue of the internal structure of collective identities. One of the most important developments in contemporary debates is the emphasis that is being put on the *multiple* strands internal to collective identity. Some suggestive, but far from conclusive, work has been done on the components of the collective identities characteristic of contemporary societies. S.N. Eisenstadt for instance argues that collective identities contain 'primordial,' 'civic' and 'sacred' components.[65] Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity does not contribute directly to the debate over the merits of this particular delineation of the multiple strands of collective identity. It does, however, provide a productive perspective on the ways in which such multiple strands are integrated. To pursue this line of thought would be to focus attention on the narratives in which the components are connected, to recognise the potential for tensions between them, and above all, to stress the open-endedness of the story into which they are integrated.

Finally, Ricoeur's analysis of narrative identity also has some ethico/political implications that are pertinent to Touraine's analysis of democracy. In the first place, to recognise the narrative structure of collective identities is to foreground the possibility of re-orienting destructive forms. Ricoeur's analysis suggests that it is always possible to reinterpret once fixed narratives, and in the process generate new and less destructive interpretations of the past. Such reinterpretations are best achieved, his analysis suggests, by shifting the focus from the past to the future.[66] More generally, the idea of a narrative identity suggests that a political identity is defensible insofar as it recognises the danger of being petrified in such a way that both disregards others and their traditions, and canonises one 'orthodox' interpretation.[67]

These considerations are clearly only a small part of the analysis of the forms of collective identity which could sustain democratic life in the present historical conjuncture. However, they are, I hope to have shown, a concrete indication of some ways in which Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy could extend and deepen the highly productive new avenues of analysis thrown up by Touraine's recent social theory. I would like, finally, to close the conversation between the two by reiterating that the lines of development Ricoeur's work has suggested are not foreign to Touraine's project but would, rather, constitute a furthering of it; above all, Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics, I hope to have shown, are consonant with the importance Touraine attaches to social and cultural conflict as a source of social creativity. The dialogue we have constructed between Touraine and Ricoeur has revealed a number of striking affinities between the two thinkers, and many points at which their analyses intersect. Underlying these specific points of contact, however, is a more profound connection; linking the social theory of the one, and the philosophy of the other is the shared aim to expand the possibilities for human creativity and self-determination in the contemporary world, and an unwavering critical appraisal of the manifold political, social and cultural obstacles to their realisation.

Notes

1 J. Arnason, "Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity," *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1990, pp. 207-236, p. 21.

2 Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, p. 236.

3 Touraine, *What is Democracy?*

4 Touraine, *Can We Live Together?*

5 I would, of course, argue that the impoverishment of Touraine's analyses within this less hermeneutical framework confirms the central argument I have been making. A couple of points are worth noting. Firstly, Touraine's shift away from the problematic of *Critique of Modernity* results in a more streamlined, but less theoretically penetrating account of the distinct configurations within modernity. Touraine still identifies three main configurations, but his periodization has changed, and his new narrative of 'high', 'middle' and 'low' modernity gives a different slant to the predominant characteristics of each period. (The translation of the terms 'haute', 'moyenne' and 'basse' as early, mid- and late modernity loses the implicit evaluative references of the original. The implication of decline that is

contained in the idea of low modernity is clearly the central theme of Touraine's analysis. I will use the alternative translations of high, middle and late.) High modernity is more rationalist than early modernity was; the 'classical' conception of modernity is now taken to be representative of this period (Touraine, *Can We Live Together?*, p. 123). Middle modernity is still held together by the idea of progress, but now incorporates the period of fragmentation, and the dissociation of the international economy and the nation-state is now seen to have begun earlier (*ibid.*, p. 126). Low modernity covers the era characterized in the earlier work as the near complete crisis of modernity, it is characterized by the divorce between the international market and cultural identities, and the decline of institutions and in some formulations, of the nation-state (*ibid.*, p. 132). However, in the new typology Touraine no longer defines the configurations of modernity in terms of concrete traditions, and as he has withdrawn from his culture-oriented approach, his analysis has become more contradictory. There are contradictions evident, for example, in his general statements about modernity. His diagnosis of contemporary societies is largely unchanged—the most conspicuous development affecting them is the breaking of the links which bound together economy and culture, and personal freedom and collective efficacy (*ibid.*, p. 25)—but Touraine sees these societies, both, as representing the decline and decomposition of modernity (through his new leitmotif of the idea of demodernization), and as the most the most advanced form of modernity (*ibid.*, p. 130).

Secondly, his analysis of the subject also becomes less productive and more contradictory as it becomes less hermeneutical. The subject is still 'the individual's desire to be an actor', but it now is seen as the combination of instrumentality and identity, mediated by the principle of individuation (*ibid.*, p. 57). The most important shift in his analysis of the subject, as Touraine sees it, is a shift away from the idea of a personal subject to an 'empty' subject. More particularly, the subject now has 'no content other than its attempt to reconstruct the unity of labour and culture as it resists the pressures of both the market and communities' (*ibid.*, p. 83). But his more detailed analyses tend to go in two different directions. On the one hand, he radicalizes the Sartrean theme which emphasizes the break between the subject and social collectivities. The subject is 'nothing more than its assertion of its own freedom in the face of all social orders' (*ibid.*, p 74), and these include not only the market, but also the community. On the other hand, however, there is an alternative line of development which reveals a trace of his earlier hermeneutical treatment. The idea of the subject is, Touraine suggests, 'defined by two refusals which reveal its belonging to two opposed traditions' (*ibid.*, p. 86 trans-amended). His formulation here is a negative version of the argument put in *Critique of Modernity*: on the one hand, he refuses to identify the subject with

his or her works and social roles in the rationalist manner; on the other, he rejects the extreme religious stance which identifies the subject with the eternal soul (*ibid.*, p. 88). These refusals reveal that the idea of the subject belongs to the two conflicting traditions which occupied his analysis of cultural modernity in the earlier work: the tradition of reason, and the tradition of the subject. And he talks about the subject as a weak, but positive principle of integration in the contemporary period, at the same time as he argues that the subject is on the defensive (*ibid.*, p. 147).

These tensions and contradictions in *Can We Live Together?* are not signs of incoherence; they reflect, rather, the complexity of the historical situation Touraine is analyzing, and the multiple and divergent possibilities it contains. But an adequate theoretical approach must elucidate rather than merely reflect the contradictoriness of human life, most especially in times of change and confusion, and in this regard, *Can We Live Together?* does not represent a step forward. A number of the tensions and contradictions I have mentioned here were apparent, in a less extreme form in *Critique of Modernity*. but whereas the interpretative framework of the earlier work, although far from comprehensive, was rich enough to illuminate the tensions of late modernity, the effect of the shift away from the hermeneutical problematic has been to reduce these tensions to contradictions. The earlier work is not only the seminal text of Touraine's new theoretical approach; it has yet to be surpassed.

[6] Touraine insists that the processes involved are multi-faceted and often divergent. Far from leading to a single social space, they are intensifying the break up of modernity.

[7] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 12.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 124. He specifically endorses MacIntyre's explication of it. See A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London, Duckworth, 1985.

[9] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 351.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 191. This new attitude to communication is also reflected in his relation to hermeneutical thinkers. and Taylor's hermeneutical formulations, and cites Taylor (C. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in ed. A. Gutman, *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 25-73) as the source of the 'most forceful definition' of what this politics of recognition should mean.

[11] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 36.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 7.

[13] Touraine is not, of course, the only writer to arrive at this conclusion. For a similar analysis, see S. Eisenstadt, *Paradoxes of Democracy Fragility, Continuity and Change*, Washington, The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 1999.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 124.

[15] *Ibid*., pp. 14, 30. It is also, as Touraine sees it the best defence against "the moralising and normalising pressures of mass production, mass consumption and mass communication" that has equally threatened democracy in the twentieth century.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 45.

[17] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 334.

[18] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 46.

[19] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 331.

[20] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 54.

[21] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 331.

[22] The threat to democracy created by the absence of representativity, Touraine argues, stems from the subordination of social actors to political agents. This anti-democratic dynamic was exemplified in France's revolutionary political tradition, but it is also visible in the fate of socialism (the collapse of which resulted, according to Touraine, primarily from the subordination of the labour movement to a formerly revolutionary party that became the state itself), in the domination of political parties in Latin America, and, in the contemporary context, in the collapse in the developed democracies of parties which represent social classes. Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 54.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 330.

[24] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 70.

[25] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 64. With this principle of democracy, Touraine is further differentiating himself from liberalism. As Knöbl has noted, Touraine's conception of citizenship is based upon a conception of the subject as a social being; his idiosyncratic interpretation of the sociality of the subject is particularly conflictual, but it remains for Touraine unlike the liberal premise that citizens enter the political process with predetermined preferences, that knowledge of oneself and thus autonomy are gained in the private sphere before attempts are made in public to assert privately formed interests, that democratic participation is prerequisite for the process of individualisation. See Knöbl, "Social Theory from a Sartrean Point of View."

[26] *What is Democracy?*, p. 65.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 126.

[28] This reading is present in *What is Democracy?*, but is more pronounced in *Critique of Modernity*, where he traces the evolution of the idea of democracy There is a slight change in the chronology and terminology between the two accounts, but the essentials remains the same. In *Critique of Modernity*, this history runs from an initial idea of democracy, based on the idea of popular sovereignty, the idea of a social(ist) democracy serving the interests of the largest class, and a liberal concept

based on the defence of the rights of man, and in particular, human rights, the defence of minorities, and controls on State and economic power. The account given here is based upon the more systematic analysis in the latter work (*ibid*., p. 108).

[29] *Ibid*., p. 109.

[30] See for example, *ibid*., p. 34.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 46.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 61.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 22.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 117.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 23.

[36] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 330.

[37] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 79.

[38] *Ibid*., p. 79.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 81.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 80.

[41] Touraine, *Can We Live Together?*, p. 236.

[42] Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*, p. 327.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 330.

[44] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 66.

[45] *Ibid*., p. 27.

[46] Touraine, *Can We Live Together?*, p. 229.

[47] Touraine, *What is Democracy?*, p. 67.

[48] Touraine, *Can We Live Together?*, ch. 6.

[49] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*.

[50] H. Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jaovanovich, 1972, p. 143.

[51] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 7.

[52] It is discernable "only in its discontinuous irruptions onto the public stage when history is its most tumultuous." Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 197.

[53] *Ibid*., p. 258.

[54] *Ibid*., p. 257.

[55] Although Touraine would not disagree, he does not spell out, as Ricoeur does, the further corollary, that the question of prioritising the multiplicity of goods cannot be decided in a scientific procedural or dogmatic manner.

[56] Touraine, *What is Democracy*, p. 30.

[57] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, pp. 260-261.

[58] *Ibid*., p. 198.

[59] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 201.

[60] *Ibid*., p. 257.

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] Touraine, *What is Democracy*, p. 79.

[63] *Ibid*., p. 256.

[64] P. Ricoeur, "Reflections on a new ethos for Europe," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 21, no. 5/6, 1995, pp. 3-14, p. 6.

[65] See for example, S. Eisenstadt, "The Construction of Collective Identities. Some Analytical and Comparative Indications," *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 230-254.

[66] See B. Dauenhauer, *Paul Ricoeur. The Promise and Risk of Politics*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, p. 130.

[67] *Ibid*., p. 131.

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