

Against structure: a critique of morphogenetic social theory

Anthony King

Abstract

This article criticises the ontology of Margaret Archer's morphogenetic social theory, arguing that the concept of autonomous social structure on which she bases this social theory is contradictory. Against the ontological contradictions of Archer's work, the article tries to re-habilitate the interpretive tradition which Archer dismisses, showing that only this tradition provides a logically coherent and methodologically useful social ontology, which consists only of individuals and their social relations.

Introduction

Despite the academic prominence of Margaret Archer's work on social theory and on education, there has been a surprising paucity of critical commentary on her writing, even though, informally, it is widely acknowledged. Beyond reviews of her two major books in social theory (eg Giesen, 1997), there has been little significant published discussion of her work. At one level, the purpose of this article is to rectify that silence by providing a critical public commentary on Archer's writing in social theory, going some way towards balancing the informal acknowledgement of her contribution to sociology with the written and formal recognition of the importance of her work.

The central claim of Archer's morphogenetic social theory is to maintain a stratified social ontology. Society must be understood and analysed as the interaction over time of objective structure and individual, subjective agency or of the macro and the micro. In this claim of ontological dualism, Archer's morphogenetic social theory echoes the broader current of social theoretical thinking in the last decades of the twentieth century because it amounts, in the end, to

a long defence of a non-reductionist social ontology. Although its precise links and differences from those other approaches cannot be corroborated here,¹ it is worth noting that Archer herself has explicitly argued for the very close connection between her own morphogenetic approach and Bhaskar's critical realism (Archer 1995: 135–41, 157); and Bhaskar in turn, has argued that his 'Transformational Model of Social Activity' is compatible with Giddens' structuration theory (Bhaskar, 1993: 154). Thus, if we accept Bhaskar's interpretation of Giddens, the positions of three major British social theorists can be shown to have a broad 'family resemblance'. Yet, even if this resemblance between contemporary non-reductionist theorising were not accepted, the critique of Archer would still be relevant because of Archer's acknowledged position in social theory.

In contrast to the ontological assumptions of Archer's social theory (and, perhaps, a much wider style of thinking), this article will argue that once the implications of the interpretive tradition are considered more deeply, the notion of an objective social structure becomes unsustainable. However, this is no loss to social theory because the interpretive tradition is well capable of providing an explanation of the persistence of social institutions and of accounting for the manifest constraint which individuals face in their everyday interaction. Moreover, a critical consideration of the interpretive tradition reveals that the concept of structure, as an ontologically prior or autonomous realm, independent at some point from individual knowledge or activity, emerges as a metaphysical notion, and is only arrived at through the reification of (interpretive) relations between individuals. Consequently, the position which I am adopting here against Archer's non-reductionist morphogenesis echoes Randall Collins' reduction of macro sociology to its microfoundations (1981a, 1981b) and this article is, in effect, an attempt to apply Collins' arguments about micro-sociology to Archer's social theory.

Morphogenetic social theory

The origin of Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach lies in two articles, one by David Lockwood (1964) and one by William Buckley (1968), but although she derives the name for her ontological model of society from Buckley's article it is to Lockwood's article, 'Social Integration and System Integration', which she is

overwhelmingly indebted. Her morphogenetic approach is ultimately an extended elaboration of that article; a point which becomes particularly clear in her latest contribution to the agency-structure debate (1996). Following Lockwood's argument for a dualistic ontology of social integration, referring to individual (micro) relations, and system integration, which refers to the more objective, enduring and institutional (macro) structures of a society, the common thread running through all Archer's writings on social theory is her robust defence of the notion of a stratified social ontology. Social theorists have to see society as consisting of individuals and the more objective and permanent social institutions or, as Archer puts it (in admirably and typically unpretentious language), as the 'people' and the 'parts'. In particular, Archer insists on the temporal pre-existence of structure as a condition for individual action; 'structure pre-dates action leading to its reproduction or transformation' (1995: 15).

Although in her first book (Archer, 1988), Archer maintains that this temporal divide is only 'analytic' rather than ontological, in her second book (Archer, 1995) she commits herself more explicitly to ontological dualism, which is actually already implicit in the 'analytic' and temporal separation effected in the first book. After all, one of the major points in that first book was the rejection of any social theory which threatened to conflate society and the individual, or structure and agency. Announcing this more open commitment to ontological dualism, Archer writes;

Since theories are propositions containing concepts and since all concepts have their referents (pick out features held to belong to social reality), then there can be no social theory without an accompanying social ontology (implicit or explicit). (Archer, 1995: 12)

In this later work, Archer's social theory explicitly – rather than implicitly – assumes a dualistic social ontology, which consciously insists on the autonomy of the people and the parts, at certain moments in the social process. For instance, in a discussion of the debates between the so-called Collectivists and Individualists, Archer supports the Collectivists but believes that they have not gone far enough (Archer, 1996: 683–4): 'The irony of Collectivism was that whilst it defended the methodological indispensability of "structural factors", no overall conception of social structure was advanced ontologically' (Archer, 1996: 684). Archer believes that

the ontological pusillanimity of the Collectivists was due to the fact that they were operating under an empiricist paradigm. The emergence of a post-empiricist paradigm in the mid-1970s has, according to Archer, crucially allowed the claim about the ontological and not just methodological autonomy, priority and causality of certain aspects of society to be maintained (Archer, 1996: 685–7). Thus, following Bhaskar's claim that 'there is an ontological hiatus between society and people' (Bhaskar 1979: 46) and that 'while society exists only in virtue of human agency, and human agency (or being) always presupposes and expresses some or other definite social form, they cannot be reduced to or reconstructed from one another' (Bhaskar, 1986: 124), Archer proposes 'that it is fully justifiable to refer to structures (being irreducible to individuals or groups) as pre-existing them both' (Archer, 1995: 75).

This ontological division of society into the people and the parts, into social and system integration as Lockwood would call it, is seen as crucial to Archer because it ensures the preservation of two central aspects of social life, whereby individuals are substantially constrained by their society but can also transform it in certain ways. Archer illustrates this ontological dualism in the following way.

Structural conditioning

T1

Social interaction

T2

T3

Structural elaboration

T4 (Archer, 1995: 157)

Like her non-reductionist peers, such as Bhaskar, and, ironically given her criticisms of him, Giddens, Archer wants to preserve both structure and agency in order to remain true to what she calls the 'Janus-faced' nature of society with which she believes (wrongly, as I intend to show here) few can disagree (Archer, 1988: xii; 1995: 65–6). As a consequence of her insistence upon the dual nature of social reality, Archer is vehement in her rejection of any social theory which seems to threaten to collapse social reality into either the structural and objective or individual and subjective dimensions because these approaches will necessarily involve either the exaggeration or elimination of human freedom and the misrepresentation of the Janus-faced nature of society.

Consequently, Archer's writings consist extensively of refutations of other positions in social theory which she sees as making either

the objective or subjective aspect of society epiphenomenal to the other and Archer identifies three positions from which she differentiates her own realist-morphogenetic approach; the Collectivists, the Elisionists and the Individualists. Although Archer's critiques of the Collectivists (functionalism) and the Elisionists (Giddens)² are important, her critique of the Individualist position is finally crucial to Archer's whole theoretical project as she must refute the ontological implications of this position if she is to sustain the objective side of her morphogenetic approach. Her criticisms of the Individualist position must stick or the claims of ontological dualism on which the morphogenetic approach is predicated will be undermined.

The critique of Archer's critique of the individualists

Although the conflation of diverse sociologists, who are never cited directly, under a single neologism is a dubious practice³ since it raises the problem of the representativeness of the account of the social theorists which is being given, Archer does make it clear whom she means by the Individualists in certain passages.

Thus, for instance, the neo-phenomenological school asserts the primacy of agency by reducing the structural context of action to a series of intersubjectively negotiated constructs. (Archer, 1995: 84)

However, in viewing entities such as social institutions as purely dramatic conventions which depended upon co-operative acts of agents in sustaining a particular definition of the situation, Symbolic Interactionists in particular elided 'structure' and agency . . . (Archer, 1995: 60)

It is clear from these quotations that by Individualists Archer refers to the interpretive tradition in the form of the writings of Blumer's symbolic interactionism, Garfinkel's ethnomethodology and Goffman's dramaturgical model of social interaction, although she never once cites a single line from any of their extensive writings.

In place of any such precise textual critique, Archer adopts a more analytical approach, which is intended to undermine the interpretive tradition at a fundamental level and therefore, at a level which is common to all of its practitioners. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in this analytical approach since it operates with

clarity and simplicity, ensuring that discussion is limited to the really serious differences between social theories. However, the shortcoming of Archer's approach is that by generalising the position of her opponents, there is a risk that she will mis-represent them, building her own position, in opposition to what is, in the end, a straw man. Below, I will try to show that she is guilty of exactly this error with regard to the interpretive tradition.

There are two major claims which Archer makes against the interpretive tradition. Firstly, Archer claims that by reducing society to individuals and their interactions, the interpretive tradition ignores the past and therefore the constraint which the past inevitably imposes upon individuals in the present. It is, consequently, guilty of upward conflation where everything social is the result of individuals and their practices in the present.

In the past debate and in the present vacillations we are examining, it seems that the root of confusion lies in an over precipitous and quite unnecessary leap from the truistic proposition 'No people: no society' to the highly questionable assertion, 'this society; because of these people here present' (Archer, 1995: 141)

According to Archer, the signal error of the interpretive, 'individualist' tradition is to make an unsustainable leap from the correct and self-evident claim that society is dependent upon individuals, to the deeply problematic assertion that therefore, any social form is dependent upon the individuals living in society in the present. Archer correctly claims that Individualists would insist on reducing everything to individuals as is revealed explicitly in the writings of Randall Collins (1981a, 1981b) and Norbert Elias (1978).

All varieties of macro-structure can be translated into these kinds of aggregations of micro-events. (Collins, 1981b: 988)

Society, often placed in mental contraposition to the individual, consists entirely of individuals, oneself among them. Concepts like 'family' or 'school' plainly refer to groupings of interdependent human beings to specific figurations which people form with each other. But our traditional manner of forming these concepts makes it appear as if these groupings formed by interdependent human beings were pieces of matter. (Elias, 1978: 13)

However, she is wrong to say that the interpretive approach reduces everything to living individuals, denying the influence of the pre-

existing social conditions and traditions. On the contrary, the interpretive tradition is well aware of the historical derivation of the meanings by which individuals frame their world; the typifications of which Schutz talks are exactly these historically derived and publicly produced ideas. For the interpretive tradition the past is the meaningfully produced social relations between (now dead) individuals which have an impact on the present through the actions and interpretations of living individuals. The interpretive tradition does reduce society to people (both living and dead), but not to 'these people here present'.

Although the significance of this misrepresentation of the interpretive approach will be discussed later, it can be set aside here, for Archer's key second objection is that by reducing everything to individuals, the Individualists ignore the structural, objective aspects of society which pre-exist and constrain individual practice. Crucially, if the Individualists are to sustain their micro-reduction of macro phenomena to individuals and their interactions, then the Individualists have to refute three features of structure, each of which Archer believes to be irrefutable.

Demonstrating that the social context is epiphenomenal is a methodological task which entails showing that every reference to it in explanations of social life (and no one wishes to deny that we are influenced by our social environment) actually refers to 'other people' (under the 'inflated' description particular to the Individualists). Specifically, this means showing that, in relation to people, social structure is not: (i) autonomous or independent, (ii) pre-existent, (iii) causally efficacious. Collectivists have argued that they fail on all three counts and their arguments are persuasive. (Archer 1995: 42-3).

If the Individualist or interpretive approach can demonstrate that social structure has none of these properties and is reducible to individuals – to other people – in all cases, then the morphogenetic approach is undermined because the central point of Archer's entire project is the maintenance of a stratified social ontology

The priority and autonomy of structure

Although Archer suggests that there are three claims about structure which the Individualists must refute – structure's autonomy, its

pre-existence and its causal power – in fact, the first two points are analytically inseparable. If something is temporally pre-existent it must necessarily also be autonomous for it cannot pre-exist something upon which it is dependent. As Archer emphasises in numerous places it is the temporal priority of structure from action which renders structure necessarily autonomous of subsequent agency. Therefore, it is logical to argue against the notion of the autonomy and the pre-existence of social structure simultaneously.

In the critique of the Individualists' putative presentism, Archer accepts as a truism, the claim: 'No people: no society'. There cannot be anything social or a society where there are no individuals or individual interactions and practices. However, although Archer accepts this premise as self-evident, as everyone must since to argue otherwise would be to maintain that society could metaphysically exist without individuals, she argues that there is something more to all these individuals and their interactions, which constitutes society and of which sociologists have to be aware; namely, structure, which pre-exists and is autonomous of individuals: 'Structures (as emergent entities) are not only irreducible to people, they pre-exist them' (Archer, 1995:71). There is a fine theoretical line to be traversed here because Archer has to argue plausibly that out of the sum of social interactions some social structural-properties are produced which are different from and in some sense, autonomous and prior to individual action without falling foul of the truism 'no people: no society' by claiming metaphysically that there are aspects of society which exist without individuals.

Archer has fully recognised the metaphysical dangers inherent in claiming that society cannot be understood simply in terms of the interaction of individuals but believes that there are certain objective features of society which are, nevertheless, beyond any individual's knowledge or practice. According to Archer, Gellner hinted at the existence of these objective and autonomous social properties which were based in individual practice but more than them but, under the empiricist paradigm in which he wrote, admitted to feeling a certain 'sheepishness' at suggesting the real existence of certain properties beyond the individual.

The origins of this 'sheepishness' are important for they were responsible for withholding full ontological status from 'societal properties' for decades. Tentativeness is rooted in two spectres of reification and the seeming difficulty of affirming the existence of 'societal properties' without invoking one of them. The first was

J.S. Mill's old fear, namely that to acknowledge emergence was to countenance the existence of a new 'social substance'. The second was that talk about 'societal properties' was also to talk about things produced or generated by Society, independently of the activities of people. (Archer, 1996: 685; also 1995: 47–8)

Archer is well aware that to insist that society cannot be understood solely in terms of individuals is to skirt dangerously close to reifying metaphysics. However, for Archer, there is a crucial way in which she can sustain her claim for the ontological duality of society, without invoking a bad Cartesian dualism, where society is of a different substance and completely external to the individual. For Archer, the concept of emergence performs this crucial theoretical function of allowing society to be given its properly objective character, while still locating that objectivism within the practices of individuals and by appealing to emergence, ontological dualism can be postulated without any sheepishness. Emergence allows the social theorists to tread that fine line between recognising that certain aspects of society are not reducible to the individual even though these aspects of society are still rooted in individual practice. Thus, emergent properties allow Archer to implement Mandelbaum's dictum, which she cites, that 'one need not hold that a society is an entity independent of all human beings in order to hold that societal facts are not reducible to individual behaviour' (Mandelbaum, 1973: 230).

Moreover, and of especial importance here, emergent properties, although rooted in individual practice are more than those practices or individuals and cannot be reduced to other people. She is adamant on this point. 'The effects of emergent properties are not those of "other people" and reification is not involved in saying so' (Archer, 1995: 148). Archer's concern for the existence of emergent properties is well placed, for, if emergent properties can be 'incorporated into "other people" in typical Individualist fashion' (Archer, 1995: 147), then the distinctiveness of the morphogenetic approach is undermined. If emergence is only other people, then, despite its polemic against the interpretive approach, the morphogenetic approach will be forced into accepting an interpretive ontology. Either that, or go over to the metaphysical side, which Archer explicitly recognises as unconscionable. I want to demonstrate that in every case, appeals to emergentism can be reduced to the practices of other people, located at other places and times, and that, therefore, the morphogenetic approach cannot defend itself from collapsing back into an interpretive ontology.

The term emergence was originally employed in the philosophy of science where it referred to the chemical process whereby the combination of certain molecules produced a new compound which has entirely different characteristics from any of the original molecules. Thus water is a completely different substance from either hydrogen or oxygen. Similarly, Archer argues that the actions of individuals in society produce certain 'structural' features which are emergent; they are more than the sum of the interactions or individuals of which they are comprised. In Archer's writing there are three main types of emergent property; the structural, the cultural⁴ and the agential (Archer, 1995: 175).⁵ Although cultural emergence is important to Archer's writing and is the focus of *Culture and Agency*, I will not discuss it here since my focus is specifically on structure. Agential emergent properties will not be discussed for that same reason, but also because these agential emergent properties are unconvincing. On the one hand, agential emergence refers simply to the fact that groups of individuals produce properties which are different from any single individual, in which case it is difficult to see how they are different from structural emergent properties. On the other hand, agential emergence refers to the fact that individuals can learn new things to transform themselves and their practices. That is, certainly true but it does not seem to have any bearing the defence of ontological dualism. Consequently, I want to focus on structural emergent properties out of which social structure putatively emerges. In Archer's writing, structural emergent properties are further divided into, numerical, relational and bureaucratic social phenomenon in which emergence is displayed. Thus, as an example of a purely numerical emergent property, Archer employs demographic structure (Archer, 1995: 143–4; 1996: 683) and the literacy rate in Castro's Cuba (Archer, 1982: 468–70, 1995: 76–9, 143), while she uses the example of Adam Smith's division of labour to illustrate a relational emergent property (eg Archer, 1995:51; 1996: 686) and the example of the official role to highlight bureaucratic emergence (Archer, 1995: 43).⁶

I want to discuss all three types of structural emergence – numerical, relational and bureaucratic – in order to demonstrate that all appeals to emergent properties in Archer's writing can be reduced to 'other people' and that they do not demonstrate the autonomy, priority or causality of structure. Since Archer employs the Castro example a number of times as evidence of numerical emergence and discusses it at the greatest length, it must, in her eyes, be a particularly good example of this kind of emergence and

so it is this example on which I will concentrate. Although Archer calls it the 'Castro example', in fact, the example only employs the historical specificities of post-revolutionary Cuba in the briefest way. Archer re-works the example in an abstract way, adding certain hypothetical assumptions, which are intended to illustrate her point with particular clarity. Thus, she hypothesises that the initial rate of literacy in Castro's Cuba might have been either 5, 15 or 25 per cent, that it takes one year to become literate and that the final literacy rate is 95 per cent (Archer, 1982: 468). From these three hypothetical figures she develops a graph which plots the growth of literacy over time and which has three separate lines, indicating the different take-up rates given the differing initial percentage of literates (5, 15 or 25 per cent) (Archer, 1982: 469). When there are initially only 5 per cent literates, it takes 5 years for Cuban society to become literate, when 15 per cent, 3 years and when 25 per cent only 2 years.

Archer's figures are arbitrary but they are designed to demonstrate the idea of numerical emergence in the clearest of ways. The differing rates of growth in literacy are intended to demonstrate definitively that prior structural conditions – literacy in this case – have persistence into the present: 'It takes time to change any structural properties and that period represents one of constraint for some groups at least' (Archer, 1982: 469). The social conditions which confront individuals and the speed with which they can change them are independent of them. The only way individuals, living in Cuban society with an initial literacy rate of 5 per cent, can transform this condition in two years is to work harder and teach more than person. Thus, Archer argues:

those who were literate initially were not responsible for their distribution in the population; this group property resulted from the restrictive educational policies of others, probably long dead. Here it appears impossible to follow the methodological individualist and assert that any structural property influential after T2 is attributable to contemporary actors (not wanting or not knowing how to change it), because knowledge about it, attitudes towards it, vested interests in retaining it and objective capacities for changing it have already been distributed and determined by T2. (Archer, 1982: 470)

The reference to T2 refers the reader back to the three-tier diagram (Archer, 1982: 468; on p. 202 in this text). The structure (or

'structural conditioning') – literacy rates in pre-Castro Cuba – which exists at T1 on her three-tier model, pre-exists the intervention of actors at T2 which intervention (called 'Social Interaction, on the model and lasting until T3) produces structural elaboration at T4. Archer is certainly right to argue that the past has an influence over possible actions in the present, although she is wrong, as we have already discussed, to argue that the interpretive tradition ignores the past. However, the point of this example is not just to prove that the past is important but, against the interpretivist micro-reduction, to insist that this past consists of structural emergent properties which are prior, autonomous and determining and which are not reducible to other people (see quotation on p. 207 here, Archer, 1995: 147, 148). For Archer, the literacy rate in Cuba is structural and emergent because it has persistence into the present, whatever living individuals think. It is therefore structural because it is not reducible to individual belief or activity.

Yet, with an irony which escapes her, Archer herself demonstrates that these putatively autonomous and prior structural conditions are exactly only 'other people'. In her discussion of the transformation of the Cuban literacy rate between the period T2 and T3, individuals act to transform the emergent structural conditions which confront them and they consequently transform the literacy rate to produce 'structural elaboration' at T4. This structural elaboration, in fact, constitutes (new) structure for subsequent generations and is a theoretical, though not an actual return to T1, where the whole process begins again, and where individuals again face emergent, structural conditions which are independent of them. However, as Archer's discussion of 'Social Interaction' between T2 and T3 reveals, all that occurs there is that individuals interact with other individuals, teaching them to read, which instruction taken together, produces a completely new social condition; namely the literacy of Cuban society. Thus, T4, the putative moment of structural elaboration where a new structure, which is not reducible to other people, confronts Cubans, is brought about only by individuals interacting between T2 and T3 and is just the new ways of interacting which are developing between those individuals: in this case, literacy. Thus, on Archer's own account of social reality, the 'structure' which living individuals face, and which is supposed to be irreducible to other people is in fact, only these very other people interacting in the past. Archer is correct to claim that the structural conditions which confront individuals born into now literate Cuban society after T4 are independent of them but her own description freely admits and dis-

cusses at some length that these structural conditions are just other people in the past, who have learnt to read. Archer's own model presupposes an interpretivist ontology which insists that social conditions are only other people. Archer ontologises time so that the actions of other people in the past, which she accepts and describes as individual action while they are happening, suddenly become structural once they have receded into history and irreducible to anybody even though they are plainly, on Archer's own account, the interactions of other people in the past. Archer converts the temporal priority of other people's actions into the ontological priority and autonomy of structure.

Although quantitative emergence can be reduced to other people, and indeed, is nothing but other people, as Archer at certain key moments presumes, there is a second form of structural emergent property to which Archer refers and which might allow her appeal to structure in the form of emergent properties to be sustainable, 'relational' emergent properties (1996:685–6). Relational emergent properties refer to social phenomena in which individuals through interacting in new ways produce a novel social context which now confronts them all and is independent of any one of them. The notion of relational emergence is undoubtedly Archer's strongest argument for emergence because it is true that social situations confront everybody and they are not reducible to anybody alone. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that relational social situations are emergent and irreducible to other people since they confront these others as well. Drawing on the post-empiricist paradigm (not available to Gellner) to justify her ontological dualism, Archer describes these emergent properties:

Instead of one-dimensional reality coming to us through the 'hard-data' supplied by the senses, to speak of 'emergence' implies a stratified social world including non-observable entities, where reductive talk about its ultimate constituents makes no sense, given that the relational properties pertaining to each stratum are all real, that it is nonsense to discuss whether something (like water) is more real than something else (like hydrogen and oxygen). (Archer, 1996: 686)

Thus, with reference to social life, although individuals are certainly real, it is pointless trying to reduce the analysis of social phenomena to each of these individuals, since the combination of these individuals' activities constitutes a different social reality.

In order to demonstrate this phenomenon of relational emergence, Archer employs the example of Adam Smith's division of labour.

Thus the increased productivity of Adam Smith's pin-makers was a power emergent from their division of labour (relations of production) and not reducible to personal qualities like increased dexterity which did not account for the hundred fold increase in output (mass production), i.e. the relational effect. (Archer, 1996: 686)

It is certainly true that the division of labour in Adam Smith's famous example cannot be explained by reference to any particular individual in the workshop. The signal transformation which Smith highlighted was that the process of pin-production was a form of specialized collaboration between individuals. Thus, it is more than any one particular individual and their function in the division of labour and is not explicable in terms of any single individual, working as a craftsman in the past. As Archer says, it is not reducible to an individual's dexterity. Unlike craft production, this division of labour is substantially autonomous from each individual who works in it, even though they contribute to it. Archer concludes that since every individual is confronted by this division of labour which is not reducible to any particular individual, the division of labour is emergent; it is autonomous and prior to individuals working in it. Archer has noted something important about social life here but has mis-described it. It is true that the social situation cannot be reduced to any particular individual for the social situation by definition involves more than one person and is a collaborative and mutual creation. Moreover, since the social situation is substantially produced by others, it confronts each individual (including those others who are faced by a situation created by me) as an autonomous entity. However, although Archer is correct to say that the division of labour (or any other social context) cannot be reduced to *an* individual, it must be necessarily reducible to all the individuals in that context mutually interacting to create that situation. Thus, Adam Smith's division of labour cannot be reduced to any one individual in the workshop for this division of labour refers exactly to all the individuals working at the different stages of pin-production. Each one is confronted by a substantially autonomous reality, of which they are part for others. Thus the needle-sharpener is part of the autonomous reality of the division of labour for the

eye-maker, just as the eye-maker is, in turn, part of the substantially autonomous reality of the division of labour for the needle-sharpener; no autonomous reality ever looks the same for two people since it comprises different others. However, the division of labour taken together, although not reducible to the eye-maker or the needle-sharpener, is reducible to all the workers on the shop-floor, who together create a mutual social situation. That mutual situation is more than any one of them but it is not emergent from or irreducible to all of them. It is very precisely all of the individuals working in the division of labour and to say otherwise is to misdescribe social reality, creeping unwittingly toward social metaphysics, where social life is described by reference to an entity beyond everyone. The division of labour consists of other people, which means that it is substantially autonomous of each individual, but not more than all of them.

The interpretivist tradition is no way arguing that this new division of labour can be understood through dis-aggregating the division of labour back to its molecular constituents – the individual craftsmen or individual readers. This approach fully recognises the qualitative novelty of this situation but that newness resides precisely in the new relations between individuals. In arguing this, the interpretive tradition is not reducing the social situation to *the* individual (in the singular) but only recognising that social situations are collaborations which cannot be understood except in terms of everyone – all the other people – involved in them. Arguing for the irreducibility and emergence of the social situation threatens to reify the new relations between individuals into something that is more than all of them. Archer wrongly deduces from the two premises that social conditions confront everyone and are substantially independent of anyone that therefore, they are, at some emergent point, independent of everyone acting together. She misses the fact that reality is social and that its very defining feature is its collaborative and mutual nature where collaboration between people, although having special properties irreducible to any one individual, is very precisely only the relations between individuals. Social conditions are thus independent of any individual, as an individual, but they are not more than all the individuals considered together in their social relations. Thus, both cases of numerical and relational emergent properties can be explained in terms of other people, while appeals to autonomous structures are simply errors of description when what is actually just other people at a different time or place, or other people creating new social situations (which then confront

them) by performing new practices is taken to be evidence of some social development which is autonomous of everybody both now and in the past. In neither the case of numerical nor relational emergence can the morphogenetic approach prevent the micro-reduction of structure to other people.

However, besides these emergent properties, Archer also employs a third set of structural emergent properties, which might defend the morphogenetic ontology, when she refers to the quasi-objective social properties that are demonstrated by bureaucracies, which although dependent on the officials who work in them, seem to have an existence which transcends these officials. Bureaucracies often persist beyond the life-time of an official and they have an overwhelming determination over the officials employed in them. Trying to demonstrate this autonomous and prior (emergent) property of bureaucracy, Archer draws on the example of roles which cannot be reduced to interpersonal relations because they exist before the individual and give the individual powers not inherent to that person but are invested in the role.

Roles, as Collectivists have often pointed out, are more important for understanding what is going on between landlords and tenants or bank cashiers and customers than their relations as persons. Moreover, the role has to be granted some autonomy from its occupants or how else do we explain the similar actions of a succession of incumbents, or that when promoted to bank manager our original cashier now acts quite differently? (Archer, 1995: 43)

For Archer, the existence of social roles whereby any individual conforms to certain expected and previously arranged social conventions is definitive evidence of the autonomy and pre-existence of the social structure. It is true that when a clerk becomes a bank manager, they behave in fundamentally different ways and have different powers. It is also true that the post or role of bank manager preceded the promotion of any clerk to that role. Consequently, Archer concludes there is some social role and by extension a structure which pre-dates the individual clerk. Yet this example does not prove the existence of roles or structures that pre-dates all individuals and their actions. Though the role of bank-manager to which a cashier is promoted certainly pre-dates that particular individual, it does not and cannot pre-date all individuals working in that bank. Rather, the role of bank-manager

has been intersubjectively created in the past and is re-created in the present by individuals in the bank who assign a particular set of functions to a particular individual whom they term the manager. The role of bank-manager exists before the individual who fills it but only insofar as individuals in the past and in the present recognise that role and have a certain set of understandings and expectations about what an individual given that role is to do. What structures an individual's practices in that role is not the role itself but rather the intersubjectively created notion of what that role is. The individual filling that role is not imposed upon by some prior existent structure independent of any individuals, although it is independent of that promoted clerk, but by the understandings and expectations of individuals who have worked and who now work in the bank and who understand what is required of a manager if the bank is not to go out of business.

Those expectations and understandings are uneven, depending on other individuals' perspectives on the role from their position in this bank and they are under constant negotiation; thus the role is open to change, subversion and liquidation. However, the powers and functions of a particular role can never be separate from somebody's definition of that role even though that definition and the powers that definition gives might be disputed or even ignored by some. Roles, therefore, have a determination over social action, they precede the particular occupants and they might be rejected, ignored or not even known about by many individuals. However, none of this is evidence of the autonomy and emergence of roles. They must be known about, understood and embodied by somebody or they would not exist, although who understands their role and gives them their power is a diverse and complex empirical problem. They are not reducible to an individual but they are reducible to some individuals who define and recognise and, therefore, create these roles in complex and negotiated ways.⁷

Although Archer overtly and rightly rejects any appeal to metaphysical social substances, her insistence that roles are autonomous and prior to all individuals (and not just the individual who comes to occupy that position) leads her to contradicting the self-evident premise, which she, herself, accepts, 'No people: no society'. For, if the role's autonomy and priority from the person that fills it is taken as evidence that it cannot be reduced to individuals, then the role must be beyond all individuals. Either she must accept the Individualist position that roles, committees and other bureaucratic structures are simply other people at other times and places or she

commits herself to the absurd claim – which she recognises as such – that roles can exist independently of anyone. Since the above discussion is intended to demonstrate that roles can be fully understood in terms of individuals as long as we take a wide enough perspective so as to include all those individuals, in other times and places, who create a role and not just to the individual who fills that role, then such a reduction to ‘other people’ has no voluntaristic implications. In all cases, the way to rescue ourselves from the metaphysical contradiction of the ‘No people: no society’ truism is to accept the interpretivist premise that society can always be reduced to other people and that the concept of emergence or structure appears only when the social theorist takes too narrow a view of social reality, focussing on too few individuals in the present or past, concluding that because the social conditions are independent of these particular individuals (here present), that they are structural and emergent, autonomous of everyone. In every case, the danger of emergent properties disappearing is real, as Archer feared, for they can always be reduced to other people, unless it is claimed that emergence refers to some metaphysical aspect of society.

The solipsistic error

Archer has failed to prove the autonomy and priority of social structure which in every case can be reduced to other people and instead Archer commits herself unknowingly to sociological metaphysics at crucial moments in her argument. It is important to consider why she makes such a signal error, especially given her overt opposition to any form of sociological metaphysics. In certain parts of her text, the reason for her error emerges. As we have seen, Archer claims that few can disagree that social reality is Janus-faced (Archer, 1995: 65–6; also Archer, 1988: xii) because, according to Archer, society self-evidently comprises structure and agency. For Archer, the self-evidence of society’s dualistic ontology is demonstrated by an examination of one’s personal biography which reveals that ‘we are simultaneously free and constrained and we also have some awareness of it’ (Archer 1995: 2). Indeed, Archer believes that this issue of the freedom and constraint is not just academic but faces every individual (Archer, 1995: 65). For Archer, this universal experience of freedom and constraint demonstrates the existence both of free individual agents and prior, objective social conditions which frame and constrain that agency.

Intuitively, Archer's appeal to personal biography to sustain this claim about the Janus-faced nature of society seems wholly reasonable. It is clear that, as an individual, I am free to make certain choices but constrained by wider social contexts (which actually heavily inform even the kinds of choices I can even imagine). Since this biographical premise is self-evident, Archer assumes that her conclusion – that therefore society is Janus-faced, comprising structure and agency – is also self-evident; as she says, 'few would dispute it'. Yet, the conclusion does not follow. As I have argued, the social context can only be other people, at other times and places. The key error which Archer makes in her derivation of social structure is to draw the sociological conclusion of the existence of a social structure from the perspective of a single individual (and, in particular, the perspective of an individual's knowledge of their freedom and constraint). Archer's ontology is originally founded in the perspective of a single individual and this one commonsensical perspective is then drawn upon as the grounds for ontological conclusions. Because I know I have no say over the conditions of my actions, the social conditions of action are independent of anyone and exist autonomously. Archer has made a solipsistic error where she hypostatizes the experience of an individual to derive sociological conclusions. If she had de-centred her perspective to see that the constraint which I face is other individuals – and no less serious for that – just as I form some of the social conditions which mutually constrains these others, she would not have fallen into ontological dualism. Despite her claim that the interpretivist tradition is 'Individualist', it is, in fact, her position which is irretrievably individualist.

Archer's fundamental individualism and, indeed, solipsism is especially highlighted in her discussion of the self (Archer, 1995). Against Durkheim's claim that self-identity is given to the individual by society and therefore the individual is always and everywhere a product of and dependent upon society, Archer insists that certain elements of the self are prior to and separate from society: 'I will use three arguments to rebut the contrary view that our humanity itself is a social gift, in order to maintain that the sense of the self, which has been shown to be essential to social life, cannot be derived from life in society' (Archer, 1995: 285). She appeals to the fact that each individual is located in a discrete body which ensures their individuality (Archer, 1995: 286) but, much more importantly and interestingly, she argues (following Kant) that at a certain point we must have an autonomous self in order to become social beings.

human beings are born into an undifferentiated world such that the primary task has to be the differentiation of objects, meaning that the distinguishing of social objects cannot be a predicate but only a derivative of a general human capacity to make distinctions – including it was maintained, the crucial one between ‘myself’ and the rest of the world. (Archer, 1995: 286)

The self is at some level autonomous and prior to social interaction because the self has to be able to distinguish itself from its environment. That ability to distinguish cannot be derived externally because the ability to distinguish itself from the rest of the world is crucial to there being a world with which the self can interact in the first place. Thus, Archer explicitly returns to the philosophical traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and, in particular, to the philosophies of Locke and Kant (Archer, 1995: 289) by positing a notion of an individual subject who exists before social interaction and who makes society possible.

Already, in having argued that a sense of self is *a priori* to recognizably social action and to the personal recognition of social responsibilities, a gap has been introduced between self and society. (Archer, 1995: 289–90)

In addition to defining ‘personal identity in a neo-Lockean and Kantian manner, as the body plus sufficient continuity of consciousness’ (Archer, 1995: 289), Archer tries to widen this gap between the self and society by arguing that we have non-social experience of the natural world (Archer, 1995: 290–1). She argues that we have to eat and this putatively unmediated and directly biological encounter with nature ‘from our first day’ produces dispositions in us which frame our social experience; ‘cumulative experiences of our environment will foster propensities, capacities and aversions which sift the social practices we later seek or shun’ (Archer, 1995: 291).

Besides the biological essentialism of her final claim, where she asserts a direct and culturally unmediated relationship with a primordial nature, this notion of the self as a prior and pre-social monad has been consistently rejected in sociological thought where the *a priori* individual is seen to be the product of social interaction and public language use (see, for instance, Parsons, 1966). The Kantian subject, the Transcendental Unity of Apperception, is not a logically-derived and timeless self but, on the contrary, as Hegel’s critique pointed out, an irretrievably historically located one.

Although I would reject Archer's notion of the self, in line with sociological tradition, the purpose of discussing Archer's idea of the self here is not to establish a coherent notion of the self for social theory but only to demonstrate that her focus is individualistic and her primary social vision is of a single individual, confronted by an external social reality, rather than interacting networks of individuals. It is exactly that individualistic vision which ensures that she confuses the past literacy rates in Cuba, Adam Smith's division of labour and social roles as autonomous and prior to all individuals when they are, in fact, autonomous or prior only to some individuals in the present. In each of these cases, she took the perspective of certain individuals in the present and transformed anything which occurred before them or anything which confronted a particular individual independently of that individual's knowledge and volition into structure.

This individualistic and, in the end, solipsistic premise not only determines the kind of social theory which she constructs, in which her two terms are society and the individual (in the singular), but it also influences her reading of other theoretical positions so that she makes the further error of assuming that other sociologists adopt this notion of the individual as well. Crucially, Archer assumes that interpretive sociologists are employing this monadic notion of the individual in their social theory.

the Individualist is committed to social atomism, that is to the claim that the important things about people can indeed be identified independently of their social context. (Archer, 1995: 35)

Although consistent with her notion of the individual, this is a complete misreading of the interpretive tradition, whose fundamental point is the exact opposite of Archer's claim; that nothing meaningful can be said about individual practices or understandings independently of the social and historic contexts in which those individuals are situated. In other words, that nothing meaningful can be said without situating individuals in their social networks with other individuals. Blumer's three premises of symbolic interactionism graphically demonstrate the extent of Archer's misreading of the interpretive tradition:

The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that they things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from or

arises out of the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the thing he encounters. (Blumer, 1969: 2)

For Blumer, our interaction with the world is interpretive (the first and third premises) but any interpretation is possible only in the context of social interaction with others (the second premise).

Archer's misreading of the interpretive tradition, which is demonstrated in her calling them the 'Individualists', which obscures the more important interactionist premise of their work, leads her to accuse the interpretive tradition of a serious error, which would genuinely call this approach into question if it were true. Since, according to Archer, the interpretive tradition focuses on the individual separately from any constraining and overarching social context, this tradition is incapable of explaining the constraint which society and the past manifestly exerts upon the individual. By focusing on the individual, the interpretive tradition gives that individual an untenable freedom; as Archer says, the interpretive tradition wrongly tries to explain society in terms of 'these people here present'.

Archer's criticisms of the interpretive tradition are logical given her assertion that the interpretive tradition has a monadic notion of the individual, as Archer does (Archer, 1995: 38). Furthermore, her insistence upon a prior and autonomous social structure is also logical given that she thinks of individuals as monadic and, therefore, potentially or at least partially separated from society. If individuals are in some sense solitary, then there have to be certain forces in society which are autonomous of these individuals and which operate to create the constraint which each individual manifestly faces in everyday social life. However, the interpretive tradition does not operate with a notion of a monadic individual separated from the social context but insists that we must always look to the social context first to explain any individual practice which can, logically, only be other individuals, who are similarly always bound by the social context of other individuals. The social context is interaction between individuals, one of the products of which is the individual subject.⁸

Accounting for causality

Archer's solipsistic premise leads her to insist upon the existence of an autonomous and pre-existent structure, which constrains indi-

viduals, and to regard the interpretive tradition as a form of theoretical libertinism in which the rejection of structure, leaves monadic individuals free to do what they please. In fact, although the interpretive tradition rejects the concept of structural determination, it in no way does away with the notion of social constraint. For instance, the interpretive tradition in no way plays down the effect which the distribution of material goods, the material structure of a society, has on the individual. The interpretive tradition does not fall into the idealist fallacy of arguing that since (intersubjective) interpretations are central to social relations that, therefore, a single individual can transform their material condition simply by thinking differently, even though it is often accused of this error. To paraphrase Marx, just as an individual is not prevented from drowning by their disbelief in the forces of gravity, neither is an individual's poverty relieved by their solipsistic disbelief in the operation of the market. The distribution of wealth is real and not reducible to what any particular individual thinks. However, the interpretive tradition maintains that the differential distribution of material possessions across society is dependent upon a myriad of past interactions between individuals according to their understanding of the capitalist market and the continued employment of these beliefs to inform exchanges in the present. No single individual can transform the material legacy of the past and certainly not merely by interpreting the situation differently. The interpretive tradition would not in any way pretend that material conditions are reducible to, or transformable by, what a single individual thinks but this tradition would argue that the present material conditions are the result of the past beliefs and (interpretive) actions of (other) people and the continued adherence to these beliefs and practices by people in the present.

Thus, although it is true that 'I' as an individual can do practically nothing and that material conditions seem glacial to me, it is not true that these conditions are independent of everybody and that everybody can do nothing. These material conditions are the result of the continuing interrelations between people and are consequently the result of, in Archer's language, other people's practices (and beliefs). Humans may well be drowned independently of whether they believe in gravity or not but individuals are most certainly only poor or rich according to the beliefs and the practices, which are informed by those beliefs, of themselves and, crucially, other people. Poverty and wealth do not appear independently of the practices of all individuals, although it is independent of the practice of any one individual. Thus, although the distribution of wealth in a society cannot be

transformed by a single individual interpreting their relations with others differently, it could be transformed if everyone or vast numbers of individuals began to interpret their social relations differently and, therefore, began to engage in new social practices. This is exactly what happens at moments of epochal historical change such as the transformation of feudalism (which changes might actually go on for centuries). To argue that the material conditions of a society are somehow independent of relations between individuals in a society is to produce a mystifying and pessimistic social theory, which excuses poverty and dispossession as the property of an objective system and, therefore, the responsibility of no one. Material differences are the product of knowingly unequal material exchanges between people in the past which are repeated in further knowingly unequal exchanges in the present. Our material condition presents itself to us as individuals, like the role of the bank manager, as objective and autonomous, when in fact it is the outcome of the beliefs and interactions of numerous individuals over time and space. From the interpretive tradition's rejection of a pre-existent and autonomous structure follows a refutation of any notion of objective causality in society but that does not mean dispensing the notion of social causality or constraint, altogether. Rather it grounds that constraint in the practices and beliefs of individuals.

Conclusion

This article has tried to demonstrate the interpretive tradition's rejection of the concept of structure on the grounds that structure is not autonomous, pre-existent or causal. Thereby the article has tried to vindicate both the interpretive approach against Archer's critique and to demonstrate the fallacious ontology of morphogenetic social theory. The interpretive approach insists that society must be understood in terms of individuals and their interrelations alone and that any form of ontological dualism which posits a realm of objective or structural features is a mere reification which can at all times be reduced to individuals and their interactions. Furthermore, any appeal to the reified concept of structure is in the end metaphysical since at some point the theorist will have to argue that there are aspects of society which are independent of any individuals in that society.

This reduction of society to individuals – to other people – in no way gives individuals free reign to do what they will. It does not in

any way imply an individualistic libertinism. The interpretive tradition fully recognises the constraint which society places upon the individual but the interpretive tradition does not hypostatise this constraint into certain structural properties but insists that social constraint stems from the relationships between individuals which necessarily limits the kinds of practices which any individual can perform. We are constrained by other people (most of whom we do not and will never know) not by structure but that does not make that constraint any less real. Furthermore, the fact that social constraint comes from the expectations, material and political position of other people to whom we are bound means that the sociological questions must always address specifically empirical questions of how individuals constrain one another and not metaphysical ones of how structure constrains or facilitates individual action. The first question, although replete with theoretical (and empirical) difficulties, is actually answerable whereas the second is simply a metaphysical non-question, falsely created by an incorrect perspective on social life.

Although this interpretive, interactive approach always insists that sociologists examine the specific relations between individuals in order to produce sociological insights, the approach simultaneously recognises that, practically, a heuristic concept of structure can be usefully maintained. In any sociological study, the sociologist will have to situate the specific practices under examination within a wider social and historic context. Theoretically, this context could come under micro-reduction and we could demonstrate how each institution and economic form is actually only the complex 'figurations' – to use Elias' term – of individual interactions and exchanges over time. Such a reduction could go on *ad absurdum*, so that the sociologist never actually analysed the practice under consideration. At some point then, in employing the interpretive approach and focusing on the specific interactions of individuals, the sociologist is going to have to assume certain background conditions which are not reduced to their micro dimensions. This background might usefully be called 'structure' but with strong proviso that this structure amounts to the relations of other people in different times and places and never refers to any metaphysical entity which exists above and beyond all individuals or is more than the sum of all individuals and their interactions. Consequently, it may be more useful to rename this methodological notion of structure in now half-forgotten Gramscian language and refer to it as 'organic' background (Gramsci, 1971: 177) – a phrase which usefully communicates the

shifting interactive and unfinished nature of the background which we frankly misname with the term 'structure'.

University of Exeter

Received 13 March 1998

Finally accepted 14 September 1998

Notes

I am grateful to two anonymous referees at *The Sociological Review* for their useful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1. Although taking different forms, a broad non-reductionist approach, which maintains a divide between the objective, structural and interpretive, individual aspects of society can be detected in a wide variety of texts: eg Alexander and Giesen (1987), Lockwood (1964), Giddens (1976, 1977, 1979, 1984), Bourdieu (1977, 1984), Bhaskar (1979, 1986, 1991, 1993), Harré (1979), Harré and Secord (1976), Benton (1977), Stones (1996), Callinicos (1985, 1987), Layder (1981) and Mouzelis (1995). It is also implicitly accepted in other major sociological works; eg Luhmann (1989, 1995, 1995), Habermas (1987, 1991) where both sociologists refer to a system which has objective properties beyond individual understanding and practice.
2. The Collectivists, or holists, by whom Archer refers to the functionalists are rejected on the grounds that they effectively obliterate individuals through their emphasis on the system and its needs, which Archer terms 'downward conflation' (1988: 25-45). The Elisionists (Giddens, in particular) are criticised because they elide both objective and subjective sides of society in the error of 'central conflation'.
3. Archer has learnt this misleading technique from the late Ernest Gellner. Archer's use of the term the 'Individualists' which is derived directly from Gellner (1968) throughout her writing is a perfect example of this.
4. Archer's discussion of the emergent cultural properties substantially replicates Popper's notion of Third World Knowledge, which refers to the objective and intersubjective creation and recording of knowledge such as a mathematical formula that is written down and then lost. Since this knowledge is recorded, it exists independently of whether anyone knows about it or not, and is, therefore, autonomous of any individuals; it is emergent. I cannot deal fully with this issue here but Popper's claims of objective knowledge which exists whether anyone knows about it or not cannot be sustained. If this formula goes missing and is not known by anyone at all, then it is no longer known; its existence and its significance depends upon individuals knowing about it and its existence as a forgotten squiggle on a piece of paper is not the same as it is existing in the minds of individuals. Moreover, even if this formula were re-discovered and re-learned it is simply wrong to believe it would be exactly the same piece of knowledge which was written down and lost. Rather, even putatively objective pieces of knowledge are re-remembered in ways which accord with contemporary historical consciousness. In other words, they are not as objective as Popper thinks but depend on a wider frame of knowledge (which people know) and which changes over time. For instance, Mozart's score for his 40th Symphony still exists (as a formula) in exactly the way that Mozart originally composed it but even when played on authentic eighteenth century instruments, no one would claim that they are

playing or hearing this music in exactly the same way as Mozart's contemporaries did, even though it is manifestly the same notes which are being played. Thus, although a piece of knowledge may appear to have an independent existence, the significance of any information which is re-discovered is given by contemporary understandings and changed by them. A mathematical formula does not have an independent existence as a piece of knowledge, whether anybody knows about it or not, but only as meaningless squiggles on a piece of paper. It becomes only a recognisable mathematical formula with meaningful symbols given a much wider horizon of knowledge, which must be known even if this formula slips behind the shelves in the library, and which horizon of knowledge is always moving forward because it is inevitably transformed in the light of new understanding.

5. For a discussion of agential emergent properties see Archer, 1995: Chapter 8.
6. Although this article focuses on Archer's notion of emergent properties, that notion is very similar to both Bhaskar's (1979: Chapter 3.5, eg 137, Chapter 4, eg 194) and to Sayer's (1984: eg 109), and the criticisms made here could be applied to both these theorists.
7. Although Archer never employs the example, the committee might be held up as an example of an emergent property because it is prior to the individual committee members, although it never exists without those individuals coming together, and it is independent of those individual's personal abilities; if they meet informally, then they do not constitute a committee and do not have its powers. This example can be submitted to the same critique as the role for, in the end, the committee is only a communal role. Thus although the committee is independent of its current members, it is not autonomous and prior to everyone but only exists through its wider recognition by others in the bureaucracy.
8. Although Archer's notion of the individual as a monadic, pre-social being leads her to construct an objective social domain, it is not necessarily the case that the postulation of this kind of self would lead to this conclusion. Methodological individualists such as rational choice theorists operate with a similar notion of the individual as Archer but operate with a social ontology very similar to that of the interpretive tradition. Moreover, Giddens operates with a putatively phenomenological notion of the individual but emphasises the existence of objective structural properties of society which he calls 'system'. It is impossible to engage properly with these differing accounts of the individual and society here as the explicit purpose of this article is a critique of Archer's ontology and this discussion of her notion of the individual is intended only to demonstrate how she arrives at this ontology and why she is so dismissive of the interpretive tradition. However, the ontological claims made here are plainly pertinent to other theoretical positions, though not in ways which I can spell out here.

References

- Alexander, J., Giesen, B., Munch, R. and Smelser, N. (eds), (1987), *The Micro-Macro Link*, London: University of California.
- Alexander, J. and Giesen, B., (1987), 'Introduction: From Reduction to Linkage: the long view of the micro-macro debate' in Alexander, J., Giesen, B., Munch, R. and Smelser, N., (eds), (1987), *The Micro-Macro Link*, London: University of California.

- Archer, M., (1979), *Social Origins of Educational Systems*, London: Sage.
- Archer, M., (1982), 'Morphogenesis versus Structuration: on combining structure and action', *British Journal of Sociology*, 33(4): 456–483.
- Archer, M., (1988), *Culture and Agency: the place of culture in social theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, M., (1995), *Realist Social Theory: the morphogenetic approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, M., (1996), 'Social Integration and System Integration: developing the distinction', *Sociology*, 30(4), Nov: 679–699.
- Benton, T. (1977), *Philosophical Foundations of the Three Sociologies*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Bhaskar, R., (1978), *A Realist Theory of Science*, Sussex: Harvester.
- Bhaskar, R., (1979), *The Possibility of Naturalism*, Sussex: Harvester.
- Bhaskar, R., (1986), *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, London: Verso.
- Bhaskar, R., (1991), *Philosophy and the Idea of Freedom*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bhaskar, R., (1993), *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*, London: Verso.
- Blumer, H., (1969), *Symbolic Interactionism*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Bourdieu, P., (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., (1984), *Distinction, a social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Brodbeck, M., (ed.), (1968), *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, London: Macmillan.
- Buckley, W., (ed.), (1968), *Modern Systems Research for the Behavioural Scientist*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing.
- Buckley, W., (1968), 'Society as a Complex Adaptive System' in Buckley, W., (ed.).
- Callinicos, A., (1985), 'Anthony Giddens: a contemporary critique', *Theory and Society*, 14(5): 133–166.
- Callinicos, A., (1987), *Making History: agency, structure and social change*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Cicourel, A., (1981), 'Notes on the Integration of Micro- and Macro-levels of Analysis' in Knorr-Cetina, K. and Cicourel, A., (eds) *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: towards an integration of micro- and macro-Sociology*, London: Routledge.
- Collins, R., (1981a), 'Micro-translation as a theory-building strategy' in Knorr-Cetina, K. and Cicourel, A., (eds), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: towards an integration of micro- and macro-Sociology*, London: Routledge.
- Collins, R., (1981b), 'On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology', *American Journal of Sociology*, 86(5): 984–1014.
- Elias, N., (1978), *What is Sociology?*, London: Hutchinson.
- Gellner, E., (1968), 'Holism versus Individualism', in Brodbeck, M. (ed.).
- Giddens, A., (1976), *New Rules of Sociological Method*, London: Hutchinson.
- Giddens, A., (1977), *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, London: Hutchinson.
- Giddens, A., (1979), *Central Problems in Social Theory*, London: Macmillan.
- Giddens, A., (1984), *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Giesen, B., (1997), 'Review Essay: Old Wine in New Bottles', *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(2): 461–63.
- Gramsci, A., (1971), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.

- Habermas, J. (1987), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Vol. 2 Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Habermas, J. (1991), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Harré, R. and Secord, P. (1976), *The Explanation of Social Behaviour*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harré, R., (1979), *Social Being: a theory for social psychology*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hegel, G., (1967), *The Phenomenology of Mind*, London: Harper Torchbooks.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. and Cicourel, A., (eds), (1981), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: towards an integration of micro- and macro-sociology*, London: Routledge.
- Layder, D., (1981), *Structure, Interaction and Social Theory*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Lockwood, D., (1964), 'Social Integration and System Integration' in Zollschan, G. and Hirsch, W. (eds).
- Luhmann, N., (1989), *Ecological Communication*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Luhmann, N., (1995), *Social Systems*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Luhmann, N., (1997), 'The Limits of Steering', in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 14(1): 41-57.
- Mandelbaum, M., (1973), 'Societal Facts' in O'Neill, J., (ed.), *Modes of Individualism and Collectivism*, London: Heinemann.
- Mouzelis, N., (1995), *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong? Diagnosis and Remedies*, London: Routledge.
- Parsons, T., (1966), *The Structure of Social Action*, New York: Press Press.
- Sayer, A., (1984), *Method in Social Science: a realist approach*, London: Hutchinson.
- Stones, R., (1996), *Sociological Reasoning: towards a post-modern sociology*, London: Macmillan.
- Zollschan, G. and Hirsch, W., (eds), (1964), *Explorations in Social Change*, London: Routledge.