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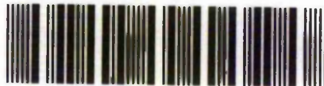

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THE REFLEXIVE SELF: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF GIDDENS'S LATER WORK ON SELF-IDENTITY

MATT ADAMS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2001

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Abstract

The subject of this thesis is Anthony Giddens's later work on identity. More specifically, it is a critical discussion of self-identity as a *reflexive project*, which Giddens claims has emerged as a result of recent and radical social upheavals. The initial discussion offers a summary of Giddens's theorisation of recent social change. This is followed by an account of Giddens's generic model of selfhood, a tripartite model which has a long line of development in Giddens's work. I trace out this development, and consider its conceptual origins in psychoanalytical and phenomenological theory. Giddens's conceptualisation of generic selfhood and recent social change in place, the two are then brought together: the remainder of the discussion focuses upon the impact of social transformations on the processes of self-identity, as understood by Giddens in his later work. I assess Giddens's claim that self-identity has become an increasingly reflexive process. I offer a critical analysis of this claim, drawing from a wide range of recent social and social psychological theory, to pose a number of problems for the theorisation of an increasingly reflexive self-identity. I consider the ways in which the idea of a reflexively formed self-

identity is problematised by various issues: the culturally situated nature of modern identity; aspects of self-experience which may compromise a reflexive understanding of the self; and the importance of social relations of power in a theorisation of self-identity. The thesis's original contribution lies in its critical assessment of Giddens's later theory of identity in terms of both its psychological and sociological implications. As a result of this critical analysis it is argued that Giddens's notion of reflexivity needs to be extensively revised in order to more accurately represent contemporary forms of self-identity.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 7

CHAPTER 1 GIDDENS, THE SELF, & SOCIAL CHANGE 11

Giddens on Social Change: An Outline 12

The Shift to the Post-Traditional: Three Processes 16

Recent Social Change & Selfhood 22

Giddens's Model of Selfhood 25

Conclusion 63

CHAPTER 2 QUESTIONING REFLEXIVITY I : CULTURE 69

Reflexivity Overstated 71

Concepts of Fate 74

Giddens's Analysis of Fate, Fortuna & Fatefulness: Some Inconsistencies 82

Reflexivity, Fate & 'Active Trust' 86

The Continuing Importance of Concepts of Fate 93

Conclusion 116

CHAPTER 3 QUESTIONING REFLEXIVITY II: THE UNINTENDED, THE UNACKNOWLEDGED, CONSCIOUSNESS, EMOTIONS & AMBIGUITY. 121

Unintended Consequences & Unacknowledged Conditions 121

The Unconscious / Practical Consciousness 131

Emotional Life 138

Self-Identity as Ambiguous 148

Conclusion 155

CHAPTER 4 REFLEXIVITY, POWER & SOCIAL STRUCTURE 158

Giddens on Power 159

Rules & Social Structure 168

Giddens's Concept of Social Structure as 'Weak' 172

A Tendency Towards Universalisation 176

Reintroducing Power 189

Differentiating Reflexivity 195

Social Structure & Identity 202

Conclusion 210

CHAPTER 5 REFLEXIVITY, POWER & IDEOLOGY 214

Reflexivity as Ideology 214

Reflexivity and the 'Other' 225

Autotelic/Heterotelic Identity 228

Giddens's Defence and a Critical Response 235

Conclusion 245

CHAPTER 6 REFLEXIVITY & NARCISSISM 252

The Psychoanalytical Concept of Narcissism 254

Lasch, Capitalism & Narcissism 260

Giddens, Capitalism & Lasch 263

Lasch & Agency 267

Cults of Expertise / Expert Systems 270

The Therapeutic Sensibility 278

Conclusion 284

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS: REVISING REFLEXIVITY 293

Reflexivity, Identity & the Psyche 297

Reflexivity, Identity & Social Structure 302

Conclusion 313

BIBLIOGRAPHY 319

Introduction

Anthony Giddens has been one of the most influential British social theorists in recent times. His academic career spans twenty-five years, publishing more than that number of books, as well as countless journal articles. Giddens has contributed to a number of fields within social theory, but the focus of this thesis will be his recent theorisation of self and identity in relation to the contemporary social world (1990, 1991, 1992,1994, 1994b). A good deal of critical social theory has focused on the 'plight of the self' in modern Western societies (Lasch, 1985, 1991; Bauman, 1995; Marcuse, 1964). Giddens's theory, whilst in some ways sympathetic to these approaches, presents an apparently more complex picture of the existential situation of the modern self than those which draw predominately upon various versions of alienation theory or notions of psycho-social fragmentation. He acknowledges a situation in which risk, uncertainty and loss of individual control over many areas of social life combine with the loss of satisfying communal narratives of cultural-existential meaning to cast individuals 'adrift' (Erickson, 1978; Szersynski, 1996) in the world. In this respect at least, his analysis coincides with post-modern thinkers such as Bauman, who claim that the modern subject necessarily 'swims in the sea of uncertainty' (Bauman, 1993: 222). However his theory counterpoises this assertion with the possibility of a 'positive appropriation of life' (Giddens, 1994a: 207). No longer bound to fixed, culturally given identity positions, modern individuals face the liberation and burden of constructing their identities in what Giddens calls the reflexive project of the self. Thus social modernity is not only existentially and ethically troubling, it also potentially provides resources for the recovery of meaning

in 'lifestyle choices' previously unavailable to the mass of populations (1991). This thesis will attempt to clarify the sources of this dialectical position in Giddens's wider social theory, to examine its critical reception, and to provide an original assessment of its status as a theory of modern lived experience and analysis of contemporary forms of self-identity.

Chapter one provides an outline of Giddens's social and psychological theory. The social changes which have transformed the conditions in which self-identity is played out, according to Giddens, are summarised. Giddens splits these changes into the three elements of the 'dynamism of modernity' - the separation of time and space, disembedding mechanisms and reflexivity. After these concepts have been introduced, Giddens's model of the self is discussed in detail. Here I will consider Giddens's tripartite representation of the self and the processes of identity formation in some detail. The relationship between each of the three elements of the psyche - the unconscious, practical consciousness and reflexive awareness - will be scrutinised and queried. I will compare them to other accounts of selfhood, particularly in the literature of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, and discuss the benefits and limitations of Giddens's model.

In the remaining chapters these two elements, Giddens's theorisation of the dynamics of modernity and his conceptualisation of the self, are brought together. His understanding of the transformations that the self has recently undergone are specifically understood in relation to radical social changes. Giddens argues that reflexivity takes on an extended role in processes of self-identity once it comes into contact with the 'post-traditional' settings which emerge from modernity's dynamism.

Reflexive self-awareness provides the individual with the opportunity to construct self-identity without the shackles of tradition and culture, which previously created relatively rigid boundaries to the options for one's self-understanding.

In chapter two I consider Giddens's account of modern reflexivity's relationship to his concept of culture. I will assess critical accounts of this relationship (Tucker, 1998; Craib, 1990, Alexander, 1996) and, in light of these criticisms, discuss ways in which culture might still play an important part in the shaping of identity. By potentially repositioning self-identity in its connection to culture, the overall bearing of reflexivity upon the processes of self-identity is thus questioned. I suggest that a more fluid and multifarious portrayal of self-identity arises from a detailed analysis of cultural boundaries to reflexive awareness.

In chapter three a questioning of reflexivity is continued. I argue that there are a number of factors which possibly compromise the part reflexivity plays in contemporary experiences of self which Giddens either marginalises or overlooks. Areas discussed are unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions, practical consciousness and the unconscious, emotional life and self-ambiguity. The overall suggestion from this analysis is that processes of self-identity are more complex and ambiguous than Giddens tends to acknowledge.

In chapter four I consider Giddens's analysis of reflexive self-identity, power and social structure. In his more recent work Giddens's has been criticised for an excessively weak conceptualisation of social structure (Lash and Urry, 1994; Hay et al., 1997; O'Brien, 1999). I assess a number of these criticisms and attempt to draw together a coherent critical position. Again criticisms have suggested that the

reflexive self is over-theorised in relation to social conditions which persist in shaping life-chances for individuals and thus compromising the possibility of a freely constructed reflexive self-identity. Identity in these accounts is still understood to be permeated by power relationships and thus a hierarchical, highly politicised and contested domain of experience. A number of examples from Giddens's work are drawn upon to illustrate his incorporation of power and his theorisation of social structure, and are considered in the light of the aforementioned critiques.

In chapter five an assessment of this critique is extended. Giddens's analysis of contemporary self-identity has been criticised for contributing to a voluntarist, individualistic discourse of selfhood which stems from his weak concept of social structure, power and other factors. Accusations which see Giddens's work as symptomatic of a hegemonic individualism, of encouraging a Marcusian 'happy consciousness', of hollowing out social theory, and of serving up a kind of 'sociology-lite' will all be discussed (O'Brien, 1999; Mestrovic, 1998; Alexander, 1996). This accusation will be considered in detail, assessing the overall message of Giddens's social theory, and the alternative discourses which critics have suggested.

In chapter six I discuss the work of Christopher Lasch. His analysis could be argued to contain a much stronger sense of social structure and persisting social relationships. His account, and his consequent labelling of the modern self as narcissistic, shares many parallels with Giddens's while offering a far more pessimistic diagnosis. Lasch is in fact highly critical of theories of selfhood which suggest and encourage new levels of self-awareness and its connection to authentic self-actualisation. Giddens, in turn, is highly critical of Lasch's lack of emphasis on

human agency. The connections and contrasts between these two authors illustrates some of the points raised in chapters four and five. It considers an alternative, but in many ways similar, account of social structure. As a result it provides an antithetical interpretation of the phenomenon of reflexivity which raises questions about the role of social structure and the ideological discourses existing in Giddens's work.

In the final chapter, chapter seven, I attempt to illustrate the continuing importance of social structure by drawing from contemporary social commentators who focus on the changing but persistent nature of modern social conditions. I suggest that these authors illustrate ways in which self-identity is still limited by social conditions. While reflexive awareness may play an important part in modern selfhood, it does not necessarily amount to an unrestricted development of identity, as many obstacles still persist. In chapter seven I will complete the discussion by drawing from the arguments made in each chapter to assess in an overall sense a revised notion of reflexivity in relation to self-identity and the modern social world.

Chapter 1 Giddens, the Self, & Social Change

This chapter offers an initial outline of Giddens's recent theorisation of self-identity. Firstly, I will summarise Giddens's understanding of the nature of recent social change, and briefly indicate its supposed impact upon processes of identity-formation. Secondly, I will take a closer look at Giddens's tripartite model of selfhood. I will then take each element of the self in turn, tracing its origins and parallels in existing social and psychological theory. I also make some initial critical suggestions concerning Giddens's model. The intention is to provide the foundation for a detailed analysis of how these two areas come together - the way radical social upheavals have affected the nature of contemporary self-identity in Giddens's account.

Giddens on Social Change: An Outline

In his more recent work, Giddens divides recent history into two distinct periods - traditional and post-traditional. Previously, Giddens has used a variety of terms in making sense of historical epochs, such as the distinction between pre-modern and modern (1990: 100), and modern and high or late modern societies (e.g. 1991: 10). Being the most recent, traditional/post-traditional are the terms which will generally be used in this thesis.[1]

Traditional communities provided a stable, if restrictive, environment for the development of identity. This was due to the complex co-existence of a number of social factors. The persistence of rituals and beliefs 'which either the elders or the

religious specialists controlled', provided 'formulaic truths' for understanding the world, and one's place in it (Giddens, 1994a: 65). They 'inject reliability into the experience of events and situations' (Giddens, 1991: 103) The largely unquestioned normative content of traditional beliefs and rituals combine with the chronic localisation of most people's experience. Relationships were bound together in local orderings of time and place, which in turn prescribed the boundaries of identity. Giddens stresses 'the importance of *localised relations* organised in terms of *place*' (1991: 101; emphasis in the original). Thus 'the local mileu is the site of clusters of interweaving social relations, the low spatial span of which provides for their solidity in time' (1991: 103). Kenneth Gergen's discussion of the relationship between tradition and identity neatly reflects Giddens's vision of traditional society:

> In the traditional community, where relationships were reliable, continuous, and face-to-face, a firm sense of self was favoured. One's sense of identity was broadly and continuously supported. Further there was strong agreement on patterns of 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour. One could simply.... be, for there was little question of being otherwise (Gergen, 1991: 147).

In summary, traditional communities, 'provided a relatively fixed horizon of action' (Giddens, 1994a : 76), which offered supra-individual moral and cultural forms. These were further stabilised by ritual and the relatively sturdy nature of formulaic truth, filtered to the general community via legitimated 'gatekeepers', such as religious leaders. Identity formation is still an involved process in traditional communities, 'necessarily active and interpretative' (Giddens, 1994a: 64), but as the nature of the self is firmly embedded in contexts which are, to a great extent, 'given', it presupposes certain boundaries.

Historically, particular traditions crumbled or were deposed, while others rose to ascendancy. One form of truth, or set of truths, replaced another, but the validity of an all-encompassing set of truth claims was not *in itself* doubted. Modernity, or modern society, is not a label which is interchangeable with that of 'post-traditional society', and in fact social relations were still fundamentally ordered in ways similar to those of more obviously traditional societies. Modernity, in Giddens's definition, is equated 'in a very general sense' with the 'institutions and modes of behaviour established first of all in post-feudal Europe, but which in the twentieth century have become world-historical in their impact' (Giddens, 1991 : 14-15). Giddens suggests that modernity has been complicitly reliant on tradition for its perpetuation for the bulk of its historical development:

> For most of its history, modernity has rebuilt tradition as it has dissolved it. Within Western societies the persistence and recreation of tradition was central to the legitimation of power....For tradition placed in stasis some core aspects of social life - not least the family and sexual identity - which were left largely untouched so far as 'radicalizing' Enlightenment was concerned.... Most important, the continuing influence of tradition within modernity remained obscure so long as 'modern' meant 'Western' (Giddens, 1994a : 56).

The prevalence and power of Enlightenment thinking problematised the premise of tradition, and removed the boundaries which had previously contained traditional discourses of knowledge. Traditional forms, or rather *certain* traditional forms were questioned and undermined by reason's exclusive claim to objectivity and 'truth'. However, the doubt intrinsic to rational enquiry was not turned upon its origins, nor the emerging institutions of modernity. As Giddens notes here, the contradiction of a supposed affinity with truth and certainty based upon the systematic application of

doubt, was hidden, paradoxically enough, in the escalation of science itself to the status of tradition:

> For a long while, the tensions inherent in such a situation were masked by the distinctive status which science, understood in a specific way, enjoyed in modern societies - plus a more or less unquestioned dominance that the West held over the rest of the world (Giddens, 1994a : 86-87).

The 'traditions' of modernity provided relatively stable guidelines for social interaction and options for identity formation, as traditions had done in previous epochs. More specifically, 'tradition placed in stasis some core aspects of social life - not least the family and sexual identity - which were left largely untouched so far as 'radicalizing Enlightenment' was concerned' (1994a: 56).[2]

The institutions of modernity have continued to expand and envelop the modern world, but it is only in our more immediate history that the patterns of modernity have qualitatively broken from their reliance on tradition. Giddens's vision is of the existing tendencies of modernity coming to fruition rather than an abrupt break with history - 'processes of change which, while they have their origins with the first development of modernity, have become particularly acute in the current era' (Giddens, 1994a: 57). Giddens is clear on the historical specificity of changes in the nature of the spread of modernity: 'Over the period since the Second World War, however, and particularly over the past forty years or so, the pattern of expansion has begun to alter' (ibid.). The post-war period serves as a loose marker of the cumulative effects of recent social changes. These changes, variously referred to as the 'orders of transformation' (1994a), or 'the dynamism of modernity' derive from

three main tendencies: the separation of time and space, the process of disembedding, and institutional reflexivity (Giddens, 1991 : 20). These tendencies, taken together, Giddens utilises to explain the establishment of post-traditional societies, and consequently, their impact upon contemporary processes of self-identity.

The Shift to the Post-Traditional: Three Processes

Time-Space Distanciation

In traditional communities, Giddens argues, time and space were essential aspects of the *local* ordering of social life; that is, they were inseparable from considerations of *place*. Less than a hundred years ago, for the majority in the West, activities and relationships were largely determined by geography. They were contained by, and dependent upon, the *physical* presence of others and their surroundings. Time and space are 'contextually implicated in the nature of lived activities' (Giddens, 1990 : 105). Consequently, one's locality 'is the focus of, and contributes to, ontological security in ways that are substantially dissolved in circumstances of modernity' (1990: 103). The way Giddens conceptualises time in traditional societies is similar to E.P. Thompson's understanding. Thompson argues that traditional communities were structured by a 'task-oriented' grasp of the passing of time. To illustrate this concept, he cites the example of a crofting and fishing community:

> whose framework of marketing and administration is minimal, and in which the day's tasks (which might vary from fishing to farming, building, mending of nets, thatching, making a cradle or a coffin) seem to disclose themselves, by the logic of need, before the crofter's eyes. (Thompson, 1993 : 357).

The particulars of the community's interaction with their immediate physical environment decide the structure of their day. Giddens contrasts the utilisation of time rooted in the local with what he understands to be radically different contemporary orderings of time. For Giddens, time, space and place are no longer as intimately connected as they were in traditional settings, such as Thompson's crofting and fishing community. Giddens argues that the 'separation of time and space', and its 'recombination' (Giddens, 1990: 16) in numerous ways, is an important element of modernity, which has further developed in post-traditional settings. Many of the origins of this separation lie in technological innovations which have widespread social repercussions. The invention and development of the mechanical clock, the extensive mapping of space, and the ability to diffuse these developments to large populations provide, Giddens argues, the foundations for time and space becoming 'contentless dimensions' (Giddens, 1990: 105). Mechanical clocks allowed the widespread notion of abstract time, and in the mapping of the globe all space becomes relative to other spaces - the centrality of particular locales is disrupted, at least conceptually. As modernity developed, particularly with the expansion of industrialisation and capitalism, techniques of production were revolutionised, bringing enormous changes to the nature of work, communication and transportation. With inventions such as the telephones, the railways, electronic media, mass-produced cars, and an effective means of producing and distributing them, social relations begin to transcend the contexts of time and space which were previously bound to locale, and allows for their 'complex co-ordination.... across large tracts of time-space'. They may no longer be defined by a sense of time and space which is inseparable from the physicalities of that same community. Physical presence, in fact, becomes an unnecessary element in social interaction:

> The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between "absent" others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. In conditions of modernity place becomes increasingly *phantasmagoric*: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them (Giddens, 1990: 19).

Social interaction ordered by localised, relatively self-contained structures of time, space and place, is now potentially disrupted. Thus the separation of time and space, or *time-space distanciation*, is the first of Giddens's dynamics to break the hold of tradition over social relations and the formation of identity. It is the foundation for 'the articulation of social relations across wide spans of time-space' (Giddens, 1991: 20). In this sense it is the essential precondition for, and partner to, further dynamics which propel modern society into a post-traditional era.

Disembedding Mechanisms

Giddens's second dynamic is *disembedding*. Giddens defines disembedding as 'the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts and their rearticulation across indefinite tracts of time-space' (Giddens, 1991: 18). There are two mechanisms of disembedding in Giddens's formulation - 'symbolic tokens' and 'expert systems'. The most salient example of a symbolic token is money. It is a *symbolic* token of exchange because in itself it has no value. For example, one can imagine a barter system of exchange. If I were to arrive on market day with some small pieces of coloured paper, they would have little if any bargaining power. I would instead have to produce goods or offer services myself which others will find of worth, offering me

goods and services in return which I find useful or necessary. Both what I give and receive is dependent on the context in which I exchange.

However, money decontextualises the moment of exchange. Its value is standardised, and the value of particular goods and services becomes valued against this standard. Money becomes a 'media of interchange which can be 'passed around' without regard to the specific characteristics of individuals or groups that handle them at any particular juncture' (Giddens, 1990 : 22). The widespread use of this particular symbolic token 'lifts out' systems of exchange from their local contexts, further separating time, space and place. The post-war period sees the expansion and globalisation of capitalist markets, including currency markets, propelling further the scope and abstraction of exchange systems. Giddens states that this expansion is 'one of the most characteristic forms of disembedding in the modern period' (1990: 26). Capitalist enterprise is seen as 'a disembedding mechanism *par excellence* ' (Giddens, 1994a: 96).

The second disembedding mechanism, expert systems, similarly undermines the traditional cohesiveness of time-space settings of social interaction. An expert is characterised, in Giddens's definition, as: 'any individual who can successfully lay claim to either specific skills or types of knowledge which the layperson does not possess' (Giddens, 1994a: 84). An expert *system* is ideally the embodiment of this skill and knowledge in relation to which the coming and going of individual practitioners, and the variety of situations in which their knowledge is applied, is largely incidental.

The legal system is an illustrative example here. If, amongst a small group of people someone is killed, those involved in the event and those witnessing it would not in most cases be responsible, at least exclusively, for deciding how the event should be defined, who, if anyone, was responsible, or what punishment, if any, should be meted out. They are not expected to be judges. The incident would be reported to the police, who would investigate and eventually offer their findings to the court. After due deliberation the incident would be assessed according to the rational-legal framework and a judgement would be made. Even in this brief example of an expert system, the process of disembedding is apparent on at least two counts. Firstly, all the 'experts' involved rely on a system of expertise which is external to them as individuals. Anyone could hypothetically learn the content and procedures of the law - what matters is their rigorous institutional application. A second but closely related point is that experts can make judgements about events with which they were not initially involved. Thus the legal-system removes certain aspects of social interaction from their locale and recombines them across a non-local ordering of time and space; an example of what Giddens refers to as disembedding. An important aspect of expert systems lies in the observation that they are not just a set of rationalised institutions with which we have occasional interaction. It might be tempting to equate 'expert' simply with technological expertise and consider how we depend on modern transport, medicine and food production for example. Technological expertise is undoubtedly an important factor in structuring social experience, but for Giddens the implications of expert systems stretch further. 'They extend to social relations themselves and to the intimacies of the self. The doctor, counsellor and therapist are as central to the expert systems of modernity as the scientist, technician, or engineer' (Giddens, 1991 : 18). Expert systems and symbolic

tokens are jointly referred to by Giddens as 'abstract systems', and together their effect on the structure of daily life is pervasive.

Reflexivity

The final element of the dynamism of modernity which propels us into a post-traditional era is *'the reflexive ordering and reordering'* of both social relations (Giddens, 1990: 17) and self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 244). Reflexivity *per se* is not peculiar to a post-traditional society; it has always formed an integral part of the self and social relations in Giddens's formulation - 'nothing is more central to, and distinctive of, human life than the reflexive monitoring of behaviour, which is expected by all 'competent' members of society of others' (Giddens, 1976: 114). The understanding of reflexivity as a foundational element of human behaviour will be discussed in the following chapter. Giddens argues that a different sense of reflexivity can be attributed to modern, particularly post-traditional, societies:

> The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.... only in the era of modernity is the revision of convention radicalised to apply (in principle) to all aspects of human life.... (Giddens, 1990: 38-39).

The institutions of modernity, such as capitalism, industrialism and the military complex, intimately connected to the aforementioned abstract systems, are increasingly organised according to the principles of reflexivity. That is to say, the reflexive processes involved in attacking and replacing the 'wisdom' of traditional

institutions, and subsequently the practices of everyday life, are inevitably a constitutive aspect of any alternative ordering of social life. Institutions are increasingly 'internally referential' - 'organised reflexively in terms of internal criteria' (Giddens, 1991: 243). As a consequence of the dynamism of modernity, embodied in the three processes discussed here, the institutions through which social relations are organised and defined are no longer held in stasis by any unifying external criteria. These criteria, 'traditions' in their simplest terms, are dissolving. What replaces them is a constant, chronic reflexive approach to knowledge and practice. Thus, knowledge and practice is always open to revision, and social relations subject to 'the routine incorporation of new knowledge or information into environments of action that are thereby reconstituted or reorganised' (ibid.).

A process of 'evacuation' is begun, emptying the previously meaningful discourses which ordered tradition into decentred, disembodied, abstract systems. To make sense of the world, the lay individual relies upon these systems even in the most localised of contexts: 'all forms of 'local knowledge' under the rule of expertise become local recombinations of knowledge derived from elsewhere' (Giddens, 1994a : 85). The picture painted here is of modern institutions which increasingly take knowledge out of the hands of the individual, and reformulate it in a specialised, impersonal and abstract framework, before offering it back for consumption.

Recent Social Change & Selfhood

It is not difficult to imagine how some of the consequences of the changes I have outlined above have been formulated in relation to the self, and more specifically

identity formation. The knowledge we rely upon to make sense of the world and our relationships with the world is distanced from our direct input *and* what 'the facts' are is constantly changing. Even without the benefit of a comprehensive psychological theory one might conclude that the self is likely to be troubled by the experience of uncertainty and a lack of control over events suggested here. It seems reasonable to agree with Zygmunt Bauman in asserting that the modern subject necessarily 'swims in the sea of uncertainty' (Bauman, 1993 : 222). We have an expanding prerogative to choose but the *basis* for such choice is increasingly problematic. Tradition loses its salience irretrievably and the self is disembedded, separating the individual from the meaningful, if relatively unquestioned, context it had in previous times been immersed in.

However, Giddens goes beyond a familiar vision of contemporary society deriving from what can be broadly be termed alienation theories. He attempts to counterpoise the loss of tradition with the possibility of a 'positive appropriation of life' (1994a : 207). No longer bound to fixed, culturally given identity positions, modern subjects, perhaps for the first time, face the burden *and* the liberation of constructing their own identities. The individual is no longer painting by numbers, so to speak, she is creating her own work of art. Potentially then, spheres of autonomy and control are supposedly opening up for the individual. We can increasingly determine the nature of our identity through conscious choices. Giddens refers to this process as 'the reflexive project of the self' (e.g. Giddens, 1991: 52-55). This is the double-edged nature of processes transforming self-identity, which Giddens understands as marking the shift from traditional to post-traditional society.

In order to contextualise the discussion, and consider these changes in any detail, I will offer an analysis of Giddens's conceptualisation of the processes which underpin identity formation in *any* period. The foundations of a coherent theory of subjective experience are present in earlier work (Giddens, 1976: 71; 1979: 49-96), but it is in his most recent work that there is a noticeable shift towards a more explicit theorisation of the experience of the self in what he terms the post-traditional society (e.g. 1994a), combining sociological and psychological theory in his analysis. The self as Giddens constructs it, I will suggest, is on the one hand a dynamic and protean entity, transformed by, and transforming, social, cultural and historical processes. On the other hand certain aspects of selfhood are essential and form the foundation of all variants of the self. They could be thought of as navigational instruments, which we rely upon whatever the nature of the voyage.

There is an explicit theorisation of the structure of the 'basic' psyche in Giddens's work, referred to as 'a 'stratification model' of personality' (Giddens, 1979: 2), which underpins the radicalised reflexivity of late modernity. There are, we might say, common *mechanisms* of self-identity. We can understand radical changes by interpreting how these mechanisms respond to, and take part in, the changes - although their core components remain intact. This basic self, I argue, is often presented by Giddens as a largely ahistorical, supracultural entity, although the various processes which make it up may vary radically in content and dominance, depending on their cultural or historical form. It is ahistorical not because historical variants are ignored. On the contrary, Giddens focuses emphatically upon how social developments in recent history have wrought extensive and irreversible changes in the activities of the self. Similarly it is supracultural not because the importance of

culturally specific frameworks of personhood is denied. Giddens does not shy away from cross-cultural comparisons (see for example Giddens, 1994a: 61-66). Giddens's understanding can be read as partially ahistorical and supracultural simply because for him there are fundamental aspects of the self which *transcend* or are *prior* to cultural and historical variables. 'What a 'person' is understood to be certainly varies across cultures', he acknowledges, 'although there are elements of such a notion that are common to all cultures' (Giddens, 1991 : 53). Bringing together strands of Giddens's work in an examination of what he understands to be these 'common' elements of the self serves as a vital starting point for a critical analysis of his theory of identity.

In everyday life self and society are not easily separable - they are mutually constitutive even. Considering the self as an entity in its own right is a worthwhile task nonetheless. We can grasp its indebtedness to social changes and vice versa, which might allow us to illuminate their inter-relatedness and transcend some elements of a problematic dichotomy. Although there has always been an attempt to grasp the psychological implications of social theory in his work (1976: 71-93; 1979: 49-96), Giddens's explicit conceptualisation of the psyche has recently gained pace. A fairly detailed discussion appears in *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990), and has been elaborated upon to varying degrees in most of his publications since (e.g. 1991: 35-109). What I attempt here is initially an exegesis; to bring together various themes and discussions, in an effort to present a coherent picture of the self as Giddens expounds it.

Giddens's Model of Selfhood

Three components or 'sets of relations' (Giddens, 1979: 2) make up the core of Giddens's understanding of the self: the unconscious, practical consciousness and reflexive awareness, alternatively referred to as discursive consciousness. They will now be considered in turn.

<u>The Unconscious</u>

The realm of the unconscious is of primary importance for the development of self - identity as it is here where relationships of 'basic trust' are initiated. Although cognitive understandings of the self and social worlds are essential in providing 'faith' in the world, they do not facilitate a meaningful existence in themselves. What is needed initially is an emotional attachment to the world and relevant others - which tends to remain unconscious and unquestioned : 'Cognitive frames of meaning will not generate that faith without a corresponding level of underlying emotional commitment - whose origins....are largely unconscious' (Giddens, 1991 : 38).[3]

The 'underlying emotional commitment' referred to here originates in trusting relationships. Trust, put simply, is a 'faith in the caretaker's love' (Giddens, 1990 : 95). It is primarily experienced by the individual at a preconscious level. Giddens argues that the young infant does not have the immediate benefit of even a rudimentary grasp of linguistic skills, and so is unable to consciously monitor her own action. The child still experiences needs though and this provides an initial connection with the outside world; '....while a child is not born a reflexive being, he is

born one with wants, a set of organic needs for the provision of which he is dependent upon others....' (Giddens 1976: 117). To ensure her wants are fulfilled at all, the infant has to quickly learn the reality of this dependence, and incorporate it into her actions accordingly. This is what Giddens calls 'tension management' whereby the infant 'is able actively to accommodate his wants to the demands or expectations of others' (ibid.).

Trust is an integral part of tension management, for without a faith in the continued presence of others, or in their return if absent, such management would be impossible to achieve, and so it is at this level of experience that basic trust relationships are formed. For Giddens, basic trust 'forms the original nexus from which a combined emotive-cognitive orientation towards others, the object-world, and self-identity, emerges' (Giddens, 1991 : 38). If trust is allowed to develop the infant can cope with *absence* without anxiety flooding in. They have faith in the existence of objects outside the vicinity of immediate experience. This ability is of fundamental importance. Accepting the absence of others allows the infant to develop an awareness of primary care givers as distinct entities; identifying the other as separate leads to an understanding of what is 'not-me', which in turn shapes the formation of self-identity, what is 'me'. Here we can see unconscious processes forming, and perhaps perpetually influencing, the foundations for the ordering of the self as a separate and coherent being.[4]

Trust has to be actively maintained throughout life and cannot completely cancel out feelings of anxiety. It could even be argued that some level of anxiety is inevitable if the individual is to experience the need for trust. However, initial relationships of

basic trust are vital in shielding the self from constant and overwhelming existential anxiety in later life. Giddens argues that this provides an 'emotional inoculation'; 'that sense of 'invulnerability' which blocks off negative possibilities in favour of a generalised attitude of hope derives from basic trust' (1991: 40). Serious problems can emerge if trust is frustrated in infancy: 'If basic trust or its inherent ambivalence is not contained, the outcome is persistent existential anxiety' (Giddens, 1990 : 100). We can in some sense see anxiety as the reverse of trust. It derives primarily in (unconscious) fears of separation from the key care givers in an infant's surroundings. If we cannot trust in the continuing presence of others in infancy, we may not see their existence as concrete and distinct. The learning of what is 'not-me' becomes blurred, phantasmagoric. Similarly, evolving attempts to identify and consolidate what *is* 'me' are problematised. Hence Giddens defines this anxiety as existential, concerned as it is with the nature of existence. In this situation there is the possibility of internalising anxiety where it gnaws at attempts to form a constant identity; attempts to trust in the self: 'Anxiety is essentially fear which has lost its object through unconsciously formed emotive tensions that express 'internal dangers' rather than externalised threats' (Giddens, 1991: 44). This quote also indicates that in Giddens's analysis anxiety and trust operate at an exclusively emotional level, distancing them further from the discursive realms of the psyche. How open these emotions can be to reflexive awareness - in any historical period - is unclear.

According to Giddens the unconscious conflict between trust and anxiety is not reserved exclusively for the infant:

> Given that the modes of management of organic wants
> represents the first, and in an important sense the most all-

> embracing, accommodation which the child makes to the world, it seems legitimate to suppose that a 'basic security system'....remains central to later personality development.... (Giddens, 1976: 17).

Basic trust relationships which are well formed may *incline* the individual toward ontological security in adult life. Giddens's terminology is one of protection. Basic trust is a defence, a 'protective cocoon' (Giddens, 1991: 56) against existential anxiety. But it has to be maintained so that we can carry on in everyday life: 'trust in others is a psychological need of a *persistent* and *recurrent* kind' (Giddens, 1990 : 97, my emphasis). Trust is the reverse of anxiety; we might even say that experiencing the 'need' for trust which Giddens talks about here *is* anxiety. Unconscious anxiety, and its ambivalent relationship with trust, must then also affect our actions throughout life. The early processes of 'basic trust' remain unconscious in adult life because, Giddens argues, the tension management of needs originates prior to the development of linguistic abilities which are necessary for self awareness. According to Giddens, such processes 'lie 'below' the threshold of those aspects of conduct that, learned later and in conjunction with the reflexive monitoring of that learning, are easily verbalized - thus made conscious - by the older child or adult' (Giddens, 1976: 117).

The relationship manifests itself further in the psyche via what Giddens refers to as 'motivation systems' (Giddens, 1991 : 66). He identifies motives as distinct from reasons. Reasoning is largely a conscious activity and is a constant point of reference in routine activities. Reasons 'impinge chronically on action' (1991: 63), and without too much effort it is expected that we could discursively express the reasons for our behaviour. Motives, on the other hand, are a more subtle presence at the level of

consciousness, underpinning but not discursively encroaching upon activities; 'the wellsprings of action' (1991 : 64). They are not ever-present in our actions as reasons are, they are foundational. Maybe as a consequence of this distancing from routine reflexive understanding, Giddens perceives motivation in an ambiguous manner: 'We should regard motivation as an underlying 'feeling state', involving unconscious forms of affect as well as more consciously experienced pangs or promptings' (ibid.). Giddens thus establishes a motivational connection between the depths of the unconscious and the routine activities of the everyday.

As there are numerous ways of coping with anxiety, of suppressing, projecting and transcending it, so too are there a multitude of distinguishable motives for Giddens, both conscious and unconscious. Giddens's theorisation of self-development is no longer focused on the role of the unconscious in particular at this juncture. In his analysis of motives, how much of an effect anxiety has on us is dependent on social and cultural settings, and practical and discursive consciousness, as well as unconscious tensions deriving from infancy. While the mechanisms of the self are relatively fixed - trust / anxiety > motives > behaviour - the particularities, and thus the nature of the psyche depends upon more external forms, on social as well as purely psychological development: 'How far anxiety has a crippling effect on the personality or expresses itself in, for instance, compulsive or phobic behaviour, varies according to the *psychosocial* development of the individual' (Giddens, 1991: 45, my emphasis). Different social and cultural settings offer different ways of dealing with existential anxiety. In other words, discursive and emotive configurations which 'answer' existential questions and placate associated fears are organised and utilised by actors depending on their social and cultural situatedness.

The particular 'settings' Giddens focuses on include the varying discourses for self understanding of traditional and post-traditional society, discussed at length in the following chapters.

The Unconscious: Some Initial Criticisms

Critics of Giddens have raised certain problems with his version of the unconscious, which are to some extent reflected in my own concerns. Giddens's positioning of the unconscious in relation to self-identity, to reiterate, is as follows. In the unconscious of the young infant, basic trust relationships are formed. Through the routine attention of others we learn that they are reliable, that we can trust the reality of 'them' as specific others. Subsequently we also learn, particularly as we come to accept the temporary absence of attentive others, the reality of 'me'/ 'I' as a distinct entity too. This developing sense of self is inseparable from a sense of its acceptability, for it is dependent on the positive attention of others. The trust of others can never be fully secured in any final sense. Throughout infancy and indeed adult life, much will be construed as a threat, leading to unconscious anxiety. How we deal with that anxiety, and the extent to which it overwhelms the self is largely dependent on the nature of early trust relationships, and will lead us to act in certain ways.

In problematising Giddens's understanding of unconscious processes, a useful foundation is Freud's original theorisation of the subject. It is possible then that his work may throw some light on the problems that, according to this thesis, arise in Giddens's handling of a concept of the unconscious. A good place to start is the

overall problem of an inherent paradox which I understand to be at the heart of Giddens's analysis of the unconscious, whilst left unnoticed or at least not warranting explicit recognition in his writing. This is the problem of talking, writing or thinking about the unconscious; can unconscious activity be rendered comprehensible, and its existence convincingly stated, in a conscious form, such as an academic description, and if so does this not stand at odds with its very definition? Put another way, even if we assume its existence, in describing the unconscious we are no nearer to accessing its qualities, because, description necessarily relies upon *conscious* means of symbolisation.[5] I will separate these issues out and consider both how Freud justifies the existence of the unconscious, and to what extent unconscious material can be expressed via conscious processes.

It is immediately apparent in Freud's work that a concept of the unconscious is the foundation for much of his subsequent theory, as he himself states: 'The division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise of psycho-analysis; and it alone makes it possible for psycho-analysis to understand the pathological processes in mental life' (Freud, 1915: 165). Thus, in a manner which is striking in comparison to Giddens's account, Freud sets his arguments out with great deliberation and depth, aiming to confront criticism in advance by anticipating potential queries. In arguing for the reality of the unconscious Freud is careful not to contradict the meaning he attributes to the word 'unconscious'. Processes are not assumed as given, if invisible, nor are they there for all to see, if we know where to look. In short Freud seems to be far more mindful of the paradox implied in the conscious deliberation of the unconscious than, in my interpretation at least, Giddens's account.

Freud achieves this firstly by a simple acknowledgement that the existence of unconscious activity is always *inferred* rather than directly observed. Thus 'an unconscious conception is one of which we are not aware, but the existence of which we are nevertheless ready to admit on account of other proofs or signs' (Freud, 1912: 51). If for a moment we imagine a theoretical position which holds that all activity which goes on in the mind of an individual is accessible to the conscious part, Freud suggests that such a position is easily made untenable because there is so much activity which can broadly be called mental, but is absent from conscious recognition. In Freud's account a concept of the unconscious is necessarily derived from these absences: 'It is *necessary* because the data of consciousness have a very large number of gaps in them; both in healthy and in sick people psychical acts often occur which can be explained only by presupposing other acts, of which, nevertheless, consciousness affords no evidence' (Freud, 1915: 168).

The evidence which signifies the unconscious is drawn from a number of sources. The most celebrated indication in psychoanalytic theories is probably the phenomenon of dreaming. For Freud, the significance of dreams could not be explained away as meaningless representations of conscious systems, somehow surplus to requirement in a waking state. In psychoanalysis they are generally understood to be an area where unconscious processes are allowed to attach themselves to cognitive representations due to the regression of some elements of consciousness - a kind of half-way house for what tend to be mutually exclusive realms of the mind. Other indicators include the symptoms of hysteria and neurosis, jokes and humour, hallucinations, meaningful slips of the tongue, and of course the much cited and mysterious example of hypnosis. In this extract, worth quoting at

length, Freud witnesses hypnosis, which he later practised himself, as performed by Bernheim :

> ....a person is put into a hypnotic state and is subsequently aroused. While he was in the hypnotic state, under the influence of the physician, he was ordered to execute a certain action at a certain fixed moment after his awakening, say half an hour later. He awakes, and seems fully conscious and in his ordinary condition; he has no recollection of his hypnotic state, and yet at the prearranged moment there rushes into his mind the impulse to do such and such a thing, and he does so consciously, though he does not know why. It seems impossible to give any other description of the phenomenon than to say that the order.... had been present unconsciously, until the given moment came, and then had become conscious. But not the whole of it emerged into consciousness: only the conception of the act to be executed. All the other ideas associated with this conception - the order, the influence of the physician, the recollection of the hypnotic state, remained unconscious even then (Freud, 1912: 51).

This is a good example of Freud's attempt to point out the existence of an unconscious via the absences in our understandings, made explicit in practices such as hypnosis.[6] The unconscious system is not only to be inferred from areas of the psyche which tend to be conventionally regarded as unfathomable such as dreams, hypnosis or madness, it also permeates the day-to-day lives of every individual, where 'holes' in conscious appropriation abound; 'our most personal daily experience acquaints us with ideas that come into our head we do not know from where, and with intellectual conclusions arrived at we do not know how' (Freud, 1915: 168). A useful analogy is that of an invisible man or woman. Though we would of course not be able to see an invisible person, it would be possible to be reasonably convinced of

their existence by the impression they make upon what *is* visible, when they sat down, picked things up, bumped into objects and so on.[7]

Although Giddens's understanding of unconscious processes is indebted to psychoanalysis, in certain important aspects it lacks the level of sophistication apparent in Freud's writing. Giddens is of course only drawing from psychoanalysis, not attempting to replicate its every detail. Nonetheless, it is possible to argue that Giddens, in comparison to Freud, assumes the existence of the unconscious without recourse to the basis of his assumptions. The important point is that this has ramifications when he comes to discuss the role of the unconscious in the formation of self-identity. As I shall argue throughout this thesis, the unconscious appears as an isolated and self-contained entity, its relationship with other levels of the self, and its management of emotions, somewhat mechanical, which partially stems from this failure to explore his concepts in critical detail, such as attempting to reconcile the paradox inherent in a conscious exploration of the unconscious. In Freud's scheme the unconscious is intimately related to the rest of the psyche, and more elaborately contextualised, by the evidence of absence, so to speak. He points to the darkness which skirts conscious understanding and argues that certain properties can be ascribed to this darkness, thus confirming its existence, by observing activities in consciousness, which necessarily cannot be explained by reference to the conscious mind. Although there are issues which remain problematic, such as the possibility of objective interpretation and inference, Freud does go some way towards containing the paradox that I am concerned with here.[8]

If we were to reinstate a Freudian conception of the unconscious in Giddens's 'stratification model' of personality, would certain insurmountable tensions arise, or have Freud's ideas simply been condensed? Little can be said of potential tensions at present, as I have not yet contextualised Giddens's claims for the unconscious in relation to the other two aspects of his tripartite model - practical consciousness and reflexivity. As an initial suggestion, Giddens's assertion of the autonomous subject, particularly apparent in his championing of reflexivity, may be incompatible with Freud's extensive notion of the unconscious. For in Freud's account, 'you experience nothing of these preliminaries of your thought; though they too must certainly have been of a mental nature; all that enters consciousness is the ready-made result' (Freud, 1926: 19). This suggestion may have implications for any assertion of the individual as a radically reflexive agent. I will argue that it is possible to interpret Giddens's lack of elaboration concerning the complexities of the unconscious as a tendentious device (conscious or otherwise!) in the context of his theorisation of self-identity. A watered-down, or 'tidy' version of the unconscious allows Giddens to maintain an important part of the psyche, while avoiding potential compromises in his attempts to reformulate and extend the scope of reflexive agency in modern settings. I will now move on to discuss two other key elements of the self - practical and reflexive consciousness.

Practical consciousness

Zygmunt Bauman, in a discussion of the general 'under definition' of the reality of existence, considers anxious uncertainty to be a prevalent concern, a human condition even. He offers some suggestions for how these fears might possibly be held at bay:

> The anxiety would be lessened, tensions allayed, the total situation made more comfortable, were the stunning profusion of possibilities somewhat reduced; were the world a bit more regular, its occurrences more repetitive; its parts better marked and separated; in other words - were the events of the world more predictable....(Bauman, 1995 : 141).

There is an implicit suggestion here that such hopes are inevitably in vain. I would argue though, along with Giddens, that for the majority, for a good deal of the time, anxiety *is* held at bay, however fragile the stand-off. We have already seen how unconscious processes contribute to the delicate balance of trust and anxiety. In Giddens's analysis practical consciousness to some extent performs the duties which Bauman hopes for wistfully in the quote above:

> 'Going on' in the contexts of daily social life involves constant and unremitting work on the part of all participants in social interaction. For ordinary individuals, much of this labour passes unnoticed, so deeply engrained is it in practical consciousness (Giddens, 1991 : 61).

The image conjured up here is of a realm or 'place' where an active process of selection and construction is laboured at. The constant goal of this 'work' is to be able to 'go on' in everyday life. 'Going on' refers here not just to the physical ability to continue of course, but to a conscious and emotional ability to carry out routines of speech, gesture, posture and thinking without being overwhelmed by uncertainty about their correctness or authenticity. More concisely, 'going on' presumes a level of ontological security, which Giddens defines as 'a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual' (Giddens, 1991: 243). This 'work' is not usually held at the level of discursive awareness - what we might imagine as the forefront of the psyche -

otherwise it would overcrowd immediate practical considerations. Neither is it as far removed as the unconscious operations previously discussed. Practical consciousness tends to be what Giddens's refers to as 'non-conscious'. It is learnt knowledge which has become second nature or taken-for-granted, but is nonetheless potentially available to the discursive realm.

For example, I may decide on a particular day to make the journey from the place where I live into the local town with a friend. Without too much reflection certain procedures can be uncovered here which though rarely considered during particular actions, fundamentally shape them nonetheless. Let us assume we decide to walk into town. Before we depart certain routines will be followed. I will almost certainly be wearing some clothing. My choice will ensure I expose no more than what I perceive to be socially acceptable. The route we will take to town may vary, but once chosen is unlikely to warrant any active orienteering. We will probably avoid walking on busy roads, cutting through stranger's houses and gardens, and all manner of stationery and moving objects. Our walk will be aided by our watchful eyes; selective conscious recognition of surrounding objects. Walking is itself a highly regulated activity, and the way we walk is likely to be carefully learnt. The way we look at others, the way we react to others looking at us, our proximity to them when passing, crossing the road etc.; conventions of language in talking to my friend as we walk such as turn-taking, adjacent pairs, pauses, inflection, volume and acceptable silences; the list could go on and this is far from an exhaustive analysis of an everyday task.[9] All of these activities are open to a near infinite number of decisions yet on the whole they receive little conscious attention in adulthood, and for most people become relatively predictable, most of the time. Giddens uses the term 'bracketing

out' to illustrate the role of practical consciousness, and 'natural attitude' for the state of mind that it produces.

My example here is relatively trivial. More fundamental aspects of existence - the nature of the self, our relationship to others, understandings of death, violence and so forth - are all monitored and partially 'made safe' by the same process in Giddens's account. Practical consciousness 'brackets out' questions of the nature of self and others; or, more accurately it 'answers' these questions. 'In 'doing' everyday life,' Giddens tells us, 'all human beings 'answer' the question of being; they do it by the nature of the activities they carry out' (1991 : 49). It is an inherently precarious process, what Giddens refers to as a 'fragile interdependence' (ibid.). It allows us to carry on in the world with a sense of safety and continuity, but it can easily be seriously disrupted by the potentially unpredictable actions of others.

The concept of practical consciousness owes much of its clarity to earlier formulations of a similar nature in the literature of phenomenology which follow on from Heidegger; particularly the work of Alfred Schutz, a pupil of Husserl, and the research of Goffman and Garfinkel, who in a broader fashion have taken the perspective of phenomenology to inform their own methods of social research. Schutz's phenomenology was explicitly concerned with the 'subjectivity of the actor'. The social world, according to Schutz is 'a very complicated cosmos of human activities' (Schutz, 1964: 6), and to understand this world with any validity it is of no use looking to external stimuli, such as behaviourism might, or abstract social structures, which much of traditional sociology depended upon for its insights. Giddens holds a similar view:

> A common tendency of many otherwise divergent schools of sociological thought is to adopt the methodological tactic of beginning their analyses by discounting agent's reasons for their action....in order to discover the 'real' stimuli to their activity, of which they are ignorant.... Such a stance is not only defective from the point of view of social theory, it is one with strongly-defined and potentially offensive political implications (Giddens, 1979: 71).

Thus Giddens sympathises with the phenomenological principle that instead, we must look toward 'the actor in the social world whose doing and feeling lies at the bottom of the whole system' (Schutz, 1964: 7).

In Schutz's theorisation, the social world is not just understood in terms of the opposite extreme - as being constituted by rational, purposeful, discursive action. We do not enter into each interaction with carefully set out goals, expectations and interpretations all *in mind,* that is, at the forefront of our immediate conscious thoughts. This is where Schutz's concept of the 'natural attitude', and equally Giddens's 'practical consciousness' comes into play. The larger part of the knowledge necessary to carry out any interaction takes a relatively tacit form, which Schutz refers to as 'stocks of knowledge' (1964: 29). Although available to the actor in the sense that they rely on it to interact in concrete situations, and skilfully so, 'stocks of knowledge' are routinely unexamined discursively. Schutz describes this aspect of consciousness as 'the zone of things taken for granted, the relatively natural concept of the world from which all inquiry starts and which all inquiry presupposes' (1964: 133).

There are obvious parallels here between 'practical consciousness' and Schutz's 'stocks of knowledge'. The similarities are not lost on Giddens. He acknowledges an

indebtedness to phenomenology, and cherishes as a principal rule of sociological method its demonstration that the production and reproduction of society 'has to be treated as a skilled performance on the part of its members, not as merely a mechanical series of processes' (Giddens, 1976: 162). It is not surprising then that in formulating a model of personality Giddens refers to a range of phenomenological literature. The two are not exhaustively congruous however. While critical of the determinism of some social science, Giddens also seeks to temper what he sees as an excessive emphasis on the *voluntarism* of social practices in Schutz's writing. He accepts that not all 'purposive' action is formulated in a calculative, discursive way, as in the tacit orientations of practical consciousness, and he goes further by recognising the importance of unconscious states (Giddens, 1976: 76).

Thus the individual cannot always be fully aware of why they act in certain ways, even hypothetically. If there are unconscious influences at work in our actions, then it follows that the consequences of those actions, for self and for others, may unintentionally influence further action, which again might have unintended consequences, and so on indefinitely. Day-to-day life is made up of countless mutually influential actions or *inter*- actions. All action is carried out in the context of previous action. Thus if we accept that some actions are unintended, e.g. unconsciously motivated, the consequences of this action, the basis for further action, may remain at the level of unconscious operation. Furthermore, even what we do intend to do can have unintended results : 'intentional acts characteristically bring about whole series of consequences, which are quite legitimately to be regarded as doings of the actor, but were not actually intended by him' (1976: 77). Again this

may have repercussions for the consequent actions (intentional and unintentional) of the acting self and others.

It is in this way that Giddens's earlier work contextualises phenomenological claims for the sovereignty of subjective experience of the social world. The relevance of this discussion here is in pointing out two factors. Firstly practical consciousness, as Giddens perceives it, supports the views of phenomenology in that it accredits the individual with a knowledge of the conditions of their existence, artfully employed in day-to-day life. Secondly however, intentional action, whether practical or discursive, is bounded 'in respect both of unacknowledged effects of action and....of determining conditions not mediated by the consciousness of the actor' (Giddens, 1976: 32). Practical consciousness is positioned in a mileu which acknowledges some level of determinism; be it unconscious motivation, or a broader context where the conditions and consequences of action are undoubtedly the product of human agency, but not always intentionally so.

In deciding how to think about something, what to say or do, how to present one's self to others, and so on in the course of daily life, the possible range from which to select a particular action is incredibly vast. Without the necessary commitment (which originates in basic trust - see above) to follow particular discourses and activities through in daily life, we would be in a constant state of indecision and uncertainty. 'On the other side of what might appear to be quite trivial aspects of day-to-day action and discourse,' Giddens warns, 'chaos lurks' (1991 :36). Practical consciousness keeps us the right side of chaos by 'bracketing out' an array of fears, concerns and questions which would otherwise dog our every movement. Furthermore by

removing them from routine discursive contemplation, we experience what we *do* do, what is 'bracketed in', as the normal and reasonable way of doing things - as the 'natural attitude'. If our sense of order is not shared by almost everyone around us we would have serious difficulties maintaining that order. Daily life, for the majority, is characterised by contact with others. As we move around our 'natural attitude' is constantly affirmed, refuted or modified by the people we come across. Erving Goffman's work highlights the consensual nature of practical consciousness particularly well. In a discussion of Goffman's notion of 'the *Umwelt*' (Goffman, 1971: 248) it is described as:

> a 'moving' world of normalcy which the individual takes around from situation to situation, although this feat depends also on others who confirm, or take part in, reproducing that world (Giddens, 1991: 128).

There are in fact many parallels between Schutz's 'natural attitude', Goffman's *Umwelt* and Giddens's notion of practical consciousness. An initial similarity can be seen in Goffman's discussion of 'normal appearances' (Goffman, 1971: chapter 6). He argues that being able to feel at ease in our surroundings is a hard-won comfort and the result of an active, vigilant process:

> To walk, to cross a road, to utter a complete sentence, to wear long pants, to tie one's own shoes, to add a column of figures - all these routines that allow the individual unthinking, competent performance were attained through an acquisition process whose early stages were negotiated in a cold sweat (Goffman, 1971: 248).

In a similar vein, no doubt drawing from his reading of Goffman, Giddens suggests that 'the 'uneventful' character of much of day-to-day life is the result of a skilled

watchfulness that only long schooling produces' (Giddens, 1991: 127). It is important to note that the process eventually allows the individual *unthinking* competence in Goffman's account. 'As his competencies mature, what he expects of his surroundings will become decreasingly available to his conscious mind; less and less will he be able to tell us what these normal appearances are' (Goffman, 1971: 259). Here the parallels between Goffman and Giddens are clear, with both attributing a large proportion of agency to a non-conscious realm. Goffman's work can in fact be seen as an attempt to describe the details of this non-conscious realm, which individuals rely upon in everyday life. Giddens understands the appeal of Goffman's studies in revealing to us the pseudo-secrets of practical consciousness:

> The feeling of sharp illumination that the reader often experiences in reading Goffman derives from his making explicit what, once he has pointed them out, we recognise to be ingredients of practical consciousness, normally employed in an unacknowledged way in social life (Giddens, 1979: 81).[10]

Much of Goffman's work is explicitly concerned with the consensual nature of the *Umwelt*. He eloquently details the seemingly endless reciprocity of social interaction. In the maintenance of 'normal appearances' for example, individuals are constantly checking themselves in ensuring they appear as if nothing 'is up', whilst at the same time checking others for signs that they are reading your efforts in the correct way - that they are not bothered by you - and also that there is nothing 'up' with them - that they are presenting themselves as not bothered with you. It is worth quoting Goffman at length during one of his many illuminations of reciprocal influence. In this instance he highlights the often prevalent concern in public places,

such as on a train or walking down a high street, to show others that we are unconcerned by their presence.

> If the individual is to be unconcerned about the others present, in the sense of accepting them as no threat or startling opportunity, then it will be useful if they have the same feeling about him, else he may feel that even though they have no cause for alarm they may think they have and themselves take threatening action in consequence. So the individual (he can feel) might best be concerned. For the individual, then, what is perceived as a normal situation is likely to be one in which he is unconcerned about other's concerns, including their concern about him (Goffman, 1971: 282).

Goffman here illustrates the *social* aspect of the *Umwelt,* or practical consciousness. Relative order in day-to-day life is not just dependent upon stocks of knowledge which we are tacitly aware of, it is also dependent on *tacit agreements* about what constitutes this knowledge.

Practical Consciousness: Some Initial Criticisms

One issue of potential critique and revision lies in Giddens's construction of the relationship between the unconscious and practical consciousness. It has already been indicated how basic trust relationships, played out in the unconscious, incline or disincline an individual towards ontological security:

> Trust in the existential anchorings of reality in an emotional, and to some degree in a cognitive, sense rests on confidence in the reliability of persons, acquired in the early experiences of the infant (Giddens, 1991: 38).

Practical consciousness seems equally fundamental, as 'the cognitive and emotive anchor of the feelings of ontological security characteristic of large segments of human activity in all human cultures' (1991 : 36). I want to avoid conflating the two in an ambiguous manner. One tentative distinction is as follows: practical consciousness maintains a 'normal' state of affairs for the discursive self to operate in by constant organisation - 'bracketing' in and out the numerous possibilities available. To have faith in 'normality' requires an 'underlying emotional commitment' (1991: 38) which goes beyond the realm of practical consciousness - it necessarily precedes it. Commitment shapes action in the form of motives. Giddens asserts that 'motivational systems' are born of unconscious emotive tensions between trust and anxiety, as we have seen. It follows then that the process of 'bracketing' in and out is the domain of practical consciousness, but a commitment (or lack of) to this process lies with the unconscious. If practical consciousness is the anchor of ontological security, then the unconscious is an underlying faith that we will hold fast in uncertain seas, the trust which allows us to drop anchor at all.

Whatever the direct connection, in Giddens's analysis practical consciousness is also of great importance, not just today, or within our culture, but in all human cultures for the maintenance of ontological security:

> To be ontologically secure is to possess, on the level of the unconscious and practical consciousness, 'answers' to fundamental questions which all human life in some way addresses (1991: 47).

In discussing the results of practical consciousness as forming a 'natural attitude' (Schutz), we are of course fully aware that what has become 'natural' is in fact a

social construction. This is what the inverted commas imply. We have seen in reference to phenomenological literature that the natural attitude is an accomplishment, 'tacit knowledge that is skilfully applied in the enactment of courses of conduct' (Giddens, 1979: 57). So an individual actively constructs, if non-consciously, what she later accepts as natural. This leads me to a further consideration of practical consciousness: what, according to Giddens, is the basis for our selection and exclusion of particular discourses and actions? Schutz considers the very same question when discussing his concept of the 'natural attitude':

> What motives prompt grown-up men living their everyday life in our modern civilization to accept unquestionably *some* parts of the relatively natural concept of the world handed down to them and subject *other* parts to question [?] (Schutz, 1964: 122).

In Giddens's account, unconscious emotive tensions underpin faith in all selections as we have seen. But there are other factors which appear more external to the individual. We draw from existing discourses and symbols in forming a perspective on the world; patterns that have already been established to serve various ends which must include, though not necessarily consciously, the provision of meaning - an ontological framing. Giddens clearly recognises how these framings or 'settings' as he refers to them shape our trust in the world : 'How far different cultural settings allow a 'faith' in the coherence of everyday life to be achieved through providing symbolic interpretations of existential questions is....very important' (1991: 38).

The extent of the success of practical consciousness in shielding the self from overwhelming anxiety is, in this analysis, at least partially dependent on the richness

of existing cultural forms.[11] Giddens tries to move away from a vision of these forms as abstract entities - rather, they are embodied in the actions and discourses we use to 'get on' meaningfully in everyday life. A major aspect of Giddens's construction of the traditional and post-traditional dichotomy derives from his theoretical understanding of the changing nature of cultural forms. He does in fact see the transformation and dislocation of modern cultural 'settings' as a defining characteristic of post-traditional society. The discussion here though is moving into particularities of the self dependent on culture and other factors. How sufficiently practical consciousness is propped up by traditional and post-traditional society in Giddens's analysis will be the subject of later discussion. For the moment I will continue with my enquiry into Giddens's notion of a 'basic' self. In particular there are a number of further queries which can be raised in relation to Giddens's articulation of the characteristics of practical consciousness.

Firstly, there is a tendency in Giddens's work to view the natural attitude as a *homogeneous* process. That is to say the content of practical consciousness appears to be uniform across large social groups. So while he acknowledges that a variety of cultural settings provide a varying degree of faith in the 'naturalness' of the world, he fails to allow for the fact that what constitutes the 'natural' invariably differs from one individual to the next. Furthermore, it may be possible that certain groups of people may share certain assumptions about what is natural which set them apart from other groups, at a much more particular level than the general distinction between traditional and post-traditional societies. At the very least it can be argued that little attention is given to differences of natural attitude *within* both traditional and post-traditional societies. So while we can agree with Giddens that there are

certain characteristics of the world we must all take for granted, examining the differences *between* natural attitudes may be at least as important in understanding identity and social life as revealing their commonality.

I can clarify this point by referring again to the work of Alfred Schutz. In his discussion of 'the world taken for granted' he distinguishes between the 'in-group' and 'out-group'. These are meant as relative terms - 'we' are always part of an in-group while 'others' make up the out-group, which Schutz nicely illustrates by citing a Rudyard Kipling poem:

> Father, mother and me,
>
> Sister and Auntie say
>
> All the people like us are We
>
> And everyone else is They.
>
> And They live over the sea,
>
> While We live over the way.
>
> But - would you believe it? - They look upon We
>
> As only a sort of They!
>
> (Rudyard Kipling, 1926, in Schutz, 1964: 243)

At the level of practical consciousness/natural attitudes, Schutz argues that accepted truths fundamentally differ from group to group, and are essentially heterogeneous:

> The members of an out-group do not hold the ways of life of the in-group as self-evident truths. No article of faith and no

> historical tradition commits them to accept as the right and the good ones the folkways of any other group than their own.....Other gods reveal other codes of the right and the good life, other things are sacred and taboo (Schutz, 1964: 245-246).

What does this imply for Giddens's analysis of practical consciousness? If self-identity is formed against a backdrop of ontological security, which in turn at least partially depends on a reliable natural attitude, as Giddens argues, the relationship between in-groups and out-groups must surely be an important factor. For what we learn to accept as natural is determined by what we learn as unnatural, abnormal, impolite and so on. In this sense natural attitudes depend upon, and reinforce, conflicting natural attitudes, in a spiralling continuum: 'To the natural aspect the world has for group A belongs not only a certain stereotyped idea of the natural aspect the world has for group B, but included in it also is a stereotype of the way in which group B supposedly looks at A' (Schutz, 1964: 247). Here we are reminded of the endless reciprocity so well documented by Goffman. But in this instance, rather than looking at the interaction within groups which stem from and perpetuate practical consciousness, we are focussing on the interaction between groups which consolidates both group's shared sense of what is natural.

This raises the idea of identity being formed in relation to a firm sense of 'otherness'. Giddens places such an image at the core of his understanding of identity-formation, initially accomplished via unconscious trust relationships with care-givers. It does not seem to go against the grain of his arguments then to suggest that the ontological security allowed by an undisturbed practical consciousness should at least in part rely on a developed sense of the 'other'. It may also be a potential intellectual space to articulate some of the attributes of conflict and inequality. Conflict, because what we

'know' to be true at a routinely unacknowledged level must come into contact with opposing attitudes which other individuals and groups 'know' to be true also. When this happens rational discourse may not resolve the issue as these attitudes precede and inform what we consider to be 'rational' discourse, they are not constituted by it.[12]

Thus natural attitudes, though undoubtedly relying on consensus for their effectiveness in some respects, are not exhaustively uniform. Also, when taken-for-granted knowledge comes into conflict it is not necessarily dissolved in reference to mutual understandings - it may in fact entrench opposing beliefs. At the level of day-to-day life this notion allows for the interplay of consensus *and* conflict, in maintaining tacit structures of knowledge with which we make sense of the world. While Giddens acknowledges the precarious nature of ontological security derived from the natural attitude, the role of conflict and a sense of the 'other' plays in the formation of this attitude is generally overlooked.

A further problem arises in Giddens's conceptualisation of practical consciousness and the unconscious as distinctly separate realms of experience, alongside reflexive awareness. When separating elements of the psyche in this way it is also important to try and establish the connections between them and it could be argued that Giddens formulation of such connections are far from comprehensive. Again this can encourage an interpretation of Giddens's self-model as overly cognitivist, rationalist and unrealistically 'tidy'. Friedman makes a similar criticism of Giddens though in relation to a different aspect of his theory. He accuses Giddens's historical representation of modernity as being an example of 'atomistic thinking':

> Instead of seeking the unity of phenomena whether hypothetically or by some more empirical means, he is more concerned to establish a list of relevant phenomena that can be associated with a conception of modernity, which consequently appear as more or less independent phenomena (Friedman, 1994: 222).

To accentuate the various factors of modernity as autonomous elements is problematic according to Friedman: 'On the contrary, their simultaneity or 'parallel process'-like properties point to the need to understand the relation between them' (1994: 223). Although Friedman's criticism is rather abstract, it is possible to sympathise with this view when considering Giddens's analysis of the self, a pertinent example being practical consciousness. However, a number of provisory points are essential before attempting any kind of transposition of Friedman's critique. Firstly, it seems clear that some level of abstraction and differentiation is necessary in analysing an ambiguous social 'object' intellectually, such as the self, whatever the associated pitfalls. Accepting the 'unity of phenomena' may be an invaluable starting point and a constant point of reference, but if analysis remains in awe of unity any progress beyond what appears to be given is unlikely, and any intellectual pursuit futile. For analysis assumes some kind of consideration of the constituent parts of the object of analysis, so what else can it do but disrupt the unity of that object?

Also, I would argue that Giddens does attempt to describe a general relatedness between separate elements under the umbrella of selfhood. Although lacking methodical application, certain processes seem to make themselves felt at all levels of the self - reflexive, practical and unconscious. Giddens's account of motivation is an example that comes to mind, and though already touched upon, some brief repetition

will clarify my argument. Motivational components of action 'straddle conscious and unconscious aspects of cognition and emotion' (Giddens, 1979: 58). Motivation is regarded as 'involving unconscious forms of affect as well as more consciously experienced pangs or promptings' (Giddens, 1991: 64). Motivation covers a broad area of human activity - the impetus for getting anything done in fact, and it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from such a term about the relationship between the three key levels. The same could be said of 'cognition', another broad and encompassing term, which is also dispersed amongst all elements of the psyche; thus Giddens talks about unconscious as well as conscious cognition (for example Giddens: 1979: 5).

Clearly then, processes of the self operate across the boundaries Giddens sets up, and so in this way bind the separate elements together. But what binds them does not dissolve their boundaries. So while Giddens posits certain dynamics which transcend his initial stratifications, the processes of the self are still imagined as distinct entities with tangible boundaries. Connections between each element of the self are generally left unexplored in Giddens's account. Each part thus appears to operate independently. This can lead to an overly-mechanical and simplified version of the psyche, which fails to do justice to the complex relationship between elements of self-experience which are separated for the purpose of analysis. To substantiate this criticism, I will return to the concept of practical consciousness, and suggest that a closer reading problematises a clear stratification between the former and the unconscious.

In Giddens's account, practical consciousness fills the space between the unconscious and reflexivity. Unconscious activity is unavailable to conscious consideration, by definition. On the other hand reflexive awareness is constituted by discursive and immediately apparent thoughts. Between these two, the 'stocks of knowledge' held at the level of practical consciousness are routinely non-conscious, as oppose to unconscious. In other words it is knowledge that we utilise regularly and skilfully, which we no longer need to consciously consider in order to carry out the activities to which they apply. If we do choose to reflect on this knowledge however, it is relatively unproblematically available to reflexive awareness. In looking at the relationship between the unconscious and practical consciousness, certain questions could be raised. A key difference between the two is the level of access to what 'goes on' there. But in trying to focus on the connections between the two, this difference is transgressed, and understandably so, in Giddens's own account:

> ....motivational elements may operate as unacknowledged causal conditions of action - i.e. as unconscious impulsions unavailable to the reflexive monitoring of the rationalization of conduct. In principle, the relation between such elements and an actor's ongoing rationalization of his behaviour, must be regarded as plastic, *as offering the possibility of revelatory self-understanding* (Giddens, 1976: 128, my emphasis).

The distinction is blurred in conceding the potential accessibility of unconscious processes. Interestingly enough, Schutz's phenomenology, and those who have in some respects taken it up, such as Garfinkel and Goffman, allows no conceptual space for the existence of the unconscious. What is apparent though is that the natural attitude is extended to cover what in Giddens's account might be attributed to the unconscious. Here Schutz states the range of the natural attitude: 'The actual stock of

knowledge is nothing but the sedimentation of all our experiences of former definitions of previous situations', and these experiences 'might refer to our own world in previously actual, restorable, or obtainable reach or else to fellow-men, contemporaries, or predecessors' (Schutz, 1966: 125).

The sedimentation of experience necessarily reaches right back into infancy: 'As early as in childhood we have to learn what we have to pay attention to and what we have to bring in connection, so as to define the world and our situation within it' (1966: 131). Thus the relationships and the emerging sense of self formed in this period, and of influence throughout life, are seen as populating an exclusively unconscious realm in Giddens's account, but contribute to an expansive natural attitude here. Furthermore, Schutz argues that the more fundamental categories with which we distinguish any kind of social world, the 'typifications and symbolizations', are 'predefined as unquestionably given' (1966: 121). Though these categories may still be penetrable, unquestionability, at least if taken literally, suggests a deeper, more inaccessible aspect of the natural attitude.

These issues leave Giddens's conceptualisation facing certain problems which are not easily resolved. On the one hand it may be possible to revise the notion of the unconscious and accept that at some times, in some case, it is accessible. On the other hand it might be seen as an option to extend the activities of practical consciousness to incorporate the origins and fundamental structuring of the self, maybe suggesting *degrees* of accessibility to the contents of the natural attitude. Either way the boundaries between the two realms become far more relaxed, and it could also be argued that in the same moment the definitions themselves become

problematic. If we consider one's relation to another in any depth the distinction becomes unclear, characteristics overlap, and an 'atomised' stratification model seems to emerge from Giddens's analysis. This discussion has outlined some initial problems with Giddens's version of the unconscious, practical consciousness and the relationship between the two. I will now consider the third and final element of Giddens's model of the psyche, reflexive awareness.

Reflexive Awareness

There is only a skeletal idea of a *generic* reflexivity, existing across all cultures and histories, in Giddens's work. Much of his theorisation of reflexivity is inseparable from an analysis of the extension and transformation of institutional reflexivity in the particular setting of 'post-traditional society', as already discussed. Unlike the other elements of the psyche so far discussed, it seems a radical reflexive awareness accompanies institutional reflexivity, and only truly flourishes in the post-traditional context. Nonetheless, Giddens clearly asserts that reflexivity in some form is evident in all cultures and throughout history:

> Reflexive awareness is .... characteristic of all human action .... All human beings continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities as a feature of doing what they do, and such monitoring always has discursive features .... agents are normally able, if asked, to provide discursive interpretations of the nature of, and the reasons for, the behaviour in which they engage (1991 : 35).

According to Giddens then, human beings routinely have some kind of answer when they are asked, or when they ask themselves, what are you doing, and why?

Reflexivity, or discursive consciousness, is defined as 'being able to give a coherent account of one's activities and the reasons for them' (Giddens, 1984: 45). Giddens suggests that reflexivity is more than an occasional ability, which may or not be utilised depending on the situation. The discursive monitoring of our activities appears, in the above quote, to be unceasing. It is a constant companion to one's everyday existence.[13]

Giddens understands reflexivity to be at the very core of self-identity. It is the vehicle by which we can see ourselves as individuals. This is not just the 'individual' of Western culture, but the ability to distinguish the self from its shifting surroundings at all: 'The capacity to use 'I' in shifting contexts, characteristic of every known culture, is the most elemental feature of reflexive concepts of personhood' (1991 : 53). So, if the unconscious is where separation of the self is made possible, it is only through reflexive awareness that we can fully constitute and maintain the identity of that self; that we can construct it and be conscious of it as a distinct and propertied entity. Giddens's views now summarised, for the remainder of this chapter I will consider some critical points which arise from the discussion of reflexivity.

Reflexivity: Some Initial Criticisms

An initial consideration is what will be a prevalent concern throughout this thesis; the extent to which Giddens champions reflexivity as a liberated, almost post-ideological process. When we discuss his understanding of social change and the extension of reflexivity in greater depth it will be worth considering whether we can at times empathise with Alexander's criticism (1996). He accuses Giddens of creating a

version of events which equates with a crude form of modernisation theory. Where once we were held in the relatively ignorant thrall of 'tradition', the more rational and reflexive we become, the more tradition fades away and we become 'free'. What this fails to recognise is that the attempt to place reflexivity outside and above the rest of discourse is a cultural project itself; a consequence of the Enlightenment, industrialism, of this or that - the point here being that this project is shot through with culturally embedded traditions, rather than transcending them.

I will argue however, that Giddens's concept of reflexivity is not necessarily as redundant, or as politically dubious, as Alexander suggests. Many of the qualities Giddens attributes to reflexive awareness provide a useful account of the individual as a knowledgeable agent, in a phenomenological tradition. I would also agree with Giddens's claim that modern individuals are more discursively aware of the contexts of knowledge production and recognition than ever before. At the same time, what needs to be acknowledged, and what will be an integral element of this thesis, is arguments that wish to illustrate the *limits* of reflexivity. Alexander, for example, associates himself with a line of thinking which 'suggests that reflexivity, whether modern, late modern or post-modern, can be understood only within the context of cultural tradition, not outside of it' (1996 ; 136). This qualification must be applied to Giddens's theory of modern self-identity. It implies that care must be taken to avoid unreservedly asserting that reflexivity is somehow all-encompassing. The pronouncement of the existence of an unconscious realm, for example, places certain constraints on the powers of reflexivity. Its inclusion in a model of the self acknowledges that there are many emotional tensions that affect our behaviour and mental activity which do not consciously occur to us. However, Giddens does not

always work through the connections between the separate elements which he constructs, and the potential contradictions of a foundational unconscious realm and an extended reflexive awareness are not fully explored.

It is worth at this point introducing the work of George Herbert Mead to our discussion. Mead's work on selfhood compares interestingly with Giddens's. He places reflexivity at the heart of his analysis though lends it a different emphasis in his overall scheme. Mead points to the inherently reflexive concept of 'self' which evokes both an object and a subject: the referrer and the referred *to* if you like. It is this fundamental dichotomy which is the basis of most social interaction.

> ....it is necessary to rational conduct that the individual should....take an objective, impersonal attitude toward himself, that he should become an object to himself. For the individual organism is obviously an essential and important fact or constituent of the empirical situation in which it acts; and without taking objective account of itself as such, it cannot act intelligently or rationally (Mead, 1934: 201).

In stating that the individual takes an 'objective, impersonal' attitude towards herself, Mead is not implying that selfhood is ideally value-free, or that it should be characterised by a lack of self-interest. On the contrary, self-interest is dependent on a subject-object dichotomy; in other words on the individual *becoming* an object to itself. Mead then asks the important question of how this becoming can occur: 'How can an individual get outside himself (experientially) in such a way as to become an object to himself'? (ibid.). Giddens answers this question by referring to unconscious processes, discussed above. In infanthood trusting others to fulfil our needs allows the child to accept their temporary absence, which subsequently fosters an

appreciation of others as distinct entities, and thus the self as distinct and bounded too. But this does not really answer the question of where the individual learns to look at herself *from*, how she, as subject, experiences her self, as an object. In short, although reflexivity is imputed in early unconscious activity, its origins remain unclear.

Mead does not make any explicit reference to unconscious activity. He attributes self-identity to the progressive development of reflexivity - to the understanding of the self as an object. He answers his question by attempting to conceptualise the nature of the awareness which is directed towards the self in the act of objectification. This process, Mead argues, is characterised by a development of a sense of the 'other': 'he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals towards himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved' (Mead, 1934: 201). Thus the self 'is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience' (1934: 202). As individuals develop, the population of 'others' increases in sum, and they become assimilated into a 'generalized other':

> the self reaches its full development by organising these individual attitudes of others into the organised social or group attitudes, and by thus becoming an individual reflection of the general systematic pattern of social or group behaviour in which it and the others are all involved (1934: 207).

No meaningful interactions, nor even the most intimate sense of self, is possible, without these social foundations. Mead makes this clear in an eloquent summary:

> unless the individual has thus become an object to himself he would not be self-conscious or have a self at all. Apart from his social interaction with other individuals, he would not be able to relate the private or 'subjective' contents of his experience to himself and he could not become aware of himself as such, that is, as an individual, a person, merely by means or in terms of these contents of his experience; for in order to become aware of himself as such, he must, to repeat, become an object to himself, or enter his own experience as an object, and only by social means - only by taking the attitude of others towards himself - is he able to become an object to himself (Mead, 1934: 246).

Mead here repeats his central assertion, that the nascent self is indebted to its social environment for its development. Even the most 'internal' or 'subjective' experience stem from the ability to be aware of one's self as an object. And this awareness is possible only by locating one's view towards one's self from an externally anchored position - 'by taking the attitudes of others toward himself'. From this position the self as a meaningful, interacting object emerges, yet remains inextricably social.

Two issues arise from a comparison of Mead's notion of reflexivity with Giddens's. First, there is a conceptual dichotomy which I find somewhat problematic and which was briefly touched upon in discussing Mead's work above; namely if we talk about consciousness of self then something, as yet undisclosed, must *be* conscious of the self. Thus we have two processes here, the self and the agent that produces the self. They cannot be one and the same or else self awareness would not be possible. Giddens is wary of others' attempts to make this distinction explicit, for example refuting Mead's distinction between 'I' and 'me', where 'the 'I' is, as it were, the active, primitive will of the individual, which seizes on the 'me' as the reflection of social ties' (Giddens, 1991 : 52). This is a fair representation of Mead's division: 'the

'me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes', whilst 'the 'I' is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others' (Mead, 1934: 244). In Mead's account the 'I' is 'the custodian of initiative' or 'the acting self', whereas the 'me' is 'the voice in part of others, the foil which gives form and substance to the 'I'' (Jenkins, 1996: 41).

Giddens suggests that Mead's distinction between the two terms is largely unnecessary, and that their relationship is 'internal to language' (ibid.). I agree that Mead's conception of the 'I' is problematic. It is detailed far less than his concept of 'me' and can easily be construed as an aspect of the social processes he designates such importance to, rather than external to them. Furthermore, Mead does not account for a source of the motivation for setting up a reflexive identity, i.e. the impetus of the agency involved in the process of making the 'other' generalized. Unfortunately, Giddens seems to shy away from acknowledging and unpacking such a distinction in his own work. It is not clear how we are to picture the 'person' as the operator of reflexive awareness in a separate way to the 'person' which is brought into being as a result of reflexivity, and it could be argued that Mead at least makes some headway in detailing the process of making the self an object.

Secondly, in some respects Mead's analysis illustrates a more restricted definition of reflexivity than Giddens's. As we have seen, while reflexivity is at the core of self-identity for Mead, it only comes about if the individual becomes an object to her self. This is totally dependent on social interaction, and although partially negotiable, relies on the existing perspectives of others, which eventually becomes generalized. This not only suggests that reflexivity is bounded, but also that it is a product of these

boundaries. It is not that Mead is arguing a position wildly at odds with Giddens, However Mead's radically social and interactionist account has implications for Giddens's version of reflexivity. Mead's analysis suggests that reflexive awareness will always be conditioned by the established procedures of one's cultural and social environment. If we learn to look at our self, right from its inception, according to established discourses, these discourses must always have normative qualities. They must contain certain ideas about what is right and wrong, and emphasise certain ways of doing things while marginalising or absencing others. Thus reflexivity is pre-conditioned by the social and cultural processes which make it possible. This reading of reflexivity is applied to Giddens's analysis in chapter two, in order to raise certain problems with his notion of an extended reflexive awareness signifying a post-traditional age. The idea that reflexive awareness can step outside of its cultural and social origins seems far more complicated in the light of Mead's account.

Conclusion

I have in this chapter outlined Giddens's theorisation of recent social change and given a more detailed account of the three elements which make up Giddens's model of the self. In part, the discussion provides an important foundation for the remainder of this thesis. In the following chapters these two dimensions of Giddens's work, self and social change, will be brought together. We will consider Giddens's analysis of the impact of supposedly radical social transformations - time-space distanciation, disembedding mechanisms, institutional reflexivity - on the processes which maintain self-identity. Also certain criticisms have already been initiated which raise questions

about the validity of Giddens's model of selfhood, some of which will impact upon that discussion.

Giddens's incorporation of an unconscious element is problematic from the outset. More complex models of the unconscious, such as Freud's, indicate more subtly the existence of an unconscious. Furthermore, in the Freudian model, unconscious processes impact substantially on the more 'rational' and accessible aspects of consciousness. By definition, this impact cannot be easily understood by the reflexive awareness it affects. Without necessarily agreeing with Freud's analysis, it can be used to question Giddens's theorisation of reflexive awareness as a clear and distinct realm from the unconscious, the two realms relating to each other in an almost mechanised fashion. It also raises a query about the scope of reflexive awareness, which may need to be revised in the light of a more active and untidy unconscious. These criticisms will be developed in the following chapter.

Giddens's concept of practical consciousness can also be problematised in relation to reflexivity. The distinction between an unconscious and a practical consciousness is difficult to maintain. Indeed the phenomenologists that Giddens draws from, such as Schutz, do not theorise a space for unconscious processes. Practical consciousness was also seen to be established out of a developing sense of 'otherness' - the forming of 'in' and 'out' groups according to Schutz. Identity in this context relies on social and cultural definitions of the normative content of 'stocks of knowledge': one's in-group is another's out-group. Such a claim again raises questions about the role of reflexivity within the self. Reflexive awareness may itself be conditioned by these social and cultural norms, and so again we are overstepping the boundaries Giddens

tries to establish. The social and cultural situatedness of practical consciousness also provides the grounds for initial scepticism of any claims which might be made about the extension of reflexivity's scope in modern settings. Comparing Giddens's version of reflexivity to Mead's also suggested that a more social understanding of reflexivity may be possible, which could lead to a more restricted understanding of the scope of reflexivity. Again these criticisms have only been outlined in introducing Giddens's model of selfhood, and will be developed in the following chapter.

While Giddens explicitly draws from the traditions of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, his attempt to synthesise various aspects of these theoretical approaches to the self has already raised some problems. In considering the gaps in Giddens's appropriation of these theories, tensions arise which question the foundations of Giddens tripartite model. This is clear in the way in which connections between these three elements are systematically overlooked in Giddens's analysis. When we do contemplate these connections, such as the relationship between reflexivity and unconscious processes, the model is complicated and the distinctions made ambiguous. This ambiguity does not necessarily mean that Giddens's analysis is so problematic that it should be abandoned, at least certainly not at this stage. However it does suggest that one needs to be wary of claims Giddens makes about reflexive awareness in contemporary settings. In particular, the relationship between reflexivity, practical consciousness and the unconscious cannot be over-simplified in order to generate claims about the scope of reflexive awareness. There is undoubtedly a danger of this happening in Giddens's work. In stressing a self-model which seems excessively cognitive and rationalised, the unconscious and practical consciousness may take on a sanitised 'tidy' role, each within their own

compartments. In this context the personal transformative power of a rationality-based reflexivity can too easily be emphasised and exaggerated in terms of its role in the maintenance of self-identity. The importance of unconscious processes, which cannot easily be rationalised or brought into discourse, and practical consciousness, with its socially and culturally sedimented 'stocks of knowledge', cannot be overlooked if they are to remain in Giddens's model. It is with these reservations in mind that Giddens's analysis of the transformations affecting self-identity will be examined.

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[1] Giddens still uses various terms interchangeably. Generally speaking, 'high' or 'late' modernity and 'post-traditional society' refer to the same epoch and are a result of the same set of social changes. The term post-traditional is a theoretical development of Giddens's which is used to focus explicitly on what he sees as the most salient consequence of recent social change: the abandonment of tradition. Even modernity, Giddens argues, was structured in similar ways to previous historical epochs: 'For most of its history, modernity has rebuilt tradition as it has dissolved it....the persistence and recreation of tradition was central....' (Giddens, 1994: 56). Thus modernity can be at least partially referred to as a 'traditional society', up until the shift to a post-traditional society.

[2] In other discussions this position is somewhat blurred, such as when Giddens asserts that 'modernity is essentially a post-traditional order' (Giddens, 1991: 20).

[3] It could be argued that the very nature of the unconscious involves a certain amount of conceptual ambiguity. Still, such ambiguity is not apparent in Giddens's formulation, where the unconscious is a distinct, accountable and separate aspect of the psyche.

[4] Giddens's theorisation of early infanthood draws extensively from the work of object-relation theorists, D. W. Winnicot in particular (1964; 1965; 1974) as Giddens acknowledges (see Giddens, 1991: 38-39).

[5] Any concept of the unconscious, in my view, contains an inherent paradox. Any analysis which attempts to uncover the mechanisms of this realm supposedly brings these mechanisms into consciousness, thus they are no longer unconscious. If such mechanisms can be uncovered following a particular line of enquiry then to what extent can they truly be called 'unconscious'? The conceptual distinction between conscious and unconscious is seriously compromised. Giddens points this out clearly himself: 'unconscious modes of cognition and emotional governance, as a matter of definition, specifically resist being brought into consciousness and appear there only in a distorted or transposed way' (1991: 36). Any social theorist then, unless we presume special penetrative powers, is equally susceptible to these distortions when consciously theorising the unconscious. Nonetheless, Giddens does offer an explanation of its possible positioning in the psyche. However he clearly does not, explicitly at least, acknowledge any such susceptibility in his own understanding of the unconscious.

[6] A second, closely related problem in theorising the unconscious is that even if it can be agreed that the unconscious can be imputed by the 'gaps' in conscious processes it does not necessarily follow that we can say anything substantial about its nature or characterise its dynamics. Freud characteristically confronts this issue early on in a discussion of the unconscious: 'How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious? It is of course only as something conscious that we know it, after it has undergone transformation into something conscious' (Freud, 1915: 167). This is an admission which also serves as

a summary of the aims of psychoanalysis as therapy. The patient, in overcoming the resistances which pushed material into the unconscious in the first place, can translate that material back into a conscious representation. It is only by attaching familiar symbolism to an unconscious process that we can begin to make sense of it, when it is 'brought into connection with word-presentations' (Freud, 1923: 356). In a different paper, Freud uses the example of the instincts to support this point: 'An instinct can never become an object of consciousness - only the idea that represents the instinct can....If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it' (Freud, 1915: 176). Freud seems to accept that direct knowledge of the unconscious is implausible, but pointed to the practice of psychoanalysis in defence of speculation. If the patient can accept the authenticity of analysis, which in turn encourages the resolution of their 'sickness', it has served a purpose: 'it turns out that the assumption of there being an unconscious enables us to construct a successful procedure by which we can exert an effective influence upon the course of conscious processes....' (1915: 167).

[7] I am indebted to Matt Connell for this analogy and general helpful discussion on Freud.

[8] The mechanical, cognitive nature of the unconscious in Giddens's account has only been introduced here. It is an issue taken up in more detail when limits to reflexivity are discussed in the next chapter, focusing on the self as an excessively 'tidy' phenomenon in Giddens's theorisation.

[9] I am reminded here of a cartoon by Gary Larson, entitled 'Basic Lives'. It portrays a suburban street scene of a man walking along, with a dog, bird and frog also in the picture. A thought bubble shows the man thinking 'left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot', while the bird thinks 'up, down, up down' as it flaps its wings and so on for the other animals present. This illustrates I think quite simply how much we 'bracket out' in everyday activities, and how ludicrous life would be if we did not have this capability.

[10] I would agree that moments of profundity are often experienced as the revealing of things which we feel we already 'knew', though until that moment were unable to articulate to others or in relation to self-understanding.

[11] This might also be called 'underwhelming' anxiety, for if cultural forms are shallow or superficial, or simply absent, it could lead to a painful sense of meaninglessness. Such a situation engenders chronic indifference and a 'paralysis of the will' (Giddens, 1991: 196).

[12] A case in point is the fatwa issued by the (late) leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, sentencing Salman Rushdie to death after the publication of *The Satanic Verses,* his controversial novel which was seen to challenge the authenticity of Islamic belief. Rushdie said his crime was to 'discuss the growth of Islam as a historical phenomenon, as an ideology born of its time. These are the taboos against which 'The Satanic Verses' has transgressed' (*The Observer* 22/01/89). He defended his position on Islam thus: 'Doubt, it seems to me, is the central condition of a human being in the twentieth century. One of the things that has happened to us....is to learn how certainty crumbles in your hands' (ibid.). There is some irony in that Rushdie's viewpoint is that all attitudes are susceptible to doubt. It could be argued that chronic scepticism is beginning to form part of the natural attitude of Western consciousness.

[13] The different levels of reflexivity can be illustrated with an example, such as a hypothetical romance. An individual, we can assume, has an intimate involvement with a partner, and has regular contact with this partner. It is extremely likely that this activity will make some impression upon her thought processes. She will be capable of describing what a relationship is, what her partner is like, how much they see each other, why she does it etc. This is in some sense reflexive awareness - she is involved in an activity yet she is also, at least potentially, fully aware discursively of the activities she is engaged in.

Furthermore, it is probable that she will think about how she thinks about the activity! She may question her own ideas about intimacy, monogamy, sexuality and so forth. Am I too prudish? Am I prudish enough? Is this an equal partnership? Should I demand more of a say? Should I see this as permanent and feel committed or treat it as an extended 'fling'? In yet another dimension it is probable our hypothetical agent will relate her preferred discourses concerning her relationship to other realms of experience - family, friends, literature etc. - and vice versa. It is difficult to capture the fluidity of

thinking, of its speed and endless tangents, revisions and modifications. The division of reflexivity into levels is also little more than a descriptive device. In the process of thinking, these levels are interwoven and inseparable.

Chapter 2 Questioning Reflexivity I : Culture

In arguing that reflexivity offers the opportunity to construct ourselves and our relationships afresh, Giddens, I will now argue, overlooks many crucial factors in identity formation, and misjudges somewhat the nature of the late modern age. I discussed in the previous chapter how Giddens places reflexivity at the heart of identity in any epoch. Nonetheless, in talking about the shift from traditional to post-traditional society, he makes it clear that it is characterised at least in part by the radical extension of reflexivity. I now want to detail the implications of this claim and the shortcomings which I feel accompany it.

> The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.... only in the era of modernity is the revision of convention radicalised to apply (in principle) to all aspects of human life.... (Giddens, 1990: 38-39, my emphasis).

As this quote indicates, the phenomenon of reflexivity reaches beyond such abstract considerations as institutions and expert systems, to 'all aspects of human life'. Not surprisingly then, the self is also implicated in reflexive revision: 'The self today is for everyone a reflexive project - a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future' (Giddens, 1992: 30). For Giddens, 'reflexivity is the most important characteristic of the modern self' (Tucker, 1998: 205).

Giddens is in fact referring to a second level of reflexivity beyond that which accounts for any form of self-consciousness. If we return to Giddens's definition of contemporary reflexivity, he says that 'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character' (Giddens, 1990: 38-39). If we consider the achievement of self-identity as a 'social-practice' then the supposed effect of radical reflexivity becomes clearer. The very processes which we engage in to form a sense of self are opened up to interrogation and continually questioned. Whereas any sense of self is by definition a reflexive feat, it is only in the context of radicalised modernity that we are reflexively aware of this reflexive process! Once this knowledge is set in motion, self-identity becomes a matter of choices - allowing a progressive, if burdensome, extension of autonomy - 'we have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act' (Giddens, 1994a: 75).

Reflexivity, particularly when imagined as a 'project', relies on distinctly modernist assumptions for its clarity and appeal. A 'project' implies a centred subject at the helm, overseeing a purposeful future trajectory. Although the number of choices about what to be may prove bewildering at times, or even most of the time, it is not the locus of this choice which seems to be in dispute. Thus Giddens seems to be referring to a self which is chronically uncertain about what to be and how to be, but the origin and the reality of the self from which these questions emanate is not in doubt.[1] What is important to recognise here is that by his own reasoning Giddens implicitly draws a line, beyond which the process of reflexivity is somehow non-applicable. Thus whilst Giddens indicates a radical 'disembedding' of the self and heralds the extension of reflexivity into all realms of experience, the self, even in his

own account, may be embedded in ways which are all too easily overlooked. Tracing Giddens's own argument then, it seems clear that he sets boundaries for the scope of reflexive thinking, which are nonetheless not fully realised in his understanding of contemporary identity. In this chapter I will take a closer look at the nature of these boundaries, and reflect upon whether or not they compromise Giddens's claims for reflexivity.

Reflexivity Overstated

Giddens is often careful to point out certain limitations to reflexive control. The frustrating aspect of his discussion of these boundaries, particularly in his later work, is that it is usually structured as little more than an informed aside. Thus, an analysis of Giddens's understanding of the limits to reflexive awareness, such as is attempted here, requires an extensive task of exegesis alongside a critical appreciation. It could be argued that treating these issues in a marginal fashion is a theoretically tendentious manoeuvre. It allows Giddens to continue his analysis of extended reflexivity and his hopes for its radical potential, without seriously considering the extent to which certain factors compromise the reflexive 'project'. For example, in 'Living in a Post-Traditional Society' (1994), he acknowledges two factors which problematise 'active choice' - the unconscious and routinization:

> Depending on how fixed unconscious traits are presumed to be, one's genogram could be seen as setting clear limits to feasible options. To see day-to-day life as an amalgam of free choices thus flies in the face of psychological reality. Another reason might be the inevitability of routinization. Daily life would be impossible if we didn't establish routines, and....they wouldn't be routines if we didn't, at least for longish period of times,

> place them effectively 'beyond question' (Giddens, 1994a: 75, my emphasis).[2]

As clarified in the first chapter, reflexive awareness coexists with practical consciousness and the unconscious. These two elements map roughly on to the two factors Giddens argues for above. It is practical consciousness which allows us to go about daily life without a constant, explicit questioning of reasons, and it would be here that the 'reasoning' behind routines are 'held in stasis'.

What Giddens does not negotiate is the extent to which these factors compromise reflexive awareness. Of course the processes we are talking about here cannot be frozen into strict proportions. However, Giddens fails to tackle the issue in any detail, and this could be considered a serious omission. What Giddens does do, specifically in the aforementioned work, is continue to index the proliferation of reflexivity in post-traditional society. As an apparent consequence of this proliferation, Giddens also argues that there is an ever-increasing abundance of choices. Reflexivity and choice should not be conflated. However, Giddens at times dispenses with his own caution, and conceives of extended choice as an unqualified and universal dividend of reflexivity. Compare the statement I emphasised in the quote above with some other comments in the same piece, which both precede and follow Giddens's suggested limitations: 'choice has become obligatory' (Giddens, 1994a: 76), 'everything is open to doubt' (1994: 86). 'Science, Popper says, is built upon shifting sand; it has no stable grounding at all. Yet today it is....more or less the whole of everyday life to which this metaphor applies' (1994: 87).

Giddens wants to have his cake and eat it. Of course there are limitations to the choices we make, he argues in one breath: 'To see day-to-day life as an amalgam of free choices thus flies in the face of psychological reality' (1994: 87). Choice has become boundless and all-pervasive, he argues in the next: 'In post-traditional contexts, we have no choice but to choose how to be and how to act' (1994: 75). I will now argue that the limits to 'choice' which Giddens touches upon, can be considered more thoroughly in relation to the nature and extent of reflexivity. I will argue that some of this thoroughness is evident in Giddens's own earlier works.

The remainder of chapter two is split into two sections. The first section is concerned with the relationship between fate and reflexivity. In Giddens's own discussion of fate, he attributes beliefs in fate to traditional societies, persisting in modern settings only as anomalies, or as reflexive elements of self-narratives. I will argue that Giddens does not fully appreciate the role cultural processes still have in the structuring of self-identity, concepts of fate being one example of those processes. If concepts of fate do persist, at a culturally significant level, then it raises questions about Giddens's model of contemporary selfhood, and its relationship with a supposedly post-traditional order. I argue that non-reflexive elements of experience are still of vital importance - particularly a commitment to the coherent reality of the social world and the self's role within that world. Following this assertion, in the second half of this chapter I will consider more detailed arguments which criticise Giddens's marginalization of wider cultural processes. These arguments suggest the need to acknowledge the cultural boundaries of reflexive awareness, which potentially compromise the ascendance of reflexive awareness documented in Giddens's account .

Concepts of Fate

Giddens tackles the concepts of fate and destiny, and attempts to show how they are accommodated by the modern, reflexive self (Giddens, 1991: 109). Fate and destiny, he argues, were central elements of a traditional culture, and are of diminishing utility in contemporary society. Formulated in this way, Giddens's concepts of fate and destiny provide a useful illustration of his analysis of the relationship between cultural processes and reflexivity. I now want to suggest that whilst Giddens goes some way towards convincing the reader that he has found a place for notions of fate in his map of contemporary self-identity, there are various problems with this attempt. Giddens's view of fate is incomplete and at times contradictory - fate and fatalism still play an important part in the structuring of identity, and exist in tension with reflexive awareness. I will first outline Giddens's attempt to accommodate concepts of fate in his overall social and psychological analysis.

As this thesis has indicated, Giddens often illustrates developments in modern self-identity by contrasting them with his view of established practices in 'traditional' societies. In his only explicit discussion of fate and its relationship with self-identity, Giddens again uses this dichotomy as a reference point: 'There is no non-modern culture which does not in some sense incorporate, as a central part of its philosophy, the notions of fate and destiny' (Giddens, 1991: 109).[3] Whilst on the other hand: 'to live in the world of high modernity is to live in an environment of chance and risk.... and the reflexive making of history. Fate and destiny have no formal part to play in such a system' (ibid.).[4]

What might 'notions of fate and destiny' consist of? According to Giddens, it involves a conceptualisation of the world usually framed in religious terms. Life, and the events which mark one's life, are not understood as a series of random or chance occurrences. Neither are they perceived to be solely within the domain of human knowledge and control. The patterns and sequences of individual histories only make sense against the backdrop of an omnipotent controlling force. This force, once acknowledged, is still not perceived to be completely understood by merely human endeavours. This over-arching intelligence, however it is reified in varying cultures, is seen as deciding and controlling the life of each and every individual, and the connections between them. The acknowledgement of this force is the acknowledgement of fate and destiny. Individual life is pre-ordained, and personal responsibility for the outcome of one's own life is at least partially relinquished; 'the direction his or her life is due to take is specified by that person's fate' (Giddens, 1991: 109).

Giddens's definition of fate and destiny is so far non-controversial. At first glance it might seem straightforward to deduce Giddens's line of reasoning on the connection between fate and reflexivity. They are diametrically opposed, we might assume. In traditional societies, beliefs about fate and destiny shaped the way people in traditional societies thought and felt. These beliefs were firmly embedded in the individual's understanding of the world, and of their own self-identity. Giddens's modern individual, on the other hand, has embarked on a 'reflexive project of the self'. This image of the self has already been the subject of extensive discussion in this thesis. Decisions about how to act, think and feel, and the consequences of one's actions, can be considered and controlled more than ever before. The particular

trajectory of each individual life span is thus taken out of the hands of an external, transcendent intelligence, and placed firmly in the realm of the human. And not just the 'human' in an abstract sense. Reflexivity places each individual at the helm in deciding their own fate and destiny.

Giddens's work often does imply that the modern world and the modern self have become fully opened out to human control, as the quotes above, and his association of fate with tradition, all indicate. Giddens often states this aspect of his traditional and post-traditional dichotomy explicitly: 'The 'openness' of things comes to express the malleability of the social world and the capability of human beings to shape the physical settings of our existence' (1991: 111). And here, even more explicitly, he juxtaposes fate with contemporary beliefs: 'fate is taken to mean a form of preordained determinism, to which the modern outlook stands opposed' (1991: 110). Giddens is arguing that the post-traditional world is in part post-traditional because it has abandoned notions of fate and destiny, along with traditions, as guiding principles in how we make sense of the world. Reflexivity has swept away these notions and has come to underpin our view of reality. It is the vehicle which propels us away from fate, destiny and tradition.

This seems to me to be a somewhat polarised analysis of the complex relationship between reflexivity, fate and self identity. While Giddens certainly suggests this view throughout his work, when he comes to discuss fate and destiny specifically, he is at times far more subtle and cautious. He discusses a variety of notions on the theme of fate, and argues that some elements of these notions may still persist, in some cases, in post-traditional society. Again partially an exegetical task due to the complexity

and ambiguity of Giddens's work, I will now outline these distinctions before offering a critical reading of Giddens's writing on fate.

Fatalism

The concept of fate, Giddens argues, has two main elements. It incorporates an at least partially 'settled future', from the individual's point of view. What happens in life is beyond the grasp of routine human comprehension, and beyond human attempts at mastery. Secondly, futures are settled within some kind of moral framework, even if said morality is beyond the individual's comprehension, events are understood to have a 'cosmic meaning' (Giddens, 1991: 110). Religious cosmologies, which allude to 'God's Will', and 'the hand of God' are obvious examples. Greek mythology refers to the moral intervention of the Gods in human affairs in a particularly literal fashion. It is this understanding of fate which Giddens attributes to traditional as opposed to post-traditional settings.

Fatalism, Giddens argues, is a similar term, but with a distinctive difference. It involves a concept of fate, but it is not imbued with the sense of a higher moral purpose. It is concerned with the first, but not the second of the elements which make up a concept of fate. Fatalism is tied with a sense of world weariness and defeatism in the face of an insurmountable, problematic 'fate', which is bestowed upon an individual. To have a 'fatalistic outlook' is to be inclined towards a 'resigned acceptance that events should be allowed to take their course' (1991: 112). Giddens argues that while concepts of fate were abundant in traditional social relations, fatalism is a far more common response to contemporary society, though it is an

attempt to negate it: 'Fatalism is the refusal of modernity - a repudiation of a controlling orientation to the future in favour of an attitude which lets events come as they will' (1991: 110).

Fatalism is a common and understandable response to contemporary cultural factors which are central to Giddens's analysis and were outlined earlier: disembedding mechanisms, the separation of time and space, and reflexivity - all fuelling increasingly globalised, high-consequence risks. 'High-consequence risks' is Giddens's collective term for predicted outcomes of human practices which potentially effect humanity on a mass-scale. Risks come to be defined as a result of dialogue between experts in a particular field, or fields, and are usually highly contested by experts and laypeople alike. Examples include supposed global climate change, nuclear accidents and/or war, and deforestation (Giddens, 1991: 114-124).

The proliferation of high-consequence risks combines with the underlying uncertainty of modern life. Radical doubt can open up life to reflexive control, but it can also leave the individual unsure what to do at all in a given situation. Even if the individual feels they might be able to affect the nature of high-consequence risk environments, knowing what to do is another matter. In such a scenario, Giddens argues that fatalism is an understandable option. In confronting such risks, individuals often feel powerless to do anything about them, and so they relinquish any sense of responsibility they might otherwise feel if they thought they could do something to alter the course of events. A fatalistic outlook is reference to the perceived fact that the outcome of these events is simply beyond their control. There is no sense of a moral purpose beyond human comprehension which is in control in

this context. While a sense of fate may have been abandoned in the shift to a post-traditional society, Giddens argues, fatalism prospers in conjunction with this shift; 'it is an outlook nourished by the main orientations of modernity' (1991: 112).

Fortuna

Giddens also points to another historical variation on the concept of fate - fortuna - and considers its connections with post-traditional society and the reflexive self. The term originates in Roman culture, named after the Roman goddess of fortune, who regularly transformed the course of events for her earthly subjects, favourably or unfavourably, according to her whim. Giddens argues that the Christian Church, once established, was disinclined towards the notion of favours being bestowed upon individuals, favours which were unconnected to the following of Christian laws and the word of God. Notions of fortuna did not disappear however: 'the idea of fortuna remained important and often outweighed providential reward in the afterlife as a feature of local cultural belief' (Giddens: 1991: 110).

Understandings of the world shaped by fortuna were gradually eroded though, just as concepts of fate were, a turn of events which was predicted by political theorists such as Machiavelli, Giddens argues. He interprets Machiavelli's writing as placing an increasing amount of human activity under the sway of human control, rather than fortuna, foreshadowing 'a world in which risk, and risk calculation, edge aside fortuna in virtually all domains of human activity' (1991: 111) - that world being post-traditional society.

Fatefulness

Finally, 'fatefulness' is an entirely different process, but concepts of fate have a bearing on it nonetheless. The term designates a type of understanding reserved for specific events, as experienced by an individual. A sense of fatefulness arises when something happens to an individual, or when they are faced with a choice, which is of great significance for the path of future events in their life - 'highly consequential for a person's destiny' (1991: 112). 'Fateful moments' are by definition uncharacteristic of the choices one commonly makes, which, Giddens argues, are usually of a routine and relatively non-consequential manner. Fateful moments are often experienced as turning points in an individual's sense of development: 'Fateful moments are times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were, at a crossroads in his existence' (1991: 113).

Fateful moments reconnect with concepts of fate in that 'they are the moments at which the appeal of fortuna is strong, moments at which in more traditional settings oracles might have been consulted or divine forces propitiated' (1991: 113-114). How we deal with fateful moments again raises a division between traditional and post-traditional settings in Giddens's account.[5] In traditional societies destiny was placed firmly in the hands of the gods at these moments, or in divine messengers of one type or another - soothsayers, oracles, priests or sages. Within the general context of post-traditional society, an omniscient, cosmic intelligence is an increasingly unlikely resource, as we have seen. The future is open to human control, Giddens argues, a now common theme in his writing:

> The 'openness' of things to come expresses the malleability of the social world and the capability of human beings to shape the physical settings of our existence.... In mileux from which fate has disappeared, all action.... is in principle 'calculable' in terms of risk (1991: 111-112).

In this context to see fateful moments arising, or being resolved, by reference to fate is a 'paranoiac' response, Giddens argues: 'In contrast to the paranoiac, the ordinary individual is thus able to believe that moments which are fateful for his own life are not the result of fate' (1991: 128).

The individual may turn to expert knowledge, but responsibility for final decisions still lies with that individual. Choosing from a range of expert advice, the individual can make an informed decision if they reflexively involve themselves in those knowledge systems - 'reskilling' - in Giddens's terminology: 'if a person takes the time to reskill appropriately, a reasonably informed choice can in fact be made' (1991: 141). A reliance on notions of fate is thus bypassed. Giddens takes an individual with a bad back as an example. She may be disillusioned with orthodox medicine, and become aware that a range of other therapies are available. She could then learn about the structure of the back, and the basics about a number of therapies. With these resources she could make a reasoned choice from the range of therapies available. This is the act of 'reskilling' or 'reappropriation' (1991: 140), which, Giddens suggests, at least partially ensures that personal destiny is not abandoned to traditional concepts of fate.

In summary, notions of destiny, fate and fortuna have gradually been eroded, and this erosion is part and parcel of the shift from traditional to post-traditional societies.

This is clear when we look at the occurrence of fateful moments. These are significant moments in an individuals life history, which were once steeped in notions of fate, but are now open, and perceived to be open, to human control and endeavour. Fatalism, however, has not been eroded, but is in fact a common cultural response to the sceptical and globalizing tendencies of modernity. I will now consider some problems with these distinctions, and then take a critical look at the role Giddens allocates to fate in traditional and post-traditional settings.

Giddens's Analysis of Fate, Fortuna & Fatefulness: Some Inconsistencies

Giddens has taken the concept of fate and attempted to incorporate it into the outlook of the modern individual. A belief in fate is hard to reconcile with the assertion of self-reflexivity. In his efforts to do so, Giddens has suggested that fate has largely been abandoned by the reflexive self, with some qualifications. But are these qualifications convincing, and do they construct an adequate picture of contemporary selfhood? Whilst Giddens does an excellent job of indexing some of the various complexities of notions of fate, some critical observations are still appropriate, and penetrate to the heart of Giddens's account of reflexivity once again.

As suggested at the outset of this section, Giddens's view of fate is inconsistent and incomplete. It is inconsistent in that the terms he introduces to differentiate between various conceptualisations of fate are later confused in his own application of the terms. It is incomplete in that it could be argued that fatalism and a sense of fate still play an important part in the structuring of identity, and exist in tension with reflexive

awareness. He also ignores the positive effect that beliefs in fate might have in the construction and maintenance of self-identity.

Giddens attempt to define the role of fate in relation to self-identity by splitting it up into different categories is, I have suggested, disputable. Giddens frustrates his own categorisation, and on closer inspection, the categories tend to be obfuscatory rather than illuminating. This is clear in Giddens's separation of fate and fatalism. In his initial discussion, Giddens quite firmly places fate in traditional or non-modern contexts, whilst fatalism is diagnosed to be a common response to the uncertainties that are inseparable from post-traditional society, outlined above. When Giddens returns to the subject briefly in a later chapter, this original distinction is offered in a far more ambiguous manner. Giddens indicates that residues of providential reason still influence attitudes today. Whilst in one sentence then, he informs the reader that fate has all but disappeared, in another he heralds its resurgence. These examples indicate the former claim:

'the psychological security that conceptions of fate can offer are largely foreclosed' (1991:129)

'the settings of modernity, from which fortuna has largely retreated' (1991: 128)

'in a society which is taking leave of the past .... all action, even that which sticks to strongly established patterns, is in principle 'calculable' in terms of risks' (1991: 111-112).

Yet when Giddens touches on modern self-identity later, his line of reasoning has changed tack. He discusses high-consequence risks - 'ecological catastrophe, nuclear war or the ravaging of humanity by as yet unanticipated scourges' - and suggests that in order to successfully 'bracket out' unwelcome anticipation of these events as a

distinct possibility, 'the risks in question are given over to fate - one aspect of the return of fortuna in late modernity' (1991: 183). Giddens does not suggest any of the 'other' aspects of the return of fortuna, hinted at here. This passage highlights the fact that after the original distinction, fate and fortuna seem to have become interchangeable terms. Most strikingly though, there is no mention of the possibility of fatalism as a response any longer, supposedly the more common contemporary cultural response with relation to fate, and a belief in fate has been reinstated as a concept which has not retreated, and which can offer psychological security, in a distinctly modern setting.

One could defend Giddens's approach as that of a dialectical thinker. Where the reader finds contradiction and confusion, it could be argued that Giddens is in fact over-arching the whole debate, successfully incorporating the abandonment of fate and its survival in a dialectic fashion. The 'overriding stress' of one of Giddens's most popular books 'is upon the emergence of new mechanisms of self-identity which are shaped by - yet also shape - the institutions of modernity' (1991: 2). This interconnectedness is part of a more general 'dialectic of the local and global' which signifies post-traditional societies. Such an account may be agreeable up to a point. However, it also allows Giddens to express certain points in a way which can appear evasive. The 'internal tensions', 'dilemmas' and 'contradictions' of modern selfhood, as described by Giddens (1991: 187), assimilate many elements of experience which supposedly operate within the self: unification versus fragmentation; powerlessness versus appropriation; authority versus uncertainty; personalised versus commodified experience (1991: 201). Giddens does not suggest any of these tendencies are dominant, only that they operate in a dialectical fashion; in 'various distinctive

tensions' (1991: 188). In this example, Giddens's approach may be interpreted as containing a necessary dose of balance and caution. But reading Giddens's discussion of fate, as with Giddens's work elsewhere, one cannot help feeling frustrated at his tendency to oscillate between positions without fully acknowledging the ramifications of such dialectics. Mestrovic similarly declares his exasperation with Giddens's 'vacillation' and comments that 'ambivalence and openness to all points of view are virtues only up to a point' (Mestrovic, 1998: 176-177).[6] In any case, to follow the allowances Giddens does make for the role of fate in maintaining contemporary self-identity to their conclusion, further queries are raised. The persistence of concepts of fate, fatalism and fortuna may challenge his vision of a reflexively constructed self more than he acknowledges, in his attempt to flit between contradictory positions.

On further application, as Giddens discovers, distinguishing between fate and fatalism is a difficult and largely unnecessary task.[7] A belief in fate might be summarised by the truism 'everything is bound to come out all right in the end'. Fatalism could be summed up with another well-worn phrase, 'what will be will be' (Giddens, 1991: 131). Is it possible to completely separate out these two as responses stemming from strikingly different attitudes towards life? To have faith that everything will work out for the best involves a certain degree of resignation and passivity, in other words, a degree of fatalism. On the other hand to take the attitude that what will be will be, could easily involve a degree of hope or trust. The phrase still suggests, however subtly, the hint of a benevolent order to the universe, however out of reach to human apprehension. The two terms are interwoven.

Consider, by way of an example, attitudes towards 'global warming'. Global warming is an example of a contemporary high-consequence risk. It is precisely one of those risks which Giddens suggests are commonly responded to with a fatalistic attitude. But there are numerous possible responses to the perceived phenomena of global warming which muddy the distinction between fate and fatalism. An individual may agree that global warming does exist and that we can do nothing about it. Events will take their course - a fatalistic outlook. However, there is often an implicit use of concepts of fate intertwined with what appears to be out-and-out fatalism. They may argue that it is something which 'is meant to happen', that it 'is part of evolution'.

In these instances it is being argued that global warming is part of a sequence of events in which we play a part, but do not ultimately control. Instead, control lies with 'nature' or an equivalent, mystified force. Another response might be to view global warming as some kind of 'payback' from 'nature', which humanity is due for inflicting ecological damage. This goes even further in associating events in the world with a cosmic intelligence. These views represent modern concepts of fate and are not necessarily separable from fatalism. They do not exhaust the number of possible responses by any means, but they illustrate the mutual existence of concepts of fate and fatalistic attitudes. In suggesting that fate and fatalism are often inseparable, it is clear that a sense of fate still plays an essential role in the structuring of identity, which may often be in tension with reflexive awareness.

Reflexivity, Fate & 'Active Trust'

Reflexive awareness is not an ever-present capability. Imagine if an individual were reflexive every conscious moment. For as long as they could function at all, they would be in a constant and chronic state of deliberation - confused and frustrated. All action would be suspended as one endlessly considered the possible consequences of, and reasons for, one's actions. It is as if two players take their seats for a game of chess; the possible outcomes stemming from the opening move are considered by white. She considers ten, twenty, thirty moves ahead, with hundreds of variations to take into account her opponent's moves. This may indeed be possible for some grandmasters, and for chess computers. But for most, if both players attempted to cover every possible move before committing themselves, the game would take an age, if it ever started at all. And even for great chess players, if this approach was carried through to everyday life, they would struggle to maintain meaningful social relationships.

Of course we are not, as individuals, exclusively reflexive. Though our reflexive capabilities may be expanding, Giddens argues that plenty of our daily life is still rarely reflected upon. As I discussed in chapter one, the development of 'generalised trust' allows the 'bracketing out' of questions and concerns that would otherwise flood the individual with uncertainty. The ability to trust originates in early childhood. To repeat Giddens's summary of this process:

> Trust in the existential anchorings of reality in an emotional, and to some degree in a cognitive, sense rests on confidence in the reliability of persons, acquired in the early experiences of the infant (Giddens, 1991: 38).

Once acquired, basic trust forms the 'underlying emotional commitment' necessary to get by in adult life, without constant recourse to reflexivity. Giddens draws on Goffman's concept of the *Umwelt* - 'a core of (accomplished) normalcy with which individuals and groups surround themselves' (Giddens, 1991: 127), to illustrate the purpose trust serves in daily life. But how is the *Umwelt* maintained? Surely the trust we establish in infancy can not guide us, unaided, through the rest of life? It provides the necessary potential for commitment, Giddens argues, but something else is needed: 'How far different cultural settings allow a 'faith' in the coherence of everyday life to be achieved through providing symbolic interpretations of existential questions is .... very important' (1991: 38).

The 'trust' of infant relationships is accompanied here by a 'faith' in the continuity and comprehensibility of one's surroundings; by one's being-in-the-world having sustainable meaning. It is here that faith and concepts of fate connect. Taking Giddens's quote as our premise, if a cultural setting is to provide adequate 'symbolic interpretations of existential questions', it must, in a sense, offer answers to the questions it sets. Furthermore, they must be 'answers' which individuals must be willing to accept. Existential questions - 'queries about basic dimensions of existence' (1991: 242) - can be meaningfully 'answered' by concepts of fate and fortuna. In fact, Giddens argues that in traditional societies, a faith in the continuity of one's self and one's environment was provided by 'religious cosmologies' and 'a providential interpretation of human life and of nature' (Giddens, 1990: 102). Thus historically concepts of fate and fortuna are an important vehicle for faith in Giddens's account.

In the post-traditional world, Giddens has argued that 'faith' is increasingly precarious. A dose of fatalism may allow one to 'go on', bracketing out otherwise perplexing concerns, but as we have seen, fate has all but disappeared, according to Giddens's world view. A sense of fate no longer imbues the *Umwelt* with the power to understand the world, it is no longer certain to provide 'faith in the coherence of everyday life':

> In the settings of modernity, from which fortuna has largely retreated, the individual ordinarily separates the Umwelt into designed and adventitious happenings. The adventitious forms a continuing backdrop to the foreground relevances from which the individual creates a textured flow of action (1991: 128).

But Giddens's description of self-identity in the 'settings of modernity' portrays an overly rationalist picture of the self, and seems to exclude the role of trust in maintaining the *Umwelt*, supposedly its centrifugal force. In the modern world, characterised by abstract systems, high consequence risks and post-traditionalism, reality is separated by the individual into a pure chance/total control dichotomy; things that happen are either purely accidental or actively designed. What is left to trust in? Giddens argues that we reflexively control our activities, or else fatalistically resign the outcome of events to chance. Giddens here paints a peculiarly arid picture of the processes we utilise to make sense of the world and of ourselves. Beyond reflexivity, there are only 'adventitious happenings'. Giddens's individual is one who rationally separates out the world into things he can control, and things he cannot control. It is a reductive portrayal of self-experience if it is limited to calculability versus contingency. In this context, maintaining a level of meaningful 'generalised

trust', or a 'faith' in a purposeful external world, seems impossible. Indeed Giddens suggests that it is increasingly difficult:

> abstract systems depend on trust, yet they provide none of the moral rewards which can be obtained from personalised trust, or were often available in traditional settings from the moral frameworks within which everyday life was undertaken (Giddens, 1991: 136).

To get by meaningfully in the modern world, Giddens suggests we need a new kind of trust - 'active trust'. This is a form of trust which is not antithetical to reflexivity. It is the ability to trust whilst being fully aware of the need to trust and consciously striving to maintain feelings of trust: 'Active trust is trust that has to be energetically treated and sustained' (Giddens, 1994a: 187).

Active trust is in a sense the only option left for Giddens's ideal-type self. To reiterate one of Giddens's most fundamental points of emphasis, all knowledge, in post-traditional societies, has been opened up to doubt. In this context, faith in one particular world-view, or in any meta-narrative which attempts to exhaustively answer existential questions, is increasingly unlikely. All approaches to understanding the world and one's self become relativised. Faith, though not impossible, is increasingly susceptible to reflexive awareness and so to doubt.

In this context, Giddens argues, encompassing visions of reality lose their salience, at least as taken-for-granted magnets for trust and faith. Individuals have to commit themselves consciously; in other words they have to actively trust in a particular way of being. The same can be said for intimate relationships, and in fact they tend to be

the focus of active trust in a world dominated by abstract systems, according to Giddens:

> In the profound transformations happening now in personal life active trust is necessarily geared to the integrity of the other.... Trust has to be won and actively sustained; and this now ordinarily presumes a process of mutual narrative and emotional disclosure (ibid.).

The problem with the concept of active trust is that it suggests a reductionist, and chronically rational, construction of the self. Mestrovic has this to say about Giddens's conceptualisation of modern forms of trust in *Modernity and Self-Identity* : 'Giddens's notion of trust is strangely mechanical and devoid of emotional connotations'. In the same paragraph; 'for Giddens, trust seems to be a synthetic, watered-down imitation of faith', which is 'hyper-conscious and pro-agency' (Mestrovic, 1998: 84). Mestrovic undoubtedly has a point. Giddens's use of 'networking' - 'a lot of business is now done that way' - as an example of active trust, gives the concept an air of superficiality:

> networking is a way of actively sustaining connections in a detraditionalizing society. To some extent one can still rely upon established roles, but networking means forming relationships with other people in an active and open way - it involves what I call active trust, as in many other sectors of social life today. Networking is quite egalitarian and it evokes the rhetoric of intimacy.... Its striking how many people use first names quickly now, compared to even a few years ago (Giddens & Pierson, 1998c: 120-121).

'Active' trust here seems to be hollowed out, any level of emotional commitment disregarded. How might one go about 'actively' trusting, in an intimate relationship

for example? Both partners might want to be reassured that the other partner has a strong sense of commitment to them. They do not want to constantly be worrying about whether their partner will leave them for someone else, will prioritise relationships with other friends or lie about their activities. To go about trusting that one's partner will be faithful, caring and honest, one has to stop considering more negative possibilities, and assume positive ones. Trust, by definition, implies the suspension of considerations such as a partner's potential unfaithfulness. It is difficult to see how trust in this context is any more 'active' than it always has been. One might even argue that the degree to which trust is 'active', i.e. considered, reflected upon, and consciously delivered, is a fair measure of the decline of 'actual trust'. 'Actual trust', in this context, involves a spontaneous emotional commitment, an instinctive suspension of doubt which is at least partially non-reflexive. Mestrovic argues along similar lines, pursuing the notion that Giddens's version of trust is a pseudo-trust, which in fact undermines the existence of actual trusting relationships:

> The human agent who enters a relationship with such a calculating, cautious, and gaming attitude toward trust is paradoxically not an agent in the fullest sense of the term, because he or she is holding back in commitment. If one is weighing the capability of the bond to withstand future traumas as an index of how much to invest in the relationship, one is not really committed to the relationship (Mestrovic, 1998: 85).

In other words the ability to trust, and even more unequivocally, to have faith, are dependent on *not* being reflexive about the object of trust/faith.

In more general terms, it is worth returning to the 'faith in the coherence of everyday life' (Giddens, 1991: 38) which Giddens sees as of great importance for a secure

identity. It is dependent on 'cultural settings', but as is made clear by Giddens's own account, these settings fail to provide a meaningful framework of trust in post-traditional settings. Here we reconnect explicitly with concepts of fate. Concepts of fate, are in effect, a means by which trust is engendered. They involve the handing over of the outcome of events to some kind of higher authority - to trust in the benevolence of that authority. Giddens argues that in more traditional settings, concepts of fate might have strengthened the *Umwelt*. A faith in the coherence of the world could be bolstered by an understanding, however vague, that everything was under cosmic control. At fateful moments, such as bereavement, illness or child birth, the individual might 'lean on' their beliefs in fate more expressively. However, with the abandonment of fate, and the extension of reflexivity, comes active trust. I have argued that 'active trust' is something of a misnomer, an inadequate term to describe the complexities of trust and faith in post-traditional society. I have suggested that while there is always a partially 'active' element to trust, it cannot replace the need for a more 'generalised trust'. This is a form of trust routinely beyond the attentions of reflexive awareness. It depends on non or pre-reflexive apprehension of reality, a prime example here being concepts of fate. I now want to argue that concepts of fate are non or partially reflexive activities, and still operate as a structuring element of contemporary self-identities .

The Continuing Importance of Concepts of Fate

Individuals do manage to hold at bay a sense of meaninglessness, even in contemporary society, but it is not achieved by the investment of 'active trust' as Giddens understands it. A 'faith' in the coherence of everyday life is still intimately

connected with concepts of fate, and to be authentic demands the suspension of reflexivity. In order to clarify this claim further, and apply it specifically to questions of self-identity, I will consider some examples which I think suggest the continuing potency of beliefs in fate in the post-traditional era.

In his 1992 work, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Giddens draws extensively from the plethora of contemporary self-help books. He suggests that these books generally reflect and encourage the 'democratisation' of personal life. They encourage a reflexive approach to one's own development as a self, and to one's relationship with others. In other words, he uses a contemporary publishing phenomenon which encourages reflexivity to illustrate his own arguments about the proliferation of reflexive awareness, its causes and consequences. I will now consider an example of a similar tendency in publishing and in a wider cultural context - the promise of *spiritual* awareness. It will be interesting to see how this cultural development reflects modern self-identity, as much as the self-help manuals Giddens analysed.[8]

Since the nineteen sixties, books offering therapeutic advice in a spiritual context have become widespread, a number of which are established best-sellers. It is often the case that the two trends are inseparable, so mutually entwined have they become outside the realm of mainstream psychiatry. There is not the space here to research spiritual self-help guides to the extent Giddens considered therapy-oriented self-help manuals in *The Transformation of Intimacy*. However it is possible take a closer look at one of the highest selling spiritual self-help texts in recent years - *The Celestine Prophecy*, by James Redfield.

The Celestine Prophecy

The book *The Celestine Prophecy* was first released in the U.S.A. in 1994. By 1996 it had already been reprinted twenty times in that country and had sold well over a million copies. Since then its popularity has spread and it has sold thousands in Australia, the UK and the rest of Europe. There are groups set up all over the world to meet and discuss the principles that the author proclaims. There are also audio versions, an 'experiential guide', three follow up books, and numerous web sites dedicated to the book and its teachings. *The Celestine Prophecy* is the gradual disclosure of nine revelations or 'insights' woven into a fairly straightforward adventure narrative. The insights are discovered one by one in the text and presented as if part of an ancient manuscript. Whether or not there actually is a manuscript, or if it is just a literary device, remains ambiguous. The explicit intention of the author is that the reader 'takes on' these insights and applies them to their own life: 'insights each human being is predicted to grab sequentially, one insight then another, as we move toward a completely spiritual culture' (Redfield, 1994). The relevance of Redfield's writing to this discussion is the nature of these insights.

The nine insights (which Redfield has added to with a tenth, eleventh, and soon to be released twelfth in subsequent titles) are peppered with references to concepts of fate, to which the reader is encouraged to adhere. The first insight is a prime example. It heralds the imminent emergence of a spiritual upheaval throughout the world - 'A Critical Mass'. It is described as follows:

> A new spiritual awakening is occurring in human culture, an awakening brought about by a critical mass of individuals who

> experience their lives as a spiritual unfolding, *a journey in which we are led forward by mysterious coincidences* (my emphasis, Redfield, 1999: 1).

My emphasis suggests that the insights are affiliated to a certain concept of fate. The possibility of being 'led forward by mysterious coincidences' suggests a higher intelligence, a controlling force. Taken in the context of the rest of the sentence it also a positive force. This reading is consolidated by a more detailed description of the 'coincidences' of the first insight:

> 'Well', she continued, 'according to the priest, these coincidences are happening more and more frequently and that, when they do, they strike us as beyond what would be expected by pure chance. They feel destined, as though our lives had been guided by some unexplained force' (Redfield, 1994: 17).

The insights continue in much the same vein. Insight four laments the human tendency to ignore 'the greater source' of sacred energy. Further insights talk about being 'guided toward our destinies' and that 'each us of comes here on assignment' (Redfield 1999: 1-4). Clearly then, Redfield is evoking a divine, cosmic power which we can submit to, for our own benefit. This, undoubtedly, is a belief in fate.

The existence of *The Celestine Prophecy*, and its time on the best-sellers list, says nothing of its *influence* of course. It might say more about a yearning for a more closed and certain reality, rather than celebrating its arrival. In the world Giddens and many other social commentators portray, it is easy for the individual to feel lost in a setting where there are no final authorities. Books which offer an infallible guide to experience are appealing in this context. But the implication here is that such offerings are, in the final analysis, frustrating. We do, after all, live in a world of

radical uncertainty. If *The Celestine Prophecy's* call to fate was fully heeded, then the picture of a world without certainty would be problematised.

Of course, I would not want to argue that Redfield's book, or any other, signifies a cultural shift towards an existence cradled solely by fate-oriented belief systems. Just as Giddens's examples of self-help literature indicate the pervasiveness of reflexive awareness, examples such as Redfield's book might reflect the continuing importance of concepts of fate in self-understanding, which can run alongside, and/or in tension with reflexive awareness. If one does manage to accept, even reflexively, that there is a benign intelligence guiding one's action, then a reflexive approach towards certain elements of experience is effectively suspended. A faith in the coherence of everyday life could be seen to be achieved at the expense of a persistent reflexive questioning of that faith. Alternatively, fate and faith do not necessarily exclude reflexively, and instead the two may live in tension. Radical theology may be one example of the co-existence of reflexivity and faith. Either way concepts of fate, and the need for faith, are here argued to be persistent factors in the achievement of self-identity.

Redfield's books are not isolated examples. As I suggested above, there has been a steady growth in the publication and readership of 'spiritual' texts, drawing from Eastern religions as well as more novel variations. *The Celestine Prophecy* distils the philosophies of a series of works which claim to offer spiritually oriented solutions to questions of self-identity. Best-selling authors in this field include Carlos Castaneda, Jonathan Bach, Paulo Coelho and M. Scott Peck.[9] They all share the acknowledgement of an omniscient intelligence, which can potentially guide us to a more fulfilling life. Along similar lines the resurgence of paganism and the

popularity of 'deep' ecology and many new-age religions could be seen as a testament to the continuing importance of concepts of fate, however transformed. There is not the space for an investigation into these movements and their philosophies here. It is sufficient to say that *The Celestine Prophecy* is an example which suggests that concepts of fate may not have disappeared.

The Celestine Prophecy is illustrative of a strand in self-help publishing which is in turn indicative of an element of contemporary self-identity that Giddens overlooks - the continuing importance of concepts of fate. Although fragile, possibly temporary, and open to scepticism, I want to argue that a sense of fate still plays an integral part in self-identity. My point here is not simply to hold up work such as Redfield's and declare the existence of belief systems which rely on concepts of fate as opposed to reflexive awareness. The most interesting thing about The Celestine Prophecy and similar titles is that they are attempting to combine extensive self-awareness with a faith in some sort of divine providence. It talks about the importance of 'personal awareness'. It encourages the analysis of what we may have previously done unthinkingly, and suggests that it is possible to treat others, and be treated by others without manipulating or being manipulated. Such goals are reminiscent of the work Giddens cites in Transformation of Intimacy, particularly the democratisation of personal life. The key difference is that Redfield encourages reflexivity, but explicitly connects the motivation to be reflexive with a non-reflexive faith in an omniscient intelligence.

Redfield's solutions may or may not be particularly fruitful, but to suggest that attempts to incorporate fate into a sense of self are always doomed to failure in the

post-traditional world, is as unhelpful as the suggestion that they always work. Furthermore, 'active' trust can be construed as an unsatisfactory alternative to supposedly more traditional processes facilitating faith and commitment. It is important to allow for the possibility that attempts are made to incorporate concepts of fate. Other examples abound in popular culture. Feng Shui, originally a Chinese art, is now a popular hobby in the West. It is concerned with the organisation of objects in one's living space. If one orders objects in a particular way, according to given rules, it supposedly encourages the events in one's life to take a certain path. This is implying a connection between the actions of individuals and a more mysterious, transcendental power.

Feng Shui is only one of many 'alternative' practices which are built upon such an assumption. According to a survey carried out by *The Philosopher* magazine 33% of women in the UK 'believe in karma'.[10] Karma was originally a fundamental element in all Oriental philosophy. It is defined in one Buddhist guide book as 'the law of moral retribution, whereby, not only does every cause have an effect, but he who has put the cause in action suffers the effect', or, 'the sense of the reign of moral law' (Humphreys, 1943: 15-16). Thus it as understanding of events as unfolding in universe ordered by an overarching intelligence. There are many enduring phrases and turns of speech connected with concepts of fate which persist in the English language. People are often wary of talking about things they do, or do not want to happen in any detail, in case they are 'tempting fate', for example. Such usage might not always point to deep seated convictions, but their persistence indicates a continuing relationship with ideas of fate. At the very least *The Celestine Prophecy* and these other examples indicates that concepts are fate have far from disappeared

and may thus still play a part in self-identity. It is imperative that reflexive awareness and beliefs which accommodate fate are not defined in polar opposition. Acknowledging the existence of both these tendencies can open the way to a more accurate portrayal of contemporary self-identity.

The persistence of concepts of fate also suggest, yet again, that Giddens's view of the self, whilst intriguing and convincing in parts, is also contradictory. His attempt to replace only partially reflexive senses of faith, commitment and trust with a more reflexive 'active' trust is open to criticism. It is possible that the ability to involve ones self in trusting relationships, with others and a general sense of reality, is dependent on *not* being reflexive, as much as it is on reflexive awareness. Furthermore, in proclaiming the end of tradition and the advance of reflexivity, he is overlooking many qualities of self-identity which are still important in the structuring of the self, such as concepts of fate. Those elements of experience compromise the unchallenged ascendance of reflexive awareness. In its place a far more complex and fluid picture of self-identity emerges.

I have argued that fate still persists as a cultural resource. It is still drawn upon, by individuals, to make sense of their own identity and the world around them. Concepts of fate depend, by definition, on the suspension of reflexive awareness, and in this sense, the scope of reflexivity is further compromised in contemporary mileux. For the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss further what I propose to be the cultural boundaries of reflexivity.

Cultural Boundaries

I have suggested that concepts of fate may play a more formative role in self-experience than Giddens allows. Other critics have pointed to culture more generally as a formidable realm of experience which may constrain reflexive thinking. Jeffrey Alexander (1995, 1996) and Stjepan Mestrovic (1998) in particular, have questioned the extent to which the phenomenon of reflexivity can ever transcend the social and cultural foundations of knowledge. Alexander takes particular exception to Giddens's traditional/post-traditional dichotomy. This division leads Giddens to argue that in the current era we have reflexively transcended the weight of tradition. This is increasingly apparent in the way we construct our sense of self, our self-identity. Reflexivity excavates layers of tradition which once formed the unquestioned, naturalised aspects of the self. Once reflexivity is extended, the self turns back upon its self and becomes aware of the processes which, until that point, made it what it was.

But we return to Alexander's assertion that reflexivity, in whatever historical period, 'can be understood only within the context of cultural tradition, not outside of it' (Alexander, 1996: 136). Similarly, Mestrovic accuses Giddens of being 'unaware that the meaning of reflexivity, agency and dialogue vary across cultures' (Mestrovic, 1998: 137). If reflexivity is a product of a particular culture, then clearly our knowledgeability is shaped and compromised by the 'limits' of that culture. The specific connotations of what we understand 'reflexivity' to be is inevitably conditioned by the cultural symbols already available to us.

Giddens's use of a traditional/post-traditional dichotomy, Alexander argues, revives early theories of modernisation in its representation of different cultures: 'His model rests upon the same simpliste set of binary oppositions as did earlier modernisation theory in its most banal form' (Alexander, 1995: 44). Reflexive modernisation heralds the end of tradition, the subject is disembedded, and gradually develops autonomous control over their selves and their environments (Alexander, 1996). According to Alexander these claims are little more than a reassertion of the tenets of modernisation theory. Giddens is arguing that tradition once structured and determined our lives in our ignorance. Thus, retrospectively in terms of western culture, we were once naive cultural dupes. More 'traditional' cultures which still persist today may also be perceived as more naive than the predominately post-traditional west in this context. In late modernity reflexivity has released the subject from such deterministic constraints, allowing her and him to construct their identity and environment with new-found freedom. Similarly, theories of modernisation suggested that rationally ordered capitalist economies were the pinnacle of civilization, as they successfully swept away the weight of tradition, which held back 'development' if adhered to.

Criticisms of this kind of approach to development are now familiar. Once Alexander makes the comparison with Giddens's model, connections with modernisation theory are clearly apparent. In Alexander's account, Giddens has a 'historically arbitrary, Western centred, and theoretically tendentious approach to tradition' (Alexander, 1995: 45); all accusations which could equally be made in relation to early modernisation theories. Alexander's' criticism may seem a little unfair and heavy-handed, glossing over the complexities of Giddens's position as it does. Undoubtedly

though, it contains at least the seed of a valuable critique. It may be possible to see other ways of being 'reflexive' within other cultures and traditions, as well as in the West's history. It could also be argued that Giddens's notion of reflexivity is in fact a product of the culture and tradition of Western, late modern society. In this sense, Giddens is susceptible to a degree of ethnocentrism in his writings on reflexivity.

Considering one example from a recent discussion between Giddens and Christopher Pierson, this susceptibility is subtly apparent: 'The truth of tradition is given by the codes of practice which it enshrines. This is the crux of the differences between traditional ways of doing things and those based upon rational or scientific enquiry' (Giddens and Pierson, 1998c: 128). It could be argued that 'scientific enquiry' is itself a 'code of practice', involving rituals and traditions which provide their own 'truth'. Furthermore, codes of practice from the past do still persist (such as concepts of fate). Giddens, in this instance at least, is ignoring the wealth of philosophical and social theory which has *relativised* the position of science, rationality and Enlightenment theory as messengers of truth. Here he fails to recognise that 'reflexive thinking' is a conceptual product of Western modernity, not a universally accepted cognitive function. To use Giddens's own terminology, he is assuming that reflexivity 'disembeds' the individual from traditions. What he neglects to contemplate is that the concept of reflexivity, rationality, and other Enlightenment terms, are themselves ways of 'embedding' the individual in a particular cultural framework:

> one could argue that modernists are embedded in their own provincial cosmopolitanisms despite the outward appearance of globalization. Westerners gaze at the developing world

> through the eyes of their Enlightenment-based spectacles, thereby remaining *provincial* and *ethnocentric* .... Modernism is a specific belief system which leads modernists to their own distinctive forms of irrationality (Mestrovic, 1998: 155; emphasis in the original).

I would not want to argue that Giddens's understanding of modernity is in any way exhausted in comparing it to these theories. His writing has far more depth, and on the issues of culture and tradition, as usual, his position is conceptually protean. However I would agree that underlying Giddens's distinction between traditional and post-traditional, for all its complexity, there is a danger that 'the totalizing conceit that gave early modernisation theory a bad name' (Alexander, 1995: 46) is partially reproduced. Giddens's emphasising of autonomous self-development lacks an appreciation of cultural determination. As Tucker argues here:

> [a] strong self which heroically creates narratives of personal development in uncertain times .... gives short shrift to the structural and cultural factors still at work in fashioning the self. Thus, Giddens relatively neglects the issue of the boundaries set by the cultural context in which people find themselves....' (Tucker, 1998: 208).

It could be argued that these boundaries are still important in modern Western society, perhaps as much as they were in other periods of history. Mestrovic points to a number of modern cultural habits which, like beliefs in fate, 'impinge' upon the contemporary agent's knowledgeability;

> the cult of rationalism, the cult of mechanization, the cult of conspicuous consumption, the cult of science, and, for Riesman, the cult of being 'nice' among others....each of these phenomena exerts tremendous constraint on the knowledgeable and skilled agent to conform (Mestrovic, 1998: 150).

The alternative for Alexander is to accept that reflexivity, thinking and language cannot be placed above and outside the specific cultural, historical, spatial, temporal and social context in which they are practised. Thus all these factors are still, and always will be, of crucial importance in shaping the self and the social environment. Giddens does formulate his concept of personal reflexivity as a response to cultural shifts. The problem arises however, in accentuating the ability of reflexivity to transcend its cultural origins. Giddens's picture of liberated agency, where self-identity increasingly comes under reflexive control, is again problematised.

Culture, Reflexivity & Language

The problem is made clearer if we further consider the relationship between culture, reflexivity and language, along the lines that Alexander suggests. A good starting point is a recent article by Bronislaw Szerszynski (1996). He takes up issues similar to those raised by Alexander in relating Giddens's arguments to modernisation, but at a more fundamental level. Thus, while Szersynski talks generally about the 'modern problematic', his discussion nonetheless maps informatively on to the problem faced in trying to place reflexive thinking beyond its cultural origins.

On first viewing Szerszynski's 'modern problematic' has much in common with Giddens's portrayal of contemporary dilemmas. It is 'concerned with how, in a universe stripped of meaning and purpose, we can still ground behaviour and judgements in something more than mere self-assertion' (Szerszynski 1996: 105). I think Giddens would agree that the modern world has been 'stripped of meaning'. His solution though, in the form of radical reflexivity, Szerszynski views as a

symptom of modernity and its contradictions, not a way out. This is partly due to how Szerszynski reaches his perception of the modern problematic.

He argues that one of the preconditions for the development of modern science and philosophy was the shift from a *conjunctive* to a *disjunctive* view of language (1996: 107). This basically means that at some point in the past, language and objects were seen as part of the same fabric. Thought and the material world were not clearly demarcated in separate spheres; 'words and objects .... were thought to have natural sympathies and connections which bound them together in a timeless order' (ibid.). Referring to philosophical and scientific works over the period, Szerszynski argues that very gradually, between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, such a view was ousted by a disjunctive understanding.[11] It is 'disjunctive in the sense that it posited a distinction between a descriptive language on the one hand an extra-discursive reality on the other' (ibid.).

Harmony between language and the world is no longer given, but neither is it abandoned. Rather, it has to be achieved. The modern problematic is precisely the 'question of how that harmony can be brought about' (1996: 108). This, according to Szerszynski, is the foundation for modern science and rationality, understood as 'a collective social practice which generates privileged representations of the world which have a universal validity' (1996: 109). Common language only roughly equates to the external reality which it attempts to describe. In the 'purified' language of science and reason, the distance between discourse and the reality beyond is closed, harmony once again reinstated in surety of knowledge.

What does all this have to do with Giddens, and more specifically, the issue of reflexivity being culturally bound? Szerszynski's discussion becomes relevant in the problems he associates with attempts to resolve the modern problematic. Not just science, but the modernist project in general, with its search for a universalist language of reason, ethics and knowledge, faces insurmountable obstacles. Szerszynski sums them up as follows: 'Our knowledge of the world is always shaped by pre-theoretical social and cultural commitments .... language completely abstracted from the social and cultural is itself impossible to achieve' (1996: 111-113). Szerszynski may be referring to language here but similar claims could be made about reflexivity. What is reflexivity apart from discourse directed toward the self? The discourses we reflexively use to maintain self-identity, the language of self-awareness, is similarly bound by its cultural situatedness. The association of reflexive ordering of the self with a sense of autonomy which goes beyond cultural and historical ordering may be fundamentally flawed. And this is precisely the association Giddens makes. His position is made apparent in this extract from a discussion of personal histories:

> Tradition provided the stabilizing frameworks which integrated memory traces into a coherent memory. As tradition dissolves....'trace memory' is left more nakedly exposed, as well as more problematic in respect of the construction of identity.... From then onwards, the reconstruction which tradition provided of the past becomes a more distinctively individual responsibility - and even exigency (Giddens, 1994a: 67-68).

What does more 'individual responsibility' really mean in this context? For Giddens it is the liberating yet burdensome autonomy of post-traditional society - 'no choice

but to choose'. On consideration though, however 'responsible' the individual is for making sense of their experience, they still rely on common cultural forms - language being the most basic - however much they have altered over history. It is not possible to insert a vacuum in the place of previous traditions, a blank slate on which we are free to construct our self anew. This space could never truly exist. Although individuals may have been disembedded from previous cultural norms and traditions, they still, through the use of language, culture and tradition (however we understand these terms) rely upon, and contribute to, some kind of cultural formation.

For Giddens, 'where the past has lost its hold.... pre-existing habits are only a limited guide to action' (Giddens, 1994a: 92-93). Giddens's analysis of the impact of reflexivity and post-traditionalism, as it is most commonly interpreted, amounts to 'the social arrangement of contemporary society as a world that has superseded its past, as a society that is not bound by the traditions, customs, habits, routines, expectations and beliefs that characterized its history' (O'Brien, 1998: 15). As a consequence, in Giddens's analysis all these things - traditions, customs, beliefs and expectations - have today become 'adaptable, bendable, 'plastic' resources in a globalized, cosmopolitan world' (O'Brien, 1998: 15-16). Thus it is arguable that the dominant themes of Giddens's later work can suggest that cultural situatedness has been transcended, or at least become chronically and exhaustively malleable, in the hands of post-traditional reflexive awareness. While modern cultural formations are undoubtedly flexible to an extent, possibly more so than in the past, it is important to avoid the assumption that culture and traditions have become completely transparent and subject to rationally-oriented, individual control. There are clear links here with Alexander's critique of Giddens's parallels with modernisation theory.

Modernisation theories, at their most innocent, uncritically inherited the modernist faith in our potential to close in on the real 'facts' of the world. In understanding the world we can better control it. They equated the West's version of rationality and reason with the most advanced way of doing this. This is exactly the problem Alexander has with Giddens's work - championing reflexivity as capable of transcending tradition, amongst other issues (Alexander, 1995: 11).

Similarly, for Szerszynski, faith in reflexive modernisation is misplaced. He argues that authors such as Beck and Habermas, and we might well include Giddens here, are engaged in a form of 'neo-modernism' (Szerszynski, 1996: 112). They are heralding nothing more than the extension of modernist principles; more rationality and reason in more areas of life, eventually understanding and controlling these areas. Their work reveals a belief in reflexivity which parallels the modernist faith in reason; in an 'innate rationality that, in principle, will guarantee that the outcome really is the best outcome - the good' (1996: 116). As I have stressed above, Szerszynski and many others have argued that the liberating potential of rationality has now been seriously problematised. Szerszynski questions the whole modernist project in a similar light - for assuming that language, even a purified rational language, could ever reveal the 'truths' of an extra-discursive reality; or that it could ever transcend the particular mileux of which it forms a part. In Szerszynski's account, such a belief only arose with the arrival of the modernist language - reality dichotomy. With modernism so heavily implicated in the origins of this split then, the philosophies it creates have little hope of escaping it. Dominic Diamond makes a similar point about philosophy, which is worth reproducing in part here:

> The demands we make for philosophical explanations come, seem to come, from a position in which we are, as it were, looking down onto the relation between ourselves and some reality, some kind of fact or real possibility....the characteristic form of the illusion is precisely of philosophy as an area of inquiry, in the sense in which we are familiar with it (Diamond, 1991: 69, cited in Thrift, 1996: 35).

Diamond implies that privileged positions from which we view our relationship with the world, (including ourselves) are a fallacy, an 'illusion'. They are part and parcel of the discourse which forms our understanding of everyday life, and which we can never step outside. As Castoriadis succinctly claims here:

> There exists no place, no point of view outside of history and society, or 'logically prior' to them, where one could be placed in order to construct a theory of them - a place from which to inspect them, contemplate them, affirm the determined necessity of their being - thus, constitute them, reflect upon them or reflect them in their totality (Castoriadis, 1987: 3).

It could be argued that this is exactly the role assigned to reflexivity by Giddens. Szerszynski's story is an attempt to illustrate how our particular cultural heritage, via language, has shaped the way we think about the world in almost imperceptible ways. Reflexive self-identity in late modernity, Giddens argues, is a perspective toward the self capable of transcending cultural, social and historical restrictions. Such an approach to any type of discourse, including the 'reflexive project of the self', has been problematised here.

In summary, Szerszynski, Mestrovic and Alexander all suggest that reflexive thinking is bounded, if not exhausted, by the culture and society we are a part of. Szerszynski seems to suggest that we are in fact fundamentally constrained by the language

systems we use. For Mestrovic and Alexander, cultural forms are firmly embedded in our sense of self and the world around us. While Giddens acknowledges these issues from time to time, he does not seriously consider their consequences for reflexivity and the nature of self-identity in contemporary society. To pursue this critique further, it is important to ask how cultural traditions produce and contain reflexivity. I will now return to the work of George Herbert Mead which will be of further use in answering this question.

Reflexivity: Social & Cultural Origins

I will attempt to use Mead's work in order to clarify my position and provide it with a more thorough psychological grounding.[12] Although Mead's writing well precedes the debate we are engaged in here, his understanding of self-development can make an important contribution. His theory of identity-formation stresses how all forms of self are dependent on social context. Mead argues that the self is a direct product of existing social relations:

> The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there at birth but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his [sic] relation to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process (Mead, 1934: 199).

Giddens makes a similar point, situating the origins of reflexivity in this social process: 'reflexivity is on its most primitive level grounded in the recipricocity of social relations in the interaction of the infant with other members of his [sic] family group' (Giddens, 1976, 116). In a later work he explicitly supports Mead's claim:

'We can agree with Mead that the infant begins to develop a self in response to the social context of its early experience' (Giddens, 1991: 52).

Mead justifies this claim by enquiring into the nature of self- consciousness. For the individual to be self-aware, to have any sense of self, a process of objectification must occur. In a sense the self has to divide, in order to be able to view itself from a distinct position. This is the essence of self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-identity. If we consider these terms we realise that *something* must become aware of, conscious of, or identify with, a self. The development of this awareness is a pre-condition for selfhood: 'the individual is not a self in the reflective sense unless he is an object to himself' (Mead, 1934: 203).

According to Mead, the individual needs somewhere to look from, an 'outside' position from which it can perceive of itself, in order to create the self as an object. We turn to significant others around us to initiate objectification. Thus the formation of the self is fundamentally social: '...it is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experience' (1934: 247). Looking from behind their eyes, so to speak, we see our self for the first time. What constitutes the position from which we view our self is the attitudes of others. Such a process makes more sense if imagined practically. When action is required in a situation, unless I act completely spontaneously, a process of objectification occurs. I consider how 'I' should act. Such a consideration, the options we draw from, and the choice we make, is all made possible by the individual having taken on board the attitudes of others. As we grow older, we come into contact with more and more 'others'. We develop a 'generalized other' with which to view the self, though it is constantly being modified and

reordered, and specific others are still vitally important. We draw from a variety of sources, including others who we have never met, others as social groupings.

Mead's understanding, at least on first glance, adds support to an alternative view of identity than the one proposed by Giddens. It is more akin to the view expressed by Alexander, that the very nature of selfhood is in fact firmly embedded in its social and cultural context. For in Mead's account self-development is wholly reliant on interaction with others. 'The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience' (Mead, 1934: 247). It is how we 'become aware of ourselves as objects' and thus how 'we come to see, assess, judge self, and create identities' (Charon, 1995: 151). The very act of reflection, from the first instance, is wholly reliant on the beliefs and actions of those around us. Mediated in innumerable forms, this is what makes up the practice of culture. Thus culture is undeniably implicated in the ability to be reflexive at all, and in the nature of that reflexivity.

Giddens does indeed depart from Mead and Symbolic Interactionism at this stage. He raises a valid concern that Mead's theory can be interpreted as socially deterministic:

> Mead's social philosophy, in an important sense was built around reflexivity: the reciprocity of the 'I' and the 'me'. But even in Mead's own writings, the *constituting* activity of the 'I' is not stressed. Rather, it is the 'social self' with which Mead was preoccupied; and this emphasis has become even more pronounced in the writings of most of his followers. Hence much of the possible impact of this theoretical style has been lost, since the 'social self' can easily be reinterpreted as the 'socially determined self', and from then on the differences between symbolic interactionism and functionalism become

> much less marked (Giddens, 1976: 22; emphasis in the original).

The accusation that symbolic interactionism converges with functionalism is denied by Blumer, a student of Mead's, as Tucker illustrates here: 'According to Blumer, functionalism ignores the active role of people in reproducing their own social lives.... Blumer states that socialization is not the passive internalization of values, as functionalists would have it, but the cultivated capacity to take the role of others effectively' (Tucker, 1998: 45). Giddens here argues that Mead does not stress the constitutive activity of the 'I' enough, the self thus appearing as an overly socialised construction. This is peculiar, for Giddens later criticises Mead's concept of the 'I' for putting too much emphasis on it having a constitutive role in identity at all: 'Mead fails to break finally with a starting-point rooted in the subject , as is shown by the nature of the 'I' in his work' (Giddens, 1979: 121). Giddens explains how 'I' should be understood:

> An anchoring discursive feature of self-identity is the linguistic differentiation of 'I/me/you'.... We cannot be satisfied, however, with G.H. Mead's formulation of the I/me couplet in relation to self-identity. In Mead's theory, the 'me' is the identity - a social identity - of which the I becomes conscious in the course of the psychological development of the child. The 'I' is, as it were, the active, primitive will of the individual, which seizes on the me as the reflection of social ties. But the I/me....relation is one internal to language, not one connecting the unsocialised part of the individual (the I) to the 'social self' (Giddens, 1991: 52-53).

Mead's attempt to preserve something of an unsocialised self - 'I' - is first attacked by Giddens for not being allowed enough of an establishing role in the development of

selfhood, allowing his theory to fall into the hands of determinism. In a second more recent argument, Giddens is critical of Mead making too much of the 'I' and its constitutive properties, arguing instead that the different terms (I/me/you) are nothing more than 'linguistic shifters' (1991: 53). As I have argued, Mead's use of 'I' is confusing and not always satisfactory (see 38-41). At best it is an attempt to highlight the discursive nature of selfhood, and/or accommodate for the origins of reflexive thinking. Others have argued that Mead's theory, whilst acknowledging the social origins of selfhood, fails to accommodate a detailed analysis of the complexities of modern forms of social organization, or to consider the impact of social conflict upon the establishment of self-identity (Burkitt, 1991: 50-53). Whatever the shortcomings of the Meadian model of selfhood, it provides a thoroughgoing analysis of the social origins of self-identity: 'He saw the collectivity of communicating individuals as preceding the self-conscious identity of any singular person (Burkitt, 1991: 25-26). Thus Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism 'offers the basis for a general theory of *social* identity' (Jenkins, 1996: 44). For our purposes it suggests a complex contextualisation of the origins of reflexive awareness, which poses certain problems for Giddens's account.

While Giddens imports some of Mead's work in order to develop more of a social understanding of reflexivity, it could be argued that he does not go far enough. As with his rejection of much of psychoanalysis, Giddens's partial integration of symbolic interaction clouds contradictions in his own work. Mead's theory makes a complex case for reflexivity being reducible, in the first instance, to interaction. It is in interaction where culture resides, where it is brought to life, constantly reinforced and redefined. Interaction involves, is dependent upon, seeing others as objects, and

seeing the self as an object, from the point of view of others. As Mead argues, this is the basis of any meaningful action. What we call culture and society is implicated in the formation of self-identity. It lies at its heart. Notions of reflexivity, and in fact any form of self- consciousness are all a product of culture in this sense. The individual cannot stand aside from her social and cultural origins and use them, transparently, as a variety of options with which to resource an individualised reflexive self-identity. The concept of a reflexive project of selfhood is as much a product of social and cultural interactions as any other; it does not precede it.

Undoubtedly there are similarities between Mead's account of selfhood and the importance Giddens attributes to practical consciousness. This element of the psyche is highly socialised and of fundamental importance. Where practical consciousness ends and reflexivity begins is the contested issue here. Giddens makes a fairly clear, if unconvincing, demarcation between the two. As we have seen in this section, many would argue that notions of reflexivity are also highly socialised concepts. The distinction between certain aspects of the psyche in this fashion thus becomes blurred. The manner in which we are reflexive, for example, may be a direct result of a learning process which is now firmly embedded in practical consciousness.

Conclusion

In eulogising reflexivity it can be argued that Giddens mistakenly decides that it has transcended the need for cultural embeddedness. Self-analysis, self-awareness, all reflexive processes, can only really make sense if the individual in question already has a sense of commitment in the reality of the world, of others, and the self. Cultural

processes, formed in social interaction, are the structures which we rely on to situate ourselves in the world. Once committed to the reality of the world, one can be reflexive. One can consider one's role in the world, form a lifestyle, a trajectory, make endless choices and reflect upon those choices. But the tools which one uses in this reflexive project are already given, they are formed by one's conviction in the reality of the world. The nature of a particular conviction shapes one's view of the world, of the self, and the form their reflexivity takes. Concepts of fate are merely one example of cultural processes which still persist in shaping and directing reflexive awareness.

Here I have suggested that in minimising the impact of culture in situating self-awareness, Giddens can extend the scope of reflexive awareness more readily. I first of all referred to concepts of fate as a specific example. Giddens argues that fate has largely retreated, along with other traditional understandings, as a form of trust in social reality, replaced by a more reflexive 'active trust'. I have questioned the validity of active trust in accounting for emotional commitment, and argued that concepts of fate, and many other cultural settings, still persist and pre-empt reflexive awareness.

In chapter three I will argue that Giddens uses a restricted version of the unconscious, and of emotional life, and this has similar consequences, more easily allowing the conceptualisation of an expanded realm of reflexivity. It will be claimed that an understanding of our own self, and thus our control of self-identity, can never be fully liberated from the social, historical and cultural milieu in which it develops. Reflexivity is not adequately conceptualised as a process which can stand aside from

this complex milieu. While an awareness of our cultural situatedness is certainly possible, part of this awareness may be in accepting non-rational processes which fall beyond reflexive control as conceptualised in its modernist guise by Giddens. Autonomous mastery of the self in an abstracted, 'disembedded' vacuum is a fallacy. Whilst reflexive awareness may not exactly operate in a vacuum in Giddens's account, he sees many things that have ended, replaced only by 'individualization' (Giddens, 1998c: 4). It is 'the end of tradition...the end of nature.... [and] we no longer live our lives as fate' (ibid.).

Reflexivity may have reached new levels of intensity, but this does not mean it is capable of transcending culture, tradition, and the powerlessness that accompanies fatalism. It could even be argued, as I suggested above, that the very construction of the self as an empowered, liberated agent is itself the unreflexive product of a particular cultural tradition; namely Western modernity. This notion of reflexivity as part of a cultural and ideological tradition will be taken up in the analysis of the relationship between reflexivity and power in chapter five.

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[1] Giddens acknowledges that previous conventions of selfhood have been uprooted, but discounts the post-modern possibility of self dissolution. There are certain parallels between Giddens's work and the post-modern 'turn' in social theory, which often views the 'self' as an increasingly fragmented, precarious concept, crumbling under its modernist pretensions of autonomous individuality. Certainly Giddens acknowledges the possible malaise that arises from the awareness of all knowledge as corrigible, and that the modern subject's sense of uncertainty can often be a chronic and debilitating experience. Giddens's analysis does not stretch to allow for the possibility of the dissolution of the 'self' as the bounded centre of experience however. He rejects this claim as being a naive post-modern concern. Post-modernism, Giddens argues, sees the contemporary self 'as dissolved or dismembered by the fragmenting of experience'. This interpretation fails to acknowledge that the self is 'more than just a site of intersecting forces' and in fact, 'active processes of reflexive self-identity are made possible by modernity' (Giddens, 1990: 150). Giddens's wholesale dismissal of postmodernism is not always convincing, but there is not the space in this discussion to consider Giddens's relationship to postmodernism in detail.

[2] Giddens also talks of a third factor at this point - 'constraint or power'. This is an issue of the ability to enact the decisions we reach reflexively, rather than a concern with the extent of reflexivity itself. For a discussion of the limits to translating reflexive thinking into action, see chapter four.

[3] 'Non-modern' is a turn of phrase rarely utilised by Giddens, in fact no other reference to the term was found. In more recent work he favours the terms 'pre-modern' or 'traditional'. I assume the use of 'non' rather than 'pre' is used here to incorporate two types of cultures: Traditional societies in the strictly historical sense, i.e. those societies which existed before contemporary, Western, modernity, and; societies or cultures that still exist, but do not, in Giddens's view, possess qualities of a *truly* modern nature.

[4] This is supported by Giddens's earlier claims about the properties of pre-modern societies in The Consequences of Modernity (1990). See in particular his comparative table, on page 102. Traditional spheres of risk and trust are evoked by references to 'providential interpretation', 'a fall from religious grace' and 'malicious magical influence' - these are all suggestive of concepts of fate, and are in contrast with modern life according to the aforementioned table.

[5] As I discuss below, however, he equivocates somewhat on this point.

[6] I am reminded here of an alleged comment by Marx, recalled in Francis Wheen's biography of the infamous dialectician. Engels wrote many articles in Marx's name to help him get by financially, and regularly contributed a column on military affairs to the *New York Daily Tribune*, as Marx. One week, when Engels fell ill, Marx had no choice but to take over and write the column for himself. The only problem was that an article on the Sapoy soldier uprising against British rule in India had been requested, including a prediction of the outcome, and Marx knew nothing about the subject. His response, recorded in a letter to Engels, was a revealing disclosure on the benefits of dialectical thinking in a sticky situation:

> It seems to me that the English ought to begin their retreat as soon as the rainy season has set in in real earnest. Being obliged for the present to hold the fort for you as the *Tribune's* military correspondent, I have taken it upon myself to put this forward.... It's possible that I shall make an ass of myself. But in that case one can always get out of it with a little dialectic. I have, of course, so worded my proposition as to be right either way (cited in Wheen, 1999: 224-225).

[7] The further distinction of *fortuna* seems to offer no meaningful advance on Giddens's uses of the term 'fate', so I will use the terms interchangeably from this point onwards.

[8] Giddens briefly acknowledges that 'a revival of religious or, more broadly, spiritual concerns seems fairly widespread in modern societies' (Giddens, 1991: 201). He attributes this revival to a side-effect of the reflexive project of the self. In a world devoid of the navigation points once offered by traditional practices, existential choices are not easy to make: 'the project of the self has to be reflexively achieved in a technically competent but morally arid social environment' (ibid.). New forms of religious and spiritual sensibilities are an attempt to counter this moral vacuum: 'Religion in some part generates the conviction which adherence to the tenets of modernity must necessarily suspend' (ibid.). Giddens astutely comments on the role spiritual concerns play, without contesting his overall framework of reflexively-formed self-identity. Religious concerns can form a part of the reflexive project of the self. However as Giddens acknowledges, there is a contradictory process at work here. The 'generation of conviction', is in many ways opposed to a reflexive approach to reality, it demands the suspension of doubt and scepticism. New spiritual beliefs may not be so easily reconcilable with the reflexive project. They may in fact be one way in which reflexivity is grounded in non-reflexive understandings of the self and the social world. This is only a difference in emphasis to Giddens's account of the revival of spiritual concerns, but, importantly, it further qualifies his analysis of the spread of reflexivity in relation to cultural processes, particularly in light of the current discussion, concepts of fate.

[9] See for example: Carlos Castaneda (1972) *The Teachings Of Don Juan*; Paulo Coelho (1980) *The Alchemist*; M. Scott Peck (1982) *The Road Less Travelled;* N.D. Walsch (1995) *Conversations With God.*

[10] Cited in an article by Raekha Prasad, *The Guardian,* 14/09/99.

[11] In his account of this period, Szerszynski is careful to point out that conjunctive and disjunctive perceptions coincided and overlapped. The shift is not clear-cut.

[12] For an initial discussion of G.H. Mead's work see chapter one.

Chapter 3 Questioning Reflexivity II: The Unintended, the Unacknowledged, Consciousness, Emotions & Ambiguity.

In this chapter I will continue the theme of the previous chapter in considering the possible ways in which reflexive awareness might be problematised. The key issue in this discussion is whether or not it is useful to think of reflexivity as opening up self-identity to the relatively transparent, informed inspection and control of each individual. As with the analysis of culture, I will argue that the formulation of the reflexive self can be misleading. There are elements of social reality which impinge upon our reflexive capabilities, which shape and condition self-understanding and control. I will focus on three elements which I feel are of particular importance: unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions; the unconscious and practical consciousness; and emotional life. At the close of this chapter I offer the beginnings of an alternative construction of self-identity which, based on the critique offered so far, takes into account a revised version of reflexivity.

Unintended Consequences & Unacknowledged Conditions

In his earlier works (e.g. 1976, 1979, 1984) Giddens qualifies his prioritisation of agency by referring to unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions.

While human beings are constantly reflexive, knowledgeable and able to give accounts of their actions, Giddens allows that some proportion of the results of one's action inevitably escape one's awareness. The reverberations of individual action across the general social mileux in which one exists can not be wholly predictable. However, these unintended consequences of action do shape the conditions of any further action, regardless of individual awareness. Thus the unknown and the unpredicted return to form, in part, the context for any further activity in a kind of endless circle of contingency. The two factors, unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions, are intimately linked: 'The unintended consequences of conduct relate directly to its unacknowledged conditions .... in so far as such unintended consequences .... become conditions of action also' (Giddens, 1979: 59).

This is a qualification of vital importance, particularly for any consideration of the scope of reflexive awareness, with which we are engaged here, and in some of his earlier work, Giddens elaborates further on the importance of these two factors in relation to agency. In *New Rules Of Sociological Method* (1976), Giddens makes a similar claim for unintended consequences as an example of 'purpose dislocated from agency': 'intentional acts characteristically bring about whole series of consequences, which are quite legitimately to be regarded as doings of the actor but were not actually intended by him' (Giddens, 1976: 77). Here Giddens divides consequences into two categories. The first is where the outcome is other than what was expected. For example, I may buy a car with the intention of getting to work quicker than on my bicycle. Once purchasing a car however, it may take me more time to get to work, stuck in the traffic jams which I avoided on my bike. In this example the unintended consequence becomes apparent; a longer journey. In this sense, then, they are within

the scope of reflexive awareness, and are of little concern here. It would not be long before I modified my actions or at least resigned myself to them in full knowledge of their outcome.

The second category is where an action is carried out and the intended result is achieved, but so are a range of other consequences.[1] One may become aware of them as they happen, or one may remain ignorant of some or all of these unintended consequences. This is illustrated in its simplest form by the 'accordion effect', by which Giddens means one act causing another, which causes another and so on, along an indefinite chain:

> An individual flicks a switch to illuminate a room. Although this is intentional, the fact that the turning on of the switch alerts a prowler is not.... the prowler flees down the road, is caught by a policeman, and after due process spends a year in gaol on the basis of being convicted of the burglary (Giddens, 1984: 10).

In this form, unintended consequences are envisaged in terms of a linear sequence. Each chain is unique and reflects 'a singular set of events' (1984: 13). While the 'accordion effect' is an aspect of unintended consequences, it is not the most important for Giddens; 'of most relevance to social theory [are] those involved in .... *the reproduction of structures*' (1976: 78). To explain this involvement, Giddens compares social structure to language:

> Speech and dialogue are each complex accomplishments of their producers: knowing how to produce them, on the other hand, is very definitely not the same as being able to specify either the conditions which make possible their production or the unintended consequences which they might be instrumental

> in bringing about. Considered as a structure - and this is crucial - (natural) language is a condition of the generation of speech acts and the achievement of dialogue, *but also the unintended consequence of the production of speech and the accomplishment of dialogue* (Giddens, 1976: 127, my emphasis).

Thus, in acting, we draw upon a social structure, yet at the same time, the unintended consequences of our actions reproduce that structure. This claim is central to Giddens's social theory, and he refers to it as 'the duality of structure'. Unintended consequences are of central importance for Giddens in explaining how social practices are reproduced. The individual is undoubtedly involved reflexively in the orientation of their own action - 'the reflexive monitoring which the individual maintains is fundamental to the control of the body that actors ordinarily sustain throughout their day-to-day lives' (Giddens, 1984: 9). However, the regularised activities of daily life can also contribute to conditions of action which, though unacknowledged reflexively, impact importantly upon future action, also in regularised ways. As Giddens states:

> Repetitive activities, located in one context of time and space, have regularized consequences, unintended by those who engage in those activities, in more or less 'distant' time-space contexts (Giddens, 1984: 14).

Giddens suggests that it is in the production of unintended 'distant' consequences that common social practices are, at least partially, reproduced. Unintended consequences can be 'traced out' in 'the mechanisms of reproduction of institutionalized practices' (ibid.). This is a complex claim. It seems that the results of our actions, many of which escape our reflexive appropriation, come to form the conditions in which later

actions are carried out. The exact nature of these 'conditions', and the extent to which they may or may not be at least potentially penetrable, is not immediately clear. Giddens attempts to clarify his position with reference to Willis's famous study of schoolboy attitudes, to illustrate the role unintended consequences play in the reproduction of social structure (Willis, 1977). Willis's research, Giddens argues, 'shows just how the rebellious attitudes which the boys take towards the authority system of the school have certain definite unintended consequences that affect their fate' (Giddens, 1984: 289).

In the 1970s Willis carried out an extensive study of pupils in a Birmingham comprehensive school. He focused in particular on the attitudes of a group of working-class boys towards school, future prospects, and other subjects. Willis takes seriously the accounts of the boys. They operate in a cultural mileux where humour, sarcasm, banter and irony are revered. Much of the boy's ridicule and resentment is directed towards figures of authority; namely the teaching staff. This mileux reveals a 'knowledgeable penetration' of the school system, often beyond that of their more conformist colleagues. Their opposition and subordination displays an articulate intelligence. They are fully aware that for most of them, future prospects are limited to lowly forms of manual labour. Yet while they appear to be perfect examples of reflexive agents, Giddens argues that there are still serious limitations to the boy's knowledgeability: 'the bounds of what they know about the circumstances in which they live out their lives are fairly confined' (1984: 292).[2]

Willis's own analysis develops this point, suggesting that the oppositional agency of the boys locks them into a class system:

> The state school in advanced capitalism, and the most obvious manifestations of oppositional working class culture within it.... is especially significant in showing us a circle of unintended consequences which act finally to reproduce.... the structure of society itself (Willis, 1977: 60)

The boys are unaware that in opposing the school system they inadvertently reproduce the conditions of which they are partially aware; low expectations and limited prospects for working-class boys, which schooling confirms rather than alleviates. Constant rebellion means the boys actively want to get out of education and find work, a wage, and independence as soon as possible. Furthermore, the bantering culture carefully fostered at school is the perfect precursor for the workplace they are likely to inhabit, easing the transition. By the time the irony of their previous convictions is upon them, perceived chances for qualitative change are minimal. Thus, in summary:

> The unintended and ironical consequence of their 'partial penetration' of the limited life chances open to them is actively to perpetuate the conditions which help to limit those very life chances. For having left school with no qualifications and entered a world of low-level manual labour, in work which has no career prospects and with which they are intrinsically disaffected, they are effectively stuck there for the rest of their working lives (Giddens, 1984: 293).

The boy's 'partial penetration', or circumscribed reflexive grasp, of their situation, actually contributes to their limited life-chances. Giddens's comments here even sound fatalistic - the boys are 'stuck' in their predicament. While the boy's may be highly reflexive, even more so than many of their fellow pupils, it is not enough to generate an autonomous project of selfhood. In fact the limits of their reflexivity

seem to be implicated in the perpetuation of their class-bound opportunities. Such knowledge which does constitute their actions merely encourages a fatalistic resignation to a limited future.

Up to this point it may seem that Giddens is careful to acknowledge the boundaries of reflexivity, and more generally, the ways in which reflexive agency is always conditional. Indeed, Giddens stresses that 'from the point of view of the social sciences, it is hard to exaggerate the importance of the unintended consequences of intentional conduct' (1984: 11-12), for that very reason. In Giddens's interpretation of Willis's study, the boy's partial penetration of the schooling system and its relationship to the wider world of work in terms of cultural capital, employment hierarchies, and so on, seems to seal their fate in terms of class. The institutionalised practices of class, are seen to be socially reproduced in the routinized activities of the working-class boys themselves. This is in spite of, or even because of, their limited reflexive awareness of the ramifications of their activities further down the line - their 'partial penetration' of the social system.

Giddens's use of Willis's study excellently indicates how reflexivity may be constrained. Giddens clearly articulates how structural conditions are not static impositions. Reproduction requires an agent's involvement, and not simply as a cultural dupe. However, his account of unintended consequences reintroduces all sorts of limits to agency which complicate his later analysis of reflexivity in contemporary societies. Giddens's own analysis of Willis's study suggests that class is a factor which shapes the choices we will later make without us knowing it at the time. Class here is a category the boys are ascribed too, yet actively constitute. This

activity, though reflexively informed, may cause unintended consequences which unwittingly structure our further actions. Thus it could be argued that a study of self-identity, whilst recognising the importance of reflexive agency, must continue to emphasise conditions of action which escape reflexive awareness. If the structuring of the life-chances of any given individual lies, at least partially, outside of their reflexive control, the notion of reflexive self-identity cannot answer all one's questions about the nature of contemporary self-identity.

Self-identity is still shaped by social structure, and this fact is largely regardless of how we imagine that 'structure' to be constituted. However, all the ramifications of unintended consequences, and their role in the structuring of individual experience, tend to be overlooked, particularly in Giddens's more recent work, where limits to agency are given minimal attention, in the claims he makes for reflexivity. Rather than persisting with notions of the 'partially penetrative' nature of reflexivity, they seem to take on a much more marginal role. Are some individuals more capable of 'penetrating' social structures than others? Is an increased, or complete, perspicuousness of social structure possible and/or desirable? These kinds of questions seem to stem from a concern for the partial nature of the individual's grasp of the conditions of her existence. However, it seems that Giddens's more recent concern is with the flourishing of reflexivity, rather than its limits and persistently structured context. Giddens's perception and incorporation of unintended consequences gives his earlier work an essential defence against excessive voluntarism which is noticeably lacking from more recent writing. This could be seen as a conscious oversight; allowing an unfettered appreciation of the potentials of reflexivity. Either way, it is clear that the phenomenon of unintended consequences

has serious ramifications for how much of the conditions of our existence reflexivity can penetrate. For even when an agent acts in a way which is apparently reflexive, such as the 'lads' in Willis's account, they systematically fail to envisage the whole range of the consequences of their acts.

However, in Giddens's more recent writing, little reference is made to either unintended consequences or unacknowledged conditions.[3] It could of course be argued that such ideas are by now implicit in Giddens's work. However the recent stress Giddens has placed on the reflexive project of the self seems at the very least to obscure his earlier arguments about the partial nature of reflexivity in relation to the reproduction of social conditions for action. The post-traditional world is often painted as a transparent one, as a resource from which the post-traditional self constructs its life-project. Confusion and uncertainty seem to arise not out of a partial penetration of one's life-chances, but out of the plethora of options provided by the social world which the individual must sort through in maintaining an identity: 'the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems' (Giddens, 1991: 5). These are two different types of 'uncertainty', different ways of thinking about individual limitations in connection with reflexivity, which should not be conflated. While the earlier Giddens may have argued that reflexivity is clouded by the unintended consequences resulting from intended activity and the partial penetration of the wider social mileux, the later Giddens seems to suggest that a lack of clarity in relation to the post-traditional order originates in the abundance of choices. The issue of unintended consequences is marginalised.

Giddens's reflexive individual perceives of the world as an open book, a space to be colonised by reflexive understanding, past, present and future.[4] In Giddens's post-traditional world, 'the universe of future events is open to be shaped by human intervention' (Giddens, 1991: 109); choice is obligatory. Personal life, Giddens argues, increasingly displays the shoots of democracy, and this is in part due to the opening up of one's environment to reflexive awareness and control. Thus he argues that: 'The changes that have helped transform personal environments of action are already well advanced, and they tend towards the realisation of democratic qualities' (Giddens, 1994a: 189). These changes are the extension of the 'principle of autonomy', which means 'the successful realisation of the project of the self', increasingly allowed to happen as traditional restrictive practices recede (ibid.). The opening up of the world to individual autonomy is an ideal, but it is an 'already well advanced' tendency in Giddens's account, which, if it continues, offers further individual control: 'The reflexive project of the self must be developed in such a fashion as to permit autonomy in relation to the past, this in turn facilitating a colonising the future' (ibid.). Giddens here posits individual identity as an entity clearly distinct from a social environment, which it is increasingly capable of colonising for its own ends. The complex interconnectedness of unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions may be implicit in passages such as these, but if so they are well buried, and at times seem to emphasise the extension of reflexivity at the expense of a developed recognition of the role of unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions.

The importance of these factors in structuring the conditions in which we act, and shaping future possibilities, should be retained in a comprehensive account of

contemporary identity and reflexivity. In general terms it provides a counter-balance to claims which overstate the perspicuity of the cultural and social conditions of social and personal identity. More specifically, if it is pursued further, in a similar way to Giddens's use of Willis's study, the analysis of unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions also offers another dimension to the study of reflexivity. It could serve as the basis for an analysis of how the relationship between the individual, reflexivity and social environment is highly differentiated, both in practice and in outcome. As with Willis's study of 1970s schoolboys, the levels of reflexive penetration, and the consequences of a partial understanding, may be one way in which the highly varied life-chances of different social groups, and the resulting opportunities for self-identity, are socially reproduced. This differentiated understanding may offer a means of understanding the new social and class divisions which accompany recent social change, rather than Giddens's tendency to universalise the process of the reflexive project and disconnect, or perhaps disembed, it from the social mileux in which it exists.

The Unconscious / Practical Consciousness

> A theory of motivation also has to relate to the unacknowledged conditions of action: in respect of unconscious motives, operating 'outside' the range of the self-understanding of the agent (Giddens, 1979: 59).

Giddens here indicates that unconscious motives, by definition, form another unacknowledged condition of action. According to Giddens the processes that motivate us to act originate, to a certain extent, in unconscious experience, and as the quote above indicates, at least partially remain there. In a later work, Giddens

explicitly states that motives involve 'unconscious forms of affect as well as more consciously experienced pangs or promptings' (Giddens, 1991: 64). In Giddens's account, *motives* are distinguishable from *reasons*.[5] Reasons form an integral part of reflexive awareness - they are a resource used in the monitoring, sorting, and planning of action; 'an intrinsic part of the reflexive monitoring of action carried on by all human agents' (1991: 63). Motives are described as more foundational, in what is one of the most complex aspects of Giddens's psychological account. I will briefly summarise the main points here.

An infant attains a level of ontological security by learning to trust in others, and eventually her/him self. Trust is a result of the formation of 'bonds' with others. How these bonds are established, and the enormous emotional tensions that go with them, shape the individual's 'motivational system'. Maintaining ontological security, and defending it against recurring violations, is the basis of motivation. To experience motives is the playing out of the emotional tensions we have been through in order to 'bond' with others, and so trust them. In trusting others we are able to trust in a sense of self and an external reality. But such security is not easily attained, and there may be emotional fall out: 'Handling the emotional involvement of early life necessarily entangles the child in tensions affecting its bonds with caretakers' (1991: 64). For example a child may experience guilt, out of a fear of transgressing caretakers expectations (1991: 63-69). Meeting the expectations of a caretaker are essential if the infant is to feel secure, their helplessness placated. In infancy this guilt may be experienced at a level of profundity, we can rarely imagine in adulthood, as a 'cosmic experience' (1991: 45). The infant is at an early stage in forming trusting relationships with others. There is no solid sense of self, no certainty in

others, or in the 'rules' of external reality to fall back on. These experiences become engrained in the individual's sense of self, remaining with us in adulthood: 'Bonds established with early caretakers....leave resonances affecting all close social relations formed in adult life' (1991: 64). And as indicated above, they resonate at least partly in the unconscious mind.

So, in this instance at least, unconscious activity persists throughout the life-cycle. Thus it must be conceded that for every individual, 'behaviour is influenced by sources not available to their consciousness' (Giddens, 1976: 85). How does this affect the individual's reflexive understanding of his or her self? If some of the things we do lie outside the realms of our self-understanding, then the most we can expect is that reflexive knowledge will understand that the self cannot account for, predict, or control, the whole of the range of its activities. It may be difficult to incorporate the unconscious into a theory of agency, but if it is put there, the consequences cannot be ignored.

In his earlier writing Giddens does not shy away from this aspect of human agency/non-agency, and in fact places its investigation at the heart of social theory. For example: 'the knowledgeability of human actors is always bounded....Some of the most important tasks of social science are to be found in the investigation of these boundaries....' (Giddens, 1984: 282). This claim grates against Giddens's later claim that 'the reflexive project of the self generates programmes of actualisation and mastery' (Giddens, 1991: 9), even before we consider other factors which may operate 'outside' of reflexive understanding. While it may be possible to assert that individuals *attempt* programmes of actualisation, without necessarily succeeding, but

it is not clear that Giddens is suggesting this. Quotes such as the one above could be seen as asserting 'programmes of mastery' as realisable, and to what extent can we authentically herald these individual programmes when boundaries to knowledgeability persist, despite reflexive investigation? At minimum, a sharper focus upon the discrepancy between the *idea* of personal actualisation and the likelihood of its realisation is necessary.

So is it possible to ascertain how much of our behaviour is impenetrable to conscious reflection? And how and when it may become penetrable? Giddens seems to suggest that much of our experience is accountable, but in terms of practical rather than discursive consciousness.

> Human agents are able to monitor their activities as various concurrent flows, *most of which* (as Schutz says) are 'held in stasis' at any point of time, but of which the actor is 'aware' in the sense that he can recall them to mind as relevant to a particular event or situation that crops up (Giddens, 1976: 83, my emphasis).

If I attempt to answer my question following Giddens's conceptual scheme, it is important to draw a line between practical consciousness and the unconscious. Activity which falls on the side of practical consciousness is the proportion of our experience which *can* be penetrated by reflexive monitoring. That which falls on the side of the unconscious cannot.[6] In practice of course such an objective division is impossible. We could never end up with a percentage of thoughts, emotions and actions whose origins we can be reflexively aware of and a percentage which we cannot. This is partially because of the way practical consciousness works, as Giddens, following Schutz, constructs it. It is not all 'there' in the open, laid out for

the social theorist, or who ever might be interested, to dissect and describe. The knowledge that is 'held' here is not routinely considered in a fully conscious manner, though it is potentially open to reflexive monitoring. It is by nature partially hidden - in a functional sense it allows us to carry out daily life without mentally overloading our reflexive mind with the intimate details of every activity.

The contents of practical consciousness are revealed usually only if an individual's actions are questioned. This in turn is only likely to happen if that activity is deemed by another, or the agent herself, to be 'out of the ordinary'.[7] A theoretical excavation of the psyche may be helpful in revealing the processes of practical consciousness, but it is also highly possible that it is only within the contextualised, daily situations of individuals (or their disruption) that they will be revealed, depending on the level of their embeddedness as 'taken-for-granted' knowledge. Thus ascribing the territory of practical consciousness, as it borders on the realms of reflexive awareness and the unconscious, is a difficult and complex task.

In acknowledging that the distinction between practical consciousness and the unconscious is extraordinarily hazy, certain questions are raised about reflexivity. As I have made clear, it is practical consciousness that is open to reflexive monitoring - this is the defining factor which sets it apart from the unconscious. However, whether knowledge is deeply embedded in taken-for-granted routines, or at the level of unconscious tensions and cognition, is not easily discernible in Giddens's account.

How are we to know if we have reflexively come up against the edge of practical consciousness, and are on the threshold of unconscious knowledge, or if there is still a wealth of practical consciousness before us? An unanswerable question, for the

processes of the psyche are far from the static entities conjured up here. But it does suggest that we need to be careful in asserting the extent of reflexivity. The psychical structure which Giddens adheres to suggests that there may be plenty to an individual's behaviour which lies 'outside' of his or her reflexive self-understanding. As we cannot easily quantify what is 'outside', any claims of expansive and extending reflexivity must be checked with a serious acknowledgement of possible non-reflexive constraints on our thoughts and deeds.

Giddens attempts to construct what I would call a very 'tidy' version of the unconscious. This is particularly apparent, as we have seen, in comparison to Freud's model. Nigel Thrift argues provocatively that this may be a tendentious move on Giddens's part. He refers to an overall 'absence of absence in Giddens's presence':

> That is, Giddens's impoverished notion of the unconscious. It is, in fact, difficult to work out whether Giddens has a theory of the unconscious or whether it is simply a supplement which enables him to privilege practical consciousness and knowledge (Thrift, 1996: 55).

A constrained version of unconscious activity makes a great deal of sense for Giddens's theoretical intentions. He has always been concerned with agency and attempted to place it at the heart of social theory (see *New Rules of Sociological Method* for example). Craib points out the inherent problem of attempting to incorporate unconscious activity into a rational theory of action:

> If sociology is to give an account of agency.... there is a sense in which it cannot allow concepts, such as the unconscious, which suggest that human beings routinely work in irrational,

> un-routine ways.... Giddens seems to do this with ease, but then to deny its effect (Craib, 1992: 142).

Once the concept of the unconscious *is* accepted as part of the psyche, allocating it a tidy corner and keeping it there is a difficult task. If such an emphasis poses a contradiction which is not easy to overcome, Craib and Thrift argue that Giddens gets round the problem by largely ignoring it.

Lash and Urry claim that Giddens's notion of the self 'is grounded in a very strong positivistic ego psychology' (Lash & Urry, 1994: 38). For these authors, Giddens's reflexivity is inherently conservative, relying as it does on predictability, order and routine to function effectively. To allow the unconscious to exist, Giddens has to subdue it to these principles of orderliness, a task which puts him not just at loggerheads with classical psychoanalysis as we have seen, but also much of contemporary feminist and psychoanalytically-oriented social theory: 'What they positively value as the heterogeneous play of an unconscious structured by 'complexity' and 'difference', he sees as a threat to ontological security' (Lash & Urry, 1994: 42). These theories accept the chaos which the unconscious brings with it, and place it at the heart of human experience, including experience of self. Such an acceptance is encapsulated in the surrealist movement:

> Whereas surrealism and surrealist-influenced French theorists such as Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida and Lacan want the ego - and especially the creative ego - to recast itself rather along the lines of the unconscious, Giddens has recast the id along the lines of the ego (Lash & Urry, 1994: 43).

Whether or not one views surrealism as an extreme and exaggerated perspective towards the self, Lash and Urry's account consolidates my criticisms of Giddens's

version of the unconscious by focussing on irrationality. 'Giddens's ego is the hero of the battle against ontological security' (Lash & Urry, 1994: 42), and in becoming so it structures the unconscious along similar rationalistic, ordered lines. One suspects that if the unconscious revealed its true colours in Giddens's battle, it would more than blunt the range and power of reflexive awareness.

In summary, Giddens's incorporation of both practical consciousness and the unconscious into his model of selfhood poses problems for the third part of that model - reflexive awareness. In theorising the extension of reflexivity in the light of recent radical social upheavals, a number of critics have suggested that the unconscious in particular has been unsatisfactorily represented. As a force in the maintenance of self-identity it has been subsumed under the faculties of reflexive awareness, and thus neutered as a meaningful concept in Giddens's overall model of identity and its relation to contemporary social settings.

Emotional Life

I now want to argue that while to some degree Giddens's discussion of emotional processes illuminates his overall understanding of identity, there are also some serious shortcomings. At times his portrayal of emotions such as trust seem to co-exist remarkably comfortably with the cognitive aspects of the psyche. The apparent simplicity and ease with which Giddens incorporates emotion can gloss over certain complexities. His understanding of emotional life can be vague, excessively cognitive and too willingly subsumed into his affirmation of autonomous agency. I

will suggest that emotional life, however difficult it is to conceptualise, plays a more pervasive role in concrete experience than Giddens's work often suggests.

Some authors suggest that current trends in social theory do not address the existence of emotions adequately. Eugene Halton, for example is critical of what he sees as an overemphasis of rational capacities in contemporary social theory:

> The contemporary intellectual landscape is still dominated by those who believe that all we need to do is improve our critical rationality, science or technology, or to include 'multiple modes of authority' in our methods and theories. Yet as Coleridge said, 'deep thinking is only attainable by a man of deep feeling'- today of course, we would say 'by a man or woman of deep feeling' - and those who, living from the head alone, have lost the capacity to feel deeply are not likely to point the way toward a renewal of thought and culture (Halton, 1995: 271).

While the modernist faith in rationality has brought certain benefits to the world, Halton argues, it has also brought a chronic imbalance. It seeks to marginalise the non-rational elements of experience, and in doing so disconnects knowledge from vital emotional experience: 'being human involves feeling, dreaming, experiencing, remembering and forgetting, and not simply knowing' (1995: 273). Asserting the need for more rationality is seen in this context as misguided, offering only partial solutions, and misconstruing the nature of human experience.

Halton's argument is a recent development of what has been a constant feature of critiques of Western modernist thought; attacking the one-sidedness of prioritizing rationalism over all other elements of experience. Though he directs his criticisms at Jurgen Habermas, and others who argue for the need to live the modern project more

fully, the same critique may apply in part to Giddens's work. Indeed, Mestrovic (1998), Alexander (1995,1996), Lash & Urry (1994: 38), and Craib (1992) all varyingly accuse Giddens of a brand of what Szerszynski refers to as 'neo-modernism'; theory which stresses the actual and potential power of a cognitive, rationalistic and reflexive consciousness over and above other elements of experience. Such an analysis neglects emotional influences, 'accusing society of being, not *too* rational, but not rational *enough*' (Szersynski, 1996: 112). I will now consider in more detail the role Giddens attributes to emotion.

Trust is an essential emotional component in Giddens's understanding of selfhood.[8] In all Giddens's accounts of the psyche, the experience of trust/mistrust is an integral aspect of an infant's development, it forms the basis of ontological security in later life, and is an emotional, rather than cognitive process. Early emotionally-charged developmental stages, characteristically pre-linguistic, 'represent a progressive movement towards autonomy, which should be understood as the foundation of the capability for the reflexive monitoring of conduct' (Giddens, 1984: 57). Mechanisms of this 'security system' remain in adult life, but generally only at an unconscious level of experience, due to their pre-linguistic formation. Basic emotional processes of maintaining self-identity gradually 'become overlain by a variety of more mature psychic forms' (1984: 54). Here Giddens is alluding to the day-to-day achievement of ontological security, scrupulously maintained by the activities of practical consciousness, which I discussed earlier.

Giddens breaks from psychoanalysis sharply, particularly Freud himself, in that he is unwilling to locate the play of emotional tensions at the causal heart of daily

practices. For Giddens, 'most day-to-day activities are not directly motivated' (1984: 49). Rather, 'there is a generalized motivational commitment to the integration of habitual practices across time and space' (1984: 64) This is a rather vague conceptualisation; Giddens is basically suggesting that the individual is unconsciously dedicated to establishing routinized forms of social interaction, which allow trust to be extended into the mileux of everyday practices.

Routinization is a 'master key' for Giddens to understanding the psyche (1984: 60). It placates, cushions and confirms the trust which is nurtured in the basic security system. It is an achieved context in which we can safely manage more 'primal tensions', make choices, and generally 'get on' without being perpetually overwhelmed by doubt, mistrust and anxiety which would stem from chronic uncertainty; i.e. if there was *no* routinization at all. Basic emotional mechanisms can resurface and rupture 'in situations of extreme threat or crisis' (1984: 54); when routine is seriously disrupted or problematised. If a situation confounds our taken-for-grantedness, penetrating the cocoon of ontological security, we revert to the mechanisms of our 'basic security system' which may thus be brought into conscious experience: 'The swamping of habitual modes of activity by anxiety which cannot be adequately contained by the basic security system is specifically a feature of critical situations' (1984: 64).

So emotional life is portrayed as the foundation for an autonomous sense of self in early life, and also as a more marginalised element of the mature self. Emotions 'bubble under' in the unconscious realm and are also significantly invested in the formation and maintenance of practical consciousness. The picture here is of

reasonably well behaved emotions, maintaining a respectful distance from the discursive and practical self on the whole. They may lie at the heart of identity, and exist in a state of dynamic tension, but their influence on the daily maintenance of identity is minimal. Emotional commitment is necessary, if routines are to be followed, but emotions do not directly motivate our actions, and need trouble us consciously only on rare occasions. I find some sympathy here with the authors I have mentioned who are critical of Giddens's portrayal of emotional life.

Ian Craib, in what is a largely sympathetic appreciation of Giddens's theories, reserves some of his most scathing judgements for the role of emotion in Giddens's understanding of identity. He is particularly critical of the piecemeal absorption of psychoanalysis in Giddens's writing. As a result of which 'we are left with a very shallow picture of the human being indeed - the product of routine practices who only feels safe in routine practices' (Craib, 1992: 177). Taking routine as an example, Craib suggests that it has a far more complex relationship with emotions than simply procuring ontological security. On the one hand, 'routine is clearly important to a sense of safety and reliability; if every act were always a matter of spontaneous impulse or random choice then life would quickly become unbearable' (1992: 175). Here then Craib is in agreement with Giddens. However it does not tell the whole story. On the other hand:

> More routinely, routine is experienced as enveloping, as creating a sense of claustrophobia, and a person's emotional dependence on routine is frequently experienced by others as a sign that he or she is not well or is inadequate, or at any rate as an indicator of something being wrong (1992: 176).

Routinization can be understood to imply the converse of ontological security; 'immersion in routine actually invites the recurrence of anxiety, and reliance on routine is a defence against, not a cure for, anxiety' (ibid.). Craib argues that a more thorough investigation of routine, such as that found in Winnicot (1964), Laing (1960), and generally in psychoanalysis, reveals the complexities of emotional experience. Similarly, Cohen argues that Giddens's attempt to tie all motivation to a vague and singular desire for self-security is unhelpfully reductive; 'Giddens has proposed no account of the nature or development of motives above or beyond the need for ontological security' (Cohen, 1989: 227). Again it is suggested that pre- or extra-rational phenomena require a more intricate understanding. Giddens loses important dimensions in an oversimplified version of the individual which ignores 'the existence of internal psychological structures of much more complexity and ambiguity' (Craib, 1992: 166).

Craib is correct in pointing to the superficiality of Giddens's ordering of emotions in the psyche. His notion of ontological security has the ring of a therapeutic goal which belies the chaos and contingency of emotional existence. Once we reach a certain level of maturity, it seems emotions take on a minimal role, only rising to the surface in the cracks opened up by occasional fractures in self-identity. An expressive connection with emotional aspects of selfhood is construed as almost dysfunctional. Giddens's perfect human being, we might imagine, would be one whose emotions are all kept in check, someone who is predictable and content. The reality of lived experience, I would argue, along with Craib, is far less containable than Giddens suggests in the maintenance of routine and social tact. Undoubtedly for some of the people, some of the time, existence is taken for granted; they may experience little

emotion other than a tacit faith in the nature of the world they are acting in and simply 'get on'. It cannot, however, tell the whole story of emotional life.

Stjepan Mestrovic (1998) also criticises Giddens for neglecting 'habits of the heart' - the emotional side of life - in his construction of contemporary identity, largely due to what he sees as an overemphasis of cognition in Giddens's account. 'Whether or not one likes the fact that contemporary, allegedly emancipated, post-emotional human agents engage in habits of the heart in many aspects of their lives, the fact is that they simply do' (Mestrovic, 1998: 27). Mestrovic's case against Giddens's appreciation of emotion is as follows. He points to a long, prestigious line of authors who *did* consider aspects of non-agency in their theories - Durkheim, Simmel, Freud, Erikson - and are much better informed as a result (1998: 25). When Giddens takes up the work of these authors, he ignores or marginalises perplexing conceptualisations of emotional life, and focuses instead on the rational, reflexive and cognitive processes, Mestrovic argues. In doing so he exaggerates the extent to which contemporary agency is logical, autonomous and masterful, and also fails to consider the dangers of devaluing emotional experience, to which his work contributes.

From a selective use of social theorists, and an even more selective and tendentious use of elements of their work, Giddens leaves us with a rather one-sided view of the individual, an error which Mestrovic constantly reiterates:

> The result is a portrait of the agent based on oversimplified wishful thinking, a caricature based on modernist ideology in which the agent is reflexive, able to monitor his/her actions, skilled, and knowledgeable at all times .... Giddens's agent is all mind and no heart .... ultimately a rationalist , a modernist caricature of what it means to be human (1998: 78-80).

According to Mestrovic, this caricature has a variety of problems which stem from an over emphasis of rational, reflexive capabilities. It leads Giddens to a naive form of optimism, a continuing faith in the modernist rationalist trajectory despite the atrocities that mark recent history, and a constant anti-Enlightenment strand in philosophy, sociology and psychology (1998: 77); it exaggerates our abilities of empowerment; it encourages 'narcissistic megalomania' (1998: 198), conformity (1998:162), and reduces the experience of human beings to the responses of automatons. (1998: 7).

In a lengthy critique, Mestrovic does little more than to repeat the claim that in ignoring emotions, and other non-rational elements, Giddens's individual is a misleading portrayal, and his criticisms rarely develop this theme much. He also glosses over, or is at least less sympathetic to, nuances within Giddens's work which at least imply an understanding beyond the one-sidedness which Mestrovic evokes. At times it seems that Mestrovic is offering nothing more than a caricature of Giddens. Nonetheless, he certainly forces the point home that there is an important absence in Giddens's work here. On this point he coincides with other critiques of Giddens which are on the whole far more sympathetic. Ian Craib for example, in arguing that 'the world portrayed in Giddens's interpretation .... seems to me an emotionally impoverished world' (Craib, 1992: 171), mirrors Mestrovic's claims.

The acceptance of an emotional life, to the degree Halton and Mestrovic suggest, compromises Giddens's view of the contemporary individual as an increasingly autonomous, reflexive being in a number of ways. Though awareness of emotions and a certain degree of control is certainly possible. We can philosophise about

emotions, consider our own reactions and attempt to shape the way we feel. But to these authors, emotions are in an important sense non-rational. They want to retain the 'unfathomability' of this realm of experience, because it is, by its very nature, something which cannot be fully incorporated into rational, reflexive thinking. As we saw in relation to the unconscious, Giddens is attempting to bring the majority of human experience under an umbrella of rational, reflexive, ego-based control. These authors suggest that such experience does not and should not belong there.

To summarise, distinguishing between rational and non-rational, and cognitive and non-cognitive elements of the psyche serves the purpose of highlighting some initial criticism of Giddens's work. It implies a cognitive model of the psyche in which the rational ego is placed at the centre of self. Outside are the 'non-rational' elements; emotions, the unconscious, collective consciousness, culture etc. These are all integral elements of the self which are increasingly penetrable by the reflexive core, whereas previously they were uncharted waters, Giddens suggests. From a critical perspective, it has been argued that there always have been and always will be irrational and rather mysterious elements of the psyche, and it is this 'sense of non-reducibility, indefiniteness and the limits to clarity which is often missing from Giddens's account' (Thrift, 1996: 60). 'Irrationality' is not just associated with the cruelty, evil and suffering inflicted upon people throughout history which has been carried out; it also evokes such qualities as intuition, empathy and spontaneity, the properties of which should not be reduced to the rational faculties which try to comprehend them.

Some authors, such as Thrift (1996) and Alexander (1996), following psychoanalysis, argue that non-rational events form the basis of any rational processes, and thus have a pervasive influence. Thought (rational) is in actual fact *fused* with what we might call the non-rational, in this instance emotion. The way in which we think about our own self, others and the world around us, is inseparable from our emotional experience. The way we feel influences the way we think, and the way we think influences the way we feel, to the point where any clear distinction between the two is unworkable; what we separate out as concepts are in fact continuously interwoven in the process of subjective experience. Thought is often irrational, fantastical and surreal, shaped as it is by a chaotic collage of indefinable experience. Thus the hope for a blossoming reflexivity, to oversee the processes of subjectivity, is argued to be a vain one.

As with the concept of the unconscious, it has been argued here that emotional life is not adequately theorised in Giddens's recent theorisation of reflexive self-identity. The absence of a complex understanding of emotions is seen by some authors, Alexander and Mestrovic in particular, to reflect Giddens's 'neo-modernist' approach to the study of self and society. Thus he values the processes of rational understanding and the ego-oriented and discursive ordering of self-identity at the expense of non-rational, and theoretically opaque, elements of existence, in particular the experience of emotion. In these critiques Giddens's abandonment of emotional life is often exaggerated. It is clear however, as expressed in the work of Craib and others, that a more comprehensive analysis of emotions is necessary, yet somewhat antithetical, to the dominant emphasis on reflexive awareness in Giddens's recent work. A fuller appreciation of emotional life, it has been suggested, would further

problematise Giddens's understanding of self-identity as a predominately reflexive project .

Self-Identity as Ambiguous

Clearly, Giddens sees reflexivity as the guiding principle of modern self-identity. Reflexivity brings, at least potentially, a new level of knowledgeability, control and orderliness to one's experience of self. It ushers in a demystified world, geared towards calculability. In Giddens's own words, '....reflexivity refers to a world increasingly constituted by information rather than pre-modern modes of conduct. It is how we live after the retreat of tradition and nature, because of having to take so many forward-orientated decisions' (Giddens & Pierson, 1998c: 115).

The reflexive self has a functional relationship with this influx of information. Reflexivity involves 'the routine incorporation of new knowledge or information into environments of action that are thereby reconstituted or reorganised' (Giddens, 1991: 243). Life is characterised by planning and goal-orientation. In Giddens's terminology it is a 'project', involving 'the strategic adoption of lifestyle options, organised in terms of the individual's projected lifespan' (ibid.). The future is 'colonised', knowledge is 'reappropriated', and the self is a 'trajectory'. Relationships are increasingly transparent and democratic, always open to negotiation. These sentiments are repeated often, and lie at the heart of Giddens's analysis of the contemporary self.

While Giddens's analysis undoubtedly reflects certain aspects of self-identity in the modern world, it has already been argued that he also neglects many areas of

experience relevant to the contemporary self - tradition, culture and concepts of fate, the unconscious and emotions - for example. In relation to these factors I want to argue that our experience of our own self is far less clear-cut than Giddens suggests. Selfhood as a vehicle for grasping the world in relation to itself is experienced far more *ambiguously*, during both the more mundane passages of daily life, and in the more 'fateful moments' of one's life. It is characterised as much by a lack of definition and precision as it is by a calculable boundary and trajectory.

Giddens ends up with a rationalist caricature of the processes which make up self-identity. His comments on the formation of values, reproduced here, are a case in point:

> It wouldn't be true to say we have values that are separate from the increasingly reflexive nature of the world - values are directly involved in it, because we live in a world where we have to decide what values to hold, as individuals, and in a democracy, collectively - essentially through reflexive discourse. In more traditional cultures those values are more given (Giddens & Pierson, 1998c: 219).

Are the values we hold really the result of nothing more than rational 'decisions'? Most people, if asked, would probably have only a vague idea about the origins of their values. One would be mistaken in attempting to trace them back to a purely rational decision making process. It is certainly hard to conceive of values, and maintain a meaningful sense of the word, if they are reduced to the result of 'reflexive discourse' alone. Giddens's picture of the world is again far too *tidy*. People do not go through life choosing from and storing a range of values which they then apply

methodically to their understanding of the world. What we value is bound up with all the factors I have just mentioned - culture, emotion and so on.

In the same way, self-identity can no more easily be reduced to a number of options from which we choose objectively and transparently. This is apparent in a number of interrelated factors which impinge upon self-identity, largely overlooked by Giddens. How we experience ourselves, how we want to see ourselves and others to see us - all the things that constitute self-identity - is open to contradiction. Giddens too easily constructs the reflexive self as a functional whole, all units - reflexivity, practical consciousness and the unconscious - working for the overall benefit of the self. Such a view of selfhood is easily complicated. Most individuals are defined as much by the conflict of intentions, or by their actions contradicting their intentions. People are often unsure of what they want to happen - of their 'trajectory' - except when they indulge in fantasy. How one experiences one's self changes from day to day, moment to moment. A clear understanding of the self as a 'reflexive narrative' is, in this context, a rare event. Individuals may be capable of reflexivity, but it is against a wider backdrop of ambiguity.

In a recent analysis Giddens draws from a contemporary work of fiction to illustrate the exhaustive application of reflexivity in everyday life. The novel, Nicholas Baker's *The Mezzanine* (1990), 'deals with no more than a few moments in the day of a person who actively reflects, in detail, upon the minutiae of his life's surroundings and his reactions to them' (Giddens, 1994a: 60). Giddens goes on to quote a lengthy description, in which Baker's character reflects on an ice-cube tray he has just picked up. The extensive consideration of the changes in ice-cube trays and a detailed

understanding of them represents, for Giddens, 'profound processes of the reformation of daily life' (ibid.). Everything is opened up to inspection, from a post-traditional vantage point. Even the more mundane elements of life are part of a series of 'everyday experiments', in which the outcomes are no longer certain. In Giddens's analysis, 'we are all in a sense, self-pioneers' (Tucker, 1998: 206).

Fictional accounts of selfhood, and the self's relation to others and the outside world, are likely to be pretty reflexive affairs. 'Narratives of the self' are in fictional accounts, a prime concern. It may not always be helpful to draw upon fictional accounts to suggest the reflexivity of the modern world. This problem aside, fictional accounts can also be used to problematise the notion of reflexivity, and suggest a more ambiguous selfhood. In Tim Lott's recent novel, *White City Blue* (1999) he documents such an understanding throughout. Take this description of the development of the main character's relationship with his future wife:

> Not so long ago, me and Veronica would only see each other at weekends - that's Friday, Saturday and Sunday night - and on other night in the week; a ratio of freedom to commitment of 3:4. That's reasonable I think.... But as the marriage approaches, the F:C ratio is slipping badly. She's round here most nights now, and the ratio is moving towards more like 2:5 or even 1:6. I don't mind, I suppose. *Processes like these aren't really stoppable anyway. It's organic, inevitable. Nobody decides, nobody really wants it to happen. But it happens anyway.* I go out with my mates a few nights a week, she goes out with hers, but somehow or other, without any particular arrangement having been made, we both usually end up here (Lott, 1999: 34-35; my emphasis).

In this example, albeit fictional, the protagonist, far from reflexively understanding the passage of his life, only has a vague grasp of the cause of events. Reflexivity is only apparent in the retrospective illustration of those events for the reader. The fictional account of modern selfhood documented above is mirrored in a recent critique of Giddens's definition of reflexivity by Nicos Mouzelis (in O'Brien, Penna & Hay eds.1999), summarised in the following extract:

> the reflexive individuals' relation to their inner and outer worlds is conceptualised in ultra-activistic, instrumental terms: subjects are portrayed as constantly involved in means-ends situations, constantly trying reflexively and rationally to choose their broad goals as well as the means of their realisation; they are also constantly monitoring or revising their projects in the light of new information and of the already achieved results (Mouzelis, 1999: 85).

Mouzelis does not suggest that the concept of reflexivity itself be abandoned. Instead he argues that Giddens's version of reflexive awareness is 'culture-specific, or more precisely, western-specific'. He argues that reflexivity needs to be re-conceptualised, to overcome Giddens's 'over-activistic' tendencies, and accommodate other ways of being reflexive. Mouzelis signifies what alternative reflexivities might look like when he suggests what is missing from Giddens's concept. Giddens's understanding, he argues, 'entails a type of reflexivity that excludes more contemplative, more 'easy-going', less cognitive ways of navigating reflexively in a world full of choices and individual challenges' (ibid.). Mouzelis seeks an alternative formulation of reflexivity, which challenges Giddens's activistic version:

> Is it perhaps possible to resort to [a] reflexive attitude that does not seek (via rational choices) actively to *construct* life

> orientations, but rather allows in *indirect, passive manner* life orientations and other broad goals to *emerge* .... a kind of existence where instead of actively and instrumentally trying to master the complexity of growing choices, one chooses (to use Pierre-August Renoir's expression) to float as a cork in the ocean of post-traditional reality? (Mouzelis, 1999: 85-86).

The main character in *White City Blue* would probably agree. An 'easy-going' attitude towards one's beliefs is displayed in this dialogue from the same novel:

> 'You were going to say that friends are the most important thing in life'.
>
> 'I suppose so. I'm not sure. I suppose so. I don't know that I believe it though'.
>
> 'Why would you say it if you didn't believe it?'
>
> A good question. But isn't it what everyone does? You don't have to *believe* what you *say*. How are you meant to know what you *believe* ? Sometimes - most of the time you just have to guess. You have to say *something*, after all.
>
> 'I don't know. Sometimes you just pick up opinions. Like fluff on your jacket'.
>
> 'Uh-huh'.
>
> 'And you don't always know where you picked up the fluff. But there it is all the same'.

In this extract the main character is disclaiming reflexive capabilities. The comparison between the fictional world evoked here and in Giddens's example suggest two different views of modern self-identity. Individual experience is too complex for reflexivity to order in a rational, exhaustive fashion. Giddens's attempt

to make it do so is misdirected. Practical consciousness is not an answer to the intricacies of this experience. In Giddens's analysis it is little more than a spare drawer in which the self deposits things she does not need to know *at present*, but are known, nonetheless. It does not accommodate for the rationally ambiguous nature of everyday life, indicated here.

Mouzelis's concept of an 'easy-going', non-cognitive reflexivity may be something of a contradiction in terms. Nonetheless, the thread of Mouzelis's argument is clear, and it offers support to what is being argued here. For Mouzelis asserts, as I have, that self-identity cannot be reduced to rational-decision making processes. Reflexivity, as Giddens understands it, does not and cannot embrace the whole range of experiences which make up self-identity in each concrete moment. It is not necessary to argue that self-identity in post-traditional societies is characterised by *either* an activistic, goal-orientated reflexivity *or* a more non-cognitive, ambiguous, non-rational approach, as Mouzelis seems to. But the two both seem like possible responses in the contemporary climate. The arguments in this and the previous chapters potentially provide theoretical support for a tempered version of Mouzelis's assertion.

The possible ambiguity of self-identity is a result of various factors which regularly and fundamentally shape self-identity, in endless combinations. These factors have all now been discussed at length in this and the previous chapter - the unconscious / practical consciousness, cultural boundaries, fate and fatalism, emotional life, unintended consequences & unacknowledged conditions. Despite Giddens's attempts to construct a vision of the self which has largely transcended these considerations, I have attempted to suggest that they still persist in shaping consciousness. This can be

summarised by the claim that there is more to self-experience than rational understanding - 'no matter how skilled and knowledgeable the agent, miscommunication can arise because of emotional, cultural and other non-cognitive factors that are part of the process of communicating through language' (Mestrovic, 1998: 46). As with communication with others, so with self-consciousness - communication with the self, and, to repeat Halton's suggestion; 'being human involves feeling, dreaming, experiencing, remembering and forgetting, and not simply knowing' (Halton, 1995: 273). These other elements of experience contextualise reflexive awareness, and ground its transformative capabilities in the need to acknowledge the complexities of self-identity.

Conclusion

Giddens's concept of reflexive awareness has been problematised in a number of ways in this chapter. I have attempted to build on the critique established in the previous chapter - that the reflexive project of selfhood is constrained by its social and cultural situatedness. Here I have argued that in terms of self-identity, the nature and extent of reflexivity is also compromised by various factors which form an integral part of self-experience: unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions, practical consciousness, the unconscious, emotional life and the ambiguity of self-awareness. Drawing from the work of a number of authors, I have argued that these factors are overlooked, marginalised or distorted, in order to present the contemporary self as an increasingly reflexive being in relation to its post-traditional surroundings.

It by no means offers a complete picture of modern self-identity to suggest the variety of contradictions and compromises which beset reflexivity. As I suggested at the close of the previous chapter, another element important in the structuring of self-experience is the issue of *power*. An analysis of power also problematises the notion of reflexivity and the role it is attributed by Giddens in contemporary society, in a different way. So far the various ways in which reflexive awareness can be compromised, in the formation and maintenance of self-identity, has been the focus of study. Also of importance is the extent to which power relationships shape self-identity *regardless* of how reflexive individuals might be about their experiences. This analysis will be the focus of the following chapter, and will further transform the portrait of modern self-identity emerging here.

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[1] It could also be added that even if the actions do not bring about the intended results , if one's actions are frustrated in any way, they may also bring about further consequences of which we are unaware.

[2] This raises another problem concerning reflexivity: even if the boys *were* reflexively aware of all the conditions in which they act, it may not alter their work prospects. As Willis comments: 'where they occur at a cultural level the destruction of official myths and illusions and a canny assessment of the world do not stop incorporation into that world' (Willis, 1977: 178). Reflexivity does not equate with the power to change conditions which are central to identity. This issue will be covered comprehensively in a subsequent discussion of power and reflexivity.

[3] There is no reference to either factors in *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990), *Modernity and Self-Identity,* (1991), *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), or *Living in a Post-Traditional Society* (1996). In each of this texts there are, however, lengthy discussions of agency, making the absence all the more conspicuous.

[4] When he does acknowledge the limits of the colonisation of the conditions of existence, it is only in very general terms: 'the more we try to colonize the future, the more it is likely to spring surprises on us' (1994a: 58). This is a step away from the complexity of Giddens's interpretation of Willis's account, and an appreciation of the differential nature, and consequences of, a 'partial penetration' of one's environment.

[5] See chapter one for a more detailed discussion of this point.

[6] It could be argued that reflexivity has the potential to penetrate the unconscious. Indeed Giddens has made such a claim:

> In principle the relation between such elements (unconscious motivation) and an actors ongoing rationalization of his behaviour,

> must be regarded as plastic, as offering the possibility of the revelatory development of self-understanding (Giddens 1976: 126).

This may be possible, though it does fudge the distinction between practical consciousness and the unconscious. If we take the awareness of traditional gender roles as oppressive for example, would this understanding be seen as a revealing of what were once unconscious processes of self-identity, or were they elements of practical consciousness?

[7] Ethnomethodology has been particularly successful in applying this theory to empirical research. See Garfinkel (1967).

[8] In his analysis of trust, Giddens is indebted to Erikson and other psychoanalytical child development theorists, the main tenets of which are discussed in the first chapter.

Chapter 4 Reflexivity, Power & Social Structure

In this chapter I will critically explore the connections between Giddens's concept of reflexivity and his understanding of power. I will first of all summarise Giddens's analysis of power in general terms, which can be traced back to his earlier work on agency and structure. Dissatisfied with attempts by the majority of classical social theory, and more recent attempts at revision, Giddens argued for a re-conceptualisation of both agency and structure, attempting to move beyond, yet drawing from, a number of schools of thought. His work in this area will be considered before looking more specifically at the claims he makes about the nature of power regarding reflexive individuals in post-traditional societies. These claims have been the subject of a range of criticism, issued from an equal variety of sources. I will reflect upon the most relevant discussions, including analyses by Kenneth Tucker, Ian Craib, Martin O'Brien, Scott Lash, and Stepjan Mestrovic. I will consider the validity of these critiques, the connections between them and any points of overlap. In drawing these discussions together, and combining them and contrasting them with my own analysis, I will assess their impact upon Giddens's conceptualisation of reflexivity, and the role he attributes to power in relation to reflexivity. I will suggest that whilst Giddens illuminates some important attributes of contemporary self-identity, power is not as central a concern as it could be. I will argue, with the support of existing critiques, that the construction of identity is still

permeated by power relationships, and is thus a hierarchical, highly politicised, and conflictual domain of experience, in ways that Giddens does not account for.

Giddens on Power

Giddens's understanding of the role power plays in human relationships, and more specifically, in issues of identity, lies at the heart of his analysis of modern reflexivity. He makes assumptions about the transformative and universal nature of power, which are implicit in the very definition of reflexivity as a *project*. Such a project requires the expansion of power as a generative capability. Giddens's reading of power can, however, be traced back to his earlier work, and it is this work which will begin our enquiries here. Much of Giddens's work before the 1990s was explicitly concerned with an attempt to overcome the persistent structure/agency dichotomy in social theory, which he believed to be unnecessary and unhelpful in understanding the realities of social experience. Giddens objected, in sum, to an over-identification with structure, at the expense of a relative neglect of agency, which he associates with 'objectivism' and 'structural sociology'. In these theories, Giddens argued, the individual is portrayed as a pinball, directed wherever they are sent in the machine - 'equivalent to being driven irresistibly and uncomprehendingly by mechanical pressures' (Giddens, 1984:15). Giddens claimed that this was an unrealistic comprehension of the nature of self-experience, social structure, and, by consequence, of the operation of power.

Giddens reformulated a concept of power as part of his overhaul of traditional social theory - 'an attempt to transcend....prominent traditions of thought in social theory

and philosophy' (Giddens, 1981: 26) - namely those mentioned above. Instead of setting up structure and agency as an irreconcilable dichotomy, he attempted to intertwine the two, to show how both relied on each other for their existence in a dialectical interplay, and thus dispense with the dichotomy altogether. To do so he needed to offer a different conceptual vision of 'structure', which would not simply be seen as 'in some way grinding out the 'docile bodies' who behave like the automata suggested by objectivistic social science' (Giddens, 1984:16), whilst at the same time not succumbing to the excessive voluntarism of 'hermeneutics or 'interpretative' sociologies' (Giddens, 1981: 26). Giddens's alternative construction of the relationship between the subject and the external social world draws from a variety of sources, including post-structuralism, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. He defined his alternative as the *duality of structure*. This term 'refers to the essentially recursive nature of social practices. Structure is both the medium and outcome of the practices which constitute social systems' (1981: 27). Its dual nature arises from it being both the basis of agency *and* the product of agency. To be an agent in the world, one must draw from the social network of meanings, in order to make an impression upon that network. In doing so, the agent contributes further to that network of meaning, and alters it, however subtly. Furthermore, structure only exists in that moment of agency. It is rendered as a structure only via the actions of individuals - it has no existence outside of agency.

An illustrative way of thinking about the duality of structure is by comparing it to language, an analogy often utilised by Giddens (1976: 118-119). Giddens reasons that language and speech should be understood as distinct from each other.[1] In order to speak, we utilise language, which is a shared set of understandings. Language does

not 'exist' in any concrete sense, however, outside of its use in communication. It becomes concrete only as it is being used. Language is also being constantly modified and updated by the agents who use it. Language is altered as a result of being utilised. Thus, 'the relationship between structure and action is like the relationship between language and speech' (Craib, 1992: 41). Structure is thus understood as having an almost spectral existence, what Giddens refers to as a 'virtual order' (Giddens, 1984: 17). Structure, in Giddens's analysis, has no material existence as such. Power in this context, is the ability to act. To continue the analogy, speech is dependent on the ability to draw from the abstract structure of language, to reconfigure it in socially approved patterns of interaction. Similarly, agency is dependent on the power to utilise and make real 'structure', to act in meaningful, identifiable and consistent ways.

Giddens develops a sense of structure as virtual, but it is ascribed certain properties nonetheless. A glance at these properties will serve to illustrate the origins of Giddens's notion of structure, and more particularly for this discussion, how power works in relation to structure. Structure is reducible, in Giddens's analysis, to two characteristics - *rules* and *resources.* In keeping with Giddens's emphasis upon the knowledgeable agent, rules and resources are not simply, or even predominantly, there to constrain action; in fact they form the basis of Giddens's notion of power as a transformative capability. Giddens defines rules in very general terms: 'Let us regard the rules of social life then, as techniques or generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices' (Giddens, 1984: 21). Rules do not exist simply to limit our options, they serve to bring purpose to action, to allow individuals to navigate a meaningful course in an otherwise nonsensical world. Giddens's

keenness to stress the connection between rules and enablement is illustrated in the following quote:

> To know a rule, as Wittgenstein says, is to 'know how to go on', to know how to play according to the rule. This is vital, because it connects rules and practices. Rules generate - or are the medium and the production and reproduction of - practices (Giddens, 1979: 67).

The concept of rules, and of rules as enabling, yet again suggests the analogy of language. To use speech (to act) effectively, an individual must be able to use the rules of the particular language (structure) effectively when one is speaking. 'Knowing' in this context is not always a reflexive or discursive phenomenon. When speaking, one utilises a number of rules regarding language, and in this sense one 'knows' the rules of language. However, it is not always possible, and certainly not always necessary, for an individual to explicitly formulate the rules that underpin speech, and make it meaningful for all involved. This is particularly clear if we imagine a child's grasp of her native language. Rules are learnt, correlated and subsequently structure that child's speech, but it is highly unlikely that they would be able to speak coherently *about* those rules (ibid.). The same can be said of agency and its reliance on rules in Giddens's theory. For Giddens, rules are usually established as tacit forms of knowledge, what Craib describes as the 'implicit, taken-for-granted procedures, the know-how of carrying on in established ways which can be applied in a range of contexts' (Craib, 1992: 46).

The following of rules is closely connected with Giddens's notion of practical consciousness. Practical consciousness is the 'non-conscious' realm which

compliments reflexive/discursive awareness in Giddens's model of the psyche, discussed earlier. It is at the level of practical consciousness that knowledge about the rules which structure everyday life are often lodged. Practical consciousness is the bridge between Giddens's reflexive individual and his recursive understanding of structure. Of course an individual cannot actively reflect on all the rules which make up his social structure, although he is constantly modifying and recombining them, they are not all on his mind at once. But rather than conceding ground to an external, objectified view of structure, Giddens installs the realm of practical consciousness. Structure is thus still intertwined with the action of knowledgeable agents, it is simply 'held in stasis' unless problematised by the individual in question. Practical consciousness is thus a key point of intersection for structure and agency; it 'mediates between the dualism' of voluntarism and determinism (Tucker, 1998: 81).

The following of rules is what structures everyday life, it is the basis, and the outcome, of practices (Giddens, 1984: 67). The collective following of rules forms collective social practices - a social structure. Social structure is thus not something 'out there' in Giddens's account. It is something inseparable from the activities of knowledgeable human agents, and is manifest only in those activities. Practical consciousness is a holding bay for the dialectical traffic of agency and structure. It allows Giddens to uphold the primacy of agency by locating structure in the psyche of the individual and in the moment of interaction; it is not external to the individual in any concrete sense. Power, up to now, is understood almost benignly. It is the process which underlies all human action, the generative ability to act at all, and is not understood differentially.

For Giddens, rules go hand-in-hand with resources, in fact 'rules cannot be conceptualised apart from resources' (1984: 18). Resources allow for the application of rules. The exact nature of resources, and their relationship to rules, is far more complex, yet far less exhaustively covered by Giddens than the concept of rules. Craib is correct when he suggests that 'Giddens has comparatively little to say about resources' (Craib, 1992: 46), and since that comment was made, Giddens has done little to counter this criticism. Giddens has had less and less to say about either rules or resources in his recent work, as his theoretical concerns have shifted towards a more substantive thesis of modernity and self-identity. One has to go back to Giddens's *The Constitution Of Society* (1984) for a defining discussion of resources. He distinguishes between two types of resource, *allocative* and *authoritative.*

Allocative resources consists of objects. The utilisation of allocative resources facilitates power (understood as a 'transformative capability'), which 'generates command over objects, goods, or material phenomena' (Giddens, 1981: 33). Giddens later offers an elaboration on these resources, characterising them as 'raw materials, material power sources...., instruments of production, technology' and the 'artifacts created by production' (1981: 258). Authoritative resources also result in the generation of power, but are 'non-material' in nature (1981: 373). They refer to 'types of transformative capacity generating command over persons or actors' (1981: 33), which are 'the organization of social time-space'; 'the organization and relation of human beings in mutual association; and the 'chances of self-development and self-expression' (1981: 258).

Giddens acknowledges that these resources, if monopolised enough and used in combination, allow for 'structures of domination' to exist (ibid.). An elaboration of the impact of the unequal distribution of these resources has upon the nature of post-traditional society and opportunities for self-identity, may indeed offer a useful way of thinking about identity in contemporary settings. However, Giddens seems to jettison this promising indexing of resources in his later work on identity, which results, as I shall argue, in a universalising of individual experience, as well as an excessively voluntaristic and optimistic take on identity. A critical consideration of the limits resources can place on an *effective* reflexive project of self-identity, and how those resources may be systematically limited for some, is left to Giddens's critics.

In the context of the duality of structure, Giddens constructs a dialectical understanding of power, what he refers to as a *dialectic of control*. In this context, power is not understood, first and foremost, as the ability to do something to, or to control, some other person or group. This is a reductive approach for Giddens, as we are all agents, and we all act in knowledgeable ways, responding to the actions of others with one's own reflexive action. At times, Giddens seems to suggest that 'action is always creative, transformative' (Craib, 1992: 35). It follows then that in Giddens's account, power takes on a central, but more general definition: 'Power becomes an inherent and necessary feature of human relationships since it is inherent in the definition of action itself - the ability to do or achieve or change something' (1992: 35-36). For Giddens, power is the vehicle for *any* agency: 'Power is not intrinsically connected to the achievement of sectional interests .... the use of power characterizes not specific types of conduct but all action' (Giddens, 1984: 15-16).

Power cannot be conceived of as a 'top-down' phenomenon in the light of the duality of structure, Giddens argues, instead it has to be understood as intrinsically generative. Power is still exercised varyingly, but it is dependent on the nature and availability of rules and resources, as 'power is itself not a resource' (1984: 16). Within any society, the specific rules, and the amount of available resources, may differ widely from individual to individual but nonetheless, whatever resources *are* available are usually mobilised reflexively, 'drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction' (1984: 15), and thus are capable of influencing the actions of others. Autonomy and dependence is multi-dimensional - 'even the most autonomous agent is in some degree dependent, and the most dependent actor or party in a relationship retains some autonomy' (Giddens, 1979: 93). This mutuality forms the basis of Giddens's dialectical approach to power: 'all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors. This is what I call the *dialectic of control* in social systems' (Giddens, 1984: 16).

Giddens's theoretical framework, as set out in his earlier work, is complex with regards to agency and structure. His proclaimed transcendence of the traditional agency/structure dualism is at times beguiling, at times bewildering, and always highly complex. Giddens has himself moved away from that particular theoretical endeavour. For current purposes, the essential element to take on board, and which still informs Giddens's more recent work, is his broadly Foucauldian understanding of how power works. Power is not necessarily associated with coercion or conflict, and Giddens instead emphasises its transformative possibilities. It is about the ability to produce things, to get things done - 'power is not the description of a state of affairs,

but a capability' (Giddens, 1979: 68). The ability to exercise power depends on rules and the availability of resources, but there is nearly always 'two-way traffic', where even the those with very few resources are still capable of meaningful action. The impact of a highly differentiated access to resources is not considered by Giddens. All action is action which can reverberate throughout a social 'structure', hence the concept of a 'dialectic of control'.

A key proposition to be considered here is whether or not we can agree that in post-traditional orders, more people, more of the time, have the power to transform their lives. Also of importance though, is a consideration of the specific social distribution and availability of this 'power'. I am not just talking about the ability to 'transform' in any grand or final sense, but to alter and the course of their lives, the experiences they have, and the unfettered setting of priorities and goals, because this is what Giddens suggests is happening, where self-identity is a process of 'multiple choice', and for everyone a 'reflexively organised endeavour' (Giddens, 1991: 5). He is of course careful to qualify his claims on occasion, and so acknowledges that reflexivity is a response to, and encourages, new forms of both dependence and autonomy, which define self-identity in post-traditional societies.

Giddens's account of power, particularly in relation to reflexivity, has, however, been the subject of criticism from various quarters. It is the aim of the majority of this chapter to bring these criticisms together and develop a coherent critique of Giddens's concept of self-identity in terms of his understanding of power. Firstly, I want to suggest that Giddens does not comprehensively index the way post-traditional orders, to use his term, are stratified by power relationships to the same degree that he

indexes the expansion of individual empowerment. Other critics (e.g. Lash, 1994; O'Brien, 1999) have suggested that there are many factors which shape self-awareness and development, and these factors are bound up in a social structure, the contours of which are defined by power relationships. Secondly, and more specifically, Giddens has been accused of employing an excessively weak concept of social structure, which fails to account for the restraints on agency which either persist in contemporary societies, or are novel to them (Tucker: 1998; Craib, 1992; Mestrovic, 1998; Lash, 1994). I will consider the extent to which these accusations may be justifiable.

I will consider a number of what I feel to be the most pertinent critiques in conjunction with my own understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of Giddens's account of reflexivity and its relationship with power, in the light of these critiques. By drawing existing criticism of Giddens's work on the relationship between power and identity together, and combining and contrasting it with my own analysis, a more complete assessment of Giddens's understanding of self-identity will be possible.

Rules & Social Structure

Craib's critical comments about Giddens's concept of rules are a useful introduction to considering whether or not his version of social structure is excessively pliable. For Giddens, rules, together with resources, form social structures, or what Giddens prefers to call 'structural properties', because of their 'virtual' nature, as discussed above. However Craib argues that the concept of rules, as Giddens conceives of it, is

not of sufficient substance to do the job given. The concept of rules, Craib suggests, cannot account for the complexities of the relationship between the individual and a social structure. The inadequacy of the term becomes clear once one simple, but particular, question is asked: 'what are the rules which constitute social structure?' (Craib, 1992: 146). There are almost an endless number of rules which could be said to govern any individual life, and the relation between a multitude of lives, but Craib quite rightly points out that 'not all rules are of equal status' (ibid.). If all rules are not of equal status, then some are obviously more important than others. But an attempt at prioritization is not made by Giddens, and, Craib argues, this may well be because such differentiation is not possible with in Giddens's framework, which *equates* rules with social structure. It is here worth probing Craib's discussion further, and in doing so Giddens's concept of a 'rule', to understand why such a differentiation is not possible according to his analysis.

Giddens relies on what Craib refers to as a 'loose' sense of what a rule actually is. Before assessing this claim, I will first paint in a little more detail regarding Giddens's description of rules. Rules for Giddens, serve both a semantic and a normative purpose, which he defines thus: 'rules relate on the one hand to the constitution of *meaning*, and on the other to the *sanctioning* of modes of social conduct' (Giddens, 1984: 18). Giddens warns the reader against thinking of rules as *either* sanctioning *or* regulatory; they are always both. Thus, it is more correct to think of these factors as 'two aspects of rules rather than two variant types of rule' (1984: 20). Giddens illustrates his assertion by considering four instances of rules, two of which are relevant here in defining sanctioning and regulatory rules and their supposed inseparability:

> (1) 'The rule defining checkmate in chess is....'
>
> (4) 'It is a rule that all workers must clock in at 8.00 a.m.'
> (1984: 19).

At first glance, Giddens argues that to many these rules, (1) and (4), seem to fall into two distinct categories, the first constitutive, the second regulative:

> To explain the rule governing checkmate in chess is to say something about what goes into the very making of chess as a game. The rule that workers must clock in at a certain hour on the other hand, does not help define what work is; it specifies how work is to be carried on (Giddens, 1984: 19).

On closer inspection however, Giddens indicates that the distinction is blurred. To begin with, *all* rules are in a sense regulative, 'after all, the word 'regulative' already implies 'rule': its dictionary definition is 'control by rules' ' (1984: 20). Thus rule (1) does contribute to the meaning of what chess is, but at the same time, it also has a regulatory aspect. For anyone playing chess it 'sanctions' what they can and cannot do in that particular game. In a more elaborate sense, Giddens argues that rule (4) is also constitutive, as well as its more obviously regulatory dimension: 'It does not perhaps enter into the definition of what 'work' is, but it does enter into that of a concept like 'industrial bureaucracy' (ibid.). However convincing this example may or may not be , Giddens asserts that it illustrates two elements of all rules; 'their role in the constitution of meaning, and their close connection with sanctions' (ibid.).

It is in this context that Giddens's concept of rule is related to a 'loose' sense of social structure. In this theorisation, issues of differentiation, such as varying degrees of constraint, domination and authority do indeed seem to be welded into an indistinct

whole, when normative and regulative attributes of a social structure are combined as two sides of the same coin. This is particularly apparent in Giddens's definition of rules as 'techniques or generalizable procedures applied in the enactment and reproduction of social practices' (Giddens, 1984: 21). If, as Giddens claims, 'awareness of social rules.... is the very core of that 'knowledgeability' which specifically characterizes human agents' (1984: 21-22), then knowledgeability does indeed seem to be reduced to an exceptionally vague and catch-all process. Giddens portrays a 'loose' concept of rules and then places it at the heart of agency. Craib is unconvinced that 'such a looseness is appropriate when talking about social structures' (Craib, 1992: 147). Structure ends up as a phantasmagoric phenomenon, neutralised, and existing only via agency. In fact, 'it leaves us with nothing to say about social organisation at all' (1992: 148). To restrict social structure to the following of rules, Craib maintains, 'is on a par with saying that human beings are rational, or are the users of symbols' (ibid.).

The problem, for Craib, is that the relationship between individual and structure is far more elaborate than the image of a knowledgeable agent acting out rules. Craib claims that certain rules are more important for understanding social structure than others, and it is this notion of distinction which needs to be emphasised if social structure is to be adequately understood. Such an emphasis amounts to the separation of the study of rules from the study of social structure. They should not, Craib declares, be mistakenly theorised as one and the same - social structure is not an extension of the concept of a rule. Craib's own example illustrates his point concisely:

> ....the laws enshrining rights to private property are clearly more important than the rule which tells me to take my medicine three times a day: yet the only way we can establish that importance is through an implicit or explicit reference to a concept of social structure, which would change more radically if laws relating to private property were abolished than if I forgot to take my medicine (Craib, 1992: 147).

Certain 'rules' are more far reaching, and far more difficult to dispute, change, or not be followed than others. To analyse social structure successfully, the aim, according to Craib, is to show how 'rules are differentiated according to sex, class etc., which we have to assume exists separately from rules' (ibid.). Thus, the fact that rules are differentially experienced cannot be understood in terms of more rules. There is something, as yet unidentified, which exists outside of the rules which make up social structure, and so, the picture of what constitutes social structure is incomplete.

Giddens's Concept of Social Structure as 'Weak'

This problem suggests to Craib that an external structure, as understood in more traditional social theory, needs to be maintained in a stronger sense than Giddens allows. The concept of social structure needs to be filled out, conceived of as having a more concrete existence. Craib proposes that 'we need in order to think about social structures as possessing a real existence, a 'depth existence' in the social world, different from the existence of rules, agents and agency' (1992: 150). Craib is in fact arguing for the reintroduction of a structure/agency dichotomy: 'there is a strong case to be made that the qualities that are conventionally attributed to social structure by sociologists are important and that Giddens offers no alternative' (1992: 155). The division has always been sustained because it served a purpose, and Craib asserts that

such a purpose still remains. If social theorists are to analyse social experience then they must be able to account for differences in experience which are socially patterned, which are, in some sense, structured by the society they are a part of. Such an analysis depends on factors which go beyond the following of rules. What Craib is arguing for, in short, is a stronger, distinct notion of social structure, which can account for the exercise of power and its consequences better than the notion of rules.

In his recent study of Giddens's social theory, Tucker (1998) situates Giddens work alongside the sociology of Bourdieu and Elias. All three of these theorists, Tucker argues, focused upon the dualisms which have historically beset sociology, and were specifically concerned with transcending the increasingly antagonistic 'structuralist and voluntarist camps' which, by the end of the 1970s, had ruptured both Marxist and functionalist sociologies (Tucker, 1998: 67). Tucker argues that Giddens goes further than either Bourdieu or Elias in achieving that aim, but still faces shortcomings which question his ability to put the structure/agency question behind him. Tucker, echoing Craib's comments on social structure, argues that Giddens 'does not develop a strong conception of culture in his theory of structuration' (1998: 89). Some of the consequences of this problem have already been discussed, but Tucker's critique has ramifications for Giddens's analysis of agency and power also. He states that 'Giddens tends to see culture only as an environment of action in relation to which actors [have] a radical reflexivity, rather than a fundamental shaping aspect of our social experience' (ibid.). For Tucker, this tendency is because of a fundamental lack - 'Giddens's theory of the self-reflexive individual who is not determined by his/her *social circumstances*'(ibid.; my emphasis).

This is an important omission for Tucker. In spite of Giddens's attempt at dialectics, he is still being accused here of one-sidedness. This is because Giddens is seen to be constructing reflexivity, and the project of self-identity, as a process which transcends any hard and fast prescriptive qualities of social structure. Social structure is the product of human activities, such as our engagement with social routines, and Tucker takes up the concept of routines to emphasise his point. Tucker argues that routines are of central importance to Giddens's description of social structure. Routines, Giddens argues, are simply the following of rules, which as we saw above, help reproduce society as they become regularised ways of doing things, which we learn to expect to do, and which come to mark everyday life temporally. In this sense routines become the structure behind our everyday life, but they are still the product of knowledgeable human agents. Tucker's problem is that Giddens's notion of reflexively produced social routine is devoid of any structural or cultural attributes. For example, routines are not understood as differentiated in terms of gender or class and the possibility of routines being effectively imposed on individuals or groups is not considered. Furthermore, he argues that missing from Giddens's account is any understanding of cultural *contention*, arguably an essential aspect of any theory attempting to come to terms with structure and agency. In summary, Tucker states that 'Giddens does not discuss these social routines as culturally defined systems of belief which influence behaviour. He has no strong concept of cultural hegemony, or culture as a form of social power' (1998: 89-90). Tucker here echoes and extends Craib's critique. He argues that routines are not solely to be understood as the produce of knowledgeable agents - they shape the nature and extent of agency too. Thus, as with Craib, social structure is understood as an external, pressurising force. Furthermore he introduces the notions of conflict and coercion, by implying that

routines may be contested, as part of a cultural hegemony or imposed, as an aspect of social power.

Tucker is thus arguing that differences in social routines ought to be understood in terms of power relationships. Giddens fails to do so and as a result, the individual at the heart of his analysis seems to float freely in a world somewhere beyond culture and social structure, drawing from it instrumentally: 'he posits a kind of 'Promethean subject' who is not embedded in a strong cultural mileu but is separated from social life and encounters a strange, ever-changing world and an unpredictable future' (Tucker, 1998: 151). Tucker is claiming that Giddens fails to take note of factors which impinge upon an individual's power to act, and an individual's desire to act, in certain ways. By introducing the concepts of hegemony and social power, Tucker asserts that culture and social structure have to be understood as processes which are external to individual agency, and have the potential to shape behaviour, and exert control over individuals and wider social groups. Power is thus given a more central role in the ability, or inability, of agents to act freely. The social world is not just something we reflexively draw upon and create afresh. It structures us as individuals, and is stratified by power relationships which, by definition, are not always possible to overcome. Tucker's critique has a great deal in common with Craib's. Whereas Craib was concerned with a specific element of Giddens's structuration theory - rules - and its failure to account for social structure, Tucker shifts the same critique and applies it more generally to Giddens's theory of post-traditional societies.

If it can be argued that Giddens's work harbours a weak sense of social structure, one would expect to find a failure to differentiate between the experiences of individuals

within any society; a differentiation which other authors argue is a direct result of social structure. The failure to differentiate is most obvious in the prevalence of its opposite - a tendency to *universalise* individual experience of social structure. This tendency is indeed possible to find in Giddens's more recent work. Examples of this tendency will, I think, illustrate the applicability of Craib and Tucker's critiques, and further suggest a persistently general and backgrounded sense of social structure in Giddens's recent social theory, and the limited nature of his 'dialectic of control'.

A Tendency Towards Universalisation

In his more recent writing, Giddens's substantive social theory of modernity steps away from the complex theorisation of power evident in earlier work. The issue of rules and resources is largely abandoned. The dialectic of control is still seen to be an integral element of the modern world, an inescapable consequence of the intrusion of abstract systems and the wider 'dynamism of modernity' (Giddens, 1991: 20) into daily life, but it is shorn of its more difficult elements regarding social structure. The various elements of this dynamism, according to Giddens, are by now familiar: the separation of time and space; disembedding mechanisms; and the reflexive ordering of social relations (ibid.). These are the factors which radically propel the individual towards a reflexive construction of selfhood, and at the same time, usher in post-traditional societies. All these factors remove traditional forms of understanding individuals had in relation to their own sense of self, but they also offer new opportunities for generative forms of power. I will briefly reconsider these elements, with reference to how, and if, in Giddens's account, they incorporate a concept of power in terms of his theory of a 'dialectic of control'.

In traditional settings, time, space and place were all bound together. The *place* one was in, and the *time* of the day, tended to decide the *space* in which things can be done. Transactions, exchanges, and communication in general, for the most part depended on people being in the same place, at the same time. Mechanical time, precise mapping, rapid travel, and other technological and social developments, meant that time, space and place are severed from each other. Time has become standardised across the globe and so it is abstracted or 'emptied'. Awareness of time is no longer dependent on 'social-spatial markers', i.e. 'when' does not rely solely on 'where', such as the passing of recognised events in one's natural surroundings (Giddens, 1990: 16). The space in which we act is also 'emptied' further by the possibility of interacting with others who are not physically present. The removal of the need for face-to-face interaction in this sense, 'tears space away from place' (ibid.).

This emptying out of time and space in post-traditional settings has to be understood dialectically, Giddens argues. Giddens is particularly positive about this element of modernity's dynamism. It is an emptying, and thus in a sense suggests a loss of previous frameworks of meaning. But in being emptied, many new opportunities become available for the reflexive control of time and space. They can now be brought back together in innovative, personally suitable and adaptable ways which would just not have been possible in traditional societies.[2] As Giddens attests, 'it provides the very basis for their recombination in ways that co-ordinate social activities without necessary reference to the particularities of space' (Giddens, 1991: 17). Power, in a generative sense, is thus granted to individuals in general. Such a definition is not being problematised, at this juncture, for its close relationship to

reflexivity. In Giddens's scheme, it may seem plausible to map out the benefits of a generally defined social change - the extension of individual reflexive control. However, Giddens does not ground this generalisation in any kind of sustained analysis of the highly *particularised* impact of reflexive awareness and its connection with generative power. In other words, no attempt is deemed necessary, by Giddens, to make allowances for any differential access to power here. Time and space distanciation is conceptualised as opening up social life in an undifferentiated fashion. It is a change which is seen to be affecting society *as a whole*. The lack of any form of particularisation suggests, following Craib, Tucker and others, an absence of issues of power, inequality and, intimately connected, social structure.

Giddens's second element of the dynamism of modernity is the process of *disembedding*. Disembedding stems in part from time-space distanciation, as this process fundamentally disconnects the individual and their everyday life from the particulars of their physical environment. The separation of time and space is thus a disembedding mechanism par excellence. Disembedding mechanisms extend beyond the consideration of time/space distanciation however. As Giddens succinctly states, 'this phenomenon serves to open up manifold possibilities of change by breaking free from the restraints of local habits and practices' (Giddens, 1990: 20). Other important disembedding mechanisms include the use of money as a symbolic token of exchange, thus standardising and 'emptying' the moment of exchange and the character of production. Money disembeds the individual by separating them from a contextualised sense of production, exchange and consumption, already standardised by time-space distanciation.

The other crucial disembedding mechanism is the *expert system*. The term refers to the embodiment of the accumulated knowledge about a particular subject in the abstract, which is then peopled and referred to by experts and/or lay people. Expert systems range from law, engineering and sports science to counselling and family therapy. Expert systems are disembedding because the validity and relevance of the information they embody, is deemed to be suitable, regardless of who uses that knowledge, or when and where it is used. It does not matter who the doctor, counsellor, or pilot is, as long as they are suitable vehicles for the knowledge contained in the appropriate expert systems; for expert systems are increasingly 'open' institutions of knowledge (Giddens, 1994a: 85). A further disembedding characteristic of expert systems, Giddens argues, is that the generation of knowledge has become distanced from specific contexts. This is the important thing about expert systems and all disembedding mechanisms, the fact that 'they remove social relations from the immediacies of context' (Giddens, 1990: 28).

In terms of power, or lack of power, Giddens again suggests disembedding mechanisms should be understood with reference to the 'dialectic of control'. He acknowledges that control, and an understanding of events which directly effect the individual can be removed and recast in distant, abstract systems, leaving the individual with a sense of powerlessness - 'many of the processes transformed by disembedding....move beyond the purview of the situated actor' (Giddens, 1992: 192). But disembedding also opens up new possibilities for individual and group appropriation. One's life trajectory can potentially be mastered in ways which far surpass traditional societies:

> The disembedding mechanisms intrude into the heart of self-identity; but they do not 'empty out' the self any more than they simply remove prior supports on which self-identity was based. Rather, they allow the self (in principle) to achieve much greater mastery over the social relations and social contexts reflexively incorporated into the forging of self-identity than was previously possible (1992: 148-149).

Giddens argues, as this quote illustrates, that the effects of disembedding mechanisms, as of those of time-space distanciation, have to be understood dialectically in relation to power and self-identity. His dialectic attempts to stretch across issues of both the loss and regaining of power. Overall though, disembedding is implied to be a universal phenomenon exposing every individual to the opportunity for a reflexive re-embedding. The 'greater mastery' that this allows is also theorised only in general terms - we have all lost out in a standardised way from disembedding, and we all face the same standardised mileux, armed with the same faculties, with which to re-embed. Thus the attempts to think of loss and reappropriation in terms of degrees tends to be considered on a one-dimensional axis. At best, Giddens balances the losses incurred by disembedding, with the gains made in opportunities for individual autonomy, in terms of the certainties forfeited in the shift to post-traditional settings. Disembedding is not thought about in any detail by Giddens in terms of whether it benefits one social group more than another, or whether it offers some individuals more opportunities than others, and if it does do so, the *social* origins of these differences.

The final dynamic of modernity, *the reflexive appropriation of knowledge*, is discussed by Giddens in similar terms. Reflexivity is the end result of the two elements just discussed - the separation of time and space and disembedding

mechanisms - and it also contributes to, and is implicated in, their extension in modern life. The reconstitution of personal and social life, once it is disembedded, requires reflexivity if it is to happen at all, both individually and collectively. I have already discussed reflexivity at some length, so little needs to be said here in terms of definition. In summary, knowledge about how to be, how to act, and the foundations of personal and social experience in general, once propelled away from the previous certainties, are opened out to a state of constant revocability, further 'rolling social life away from the fixities of tradition' (Giddens, 1990: 53). The self is implicated at the heart of this state of affairs; Giddens talks of 'the centrality of the reflexive project of the self in late modernity' (1990: 231). Reflexivity can facilitate uncertainty, which can lead in extreme cases to pathological states such as paranoia or 'paralysis of the will' (1990: 196). In this sense, reflexivity could be seen as a loss of power. This is only one part of the equation however. The connection between power and reflexivity is understood by Giddens, as one might expect, with regard to a dialectic of control. In terms of Giddens's attempt at a dialectical balance, reflexivity plays a key role in transforming self-identity by allowing new forms of mastery over the circumstances of one's life, which are at least potentially highly satisfying. It is a world where 'social bonds have effectively to be *made*, rather than inherited from the past - on the personal and more collective levels this is a fraught and difficult enterprise, but one also that holds out the promise of great rewards' (Giddens, 1994a: 107).

Brought together, Giddens's attempt to understand the connections between reflexivity, self-identity and power dialectically offer a clearly contradictory message. Giddens acknowledges a possible lack of power on the one hand, and here he admits

he has something in common with 'nearly all authors who have written on the self in modern society' who argue that the contemporary individual 'experiences feelings of powerlessness in relation to a diverse and large-scale universe' (Giddens, 1991: 110). Undoubtedly, Giddens argues, a sense of loss accompanies the ascendance of post-traditional settings: 'With the expansion of abstract systems....the conditions of daily life become transformed and recombined across much larger space-time tracts; such disembedding processes are processes of loss' (1991: 138). On the other hand, Giddens is wary of understanding this loss in terms of a hierarchical power struggle: 'It would be wrong, however, to see such a loss as power passing from some individuals or groups to others' (ibid.). In fact, it would be a mistake to see the situation as a one-way process at all, and Giddens, faithful to his dialectic, argues that generative power works both ways, creating new opportunities for reappropriation:

> Whatever skills and forms of knowledge laypeople may lose, they remain skilful and knowledgeable in the contexts of action in which their activities take place and which, in some part, those activities continually reconstitute. Everyday skill and knowledgeability thus stands in dialectical connection to the expropriating effects of abstract systems, continually influencing and reshaping the very impact of such systems on day-to-day existence (Giddens, 1991: 138).[3]

Thus, people are capable of reclaiming power over their lives, of adapting themselves to post-traditional situations and stamping their own authority in novel settings. Power is understood to be something other than power *over* others. Giddens prefers to define power, in the post-traditional world more than ever, as a productive and generative capability, closely connected with the extension of reflexivity.

On balance, Giddens seems to suggest that these opportunities outweigh any losses - ‘the capability of adopting freely chosen lifestyles’ is ‘a fundamental benefit generated by a post-traditional social order’ (Giddens, 1992: 231). Other benefits include ‘the development of a public, cosmopolitan life in ways that were not available in more traditional communities’; ‘a diversity of opportunities for individuals to search out others of like interests and form associations with them’; and ‘more chance for the cultivation of a diversity of interests in pursuits in general’ (1992: 174). Later in the same text, Giddens tells the reader of his belief that the expansion of expert systems, just one element of the ‘dynamism of modernity’ which marks post-traditional societies, ‘provides possibilities of reappropriation well beyond those available in traditional cultures’ (1992: 176). Elsewhere, Giddens talks of ‘the potentials for the future that [the post-traditional order] contains’ (Giddens, 1994a: 107). These include ‘a “democracy of the emotions” in personal life’, and ‘the chance of developing authentic forms of human life that owe little to the formulaic truths of tradition’ (ibid.). Loss is seen to be equally spread throughout society, as universal an experience as the opportunity for reappropriation. In terms of power then, Giddens shifts the focus away from issues of domination, coercion and exploitation, which traditionally concerned social theorists, and instead emphasises the generative and transformative aspects of a concept of power. The general picture portrayed by Giddens is that post-traditional society makes possible new capacities for self-expression and self-construction, alongside, but not necessarily antithetical to, an increased interdependence. The overall image is of an autonomous self emerging, whilst a prescriptive culture and social structure retreats. Consequently, Giddens *universalises* individual experience somewhat, and reintroduces an *undifferentiated* version of social structure.

These two tendencies are particularly apparent in Giddens's metaphor of late-modernity as a 'juggernaut':

> a runaway engine of enormous power, which *collectively as human beings,* we can drive to some extent but which also threatens to rush out of our control and which could rend itself asunder.... there are times when it veers away erratically in directions we cannot foresee.... The ride is by no means wholly unpleasant or unrewarding; it can often be exhilarating and charged with hopeful anticipation. But.... we shall never be able to control completely either the path or the pace of the journey (Giddens, 1990: 139; my emphasis).

This choice of analogy - modernity as a runaway juggernaut - is strange for an author who emphasises selfhood as a reflexive project, over which we all have, at least potentially, increasing control.[4] It undoubtedly suggests an image of social processes which are external to the individual. These processes are also portrayed as equally affecting all: 'collectively as human beings', it is 'we' who have limited control, 'we' who cannot foresee the direction of the juggernaut, and 'we' who will never ultimately control the journey, just as the pleasantness, rewards and exhilaration seem to be a universal experience of the ride. Similarly, Giddens later asks the question: 'How can we - where "we" means humanity as a whole - harness the juggernaut, or at least direct it in such a way as to minimise the dangers and maximise the opportunities which modernity offers to us?' (1990: 151). Here he makes explicit his tendency to lump 'humanity' together without acknowledging that different groups have different stakes in what he here refers to as 'modernity', and that the 'juggernaut' is experienced in highly stratified ways.[5] Such a tendency is not restricted to his juggernaut analogy, however, and consistently crops up in recent work:

> It is a world where opportunity and danger are balanced in equal measure (1994: 58).

> We are all, willy-nilly, caught up in a grand experiment....a dangerous adventure, in which each of us has to participate, whether we like it or not (1994: 59).

> We are caught up in everyday experiments whose outcomes, in a generic sense, are as open as those affecting humanity as a whole (ibid.).

Again Giddens's language glosses over degrees of opportunity, control and power in its generalisations. These examples in particular convey a tone of innocence, looking out over the world as if there was no history, and no conditions, which might shape the 'experiment' of modern life. But might not some like the experiment more than others, and some try to conserve and maintain certain aspects of it? Those who benefit the least from the 'grand experiment'/'dangerous adventure' are not all free to change it, and certainly not all to the same degree. In Giddens's own terminology, contemporary social systems are akin to an out of control juggernaut. There are degrees to the 'openness' of 'outcomes', depending on questions of power and resources, but again the term 'we' is used, as if contemporary society is expressed as pretty much the same by everyone. Similarly, the idea that 'we all have to participate', in something as obscure as a 'grand experiment', suggests that we are all beginners, all at the dawn of a new threshold, from which point anything could happen. This sense of contingency and up-in-the-airness of post-traditional societies is further consolidated by the term 'willy-nilly'. Giddens seems to be suggesting that one's place within the grand experiment/dangerous adventure is *randomly* ascribed. The individual is the 'Promethean subject' of Tucker's analogy, who is distanced from social life, and encounters it abstractly and unpredictably (Tucker, 1998: 151).

The image created is of all individuals taking part randomly, but equally, in something wholly experimental and unknown, which all in all, it could be argued, does not tell us that much about the modern condition.

In attempting to balance a social theory which commentates on modern feelings of powerlessness and alienation with an account more sympathetic to an agency-oriented reading of existence, Giddens focuses on issues of 'interdependence' and 'interconnectedness' which are, he argues, a mark of post-traditional societies (1994: 57). This is where the problem of universalism originates, as Giddens, in conceptualising the individual as a knowledgeable agent, side-steps issues which shape an individual's experience. These conditioning factors may be related to degrees of reflexivity, but it is also possible that they operate regardless of reflexive knowledge. Giddens is keen to highlight what he refers to as 'the reverse side of the coin' (ibid.) from modern systems of control. As well as the individual being affected by distant, centralised systems of control, new levels of relatedness means that the modern individual also has a chance to affect those systems:

> The day-to-day activities of an individual today are globally consequential. My decision to purchase a particular item of clothing, for example, or a specific type of foodstuff, has manifold implications....[an] extraordinary, and still accelerating, connectedness between everyday decisions and global outcomes (1994: 57-58).

Giddens here suggest that as all social bonds reach new levels of reciprocity, the individual is implicated in a radically reflexive relationship with social structure. Thus it is not suitable to talk of the social world we inhabit as consisting of everyday life which can somehow be counterpoised with a 'background environment' of social

forces which for the majority are fixed (Giddens, 1991: 175). Foreground and background are merged in a realm where all activity produces and reproduces an extensive network of mutuality.

There are problems with this analysis which mirror Craib and Tucker's concern with Giddens's weak concept of social structure and his silence on the issue of power. It could be argued that the idea of individual action as globally consequential, illustrated explicitly in the above quote, betrays an excessively *uniform* analysis. It marginalises the need to differentiate between individual experiences and to look for patterns in these differences. Using the above quote as a specific example, the first sentence is a case in point. I would suggest that how 'globally consequential' an individual's action might be varies enormously, depending on the particular individual and the action in question, which go beyond issues of reflexivity. There might be certain factors which affect the range of actions available to us, and the scope of their consequences. There may be factors, external to the individual, which constrain and prevent certain individuals from acting in certain ways, while enabling and empowering others. Buying food may well connect an individual with an array of institutions, from farmers to stock market speculators. But the individual who decides what food to buy might have their options limited in a number of ways. They may not have the money to buy certain foods, or the means to get where certain foods are sold, or the necessary knowledge about the range of foods on option. These limits might not be overcome by the extension of reflexive awareness. If this is acknowledged as a possibility, then social structure is again understood as having an 'external reality' in some sense. Structure is not simply a malleable resource which can be reflexively appropriated. Whereas Giddens may acknowledge most of these

qualifications on various occasions in his work, the point is that they are constructed as marginal issues within his analysis, and thus exaggerating the universality and homogeneity of reflexively grounded choice.

Returning to the quote from Giddens, he uses the example of buying clothes or food to show how even mundane individual decisions today have far reaching ramifications. Giddens elaborates on the 'manifold global implications' of modern consumer choice: 'It not only affects the livelihood of someone living on the other side of the world but may contribute to a process of ecological decay which itself has potential consequences for the whole of humanity' (Giddens, 1994a: 58). At first glance, Giddens's reading is appealing. Modern individuals are reflexively aware of some of the consequences of their choices, as a number of recent examples testify: American student unions boycotting Nike sponsorship in universities over the company's employment policy in the third world; the dramatic rise in supermarket sales of organic foods in the light of genetically modified food scares; the popularity of 'fair trade' products which are marketed as offering better deals to indigenous and small-scale producers of imported goods. All these examples suggest that the choices that can be made in terms of consumption can affect the wider social world. The popularity of organic goods could, for example, lead to a significant change in farming policy, in the nature of government subsidies and corporate investment - all as a result of individual consumer decisions. Such a view can be contested, and in a way which suggests the need for a stronger concept of social structure, and of power, than Giddens allows. Undoubtedly we have the ability to choose, and those choices are consequential, but this claim only offers purchase on one aspect of modern experience, and as a result, self-identity in contemporary societies. To reintroduce

the notion of power here, problems are instantly raised with Giddens's account of agency.

Reintroducing Power

Firstly, by taking 'individual decisions' as an undifferentiated whole, and commentating upon them, he is failing to distinguish between important variations which fracture experiences of what it means to be an individual and what decisions an individual makes. Decisions are dependent on factors which can either limit or extend an individual's range of decisions. Using Giddens's example of purchasing food again, I may be highly reflexive about what I want to eat. I may be aware that most mass-produced foods are sprayed with chemicals. But what if I cannot afford organic produce? Where does that leave my reflexive knowledge? And how does it contribute to a new self, apart from anxiety? I may be reflexively aware that being more creative in my spare time may contribute to a more confident sense of self. But that does not mean I will necessarily have the time, money or energy to be more creative more often. This depends on social conditions; working hours and conditions, disposable income, leisure space etc. These things do not necessarily change because individuals are aware of them. It does not necessarily matter how much we think about our selves, or the world, if we do not have the resources to put those thoughts into practices. We may live in a world where 'we have no choice but to choose', but those choices are severely limited by access to resources. We can act to try and gain resources for further action, but not always easy, as conditions can be imposed upon us, whether we are reflexive or not. Access is not automatically granted by being more reflexive. Thus the consequential nature of individual

decisions has to be analysed in terms of some sense of stratification or differentiation, which recognizes the existence of structures without ignoring agency. Furthermore, reflexivity and self-identity have to be understood in this context.

Secondly, and as a consequence, whilst choice can be construed as a reflexive, open-ended option, an important qualification might be acknowledging that there are restrictions placed on what we can choose *from*. Whilst for some, choices are consistently limited, for others the extension of choice is part and parcel of the limiting of choice for the majority. People who have access to vast resources compared to the majority may, by their actions, prevent a complete range of choices being offered to that majority. For example, to ensure that they maintain their market position, gas and oil companies, may prevent the development of alternative sources of energy, by pressurising government funding bodies which depend in part on that companies revenue, to under-fund alternative energy development projects. Thus the choice for the majority is limited, whether they are aware of alternative sources of energy or not. The 'decision' taken by millions of westerners to eat beef burgers everyday, and the freedom to do so, means that big farming companies use land all over the world, for grazing cattle, preventing it from being used for crops. If this land was used to grow crops fundamental to a healthy diet - such as pulses or grains - the world food shortage would be massively reduced. Thus the choices of some - in this case to eat beef burgers - limit the choices of others - by reducing the amount of land available for crops. In light of these two points, Giddens's view of 'interdependence' and 'choice' is too neutral. It cannot account for differences in experience which seem to be related to embedded relationships of power.

These criticisms question the extent to which reflexivity can be seen to be radically transforming the options for self-identity in modern societies. If action is still seriously constrained then the notion of reflexivity as a liberating force needs to be qualified. The examples I have drawn upon here illustrate Giddens's failure to differentiate adequately between the variety of experiences which shape modern experience. If differentiation can be located in the acknowledgement of a social structure which stratifies individual experience along certain lines, then it strengthens the central claim of this chapter so far - that Giddens harbours an excessively weak concept of social structure. Some authors make such a connection, maintaining that identity still has to be understood, at least partially, as a response to dominant modes of social power, embedded in practices which constitute a social structure.

Many of Giddens's critics develop some of the criticisms I have outlined above, particularly questioning what they perceive to be an excessive voluntarism in his work. In querying Giddens's concept of social structure, they offer at least the hint of an alternative construction of social structure, and as a result, a different picture of contemporary self-identity emerges. Mestrovic, in a characteristically polemic attack, berates Giddens for what he perceives to be his unending optimism in formulating the nature of the reflexive self, which seems to transcend any firm sense of social structure. Mestrovic offers a very different picture of modern experience:

> slavery, torture, unlawful imprisonment, execution, incurable disease, genocidal wars, and other sites of suffering still thrive in the current *fin de siecle*. Nietzsche may still have a point that optimism is a nihilistic response to such suffering, and

> Schopenhauer seems compelling to claim that pessimism is a moral and compassionate response (Mestrovic, 1999: 90).

Mestrovic is here talking in general terms, but the crude distinction between optimism and pessimism serves as a useful introduction to this discussion. In championing agency, reflexivity, and by generally viewing post-traditional societies as realms of opportunity, Giddens is accused, in a sense, of failing to balance optimism and pessimism dialectically. Mestrovic's problem with this is that it fails to account for the very real inequalities that still persist. In his own words, 'a "nice" rhetoric concerning agency and democracy in the West cannot efface the real cruelties of the world, some of which could surely be ameliorated by the West if it could only confront them' (1999: 213). Slavery, imprisonment, and execution are all examples of the assertion of power by one individual or group over others. Mestrovic's diagnosis is polemic, and his examples are undoubtedly extreme. In illustrating such a polemical critique however, serious problems with Giddens's account of post-traditionalism are again raised. For the extremes which Mestrovic points out cannot be completely denied. Their persistence offers a counterpoint to Giddens's optimistic tone with regards to self-identity and humanity's fate in general, and hint at the persistence of power being utilised to limit people's options for self-expression and self-identity across the globe. The important point here is the claim that Giddens's theory of post-traditional society may need to be balanced by a degree of pessimism; in other words acknowledging the unequal terms of the modern world and the range of experiences that inequality generates.

O'Brien offers a less vitriolic critique of Giddens which nonetheless offers a similar vision for formulating an alternative notion of identity and social structure. O'Brien

focuses specifically on the persistence of inequality in contemporary societies. O'Brien acknowledges that Giddens, particularly in his recent explicitly political work, may try and address questions of poverty and exclusion. However, his work 'does not *account* for poverty and exclusion' (O'Brien, 1999: 36). This lack stems from Giddens's failure to adequately distinguish between the various 'positive and negative consequences' of modern social experience (1999: 37). Craib also suggests that, in marginalising the role of power by making it a general and transformative property of human action, Giddens is left with nothing to say about inequality. If inequality is under theorised, then there is no real motivation to overcome inequality within that theory:

> His theory recognises, rightly I think, that power is inherent in human relationships, but there is no reason within his ontology, to suggest that we might desire to minimise power relationships or work towards a different degree of equality (Craib, 1991: 187).

Echoing Craib and Tucker, O'Brien argues that a sufficient social theory must account for the pressures that people experience to act - or not act - in certain ways, of the 'economic, political and social institutions' which shape even the most intimate of experiences' (O'Brien, 1999: 36). He asserts the need for an understanding of social power at the heart of any social theory: 'A critical sociology of contemporary society must situate power at the heart of any theorisation of social change and social experience' (ibid.). Sociology is neutered 'without a theory of how power differentiates or dominates social groups, or subverts social processes' (ibid.). Craib, with a degree of exasperation, criticises Giddens's tendency to consistently pass over relevant issues: 'taking bits from other people and criticising or ignoring the parts that

he does not want' (Craib, 1991: 117), and then relates this tendency to an understanding of power: 'might we not learn something from taking 'power' as a starting point, the *essential* feature of human life upon which structure and action depend?' (118). O'Brien is also critical of Giddens's conception of power as a largely generative capability, and is at pains to distance it from hie own definition of power: 'Power here is not merely transformative capacity. It is, rather, the exercise of domination over certain kinds of relationships, norms, interactions and practices' (O'Brien, 1999: 37-38). Mestrovic declares that Giddens's work ignores inequality, and though O'Brien does not make it clear how power does operate, he focuses more closely on what Giddens leaves out - a restricted definition of the role of power in the nature of contemporary societies and identities.[6]

Once power is given a central role, it has numerous consequences for the way modern identity is understood. Various authors have argued that power is still vital in making sense of the contemporary self. Stjepan Mestrovic, for example, consistently asserts that reflexivity has not freed the individual from external constraints, and goes on to index a number of examples in support of this claim. Mestrovic seeks to problematise what he sees as the 'key claims' of Giddens's structuration theory, claims which have been discussed at length in this chapter: 'that human agents are skilled and knowledgeable, that they are not the cultural dupes they are made out to be ...., and that social structure is not only constraining but also enabling' (Mestrovic, 1999: 23). Mestrovic touches on a number of dangers associated with these claims, but prioritises one issue in particular: 'upon closer scrutiny, these claims turn out to be problematic: they overlook....above all, the strict limits of where and how agents may behave like agents in a world that is becoming increasingly monitored,

controlled and controlling' (ibid.). Mestrovic is here pointing to constraints which might be placed upon reflexive agency by external control - by the exertion of power. His sense of how individuals are controlled is a little vague here, but as he develops his argument, he offers some illustrative examples:

> The fate of a child born in the USA in the 1990s is that he or she will inevitably become a consumer, whereas the fate of a child born to "untouchable" parents in India in the 1990s is that he or she most likely will not rise above that caste despite anti-caste laws passed in New Delhi (1999: 158).

Thus, the future trajectories of the two children in this example, and their options for developing a self-identity can not adequately be understood as an undifferentiated series of 'multiple choices' (Giddens: 1991: 4); at least not on the same scale. The array of choices open to each child are completely different, and few would argue that they are at all equal. The notion of fate persisting in terms of social conditioning is an acknowledgement of the existence of a reasonably concrete and external social structure, which exerts 'tremendous constraint on the knowledgeable and skilled agent to conform' (1991: 150), to a particular set of social and cultural practices.[7] It is this structure which *decides* one's fate. Reflexive agency can, at least in some situations, only go so far in overcoming the conditions of this structure, Mestrovic argues, as the comparison of a child born in India and a child born in the USA indicates.

Differentiating Reflexivity

Scott Lash is also highly critical of Giddens's view of post-traditional society, and he expresses his suspicion of social theory envisioning a situation 'where agency is set free from structure' (Lash: 1994a: 119). Lash discusses the new 'McDonald's proletariat', the unemployed and other 'downgraded' employment sectors, and questions the extent to which an empowering reflexivity is being engendered across the social spectrum (ibid.). He asks if reflexivity might be found in some places and not in others, and offers an example which in part echoes Mestrovic's comparison of two children's' fate:

> just how 'reflexive' is it possible for a single mother in an urban ghetto to be? .... just how much freedom from the 'necessity' of 'structure' and structural poverty does this ghetto mother have to construct her own 'life narratives'? (1994a: 120)

Lash argues that there are 'reflexivity winners', which are well documented by Giddens, but there are also 'whole battalions of reflexivity losers' (ibid.), which in number approximate a third of the population in modern societies, and 'are very much in the position of what it makes sense to call an underclass' (1994a: 130). Lash thus acknowledges the need to differentiate in post-traditional societies, an issue Giddens is criticised for overlooking, as he has been in this chapter. Compare the above quote from Lash, with this from Giddens about the extension of choice:

> in a more saturated information environment, in which everybody to some extent is in contact with the findings of science and technology in relation to health,.... things are different. Whether on a conscious level or not, we are deciding

> across a multiplicity of alternatives. Every time we eat or drink, we make these kinds of decision. Contrary to what might be assumed, this situation cuts across all classes (Giddens & Pierson, 1998c: 103).

Giddens makes no qualifications, in what appears to be an attempt to unify all of society together in their experience of a 'saturated information environment'.[8] In Lash's account, differences are central to an analysis of identity, and have to be understood in terms of systematic inequalities. To adequately account for these inequalities, Lash argues, social theory needs to address the 'structural conditions of reflexivity' (1994a: 130). Lash comments reflect and consolidate the critics already cited who all argue that Giddens's social theory lacks a fitting concept of social structure and the exercising of social power. He is beginning to add flesh to the bones of the *nature* of structural conditions by talking about a reflexive underclass, defined by their relationship to, or exclusion from, new techniques of production.

Ian Craib is also concerned with the implication that reflexivity somehow transcends issues of constraint and control. His interest parallels Mestrovic's, but takes it one step further. Both Lash and Mestrovic seem ambivalent about whether reflexivity is itself compromised, and the implication in their work seems to be that in certain situations, reflexivity is a structurally excluded possibility. Any questions of degrees of freedom and constraint are tied to degrees of reflexivity. In a sense this line of reasoning validates Giddens's analysis at its core, as more reflexivity does, at least potentially, equal more freedom, even if some are excluded from this freedom. Whether this is the intended argument of Mestrovic and Lash is not always clear, but either way Craib explicitly states that the power to act is not necessarily bound up with the ability to be reflexive. He argues that situations exist in which reflexive

awareness simply may not be enough to transform one's situation and engender new levels of agency. Craib believes that there are always situations in which an individual may be highly reflexive, but still their agency is restricted in important ways.

> in our individual and social worlds, we can look around us, identify what is going on and institute changes - some of the time. Some of the time we can look around us, identify what is going on and find ourselves incapable of instituting changes.... Sometimes our capacity for reflective thought can leave us recognising but unable to do anything about our lack of freedom (Craib, 1991: 150).

Thus agency may be limited *regardless* of levels of reflexive awareness. The example of the lower-caste Indian child and the affluent American also illustrate this point. If the young Indian is reflexively aware of his or her situation, and desires to eradicate all the disadvantages of their inherited caste position, such as opportunities for education, employment and life expectancy, they may not be able to act accordingly. Despite reflexive awareness of all the possibilities potentially available for self-development, it does not necessarily alter the fact that they are much more easily accessible to some, rather than others. As a result of this possibility, of reflexivity on occasion offering alternative routes to the predicament one finds oneself in, but on other occasions not, Craib argues for the need to accommodate '*degrees* of freedom and constraint' (1991: 151; my emphasis) into accounts of structure and agency. 'At any one time', Craib argues, 'certain structural properties are more amenable to change than others' (ibid.).[9] Craib claims that social structures may be fluid and revisable, but nonetheless, certain conditions of existence remain beyond control at any one time. His example is an illustrative one: 'it is easier to

change the assessment rules for my students' essays than it is to replace the English language with Esperanto' (ibid.).

The problem with Giddens's analysis is that it offers no sense of a scale upon which these two extremes might be registered. For Giddens, variations on a theme are largely ignored. Thus everyday life can be summed up as 'an active complex of reactions to abstract systems, involving appropriation as well as loss' (Giddens, 1990: 150). Similarly, on the problem of holding values in post-traditional societies: 'we live in a world where we have to decide what values to hold, as individuals, and in a democracy collectively - essentially through reflexive discourse' (Giddens and Pierson, 1998c: 219). What is lacking in these examples, and throughout Giddens's work, is a consistent attempt to differentiate with any specificity between individual experiences of agency in relation to 'democracy' and 'abstract systems' and the possible structural nature of these differences. For Craib, decisions have not, in an inclusive sense, been freed from the conditioning of external constraints. The extent of agency is situational, and the common ways in which limits are set on an agent's choices indicate social structure:

> Do I have an opportunity to vote for my government? Do I have a wide or narrow range of jobs from which to choose? If I want to work, do I have to work in a job where wages keep me on or below the poverty line? These choices are not always my responsibility. They result from something we can call 'social structure', and the experience we have of these structures is often similar to that we have of the physical world.... (Craib, 1991: 154).

Craib is here taking some of the responsibility for one's life trajectory - for the conditions which might be said to shape one's life chances, and thus the 'reflexive

project of the self' - firmly out of the hands of some individuals. The differences between the things we are, or are not, free to choose to do, and who is free to do them, lies at the heart of an understanding of social structure. To overlook these differences is thus to overlook the continuing existence of social structure. Craib asserts that a sense of social structure has been theorised out of Giddens's social theory in his attempt to counter what he sees as the only alternative - 'a thoroughgoing social determinism' (1991: 150). Craib believes he is redressing the balance by arguing for the persistence of social structure, its resilience to change understood in terms of degrees.

Although the emphasis upon reflexivity differs, here Craib's analysis correlates closely with Mestrovic's critique, and more particularly Lash's. Lash talks of reflexivity 'winners' and 'losers', and Craib argues for the incorporation of degrees into an understanding of reflexivity in relation to the ability to act. Both authors tie different levels and experiences of reflexivity to the persistence of a social structure which reproduces power relationships, and Craib adds that it is as important to document aspects of social experience which are relatively impenetrable to an agent's demands, *regardless of the level of reflexivity*, as it is to talk of different levels of reflexivity, in relation to the perceived openness of the social world. What Lash adds to Craib's critique is that whilst Craib acknowledges that reflexivity is a relative capability and certain conditions, at certain times, resist reflexive penetration, Lash argues explicitly that the extent to which one is reflexively aware, or at least the extent to which reflexive awareness will engender agency, is structurally ordered. That is, it is partially decided by one's position in relationship a social system. This diagnosis stands in stark contrast to Giddens's, in which structural conditions have

largely, and universally, made way for new levels of reflexive agency, however ambivalent this new capability may be. While Giddens may acknowledge both sides in his dialectical approach, these authors argue that issues of constraint are not as central as they could be, which is why reflexivity is given such a prominent and transformative role in Giddens's theory of post-traditional societies and identity formation.

Hay et al.'s (1997 [1993]) discussion of Giddens's later work offers a similar critique, pointing specifically to an absence of power in Giddens's theory of self-identity. Their discussion further clarifies this criticism and is worth incorporating into the review of power and reflexivity engaged with here. This reading of identity reveals problems with Giddens's analysis of self-identity, Hay et al. argue, particularly in more recent work such as *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) and *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992). Giddens's recent social theory, to reiterate his position, places the active, knowledgeable and reflexive agent at the heart of the formation of self-identity. The 'reflexive project of the self', is a project whereby identity is constructed through 'the reflexive ordering of self-narratives' and 'organised in terms of the individual's projected lifespan' (Giddens, 1991: 243-244). Giddens's modern individual is confronted with 'open experience thresholds' (1991: 148) in which strong prescriptive connections to a pre-existing social structure are dissolved. The newly 'disembedded' individual actively draws from a common source of 'expert systems' in ordering their own self narrative. Contemporary construction of self-identity is thus viewed as something in which the individual is centrally implicated as a knowledgeable actor. Giddens contrasts this state of affairs with pre-modern societies, in which identity is fixed by seemingly immutable background

‘environments’, such as kinship, locale, religious cosmologies and tradition (Giddens, 1990: 102).

Social Structure & Identity

Hay et al. focus more closely on the ways in which power and social structure *do* still shape identity. A consideration of their analysis will contribute to the discussion in hand. It will develop our grasp of *how* experience might be differentially affected by social structure. Hay et al. open their discussion with an explicit statement of their cause for concern regarding Giddens’s recent writing, which parallels the concerns of this chapter: ‘we state the need for.... a more sophisticated definition of power and an acknowledgement of the fundamental inequalities which structure and reproduce differential modern identities’ (Hay et al., 1997 [1993]: 86). Hay focuses precisely on the issue of identity here, the central issue of this thesis. The structuring of experience via power relationships is understood as having direct consequences for the formation of self-identity. Giddens’s three elements of the ‘dynamism of modernity’ were reasoned to be excessively generalised earlier in this discussion, and Hay et al. apply a similar critical appraisal to Giddens’s notion of the ‘pure relationship’. I will briefly summarise Giddens’s concept of the ‘pure relationship’ before considering Hay et al.’s critique and its contribution to the discussion in hand.

Giddens identifies the pure relationship in *Modernity and Self-Identity,* but it is a more central matter in *The Transformation of Intimacy.* In the latter, as the title suggests, Giddens documents the radical changes which have beset common notions of intimacy throughout history. These changes culminate for Giddens in the post-

traditional era, and are epitomised in the existence of 'pure relationships'. In more traditional societies, marriage for example, was shaped by economic, political or social necessities. These factors may have been more important than the involved individual's ideas about mutual attraction, and Giddens suggests that marriage was likely to have been viewed, more literally, as a contract (Giddens, 1991: 89-90). The pure relationship is for Giddens the 'ideal type' of modern relationships. It is an intimate same-sex or heterosexual relationship, and its properties are a response to, and also play a key role in, post-traditional societies. Central to Giddens's social theory is the assertion that post-traditional societies have severed the ties between identity and a prescriptive set of traditions and other social practices. As a result, intimate relationships too are no longer defined in terms of any definite, external criteria, and this has radically altered their make-up, leading to what Giddens calls the 'pure relationship'. The pure relationship stretches across a range of ties between individuals: 'Reasonably durable sexual ties, marriages and friendship relations all tend to approximate today to the *pure relationship*' (1991: 87). Giddens defines the pure relationship, rather formally, as 'a social relation which is internally referential, that is, depends fundamentally on satisfactions or rewards generic to that relation itself' (1991: 244). There are certain characteristics which supposedly mark out the pure relationship from previous ties, and they will be briefly summarised in order to clarify Giddens's positioning of the concept within his general theory.

First and foremost, the pure relationship is defined by an absence of external conditions, as mentioned above: 'the tendency is towards the eradication of these pre-existing external involvements' (1991: 89). Close personal ties no longer depend on any 'anchoring features' and, as a result, can now be thought of as 'free-floating'

(ibid.). Secondly, relationships increasingly exist only for the sake of, and for the duration of, levels of emotional and psychological reward which are deemed acceptable by both parties. In other words people only get involved in relationships, for the reciprocal sense of closeness and intimacy they generate, and, generally, a relationship is threatened if those feelings falter (1991: 90). Thirdly, the pure relationship is always open to revision. Stripped of any external anchors, it is exposed to constant inquiry and examination. Reflexive questioning lies at the heart of the pure relationship and is closely connected to the reflexive project of the self (1991: 91). The reflexivity of intimacy constitutes, and is constituted by, a broader mediation of definitions of close relations. Giddens cites magazines, newspapers, specialist texts and manuals, and radio and television, as all contributing to an open-ended discourse on intimacy, and 'continuously reconstructing the phenomenon they describe' (1991: 92). There are a number of other elements which are also common to pure relationships, according to Giddens. They require a certain level of commitment, which Giddens acknowledges is difficult to sustain, as it stands in 'uneasy connection with the reflexivity that is equally central to how the relationship is ordered' (1991: 93). Although seemingly contradictory, Giddens believes that commitment is still possible within a pure relationship, and necessary. In the context of a pure relationship, commitment is a reflexive decision, and is thus reliant on the knowledgeable rejection of alternatives - 'the sacrificing of other potential options' (ibid.) - involved in pursuing a particular path, and a reflexive awareness of the risks involved. Mutual trust is also characterises the pure relationship. Again this might be difficult to achieve in the light of chronic reflexivity. It can stem from consistency of behaviour and authentic communication - 'the opening out of the individual to the other' (1991: 96). The pure relationship is also 'focused on intimacy' (1991: 94) and

privacy, and allow for the construction of shared 'histories' or narratives which contribute to a meaningful self-identity.

In a modern world cut adrift from the existential navigational points of traditional settings, the pure relationship potentially offers a psychologically stable foundation for the reflexive construction or maintenance of self-identity. The pure relationship offers the chance to develop and vindicate feelings of trust and security in one's environment as well as the emotional rewards of intimacy. Thus self-identity and the pure relationship are intimately connected: 'The pure relationship is a key environment for building the reflexive project of the self since it both allows for and demands organised and continuous self-understanding - the means of securing a durable tie' (Giddens, 1991: 186). The pure relationship 'can provide a facilitative environment for the reflexive project of the self' (1992: 139); it encourages reflexivity and is dependent upon it. As with reflexivity, Giddens warns that there are possible problems with the pure relationship. With so much invested in them, yet bereft of any external grounding factors, the pure relationship can be a fragile endeavour, creating doubt, anger and depression. In these cases, 'intimacy may be psychically more troubling than it is rewarding' (1991: 187). Overall though, Giddens is positive about the potential of the pure relationship, in terms of intimacy and the wider social world: 'the changes that have helped transform personal environments of action are already well advanced, and they tend towards the realisation of democratic qualities' (1992: 189).

Hay et al.'s problem with Giddens's concept of the pure relationship is specific. They are critical of Giddens's vision of post-traditional relationships as 'free-floating'.

They argue, in line with their overall critique, that Giddens fails to understand pure relationships, even as an ideal type, in structural terms. In conceiving of the pure relationship as 'not anchored in external conditions of economic or social life' (Giddens, 1991: 89), Giddens displays a 'lack of situational referentiality' (Hay et al., 1997 [1993]: 100). For Hay et al., a critique of the 'pure relationship' is an excellent means of suggesting how identity is dependent upon structural conditions, and how Giddens's avoidance of the issue distorts his work. They argue that none of the core elements of the pure relationship, as established by Giddens, focus on *gender.* In Giddens's construction, gender is not implied to be a defining issue in a pure relationship. In both heterosexual and homosexual relations, relationships are not seen to be '*intrinsically* gendered' in Giddens's account, which Hay et al. describe as 'confusing' and containing 'clear disadvantages' (ibid.). Indeed the pure relationship, as defined above, makes no accommodation for *gendered* individuals, it understands intimate relationships simply in terms of 'individuals', implicitly side-stepping issues of gender.[10] On occasions Giddens is more explicit:

> what we have is a strong tendency towards relationships based upon emotional communication rather than institutionally given gender roles - in relations between men and women, between same-sex partners, and also between parents and children (Giddens & Pierson, 1998c: 124).

Here Giddens clearly asserts what for Hay et al. is a problematic position. Traditional gender roles, Giddens believes, are increasingly transcended, as new identities are freely constructed in democratic exchanges between intimates. Hay et al. argue that, contrary to Giddens's assertions, it is still essential for contemporary relationships to be understood in terms of gender experiences:

> marriage and other heterosexual relations involve men and women, identities which are fully social and which still stand in a hierarchical relationship to each other. This is why equality is still a matter of ongoing struggle: gender relations are immediately and intimately structured by power relationships (ibid.).

Men and women still construct their identities in a social world which underpins those identities in this account. Power is a central element in defining the nature of these identities and their relationship to each other. To understand intimate relationships as gendered, Hay et al. argue, is to understand them in terms of some kind of external social structure, ordered by power relations. They then go on to list numerous pieces of research, which suggest the various ways in which 'power affects and permeates all aspects of heterosexual relationships' (ibid.).[11] Hay et al.'s specific contribution to this discussion is in their recognition of Giddens failure to differentiate, particularly when commentating upon the impact of supposed transformation of intimacy and its consequences. Here their critique connects with both Craib's and Lash's critique. For Craib, degrees of freedom and constraint are important considerations, whilst for Lash the indication of reflexivity 'winners' and 'losers' was paramount. Hay et al.'s argument makes these claims more concrete, because gender is here understood as an important way in which reflexive choice is differentiated, and in which there tends to be a social group, though internally stratified according to other factors, of 'winners' - men, and 'losers' - women. Choice about how relationships are ordered are not equally open to all, Hay et al. argue. By extension the same might also be said about how they are understood as a shared narrative, and their future trajectory. They are structured, and in part depend

upon, the factors which Giddens suggests modern relationships increasingly transcend - social and economic factors.

As an example, Hay et al. suggest how the 'expert systems' individuals draw upon to 'reflexively organise' the contours of relationships are also highly gendered, a factor which Giddens overlooks. They point to magazines such as Cosmopolitan, with high female readerships, which construct 'advice' in ways which could be seen as maintaining differential understandings of relationships. They cite an example from a women's magazine which advises women on how to improve their sex lives, worth reproducing here:

> This woman knows how to turn any setting, even the kitchen counter, into the backdrop for sensational sex and has the surfaces cleared, cleaned and ready for any spontaneous action (ibid.).

Hay et al. argue that Giddens's examples of therapeutic and self-help texts are no more representative than Cosmopolitan and others of the same genre. This variety signifies how expert systems are a stratified resource in the ordering of relationships, not simply a palate from which the individual chooses, as Giddens implies. Expert systems play an important part in 'absenting' and 'presenting' discourses about relationships. Power is thus implicated in the mediation of experience in ways that Giddens does not allow for. Hay et al. assert that the choices open to a given individual, and as a consequence their experience, and their self-identity, depends, in part, on one's place within a given social structure. Put simply, the opportunities and resources available to negotiate relations vary according to gender. Other aspects of the social world, which impact upon intimacy, are stratified in terms of gender. Child-

care, the labour market, the legal system and the sanctioning of violence all shape relations; namely they tend to make it more difficult for women to leave and initiate relationships. Thus the dynamics of the modern world are 'a priori, gendered' - they are systemic (1997 [1993]: 101-102).

Hay et al.'s arguments suggest that the transformation of intimacy does not affect all in the same way, and thus cannot be viewed as a simple shift towards freedom and democracy. In reviewing *The Transformation of Intimacy,* Zygmunt Bauman reaffirms this suggestion eloquently, arguing that 'more could be said' about the freedoms Giddens indicates as bound up with the pure relationship:

> As with all freedom, this one deepens the dependence of those acted upon and mortgages the future of the actors. As with all freedom, X's choice is Y's fate. In this game as in others, the most consequential decisions are made by those with the biggest hand, not by those with the biggest stakes. Like the commodity market, so the relationship market does next to nothing to shelter the victims from the outcome of their weakness. To those victims, the de-regulation welcomed by the market players as liberation may bear an uncanny resemblance to oppression.... This seems to be the other, perhaps sociologically crucial, aspect of the new intimacy (Bauman, 1993: 368).

The choices one person makes in an intimate relationship can have an enormous bearing on the options of the other. A decision to leave a relationship is an extreme example. Bauman indicates that relationships are structured in terms of power, rather than being disposed towards an equilibrium of choice and freedom. He points to the need to differentiate between experiences of social changes in the way intimacy is understood. One is reminded once more of Lash's terminology, picturing reflexivity

‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Again the main problem with Giddens’s analysis here, as illustrated by Bauman, is his attempt to universalise contemporary experiences of the social world, and superficially stand outside of stratifying realities, as Hay et al. confirm succinctly here:

> Here, as elsewhere, Giddens’s analysis leaves no room for the differential impacts of modernizing processes on actual social groups, instead seeming to propose that modernity washes over experience like a great tide, affecting everyone in essentially the same way (1993: 101).

In constructing the pure relationship as an attribute of post-traditional society, Giddens is again susceptible to conveying that society as a homogenous, universally and uniformly experienced phenomenon. Hay et al. argue that gender is one example of how power still configures the nature and extent of choices in many heterosexual relationships. They suggest that this persistence displays how post-traditional societies can still effectively limit the resources available, to some, for self-identity. Modern experience does not constitute a social and psychological free-for-all where everyone is free to construct an identity, in the context of a pure relationship with a similarly liberated other.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore critiques aimed at Giddens’s concept of reflexivity, as a defining element of self-identity, in relation to the issue of power. It has been suggested, drawing from a number of critics, that Giddens consistently fails to conceive of a social structure which can adequately reflect the reality of everyday

experience, and the structuring of self-identity. Giddens, it has been argued, projects an excessively weak and homogenous vision of social structure in which the self operates. What is needed to construct an authentic picture of contemporary self-identity is a stronger concept of social structure. This leads to an understanding of a more complex relationship between reflexivity and self-identity. Reflexivity is not seen by Giddens's critics to unproblematically open up the social world as a resource for self-identity. While Giddens's own analysis indicates problems that arise in post-traditional settings, they do not account for the stratification of experience which some critics have argued are still important in the formation and maintenance of self-identity. Craib argues for the need to account for 'degrees' of reflexivity. Social theory needs to acknowledge that some elements of experience are more 'open' to modification than others. Lash suggests the need for a distinction between reflexivity 'winners' and 'losers', implying that post-traditional society is more open to radical change to some more than others. Both authors see these qualifications as stemming from the acknowledgement of a social structure which restricts the opportunities of some social groups and individuals, while broadening others. The social world has not become a transparent and accessible resource for individual empowerment. In chapter six I will consider accounts of self-identity which incorporate a stronger concept of social structure and compare them to Giddens's work.

In attempting to universalise the individual's relationship with a post-traditional order, it has been suggested that Giddens's work 'decomposes into a version of voluntarism which stresses personal decisions, subjective motivations and private actions' (Hay et al., 1997 [1994]: 103). He systematically overlooks the social rootedness of individual choices and outcomes. As a consequence, Giddens obscures

the context in which self-identity is constructed and maintained. It has thus been suggested that Giddens work has an ideological function, by encouraging and so perpetuating, an individuated, liberalist reading of the contemporary and the world in which it operates. It is this possible consequence of Giddens's social theory, specifically his omission of a concept of social structure embedded in power relations, which will be examined in chapter five.

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[1] Such a contrast has of course been made before, particularly in the field of linguistics. In *Course de Linguistique Generale* (1916), Ferdinand de Saussure made the distinction between *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* refers to the system of language, the rules and regulations which make up its structure. *Parole* denotes the usage of language in a particular context - an individual utterance. It is the existence of *langue* which makes possible the infinitely various manifestations of parole. Thus Saussure, a chief founder of structuralism, was concerned with the study of the structures of *langue* in order to more fully understand the production of meaning. Chomsky made a similar distinction between competence and performance; 'competence' referring to our seemingly innate and unconscious stores of linguistic knowledge, and 'performance' denoting individual utterances. Language 'performance' relies implicitly on the established 'competence' of those involved (Chomsky, 1971).

[2] Interestingly, Giddens is no longer couching a relative lack of resources, and so power, in terms of 'superiors' and 'subordinates', as he did in earlier work, quoted above. The language he uses is instead far more general, as if talking about humanity as a whole. This reduces any sense of conflict over resources necessary to utilise power.

[3] Terms such as 'skill' and 'knowledgeability' may suggest the ability to cope with radical social change, as much as the ability to take control. However, this does not seem to be the case here, as Giddens places this skill in a direct and dialectical contrast with the 'expropriation' of abstract systems. This suggests that laypeople's 'skill' amounts to reappropriation, as in the 'reconstitution of 'contexts of action'. 'Skill' and 'knowledgeability', to some extent then, are equated with generative power (Giddens, 1991: 138).

[4]Interestingly Marx uses the analogy of a juggernaut briefly in *Capital.* He is here explaining why the processes involved in raising capitalism's productivity are condemnable from the point of view of the proletariat:

> they deform the conditions under which he works, subjects him during the labour process to a despotism more hateful for its meanness; they transform his lifetime into working time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the juggernaut of capital (in Wheen, 1999: 301).

There is little room for exhilaration on Marx's juggernaut ride. The image of being crushed beneath the wheels serves to show, even in this brief quote, how a similar analogy can indicate the chasm that can exist between different experiences of social structure.

[5] In Giddens's five Reith Lectures in 1999, the overall title for the series was 'Runaway World', later published as a book with the same title. Thus at least part of the analogy still persists.

[6] O'Brien attempts to illustrate how power shapes identity more specifically in an earlier work (1994), discussed below.

[7] Interestingly, Mestrovic reconnects the discussion of power and constraint with the concept of fate, which was discussed earlier in different terms. Here, rather than arguing for the persistence of fate as a concept used by individuals and social groups to make sense of the world though, which was discussed in this thesis earlier, Mestrovic seems to be implying that fate persists as a *real phenomenon* in the modern world. Indeed he is suspicious of claims that humans can control the future, and suggests that birthrights are still important in an individual's destiny (1998: 158-159).

[8] Recent statistics on life expectancy suggest that, however well informed the populace, there is still a massive and widening gap between rich and poor countries in terms of how long an individual can expect to live. In the thirty richest countries, life expectancy at birth is more than 75 years. In sub-Saharan Africa it is 48.9 years, 39.1 years in Malawi, and 37.9 years in Sierra Leone (Human Development Resource Office findings, cited in the *Guardian*, 29/6/00). A variety of factors are responsible for these figures, but they certainly counter any notion that everyone stands before the knowledge created by science and technology on an equal footing, and that health is characterised by its opening out to reflexive choice.

[9] Craib originates this type of criticism with the work of Archer (1982).

[10] Hay et al. cite numerous specific examples on pages 99-104 (1997 [1993]).

[11] See Hay et al., (1997 [1993]: 110), for a comprehensive list of research which supports the notion that relationships are often still defined in terms of gendered power relationships.

Chapter 5 Reflexivity, Power & Ideology

Further criticisms have arisen as a consequence of Giddens's alleged weak concept of social structure. His work is seen by some critics to be complicit in a problematic ideology of selfhood. Giddens's version of the reflexive self is potentially dangerous in the message it carries to discourses about the nature of modern self-identity, Hay et al. have suggested (1997 [1994]). Once the persistence of social stratification, inequality and power is acknowledged, Hay et al. argue, Giddens's conceptualisation of reflexivity can be understood as *implicated* in these factors. The prioritisation of reflexive capabilities is decreed by some authors, including Hay et al., to be a partial, or distorted, view of the nature of identity which obscures the continuation of the domination and subordination of individual choice. It contributes to a particular ideology concerning individuality: 'the insertion of liberal westernized concepts of selfhood into different cultures is as much a matter of power as it is of the transformation of intimacy at either a public or a private level' (ibid.). Thus the existence and nature of reflexivity and the reflexive project of the self is rendered as a political issue, understood as an ideological construction, which is highly contestable. It is this understanding of reflexivity which will now be considered in more detail.

Reflexivity as Ideology

There are certain parallels between Hay et al.'s suspicion of reflexivity and Mestrovic's critique. Alongside his documenting of constraints on agency which still

persist, despite Giddens's claims to the contrary, Mestrovic also offers an account of the supposed *ideological* function of Giddens's concept of reflexivity and self-identity. In attempting to understand reflexivity as part of a dominant ideological discourse, Mestrovic endeavours to reintroduce concepts of power and social structure to the notion of reflexivity. The notion of reflexivity as ideological suggests a social world still defined by power relationships and an imposing social structure. In Mestrovic's chronicle of modern social experience, reflexive awareness is largely understood as a diversory construction. It obfuscates the true nature of power relationships and the effect of social structure in modern societies. Reflexivity appertains to liberation from constraint but it is in fact a superficial liberation, which actually mystifies the continuing subordination of the majority of modern individuals. Giddens's work, for Mestrovic, is merely symptomatic of this hegemonic definition of individual 'liberation'. In this context modern forms of self-identity are understood as controlled and distorted, ultimately misshapen, adaptive responses, to a controlling and partisan 'social structure'.

Mestrovic argues that his critique is not directed solely at Giddens, rather that Giddens's work stands for, and is symptomatic of 'a general trend in contemporary social life in the West' (Mestrovic, 1998: 7). This trend is a kind of cultural solipsism, an isolationism in which Western individuals ignore the evidence of the world around them and carry on in their own carved out routines. It is a head-in-the-sand individualism:

> most Westerners seem to live in the present cut off from the past, do not really care about the non-Western world, are willing to manipulate and be manipulated regarding their

> emotional lives, and wish to preserve the status quo despite heightened awareness concerning the ills of the modernist project (Mestrovic, 1998: 7).

Giddens's work is just one example of social knowledge which, according to Mestrovic, perpetuates this attitude. It reflects back to the individual that the state of affairs is gradually improving, that they are caught up in a 'grand experiment', in which they must pay attention only to their immediate, personal affairs. Giddens's writing, Mestrovic argues, suggests to the reader that they are capable, pioneering agents, whilst in fact, power relations still set strict limits to the scope of agency. Giddens's work - '[a] hyper-optimistic brand of optimism' (1998: 30) - encourages a state of mind similar to what Marcuse defined as "happy consciousness" in *One Dimensional Man,* Mestrovic contends.[1] Again, Giddens is seen to be expressing a pervasive ideology, rather than initiating it. Mestrovic asserts that his polemic 'is not aimed at Giddens personally but at Giddens as the vehicle for a much larger 'happy consciousness' in Western societies' (1998: 213). Mestrovic assumes that the reader is taken in by proclamations of freedom, and thus the promotion of reflexivity takes on an ideological role. There is a discrepancy between what an individual thinks about their social situation and the realities of that situation. For Mestrovic, 'most Westerners today believe they are individuals endowed with agency even as they succumb willingly to emotional manipulation by governments, corporations, and organizations' (1998: 7).

Such a statement contrasts sharply with Giddens's careful articulation of agency, and of the knowledgeable, skilled agent, and his crusade against most forms of functionalism and structural determinism. Compare Mestrovic's claim with this

statement by Giddens: 'We begin from the premise that to be a human being is to know, virtually all of the time, in terms of some description or another, what one is doing and why one is doing it (Giddens, 1991: 35). That knowledge, for Mestrovic, is chronically susceptible to distortion. In addition, Giddens's theory of agency, reflexivity and self-identity contribute to this distortion. What Mestrovic is arguing here is that consciousness can be shaped by social structure, embodied in a dominant ideology. Furthermore, Giddens's work is portrayed as *representing* that ideology. Whereas Giddens can convincingly be accused of voluntarism, Mestrovic's critique relies on a reductionist notion of the transmission and introjection of ideologies, reproducing old problems associated with excessive determinism in social theory. While it may be necessary to hold Giddens's views of agency in check, the usefulness of reinstating a crude notion of 'false' beliefs on the part of the majority is questionable. Both Hay et al. and Ian Craib offer critiques which consider the concept of reflexivity as a problematic ideology or discourse, whilst circumventing crudely determinist perspectives concerning ideological effect.

Hay et. al are critical of Giddens's selective use of therapeutic texts in *The Transformation of Intimacy* to illustrate how documents about identity reflect back upon audiences as the discursive means for, whilst also being indicative of, any social change. They accuse Giddens of tendentiously drawing from therapeutic texts as if they were an unproblematic, positive resource: 'therapy cannot selectively and unproblematically be raided to generate a model for social change; it is not a box of 'goods' with no 'bads' ' (Hay et al., 1997 [1993]: 93). Hay et al. are not explicit about the 'bads' that might be found in therapeutic texts. This assertion, it might be assumed, indicates that accounts of social reality and proposed diagnoses of the

difficulties individuals might encounter can be as problematic as they can be progressive. In conjunction, Giddens is accused of ignoring other texts, outside of the populist realm of therapy, which might problematise his version of social change (1997 [1993]: 108). They question Giddens's uncritical acceptance of therapeutic texts as 'both symptomatic of and resources for change', whilst other literature, such as post-structuralist and neo-Marxist, are understood more narrowly, and usually critically, as attempts only to *make sense* of change (1997 [1993]: 93). Therapeutic texts, in Hay et al.'s reasoning, ought to be examined as critically. This problem relates back to Giddens's formulation of the 'double hermeneutic'. The term accounts for the knowledge contained in 'expert systems', such as social science, and its relationship with the layperson's understanding of the world. In line with Giddens's structuration theory, there is seen to be much mutual influence between these two realms, and both are in a state of constant revision; 'there is a constant 'slippage' from one to the other' (Giddens, 1984: 374).

Although their critique is complex, what Hay et al. basically argue is that Giddens is selective in his application of the principal of the 'double hermeneutic', as can be seen in their understanding of the way Giddens treats therapeutic literature in comparison to work he does not favour. However, it is of particular relevance to this thesis, that they also consider how Giddens's work itself should be read. If his work can be implicated in the reciprocity between lay and expert - the double hermeneutic - then, Hay et al. argue, it can be seen as simply representing ideas which are currently in social circulation: 'it is clearly possible to read *Modernity and Self-Identity* and *The Transformation of Intimacy* themselves as mere 'documents' of social changes currently impacting upon political and social life' (Hay et al., 1997 [1993]: 93). Here

Hay et al.'s critique mirrors Mestrovic's in that Giddens's work is seen to be representative of a general trend in social thought, and is thus understood as ideological - encouraging a particular view of the world, and of the self. Hay et al.'s analysis has the advantage of being couched in a complex but convincing terminology which draws on Giddens's own earlier work. Hay et al. are equally critical of the trend that Giddens's recent writing represents, and a little more specific and subtle about its ideological slant than Mestrovic:

> In particular, [*Modernity and Self-Identity* and *The Transformation of Intimacy*] could be read as symptomatic of the rampant tide of individualistic neo-liberalisms that are infesting global political and economic institutions in the late modern era.... elements of *Modernity and Self-Identity* and *The Transformation of Intimacy* could then be construed as exemplifying the intrusion of problematic political ideologies into sociological analysis (Hay et al., 1997 [1994]: 93).

This is an important claim, which requires further elaboration to consider its ramifications. Hay et al. argue that Giddens's work can possibly be read, in part, as the unreflexive reproduction of a problematic discourse about the self and identity, which is ideological - it masks the power relations / inequalities / stratifications talked about earlier. This ideology is specifically referred to as a version of 'individualistic neo-liberalism', which is a development from Mestrovic's notion of the superficial 'happy consciousness', following Marcuse. It suggests a more sophisticated reading of ideology. Hay et al. are careful in proclaiming the effects of neo-liberalist ideologies, but suggest that they are present in Giddens's work, and explain how his writing could plausibly be read as symptomatic of certain social discourses.

Hay et al. do not substantially elucidate the characteristics of Giddens's brand of 'individualistic neo-liberalism', but offer some pointers in their concluding remarks, and more can be inferred. Part and parcel of this ideology is what is *absent* in its accounts of identity, and here we return to a weak concept of social structure, which fails to account for 'differential effects' with regards to opportunities for self-identity. Furthermore, Giddens cannot conceptualise identity as a fully collective and social product, or any kind of effective politics in a collective sense.[2] As a result, the potential attributed to the transformative power of individual understanding and decision-making is, according to Hay et al., exaggerated in Giddens's work. Giddens's analysis is seen to be consistent with a liberalist, individualist account of identity. Hay et al., in contrast, feel that 'it is overstated to claim that the ethos of self-growth associated with [the reflexive] project of the self signals major social transitions' (1997 [1994]: 93). Once this claim is denied, Giddens's account portrays modern selfhood as an individuated experience, 'agents' acting in relation to the 'abstract 'pillars' of modernity' (1997 [1994]: 105).

Once stripped of it optimistic forecasts, Giddens's work is seen to be a 'hollowing out' of social theory (ibid.), emptied of its more meaningful contradictions. In defining it thus, Hay et al.'s reading of Giddens's relationship with social theory closely resembles Mestrovic's understanding of Giddens's overall effect on modern sociology. Even the analogy is similar; he accuses Giddens of trying to promote a 'lite' version of modernity:

> the modern consumer has the choice of opting for "Bud Lite" or the 'lite' versions of cheese, potato chips, and other food. I contend that similarly, Giddens offers the reader

> Enlightenment-lite, rationality-lite, social control-lite, and other lite versions of modernism (Mestrovic, 1998: 149).

In justifying his claim, Mestrovic draws on a similar critique to the one offered by Hay et al. and this thesis. Mestrovic argues that Giddens ignores or waters-down persistent forms of social control, such as economic, military and political resources still controlled by few, with vested interests. He asserts that the self is as construed by Giddens is reductive; a pseudo-rational being disconnected from any kind of emotional, irrational and unconscious impulses. He questions Giddens's view of Enlightenment history, ignoring the more sinister and brutal side of the Enlightenment, and those writers who have indexed it. Mestrovic here echoes comments made by Jeffrey Alexander about Giddens's later work, described as 'a kind of 'Giddens lite'', which, he brusquely suggests, 'is replete with apodictic assertions, loose propositions and ad hoc, often vague argumentation' (Alexander, 1996: 135).

Whereas Hay et al. are cautious in making claims about any definitive ideological readings of Giddens's recent work, suggesting not that it '*should* be read in this way' (as a problematic political ideology), only that it is a 'possible' reading (Hay et al., 1997 [1993]: 93), Mestrovic is far from circumspect. He often makes clear, as he does in the above quote, his disdain for Giddens's beguiling message. In candid terms, Mestrovic maintains that Giddens seems to 'urge the reader to stick with and even find comfort in modernity' (Mestrovic, 1998: 149). Another critic, Barry Barnes, sees a similar problem in Giddens's 'optimistic vision of human beings actively involved in rich and rewarding lives based on a free choice of lifestyles' (Barnes, 2000: 23). According to Barnes, there is a danger of reading Giddens's

understanding of the potential for individual choice as a form of voluntarism which 'has often been the language of those seeking to enforce deference to established institutions' (2000: 23).

Giddens's suggestion that 'there is only modernity' (1991: 117), even if a radicalized, post-traditional form, and we must make the most of what it offers, paints a 'frightening' (Mestrovic, 1998:149) and 'dangerous' (1998: 162) picture of contemporary experience, according to Mestrovic. He not only takes Giddens's work as peddling a particular ideological message, he also strays into making certain assumptions about the potential effect of such an ideology. He argues that Giddens offers his audience enticing sophisms which counter widespread feelings of powerlessness: 'Most people seem to feel helpless concerning the course of world events....yet they are comforted by Giddens's observations that they can still feel empowered by, and exercise power in, local mileux' (1998: 149). Aside from the exaggerated claims for Giddens's readership, Mestrovic is implying that individuals can take comfort in having an effect on those around them, and not worry about the passing of events on a larger scale, which they do not have the ability to affect.[3] This is why Giddens's work is so appealing to a wide public, Mestrovic argues. It is because: 'he writes about agency and making a difference "in one's own backyard" so to speak, at the same time that he proclaims that the course of world events will eventually catch up with a general movement towards democratization and agency' (1998: 149).

The 'individualistic neo-liberalism' highlighted by Hay et al. (1997 [1993]: 93) is approximated in this account - a focus on one's own activities and a disregard of

collective power and identity. But not only does Mestrovic offer support to this reading of Giddens's work, he explicitly believes that it has the desired ideological effect on its audience. Giddens, Mestrovic suggests, owes his success to his admirers' search for meaning in a world characterised by postmodernist writing as 'meaningless and chaotic' (Mestrovic, 1998: 215), and so, it seems, are easily and willingly manipulated. This creates a situation akin to the prevalence of a 'happy consciousness' illustrated by Marcuse, but even more dangerous for the expression of truly authentic identities:

> Marcuse thought that mass society was one in which people obeyed without thinking and lived in a society without real opposition. Giddens presents a more disturbing vision of agents who will obey *while* thinking because they are convinced that reflexivity has emancipated them (1998: 162).

Marcuse, at least as interpreted by Mestrovic, sees society as reducing individuals to non-thinking, one-dimensional beings. Mestrovic, perceives individuals as thinking, but in a distorted fashion. They think they are free, and so willingly obey. They are accredited, in this scenario, with a form of false consciousness. Such a claim is the antithesis of Giddens's view of agency, and as has been discussed, Giddens constructs a fairly weak version of the unconscious, as well as some other factors, which circumscribe reflexive awareness. To reiterate briefly, in the context of Giddens's duality of structure, an agent's knowledgeability is extensive, and both draws upon and sustains social structures in the practice of reflexive activity. The reflexive monitoring of action is a 'chronic feature' of everyday life (Giddens, 1984: 5). It involves an individual's own activities, but also the activity of others. Furthermore, individuals 'also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in

which they move.... [actors] maintain a continuing 'theoretical understanding' of the grounds of their activity' (ibid.). In other words the individual is not going about their daily activities in a socially induced or unconsciously motivated stupor, regarding emancipation or anything else.

While Giddens's version of the reflexive individual has certainly been problematised here, it too big a step to assume what I feel to be a crude socialisation perspective towards the relationship between ideological discourses and identity. What can be suggested, following Hay et al., is that Giddens's version of contemporary identity can, quite convincingly, be seen to be *encouraging* an individualistic, and politically dubious, reading of identity. Present in Giddens's recent portrayal of identity seems to be what Burkitt has referred to as a 'monadic' individual - the individual as wholly separate from others, as an isolated unit (Burkitt, 1991: 5-6). More specifically, Burkitt finds a 'trace of monadology' in those theories which emphasise 'the isolation of the conscious self from other aspects of personality and from other people' (Burkitt, 1991: 25). It is this vision of the individual, with a clearly separate 'project', and a focus upon conscious and rational personal decisions, which Hay et al. seem to find normatively problematic. In *normative* terms, it could be seen to be inciting individual, privatistic responses to large-scale social problems, which will possibly be consolidated by such a response. Thus to promote individualism, in terms of the reflexive project of the self, as a laudable and transformative capability, can be seen as a 'problematic political ideology' (Hay et al. 1997 [1993]: 93). In response, it could be argued that the implications of Hay et al.'s arguments are the equivalent of what Mestrovic makes explicit. After all, an ideology is only 'problematic' if it has the potential to distort the way an individual or social group understands the world.

Hay et al. offer a more thorough consideration, of the nature and impact of Giddens's work as ideological, and as symptomatic of other contemporary discourses on identity, as does Martin O'Brien's discussion. They both further flesh out the problematic, ideological content of Giddens's work, and its relationship to 'monadic' forms of self-identity, without necessarily reducing the debate to a juxtaposition of determinism and voluntarism.

Reflexivity and the 'Other'

Hay et al. assert that we need to draw from post-structuralism, 'without it being necessary to adopt all the arguments' of that perspective, to adequately understand the nature of contemporary self-identity (Hay et al., 1997 [1994]: 97). In particular, Giddens's social theory fails to grasp the post-structuralist insight 'that what is *omitted* is as significant in the construction of sense and understanding as what is included' (ibid.). Giddens's concept of the self rests upon a carefully stratified model. Each component of that self contributes to the formation of self-identity and its maintenance through ontological security. It has a specifically linear sense of development, establishing trust in early infancy, and slowly developing the reflexive faculties to make sense of the world and engage with a 'reflexive project of the self'. This self's relation to others, both immediate and abstracted, is essential for engendering and maintaining trust. The 'other' as a concept however, means less and less in the modern world. Largely due to enormous changes and possibilities in the mediation of experience, we have 'established a single 'world'', where humankind 'becomes a 'we', facing problems and opportunities where there are no 'others' (Giddens, 1991: 27).

Hay et al. argue, to the contrary, that identity *is* still bound up with a sense of the 'other': 'otherness is a central component in the fabrication of socio-cultural identities' (Hay et al., 1997: 97). The history of western self-identity is inseparable from the history of a sense of non-western identity, and the same can be said of racial identities, both 'black' and 'white' as well as others such as gender and nationality oriented identities. Hay et al. cite Hall's distinction between 'the West and the Rest', where he suggests that the notion of Western identity as 'modern, enlightened, progressive, civilised and emancipatory' is reliant on the construction and negation of an opposing other - 'the Rest' - an 'absent' but important part of that identity.[4] The self is thus accredited with an extra, yet 'absent', dimension than in the linear development of Giddens's analysis. The history of any self-concept is bound up with splits and fractures: 'the genealogical basis of the self-identity postulated by Giddens is imbued with marginalizations, oppressions, divisions and oppositions' (Hay et al., 1997 [1994]: 97). These fractures demand a more explicitly political understanding of the different forms and concepts of modern self-identity which persist in post-traditional societies.

The formation of any identity depends upon the jettisoning of 'other' identities, of what we 'are not'. In their juxtaposing role of 'other' they help define and maintain our perceived distinctiveness - what we 'are'. Knowledge of self is thus bound up with otherness - with comparisons, with an acknowledgement of what is presented and an awareness of what is omitted. This is a complex claim, but can immediately be contrasted with Giddens's claim that, increasingly, ' 'we' means humanity as a whole' (Giddens, 1990: 151), and 'we' face 'problems and opportunities where there are no 'others' ' (Giddens, 1991: 27). In their wider context, Giddens's claims here

are built upon his notions of globalisation and the compression of time and space, amongst others, which establish a 'single 'world' where none existed previously' (1991: 27). While some of these claims are hard to dispute, it is also important not to overlook the role of differentiation in the formation of contemporary identities. Hay et al. are similarly suggesting that it is unhelpful to universalise the nature of self-identity as 'our' experience, because the construction of that identity still rests upon distinctions, which are social in nature. Thus they suggest an alternative imperative: 'To accept that modern identities are both inclusive and exclusive, that they consist in assimilations and rejections, and that the self persists *in* and *through* the boundaries of others' (Hay et al., 1997: 98).

To pass over these differences - to universalise - has political and ideological consequences. What is included or excluded, assimilated or rejected, depends in part on available discourses. It depends on the nature of the 'texts' available out of which to construct an identity. 'Virtually all human experience is mediated', Giddens states, and identity is, in part, a negotiation of this experience. The modern individual, faced with the proliferation, in form and content, of mediated experiences, still manages to make sense of experience. The 'collage effect' of modern life does not mark the end of meaningful narratives (Giddens, 1991: 26); 'they depend on, and also in some ways express, unities of thought and consciousness' (ibid.). However, the 'unifying' feature of mediated experience is not, according to Hay et al., as central as Giddens suggests: 'the portrayal of unified experience fields in Giddens's recent work glosses over the marginalization, suppression and exile of specific groups of identity-construction' (Hay et al., 1997: 98-99). Hay et al. argue, drawing from post-structuralism, that self-identity is a site of ideological contestation. Giddens's own

work is a discourse which contributes to this contest. It offers a diagnosis and an ideal for the modern development of self-identity which omits, yet depends upon, alternative constructions. Giddens's alleged voluntarism, and liberalist individualism, is a discourse which is promoting one way to be, and is thus involved in a particular, hegemonic understanding of contemporary self-identity. Its presence is at the expense of, and in opposition to, other discourses. These might be discourses which make central a sense of determinism and differentiation, as has been argued in this thesis, or a for a more collective, 'heterotelic' sense of identity, which will now be discussed.

Autotelic/Heterotelic Identity

Martin O'Brien is another critic of Giddens in terms of his analysis of power. O'Brien claims that Giddens fails to address 'questions of poverty and exclusion', reflecting the criticisms made in this chapter (O'Brien, 1999: 36). He argues that Giddens offers an anodyne version of social reality which can not adequately conceptualise ways of challenging and overcoming inequality, precisely because it lacks a clear understanding of persistent inequality. As a result, what Giddens construes to be 'effective responses' to a modern world, are in fact problematic (1999: 37). It is even possible that what Giddens perceives to be solutions are symptomatic of, and more likely to consolidate, socially stratified conditions of poverty and exclusion. In detailing this understanding of Giddens's work, O'Brien introduces a new category to define Giddens's version of the self which is similar to Burkitt's 'monad' self - the 'autotelic self'. This is distinguished from its alternative - the 'heterotelic self'. The term autotelic originates from the Greek *autos,* meaning

self, and *telos*, meaning end, or ending. Thus 'autotelic' signifies something, in this case a sense of self, that exists as an end in itself, as its own justification. The heterotelic self, in contrast, refers to a self which exists in relation to others, 'a form of self which promotes heteronomy over autonomy, sociation over individuation' (ibid.). O'Brien equates the autotelic self with the 'reflexive project of the self', and identity in general in the context of Giddens's social and political theory.[5] The heterotelic self might be understood as the absented 'other', the notion of selfhood which is omitted from Giddens's scheme. Following Hay et al.'s lead, O'Brien argues that 'absent' discourses of heterotelic identity are conspicuous in their absence. Once reconsidered they offer a counterpoint to the autotelic self, and help to define it more clearly. For O'Brien, acknowledging discourses which are excluded can reveal the status of what is included more critically. What is absented is as important as what is presented.

O'Brien tentatively suggests that Giddens's version of self-identity, obscures, and actually contributes to, the perpetuation of social inequality, rather than heralding its retreat: 'It may be for example that the emergence of the autotelic self is part of the problem, rather than part of the solution' (ibid.). O'Brien is careful in that he does not accuse Giddens of wilfully promoting a problematic discourse of identity. For O'Brien it is unclear whether Giddens is championing the reflexive agent as an ideal, or analytically exposing it. There is no clear normative element, O'Brien argues; 'the normative agenda.... cannot be separated from its analytical agenda' (ibid.). It is in this confusion that an ideological reading becomes a possibility:

> it is difficult to disentangle the extent to which the autotelic
> self, for example, is a consequence of specific social changes,

> promoting certain forms of social interaction and development, and to what extent it is a normative goal, vaunted in the desire to promote autonomy over heteronomy, individuation over sociation (ibid.).

It has been argued in this thesis that Giddens's optimism for the prospects of the contemporary individual in terms of self-identity and intimate relationships, although tempered, amounts to a promotion of the characteristics which facilitate the reflexive project of the self. The problems already outlined with this formulation, such as voluntarism and individuation, O'Brien equates with an 'autotelic self'. Thus O'Brien supports Hay et al. in suggesting that Giddens's writing *can* be read as contributing to a politically dubious and ideologically problematic discourse. In offering this *description* of the world there are inevitable *prescriptive* connotations in Giddens tone - it is undoubtedly a championed (if ambivalent) situation. According to O'Brien, the encouraging of the reflexive self as the basis for social transformation, encourages, at least potentially, an individualist and isolationist response to fundamentally social problems.[6] It advocates, believes O'Brien, an identification with an autotelic self.

O'Brien's work, up to this point, develops an understanding of Giddens's work as ideological. He has attempted to offer some more detail as to how Giddens's work can be read as contributing to a problematic discourse. O'Brien is careful to avoid a 'bootstrap theory of the autotelic self'. By this he means that he wants to avoid conceiving of the autotelic self as 'a form of self which emerges as a bare consequence of micro and macro social change' (O'Brien, 1999: 37). Instead he attempts a more elaborate reading of Giddens's focus on reflexivity as ideological.

He situates the discourse of reflexivity within a kind of dynamic hegemonic struggle, which represents wider power relations:

> the autotelic self is a political counterpoint to the 'heterotelic self'.... On this basis it can be suggested that the social reflexivity of modernity expresses a form of power that destroys the heterotelic self or weakens the associative bonds of heteronomous social development' (1999: 37).

How is this power understood? Certainly not solely in a transformative sense, as Giddens often understands it, but in a kind of contest between heterotelic and autotelic aspects of experience:

> It is, rather, the exercise of domination over certain kinds of relationships, norms, interactions and practices. The social reflexivity of modernity, as a form of power, can be understood as the active dislocation of heteronomous social selves from the contexts and relationships that sustain them and the reconfiguration of those selves as autotelic isolates in abstract systems of social control (1999: 38).

Giddens is obviously not responsible for this 'active dislocation'. In many ways his work might be understood as an excellent index of the ways in which more 'social selves' have been separated from 'the contexts and relationships that sustain them' (ibid.), though O'Brien rarely refers to the specifics of Giddens's writing. A good example is Giddens's concept of disembedding, which is one his later theory's most central tenets. It captures, for Giddens, 'an essential element of the nature and impact of modern institutions' (Giddens, 1991: 18). Disembedding, defined as 'the lifting out of social relationships from local contexts and their recombination across indefinite time/space distances' (1991: 242), to some extent mirrors the dislocation

indicated by O'Brien. What is problematic, for O'Brien, is that Giddens's social and psychological analysis concurs with the subordination of 'certain kinds of relationships, norms, interactions and practices' which are associated with the heterotelic self. O'Brien believes that Giddens's work assists in the reconfiguration of selves 'as autotelic isolates in abstract systems of social control' (O'Brien, 1999: 38).

Giddens's summary of how the modern self can be viewed as a reflexive endeavour does have certain parallels with O'Brien's' assertion:

> The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems (Giddens, 1991: 5).

Understood against the backdrop of disembedding, here the self is arguably quite precisely defined as an 'autotelic isolate' which operates within a distanced, abstruse set of institutions which offer the individual choices. The focus on individual choice and a limited, self-oriented notion of responsibility is enhanced, by repeated comments in the same paragraph: 'lifestyle takes on a particular significance'; 'individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options'; 'lifestyle choice is increasingly important in the constitution of self-identity'; 'reflexively organised life-planning.... becomes a central feature of the structuring of self-identity' (ibid.). All these comments could be seen as reflecting as the norm an autotelic version of selfhood, as defined by O'Brien, in which one's own development is the limit of one's horizons. Another example is Giddens's summary of the

processes involved in 'the transformation of intimacy'. They also illustrate the juxtaposition of an enclosed self and an abstract social system:

> 1. An intrinsic relation between the globalising tendencies of modernity and localised events in day-to-day life....
>
> 2. The construction of the self as a reflexive project.... an individual must find her or his identity amid the strategies and options provided by abstract systems
>
> 3. A drive towards self-actualisation....
>
> 4. The formation of personal and erotic ties as "relationships," guided by the mutuality of self-disclosure
>
> 5. A concern for self-fulfilment.... a positive appropriation of circumstances in which globalised influences impinge upon everyday life (Giddens, 1990: 123-124).

Point one establishes a 'dialectical connection' between individual decisions and global events; between 'intensional' and 'extensional' happenings (1990: 123). Point two, three and four focus on the individual and their immediate environment, and that environment's role in meeting the requirements of the self. It is a peculiarly passive notion of identity in which one must 'find' one's way amongst the options produced by abstract systems. The individual must focus, almost chronically, on their own development, whilst being assured that they are also impacting upon global tendencies. Point five continues the same theme, and encapsulates the basis of O'Brien's critique. Abstracted systems of social control *do* shape everyday life, but the individual is capable of turning this influence into a positive scenario. The vehicle for, and the end-result of, a positive appropriation of externally ordered daily life is 'a concern for self-fulfilment'. Thus O'Brien's critique is potentially upheld by

illustrations from Giddens's own work. The reading of Giddens's work I have suggested here lends itself to O'Brien's assertion that Giddens's writing contributes to 'the reconfiguration of [heteronomous social] selves as autotelic isolates in abstract systems of social control' (O'Brien, 1999: 38).

In summary, the ascendance of the autotelic self is associated with excessive individualism and self-concern. Identity is thought of in relation to one's own life plan, possibly extended to an intimate other. This is at the expense of a self understood in terms of its relation to a larger community and external, collective goals; 'we' is as important a reference point as 'I'. This is not an abstract and universal 'we' however. It as a 'we' derived from social relationships and common objectives. It is as much about contestation and conflict as it is about any global , collective sense of humanity; an 'us' and 'them' maybe, rather than a 'we'. Giddens's social and political theory, in as far as it fosters the development of the autotelic self, 'may be said to be complicit with the subordination of heterotelic relations and interactions that socialise rather than individualise, threats, risks and stresses' (1998: 38). The complicity, or otherwise, of Giddens's work is difficult to establish and not my concern here. Regardless of this issue, the exclusion of more social analyses from Giddens's work, particularly as a normative analysis, is the moment at which it is being understood as ideological. O'Brien constructs an alternative - the heterotelic self - in order to illustrate the one-sidedness of the autotelic self, which makes some sense. It has already been argued that the self is more intimately connected with social structure than Giddens allowed, which leans to an acknowledgement of the heterotelic dimensions of identity lacking in Giddens's work. The examples used

here also illustrate how it is also possible to read Giddens's work as encouraging and stabilising an autotelic version of selfhood.

While O'Brien might agree with many of Giddens's concepts, such as deskilling, disembedding, time and space distanciation, and the prevalence of abstract systems, his interpretation of these phenomena, in terms of their consequences for the individual and self-identity, is at odds with Giddens's analysis. The potential for individual development is understood far more critically, and is not construed as balanced series of 'dilemmas'; the two inescapable sides of the same post-traditional coin which the individual has to resolve to maintain a consistent and positive sense of self (Giddens, 1991: 187-188). In fact the converse side of what Giddens understands to be post-traditional societies, and the approaches to self-identity he encourages, are, according to O'Brien, absent from his work. They exclude an appreciation of the social dimensions necessary for a valid self-identity, and obscure the power relationships which encourage and maintain the autotelic self. This is why O'Brien argues that the emergence of the autotelic self ought to be heralded as a 'degenerative' political project, rather than a 'regenerative' one, as implied in Giddens's social theory (O'Brien, 1999: 38).

Giddens's Defence and a Critical Response

Giddens has been criticised so far in this and the previous chapter on various points. He has been accused of formulating a weak concept of social structure, underpinned by an over-generalised concept of rules and under-theorised concept of resources. His version of contemporary self-identity has been attacked for being voluntaristic and

universalised, illustrated with reference to his theorisation of the 'dynamics of modernity', the pure relationship, and self-identity in general, amongst other examples. As a consequence Giddens is seen as failing to acknowledge the structural conditions of reflexivity, the persistence of inequality, and a hierarchy of reflexivity 'winners' and 'losers'. In ignoring or marginalising these conditions, Giddens is argued to be contributing to a politically dubious discourse on modern identity, which obscures, rather than encourages, effective solutions to persisting social problems. In combination, these comments offer a persuasive critical insight into Giddens's work. Before assessing their impact, however, it would be tendentious to ignore Giddens's own awareness of these issues in his work. On occasion, although overlooked by many authors, Giddens makes qualifications which seem to shift the emphasis of his work, at least momentarily. Giddens's occasional allowances in his recent writing can be read as attempts to incorporate issues of power, inequality and exclusion into his understanding of the processes which constitute self-identity. Before concluding this section it is necessary to assess Giddens's defence and consider if his qualifications in any way counter the criticism raised in this chapter.

A universalised understanding of a reflexively formed self-identity, which has transcended the hold of tradition, is undoubtedly, I have suggested, the predominant message in Giddens recent work. His attempt to hold in check his agency-oriented version of power, is far less systematic than the complex concessions made in earlier works, to structural constraints on power. In *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990), for example, Giddens's notion of power is largely as a generative force, expanded by reflexivity in a post-traditional age. As this thesis has repeatedly illustrated, Giddens talks of the increased potential for positive individual appropriation of their

circumstances in everyday life, balanced by the losses which are an inevitable part of a pervasive post-traditional order. There is a 'double-edged character' to the modern world (1990: 10). The spread of modern institutions has 'created vastly greater opportunities for human beings to enjoy a secure and rewarding existence' (1990: 7), whilst in the same breath: 'the world in which we live today is a fraught and dangerous one' (1990: 10). On the whole, no attempt is made by Giddens to differentiate between the experiences of individuals or collectives and their experience of power in any detail. At one point, however, Giddens does suggest that reflexive knowledge is affected, or 'filtered' by certain factors. One of these factors is 'differential power'. As a filter of reflexivity it is defined as follows: 'Some individuals or groups are more readily able to appropriate specialised knowledge than others' (1990: 54). Giddens here holds on to his long established transformative notion of power. This definition of differential power could certainly pay more attention to issues of coercion, constraint or imposition, whilst it does not explicitly deny such possibilities. 'Some' groups simply find themselves in a position in which they can more easily appropriate knowledge, and thus act authentically and with rational purpose, whilst some do not. That it is the impression conveyed by this definition, in its abstract, non-specific assertions.

Giddens's tendency to offer hints about the role of power within his overall scheme is, it could be argued, a persistent and frustrating tendency in his work. It offers the suggestion of a more complete understanding of self-identity, yet is as swiftly forgotten as it is considered. I will illustrate Giddens's attempt to incorporate an understanding of differential power with three more examples from his recent work. Whilst paying lip-service to the problem of differential power, I will argue that it is

possible to suggest that Giddens's attempts are, in these cases at least, further evidence of his ineffectuality in offering a valid reading of the role of power, inequality and exclusion in the achievement of self-identity.

At one point in *Reflexive Modernization* Giddens discusses 'choices and decisions'. Choices are essential to the reflexive project of the self and are a natural consequence of it; 'we have no choice but to choose' Giddens reminds us (Giddens, 1994a: 75). The abundance of choice is what allows us to reflexively construct an identity, for what we are is no longer given, it is a result of 'active choice' (ibid.). Giddens acknowledges that in practise, choices can be limited by means external to the individual: 'The choices that are constitutive of lifestyle options are very often bounded by factors out of the hands of the individual or individuals they affect' (1994: 75). This sentence concisely sums up the critical stance derivable from much of this chapter. But while Giddens acknowledges limits so plainly here, it is difficult to see how it impacts upon the general trend of his claims, which run counter to a systematic appreciation of the boundedness of individual choice. Further exegesis is required to make sense of Giddens's remarks in support of the admission that active choice might be compromised by 'constraint and power', and problems can be raised with what he does say. At first glance, Giddens's distinction between choices and decisions implies an appreciation of stratification in the experience of options:

> .... we have to make a distinction between *choices* and *decisions.* Many of our day-to-day activities have in fact become open to choice or, rather, as I have expressed it previously, choice has become obligatory. This is a substantive thesis about everyday life today. Analytically it is more accurate to say that all areas of social life come to be governed by decisions - often, although not universally, enacted

> on the basis of claims to expert knowledge of one kind or another. *Who* takes those decisions, and *how*, is fundamentally a matter of power. The opening out of social life to decision-making therefore.... is also a medium of power and of stratification (1994: 75-76).

This a complicated qualification of the role of differential power. Firstly, Giddens suggests that we have to think of 'choices' and 'decisions' as distinct terms. What distinguishes them exactly? This is the point at which Giddens's intentions become unclear. 'Choice has become obligatory', an integral aspect of day-to-day activities, whereas decisions are what 'all areas of social life' are governed by (ibid.). This is confusing in two ways. Firstly, if choices and decisions should be distinguished, then Giddens appears to be immediately blurring the distinction. Both, it seems, pervade every activity. But if both are the basis of everyday life, then there is no longer any grounds for distinction. It is also possible to read Giddens as arguing here that choices should in fact be referred to as decisions, *rather than* choices, as this is analytically 'more accurate', again blurring any distinction between the two. Secondly, it is possible that Giddens is making a distinction between day-to-day life as governed by choices, on the one hand, and 'all areas of social life' as governed by decisions, on the other. Although not a clear contrast, it does suggest that Giddens wants to incorporate the issue of power in his analysis of the extension of choice in post-traditional settings.

However Giddens's comments are interpreted here, it is apparent that a lengthy exposition is required to construct anything approaching a viable appreciation of the way life-chances may be stratified. Considering the second half of the extract I have selected, Giddens argues that the 'who' and 'how' of decision making is essential.

Again the implications of this claim are a little confusing. It seems then, by implication, that the fact that all experience has been opened up to decisions and/or choices is not the most salient feature of post-traditional societies. If the particularity of people making decisions, and the methods they use, is of vital importance in understanding 'the opening out of social life to decision making', then to what extent has it really been 'opened out'? If, as Giddens suggests, the propensity to make consequential decisions is still decided by issues of power, then it is possible that the relationship between power and choice would be a more valuable focus of a substantial social theory than the supposed universalism of decision making. Indeed, Giddens argues that evidence of social life stratified by power relations are not hard to come by - 'examples are legion, and span the whole gamut of social activity' (ibid.). Curiously though, Giddens offers no examples himself, and swiftly moves on to another topic, never returning. Thus his own qualifications seem isolated, bereft in the general current of his arguments.

In the same discussion from which the above quote is extracted, Giddens tends towards an account of general changes in decision making processes, of socially shared gains and losses in the ability to choose, rather than the specific role of power. He talks of the 'extraordinary, and still accelerating, connectedness between everyday decisions and global outcomes' as well as the 'the influence of global orders over individual life' (1994: 58), and a world where 'opportunity and danger are balanced in equal measure' (ibid.). Giddens tends to expound the dynamics of post-traditional orders as blanket processes that are homogenous in their impact upon the variety of individuals they effect (1994: 84-85), cancelling out his brief attempts to point out structured and qualitative variations in experience. It could be argued then, that

Giddens's gestures towards a conceptual differentiation of choices and/or decisions, rather than confirming a prominent strand in his work, or ushering a new area of concern, simply stand out as a contradiction to his generalising, universalising approach to choice just about everywhere else. If choice, and therefore the potential of reflexivity, is severely conditioned by issues of power, then it is this which needs to be charted, parallel to an appreciation of the expansion of reflexivity, in order to fully appreciate the persistence of structured inequality.

A second, related example is Giddens's discussion of expert systems. Giddens's conceptualisation of 'expert' knowledge is a case in point. In recent work, Giddens says plenty about the role of experts and experts systems, but I will restrict my analysis here to his comments in 'Living in a Post-Traditional Society' (1994). This is the same paper where he attempts the qualification quoted above, and is a sufficient resource for my purposes here. Despite Giddens's attempts to show caution in commentating upon the opening out of social life to decision making, it is arguable that his attitude towards experts tends to contradict his reservations rather than confirm them, as again he provides an uncritical, universalised reading of expertise.

Expert systems are a key element of the disembedding processes which define post-traditional societies, already described at length in this thesis. To reiterate, expert systems contribute to knowledge as a 'non-local', 'decentred' and 'impersonal' (1994: 84-85). Unlike tradition, any wisdom expert systems are granted is not seen to be tied to a particular place, time or person. It is an abstracted collection of knowledge, accessible to all and untainted by vested interest. Experts work 'in the interests of a universalism that lends itself to public discourse' (1994: 86). Its free-floating and

impersonal form means that it can be utilised by almost anyone, and applied in any setting. Thus it disembeds the individual from the tradition as a form of knowledge and replaces it with a reflexive ordering and application of knowledge to a given situation. As Giddens states, 'expertise is disembedding because it is based upon impersonal principles, which can be set out and developed without regard to context' (1994: 84-85). This means that expertise is no longer part and parcel of established authority, it is not necessarily affiliated with dominant social forces such as state or corporate institutions: 'In virtue of its mobile form, expertise is as disruptive of hierarchies of authority as it is a stabilizing influence' (1994: 85).

Expert knowledge undoubtedly comes in many shapes and guises. Returning to Giddens's qualifying comments, he stated that 'all areas of social life come to be governed by decisions' (1994: 75), and that often, decisions depend upon 'claims to expert knowledge of one kind or another' (ibid.). Here Giddens also claims that, due to issues of power, decisions which rely on claims to expert knowledge are not open to anyone, and the context in which expertise is constructed is still vitally important; '*Who* takes those decisions, and *how*, is fundamentally a matter of power. The opening out of social life to decision-making therefore.... is also a medium of power and of stratification' (1994: 75). Yet later in the same discussion Giddens appears to smooth over the thorny issue of power differentials and focus instead on the impersonal, context-free nature of expertise which 'cuts across' the formation of bureaucratic hierarchies, and is a resource available to challenge authority as much as it is there to consolidate it (1994: 85). The issue of decision-making in relation to expertise is thus both universalised - its the same for everyone, and personalised - the utilisation of expertise is a matter of individual choice, which seems to contradict

Giddens's own attempts to qualify the nature of post-traditional decisions. As is so often the case, Giddens oscillates between contradictory positions. He makes worthy amendments and provisos, but then fails to follow them up or expound them, returning instead to an earlier position. In this extract, within the same paragraph Giddens points out the radical nature of modern expertise, yet then offers a hint of important factors which might challenge such a concept of radicalness:

> Expert systems decontextualise as an intrinsic consequence of the impersonal and contingent character of their rules of knowledge-acquisition; as decentred systems, *'open' to whosoever has the time, resources and talent to grasp them,* they can be located anywhere (1994: 85; my emphasis).

In the first half of this quote, Giddens is merely reiterating his definition of expert systems as disembedding mechanisms. In discussing the utility of expertise, however, he puts 'scare quotes' around the word 'open', warning the reader that she or he must be sceptical about the *actual* openness of expert systems. Giddens is implying that expert systems are 'open' only to those who have the 'time, resources and talent' to utilise them fully. Here we find, in a small typographical clue, an indication that Giddens is indeed aware of the role power might play in the decisions of individuals. To make an effective and knowledgeable impact on one's environment, which might include the reflexive construction of the self, one cannot simply 're-embed' oneself, reflexively selecting from disembedded processes. Acquiring knowledge depends on other factors. Here, Giddens potentially agrees with some of the criticisms raised in this chapter; namely that a social structure, in some sense, is still important in shaping one's life-chances. He makes no reference to his use of scare quotes however, and

does not explicitly return to the issue of time, resources or talent over the course of the discussion.[7]

As a third and closely related example, I will consider another discussion in which Giddens touches on the issue of resources. He considers resources not in relation to expert knowledge, but explicitly to issues of identity, and the concept of 'lifestyle'. He begins with what is by now a familiar position on the notion of identity in post-traditional societies:

> self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems (Giddens, 1991: 5).

As a result of the increasing 'openness' of the contours of everyday life, active 'lifestyle choices' become increasingly prominent in the maintenance of self-identity (ibid.). Giddens then claims that it would be a mistake to think of lifestyle choice as a preserve of the affluent, but qualifies this assertion: 'Issues of class and inequality, within states and on a worldwide level, closely mesh with the arguments of this book, although I do not try to document those inequalities here' (1991: 6). Giddens acknowledges that inequality can in part be defined by a variable access to the resources which facilitate and constitute a meaningful self-identity, and simply admits to the omission of the documentation of inequality, without further justification. Instead he returns to his dialectical position, emphasising the universalism of the connection between lifestyle and identity: ''Lifestyle' refers also to decisions and course of action followed under conditions of severe material constraint' (ibid.).

Later in the same discussion Giddens attests to a further omission: 'I have not sought to trace out in a detailed fashion the impact of capitalist production on modern social life' (1991: 196-197). This lack of detail is acknowledged even though, by Giddens own admission, the reflexive project of the self operates 'under conditions strongly influenced by standardising effects of commodity capitalism' (1991: 196). Again Giddens does not fully justify such an omission in the light of its importance. He briefly discusses the impact commodification might have, addressing its impact, but swiftly moves on, reaffirming his dialectical position, in which 'even the most oppressed of individuals' can 'react creatively and interpretatively to processes of commodification' (1991: 199). Furthermore, commodification is foundational in the provision of choice: 'plurality of choice is in some substantial part the very outcome of commodified processes' (1991: 200). Giddens gives the example of mass produced clothing, which still allows individuals scope for individual style, however standardised. As a result, one is left with a sense that an equilibrium exists, that the 'bads' of capitalist production are balanced by its 'goods' and its openness to challenge.

Conclusion

Giddens displays his awareness of issues such as class and inequality but seems to make little attempt to incorporate them into his work. They read as if they are afterthoughts, rather than informing his understanding of the nature of identity in post-traditional settings. Consider Giddens's summary of the reflexive project, cited above. To see self-identity as an individualist, rational selection of choices from a backdrop of politically neutral 'abstract systems' is to overlook the persistence of

class, inequality and capitalist production. It is possible that the failure to incorporate these issues may distort Giddens's analysis, presenting a view of contemporary self-identity which is unfettered by inequality and thus obscuring its persistence, as much of the criticism in this chapter has indicated. Thus when Giddens considers how post-traditional individuals become empowered, for example, he has no recourse to a detailed understanding of factors which prevent or aid individual empowerment in a social context, and has to rely on vague and unconvincing assertions: 'Empowerment is routinely available to laypeople as part of the reflexivity of modernity, but there are often problems about how such empowerment becomes translated into convictions and into action' (Giddens, 1991: 141).

Empowerment is presented as an abundant resource if only an individual knows how to utilise it: 'if such a person takes the trouble to reskill appropriately' (ibid.). But if there are problems in turning 'empowerment' into conviction and action, in what sense does it exist, *a priori*, as empowerment? Giddens reduces problems of empowerment to the post-traditional abandonment of certainty; the dilemma of making decisions in a 'system without final authorities' (ibid.). While this may be an element of contemporary experience, adequately illustrated by Giddens, it can still be read as a simplistic discussion of empowerment. It suggests that becoming 'empowered' operates in a conflict-free zone, without coercion and subordination or any kind of pressure to act and choose in certain ways. From his own earlier acknowledgements, pointed out here, it is clear that there is more to empowerment than simply realising that one can become empowered and grasping the opportunity. Understanding empowerment may depend on tackling some of the issues raised in this chapter; on a realistic appraisal of issues of power, such as the persistence of

class at some level, global levels of inequality and the differential effects of capitalist production. In acknowledging these factors only fleetingly, Giddens account at times seems superficial, raising issues but then rendering them obsolete.

By ignoring a strong sense of social structure, ordered by power relationships, which persists in differentiating experiences and thus stratifying self-identities, Giddens universalises individual experiences. As a result he presents a discourse which promotes a sense of identity as if it is universal, and relatively emancipated from a prescriptive social structure. The construction of a unitary "we" fails to acknowledge 'the importance of the consciousness, habits and interests of particular social actors' (Hay et al., 1997 [1994]: 98). It is only through an understanding of what is absented from Giddens's account of a unified experience of self-identity, that its political and ideological implications can be measured. These alternatives to Giddens's "we" are 'other' forms of identity which may challenge his attempt to universalise modern self-identity, such as the 'heterotelic self'. Thus self-identity is understood to be a point of intersection between different, and often conflicting, discourses about what it is to be a self. What is excluded from these discourses is as important as what is included, and this is fundamentally an issue of power.

Giddens overestimates the extent of individual empowerment in post-traditional societies. He stresses that the self is increasingly a reflexive project, characterised by choice. Giddens's position has been construed as promoting an individualistic and voluntarist notion of selfhood, which not only obscures the existence of a social structure which continues to limit the options of social groups, but contributes to its persistence. It contributes because it encourages individual responses to an

abstracted, neutralised social world, rather than dealing with what are seen to be the realities of poverty, exclusion and inequality. The authors I have drawn upon have all suggested the need for a stronger concept of social structure, and for power to be a more central concept in Giddens's social theory. There are undoubtedly grounds for criticism here, criticisms which have been supported by repeated reference to numerous examples in Giddens's work . It has been convincingly argued that Giddens, although attempting a dialectical approach, focuses on opportunities and breakthroughs for the contemporary self in general, at the expense of a thorough and particular account of how those opportunities are socially distributed. To acknowledge factors such as class, inequality and capitalism, as Giddens does, is to acknowledge that they differentially shape identity, and so at least potentially compromise the universality of the reflexive project of the self.

Whereas reflexivity may indeed be widespread, as Giddens argues, this chapter has suggested that the focus needs to be shifted towards whether or not individuals have the ability to make choices which translate that reflexivity into an authentic and autonomous construction of self-identity. While Giddens brings a commendable balance to concepts of power and agency, and acknowledges essential issues around power, it is feasible to argue that he does not go far enough in this direction. By stopping short of a full and detailed analysis of power, his work lends itself to a distorted picture of contemporary individuality. In this context, it may be that indexing the differences in the experience of self-identity and working out how to overcome them might be more useful than analysing the common factors individuals face in the social formation of self-identity.

In summary, the possibilities of the modern world for self-identity 'do not circulate evenly and unproblematically around the globe' (Hay et. al, 1997 [1994]: 105). Giddens's universalist approach to self-identity unreflexively excludes differences in experience, contributing to a problematic discourse, which unhelpfully focuses on individual power and responsibility, excluding the politics of stratification and exclusion. The potential consequence is a 'depoliticization of social life', where any emancipatory political project rests upon 'the individuated life-politics of self-realization', and self-orientation (ibid.). In conclusion Hay et al. suggest that 'division and exclusion are increasingly important politico-economic processes which any analysis of personal and political action must address' (ibid.), reiterating the claims made in this and the previous chapter.

In the context of a world still structured by established power relations, reflexivity, particularly in relation to self-identity, can be conceived in a different light. In this chapter it has been portrayed as a coping mechanism, a form of false consciousness, or more sophisticatedly, as contributing to a problematic discourse of selfhood. It has been suggested that it is possible to understand modern features of self-identity, as Giddens constructs them, as a response to persistent cultural and social forces, not in a wholly positive way, but as a response to persistent powerlessness and alienation. Christopher Lasch is one author who focuses on the processes of self-identity and whose work might be seen as a challenge to Giddens's account. Lasch does develop a much stronger concept of social structure, which Giddens has explicitly condemned, and is extremely critical about the mechanisms of self-identity which tend to come into being as a result. Lasch argues that modern culture encourages a narcissistic self. Such a view has something in common with O'Brien's notion of the autotelic self.

While it may appear to be poles apart from Giddens's analysis, there are in fact many similarities between Lasch's and Giddens's accounts. Lasch's understanding of the psychological conditions of modern life explores many similar themes to Giddens's work, but offers a far more pessimistic diagnosis. In the light of the criticisms raised in this and the previous chapter, Lasch's work is a prime example of a theorist who attempts to incorporate power into his understanding of contemporary self-identity, and as a result constructs an interesting notion of selfhood, which can be usefully contrasted with Giddens's analysis. It is Lasch's work, in the light of the criticisms raised here, that will form the basis of the following chapter.

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[1] Here Marcuse suggested that there exists a prevalent ideology which encourages individuals to think that all is well and is generally done in the interests of all, whilst disguising the continuation, and in fact heightening, of social hierarchy and domination, reducing humanity to a one-dimensional existence. As Marcuse puts it, living in a society which reduces and/or absorbs all opposition results in an 'atrophy of the mental organs', and 'the *Happy Consciousness* comes to prevail' (Marcuse, 1964: 79). Mestrovic is accusing Giddens of glossing over contradictions and ignoring the need for opposition, and thus contributing to the 'happy consciousness'.

[2] Thus Giddens seems to come unwittingly close to Marcuse's definition of a society shaped by a 'happy consciousness', in which opposition is absorbed, and 'the established system, in spite of everything, delivers the goods' (Marcuse, 1964: 79).

[3] It is possible that Mestrovic is referring to the influence of a 'general trend' in 'contemporary social life' which Giddens 'represents', rather than the influence of Giddens's own work.

[4] Hay et al. illustrate Hall's arguments with an excellent quote, which is worth reproducing here, as it clarifies Hall's position better than any summary;

> Without the Rest (or its own internal others), the West would not have been able to recognize itself as the summit of human history. The figure of 'the Other', banished to the edge of the conceptual world and constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation of everything which the West stood for, reappeared at the very centre of the discourse of civilization, refinement, modernity and development in the West. 'The Other' was the 'dark' side - forgotten, repressed and denied; the reverse image of enlightenment and modernity (Hall, 1992: 314 in Hay et al., 1997: 97).

In terms of individual self-identity, Hall's comments and Hay et al.'s analysis suggest that the reflexive project of selfhood relies on certain hegemonic notions which actively exclude other options.

[5] It could be argued that there are in fact qualitative differences between the terms 'reflexive' and 'autotelic' self. It might be a slightly tendentious move on O'Brien's part, but the autotelic self, one can infer, is considered to be a more apt overall definition of Giddens's construction of the self in a more critical light. The point is not simply one of definition however. It is that the emergence of this self is not necessarily worth heralding, not even ambivalently, in O'Brien's account.

[6] Mouzelis's critique of reflexivity offers a complementary point in regards to the personal experience of reflexivity. He talks of the 'tyranny' of purposiveness based on calculation, planning and ratiocination', and the danger of becoming engulfed by 'incessant means-end decision making' (Mouzelis, 1999: 86). Giddens's version of reflexivity is described as 'cataphatic', understood to mean an excessively activistic reflexivity. Cataphatic reflexivity, if vaunted as an ideal type, will encourage 'compulsive routine', and an 'empty' existence (1999: 95). Different readings of the psychological consequences of Giddens's reflexive self-identify will be considered in more detail in the following chapter.

[7] Another critical point might be that, aside from issues of access to, and implication of, expert knowledge, Giddens overlooks how what is *defined* as expert knowledge may also be highly contestable. See, for example, Brian Wynne's article on Giddens's concept of expert knowledge (Wynne, 1996).

Chapter 6 Reflexivity & Narcissism

This chapter is concerned with the extent to which reflexivity can be understood as a *pathology* in connection to self-identity. Just as Giddens aims to connect a conceptualisation of the self to a substantive theory of recent social developments, Christopher Lasch explicitly attempted to 'explore the psychological dimension of long term shifts in the structure of cultural authority' (Lasch, 1979a [1991]: 238). Lasch draws from both psychoanalysis and critical theory, continuing what he sees as a 'long tradition' of study which concentrates on establishing links between culture and individual psychology, a tradition that includes Marcuse, Horkheimer, and Fromm (Lasch, 1979b: 195). Psychoanalysis offers a clinical precision in grasping the nature of psychological mechanisms of selfhood, for Lasch, whereas critical theory illustrates the conditions which shape new kinds of self. Lasch focuses on the concept of narcissism, and builds on its psychoanalytic definition, to suggest that the term can be useful in helping us understand the nature of modern society and resulting forms of self-identity: 'the concept of narcissism provides us....with a way of understanding the psychological impact of recent social changes' (Lasch, 1979a [1991]: 50).

On initial inspection, there is some affinity between Lasch's and Giddens's evaluation of modern identity. The role Lasch attributes to the concept of narcissism plays a similar part to that of reflexivity in Giddens's social theory - as a bridging concept between transformations in the social world and transformations in the intimate

realms of self-experience. The resulting analysis also shares some common ground: both authors envisage the modern self in relation to higher-than-ever levels of self-scrutiny and self-doubt, and they coincide too in some of their descriptions of social and cultural change. The two authors' subsequent reading of contemporary selfhood differs substantially though, Lasch offering a far more pessimistic diagnosis than Giddens, as the centrality of the concept of narcissism suggests.[1] The reasoning behind Lasch's differences suggest an alternative interpretation of what Giddens conceives of as reflexivity is possible, and for that reason, Lasch's work will be considered in this chapter. To reiterate, the central concern of this chapter is to establish the extent to which reflexivity can be critically defined as a pathological response to, and constitutive element of, modern social conditions.

In this chapter I will briefly consider the psychoanalytic origins of narcissism, before summarising key elements of Lasch's analysis of the 'culture of narcissism'. I will then consider Giddens's critique of Lasch's work, which focuses on a number of issues. Of particular interest is Giddens's claim that Lasch works with a simplistic and reduced concept of agency which skews his overall position, leaving it excessively deterministic in its understanding of the contemporary self's relationship to cultural change. Giddens's criticism will be assessed and, drawing from examples in Lasch's own work, I will suggest that Lasch constructs a social theory which, whilst undoubtedly flawed, is more sophisticated than Giddens concedes. In fact there are many similarities in Giddens's and Lasch's analysis, and in many cases Lasch's position seems at least as defensible as Giddens's. Whilst it may not be possible to equate reflexivity with narcissism in any exhaustive sense, there are times when Lasch's analysis almost seems to critically pre-empt Giddens's claims, and these

moments will be considered. I will argue that whilst on occasion irreparably contradictory, both analyses offer insights into modern forms of self-identity. Both authors share similar limitations too, I believe, in the sense that, in their own ways, they tend to understand individual experience in a homogeneous fashion. For both Lasch and Giddens, social conditions seem to encourage universal and uniform responses from their subjects. A consideration of these limitations will complete this chapter.

The Psychoanalytical Concept of Narcissism

Theoretical precision is important for Lasch, particularly as he wants to avoid the 'practise of equating narcissism with everything selfish and disagreeable' (Lasch, 1979a: 32). That would be stretching the concept too far, rendering it a catch-all concept: 'Men have always been selfish, groups have always been ethnocentric; nothing is gained by giving these qualities a psychiatric label' (ibid.). Lasch looks to the clinical literature of psychoanalysis for a clarification of the concept of narcissism as a pathology.[2] The psychoanalytic concept is grounded in Freud's 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' (1914), which Lasch concedes is 'a seminal but confusing paper' (Lasch: 1979a: 241). In support of Freud, he draws extensively from recent theoretical developments in clinical literature, as well as the work of Melanie Klein.[3] Utilising this body of work, Lasch attempts a precise definition of narcissism and its origins.

Freud distinguished between primary and secondary narcissism. Primary narcissism is encountered by everybody, experienced in the womb and by the new-born infant.

At these times, according to psychoanalytical accounts, the child's needs are met instantaneously:

> The new-born infant - the primary narcissist - does not yet perceive his mother as having an existence separate from his own, and he therefore mistakes dependence on the mother, who satisfies his needs as soon as they arise, with his own omnipotence (Lasch, 1979a: 36).

Because there is no delay between need and gratification, no distinction arises between inside and outside, self and other. The infant feels hungry and thirsty, and those needs are satisfied, immediately - the infant, particularly in the womb, is constantly warm, snug and protected. The infant has no sense of a separate individual satisfying its needs, or of its own self as another, separate individual. The world is not experienced as an 'outside world' which the infant operates in, as an individual distinct from that world. All a soon-to-be-born or new-born infant knows of the world is its own experiences of gratification. That is the sum total of its experience. The fledgling self feels as if it is the sum of the world - need goes hand in hand with its satisfaction, and no distinction is made between 'within' and 'without', between an internal and external world, between self and other. This is the state of primary narcissism.

Soon after birth, the infant is confronted with feelings of hunger and separation, a devastating experience which starkly contrasts with the previous 'oceanic' oneness of the womb. In these feelings, the infant comes face-to-face with 'its helpless, inferior and dependent position in the world' (Lasch, 1979a: 241). The illusory bliss of primary narcissism is no longer an option. Instead the infant must develop the 'inner

confidence' to deal with the experience of need, which comes from consistent experiences of satiation. Here the infant can develop the capacity to expect that needs will be gratified in the near future, and thus be placated. Such a recognition further clarifies the infant's separation however, and 'as the infant learns to distinguish itself from its surroundings, it begins to understand that its own wishes do not control the world' (1979a: 242).

To cope with this powerlessness initially the infant indulges in unconscious fantasies which attempt to regain the equilibrium of the womb. This may be achieved by acting as though everything which gratifies is a part of the infant's self. This is an infant's yearning for the womb. Here all experience was satisfying, and both the source of the need, and the source of its gratification, felt as if they were a part of the infant's own self. The new born infant tries to replicate that experience by imagining all objects which satisfy its needs, and, importantly, all their own actions which bring about the satisfaction of needs, as part of their own self. At the same time the infant has to cope with those times when needs are not satisfied, when they are frustrated. In Kleinian terminology, the infant directs hate and rage towards the 'bad' aspects of the world, those objects which have failed to meet their needs. The infant's attitude towards its mother might be an example. The mother when she is kind and gentle with the infant is good, and these aspects of her behaviour actually form a part of the infant's own self-image. The same mother when she is absent, distracted, or ignoring the child, is seen as bad, and a separate object from the 'good' mother, and outside of the self. Thus the infant is 'refusing to recognise that the adults on whom he depends can frustrate as well as satisfy his desires' (ibid.), and in the process, blurs the boundaries between self and other. The child imagines either a return to a mother

who always and instantaneously gratifies or that they can cope without anyone to satisfy their own needs. Both these fantasy-based responses deny the existence of separation rather than realistically begin to accept it: 'The first line of defence encourages a regressive symbiosis; the second, solipsistic illusions of omnipotence' (ibid.). Both are attempts to obliterate the distinction between a self and a separate external and indifferent world.

These defences should be a short-lived stage in the development of the infant. As the child develops it should recognise 'the need for and dependence on people who nevertheless remain separate from ourselves and refuse to submit to our whims (ibid.). Emotional maturity lies in 'a recognition of others not as projections of our own desires but as independent beings with desires of their own' (ibid.). According to clinical literature, if however, the child 'for some reason experiences this separation trauma with special intensity' (Lasch, 1979: 36), then he may revert back to these types of fantasies, which in turn create certain character traits which are associated with a narcissistic personality. It is these types of response which form the basis of secondary or pathological narcissism in the clinical literature which Lasch surveys. Lasch summarises these as follows:

> dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings....pseudo self-insight, calculating seductiveness, nervous, self-deprecatory humour (1979a: 33).

These are all ways of coping with the world, and one's inevitable dependence upon it, which stem from a failure to gain an independent sense of self. They are misplaced

attempts to emulate the illusory equilibrium of primary narcissism. A fragile sense of self depends on the perpetual attention of others, yet shuns the dependency it evokes in one's self-awareness; a meaningful sense of an 'inner' self is fleeting and vacillatory; rage is directed at the elements of the external world which do not gratify one's needs unconditionally, and so on. Lasch argues that though they make no claim to elucidate cultural or social phenomena, clinical studies of narcissistic disorder 'depict a type of personality that ought to be immediately recognisable, in a more subdued form, to observers of the contemporary cultural scene' (1979a: 38); a personality which is reflected in that very scene. This is a rather vague claim, but Lasch's more specific assertions are evident in his dissection of the personality he sees emerging. Aspects Lasch attributes to this personality throughout his work include, in relation to the above, oscillating self-esteem, compulsive consumerism and other addictions, a fascination and identification with celebrity, a sense of inner-emptiness, a difficulty forming relationships and a fear of old age (1979a: 31-51). In its broadest terms, narcissism is summarised as:

> a disposition to see the world as a mirror, more particularly as a projection of one's own fears and desires - not because it makes people grasping and self-assertive but because it makes them weak and dependent (Lasch, 1984: 33).

Clinical psychology has noted a shift in the most common causes of complaint (1984: 42-43), which Lasch argues are significant for a meaningful cultural diagnosis: 'In the last twenty-five years, the border-line patient, who confronts the psychiatrist not with well-defined symptoms but with diffuse dissatisfactions, has become increasingly common' (Lasch, 1979a: 37). The shift is recognised clinically as a growth in narcissistic personality disorders, which is important for Lasch, because it is

indicative of a general change in the way we experience our individuality - self-identity in Giddens's terminology. Such a shift can reveal more than the symptoms likely to appear in extreme cases of individual pathology. Lasch follows the Freudian logic in suggesting that what is culturally understood to be 'abnormal' is merely an exaggeration of what is collectively experienced as 'normal': 'the psychoanalytic postulate that the neurotic expresses in extreme form the psychological problems that affect even the 'normal' individual' (Tucker, 1999: 167). The common and recurring elements of the extremes of behaviour in a society indicate what passes, to a lesser degree as normal behaviour.

In making this connection, Lasch is explicit, stating that 'the character traits associated with pathological narcissism', i.e. those outlined above, 'in less extreme form appear in such profusion in the everyday life of our age' (Lasch, 1979a: 33). This connection, Lasch claims, is strengthened by the supposed cultural prevalence, and encouragement, of narcissistic traits. Here Lasch shifts his analysis to a critique of contemporary culture and its relationship to the narcissistic personality.

Lasch departs from Klein and Freud, and develops his own brand of critical theory, in explicitly extending his understanding of the causes of narcissism beyond the realm of parental relationships in early infancy. According to Lasch we live in a society upon which we are increasingly dependent to meet all our needs, a society which encourages and nourishes narcissistic personalities in the meeting of those needs. Lasch discusses many elements of the 'culture of narcissism', and considers in detail how these elements encourage narcissistic psychological responses which thus perpetuate a narcissistic culture. I will discuss a number of these elements, and

compare them to Giddens's own analysis of similar issues: capitalism, agency, cults of expertise, the socialisation of reproduction, and the proliferation of a therapeutic ideology.

Lasch, Capitalism & Narcissism

A key difference between the two authors is their emphasis upon contemporary capitalism. Lasch places capitalism at the heart of his social theory. He understands contemporary society as strongly determined by capitalism, one of his primary concerns being 'the cultural and psychological devastation brought about by industrial capitalism' (Lasch et al., 1979: 194). Lasch attempts to describe how the conditions of modern capitalism encourage psychological responses which, to a lesser degree, parallel the characteristics of pathological narcissism. In the drive towards mass-production, Lasch argues, a society of mass-consumers needed to be encouraged. Advertising has forcibly brought an ever-increasing number of needs to our attention, as well as encouraging all needs to be met in terms of standardised consumption. This amounts to what Lasch refers to as the 'propaganda of commodities' (Lasch, 1979a), which serves two important functions.

Firstly, it encourages individuals to focus on their immediate surroundings as their horizon for change. Consuming new goods and services is seen as the key, and the limit, to creating meaning in one's life, with little alternative: 'The tired worker, instead of attempting to change the conditions of his work, seeks renewal in brightening his immediate surroundings with new goods and services' (Lasch, 1979a: 74). As a second, related, element, the culture of mass-consumption offers pseudo-

salvation to the modern individual which, for Lasch belies a fundamental contradiction. Although 'consumption promises to fill the aching void' it actually contributes to and extends contemporary feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. The 'propaganda of commodities' commodifies alienation itself and proposes consumption as the cure (ibid.).

Mass consumerism glorifies a concern for self-image, Lasch argues, and encourages the identification of the self with various consumption-oriented 'lifestyle' packages, whilst eliminating or marginalising any alternative: 'they reduce choice to a matter of style and taste, as their preoccupation with "lifestyle" indicates' (Lash, 1984: 34). Based as they are on mass consumption, they cannot be allowed to become static. They have to keep moving, so that individual's keep consuming. In this sense they make a constant, independent sense of self difficult, and instead encourage a fleeting, ephemeral and uncertain self-identity, symptomatic of narcissism. As a result our own self-identity, Lasch claims, has become thoroughly mediated, and chronically dependent on other's attentions for its verification. An individual is increasingly likely to see her or himself in terms of 'a theatrical view of his own "performance" on and off the job' (Lasch, 1984: 30). Lasch illustrates this state of affairs further: 'we cannot help responding to others as if their actions - and our own - were being recorded and simultaneously transmitted to an unseen audience or stored up for closer scrutiny at some later time' (Lasch, 1979a: 47). We have become unable to separate the self as a public performance from any firm or consistent 'inner' senses of self. We live in 'a world of mirrors' where the boundaries between the self and the social world in which it operates become blurred (Lasch, 1984: 30). 'In a mirror-fixated

world', argues Frosh, another psychoanalytically based social critic, 'the centring of the object's self in something deep and stable becomes impossible' (Frosh, 1991: 73).

The result is an undermining of both a firm sense of self, and of an external reality; again suggesting parallels with narcissistic disorders, as explained by psychoanalysis. Without this distinction in place, the individual oscillates between feelings of omnipotence and fearful dependency. On the one hand the 'culture of consumption' encourages a view of the 'world of objects' as an 'extension or projection of the self': 'The consumer lives surrounded not so much by things as fantasies. He lives in a world that has no objective or independent existence and seems to exist only to gratify or thwart his desires' (Lasch, 1984: 31). On the other hand, the modern individual, as a consumer and as a worker, cannot grasp the complexity of the social world, and can only accept her dependence. 'Reality thus presents itself....as an impenetrable network of social relations' (Lasch, 1979a: 91). It is 'a world of giant bureaucracies...and complex, interlocking technological systems' (Lasch, 1984: 33). The consumer's dependence on such 'intricate, supremely sophisticated life-support systems...recreates some of the infantile feelings of helplessness' (1984: 33-34). The world is 'alternately gratifying and frustrating', and thus, the individual 'finds it hard to conceive of the world except in his own fantasies' (ibid.).

This oscillation is further encouraged by the character of the fantasies individuals are encouraged to consume, according to Lasch. Specifically, 'images of the good life' envelop the consumer, and are associated with glamour, celebrity and success (1984: 181). Lasch argues that mass culture and advertising thus do not provide realistic, authentic or attainable goals: 'mass culture encourages the ordinary man to cultivate

extraordinary tastes.... Yet the propaganda of commodities makes him acutely unhappy with his lot. By fostering grandiose aspirations, it also fosters self-denigration and self-contempt' (ibid.). Thus the individual is further encouraged to harbour feelings of dependence and worthlessness with fleeting promises of omnipotence.

Giddens, Capitalism & Lasch

Giddens takes a somewhat different view of capitalism than Lasch. As a system of organisation, it is subsumed to the more general term of 'modernity', 'late modernity or more recently, 'post-traditional society'. Particularly in his later work, which has been more explicitly concerned with self-identity, a conceptualisation of the influence of capitalism has become a background concern for Giddens. At the same time, Giddens is aware that capitalism still plays an important part in the structuring of self-identity:

> Modernity opens up the project of the self, but under conditions strongly influenced by standardising effects of commodity capitalism.... I have not sought out to trace the impact of capitalist production on modern social life (Giddens, 1984: 197).

Giddens thus acknowledges that although he has made little account of it, 'commodification influences the project of the self and the establishing of lifestyles' (ibid.). Giddens accepts that recent social changes have had an impact on the psyche, but 'commodity capitalism' is one area he has not extensively considered. In the context of mass-consumption, advertising and the mass-media, Giddens concedes that

'the project of the self as such may become heavily commodified' (1984: 198). Consumption may become a substitute for 'the genuine development of self', as might media entertainment and self-help books (1984: 198-199). With these possibilities in mind, it is unfortunate that Giddens did not, and has still not attempted, a more detailed account of the 'impact' of capitalism on modern self-identity. Giddens's omission may be seen as justifiable because he considers 'such processes in a dialectical fashion' (1991: 192). Giddens argues that commodification always faces opposition, and individuals react 'creatively' and 'interpretively' to commodifying influences, utilising 'scepticism', 'derision', and 'humour' (1991: 199).

Although he has not himself pursued the effect of contemporary capitalism in any detail, Giddens's view of agency and his belief in the personal transformations accompanying new levels of reflexivity commit him, justifiably, to a 'dialectical' position. Thus he is critical of Lasch's account for its pessimism and social determinism. Not just with regard to issues of commodification, but in their social theory in general, Lasch and similar critics overlook the possibility of a 'positive appropriation of circumstances in which globalised influences impinge upon everyday life' (1991: 124), according to Giddens. The problem with Lasch's account, Giddens argues, is its prevailing current of social determinism. In other words, the individual as reflexive agent is under-theorised in Lasch's analysis:

> In the work of Lasch, and many others who have produced rather similar cultural diagnoses, one can discern an inadequate account of the human agent. The individual appears essentially passive in relation to overwhelming social forces (Giddens, 1991: 175).

In order to produce an accurate account of agency, Giddens argues that social theory must 'accomplish three tasks', tasks which Lasch overlooks (ibid.). Accounts must recognise that 'human agents never passively accept external conditions of action' (ibid.). Individuals are always reflecting upon, and contextually reconstituting, those conditions. Secondly, individuals and groups appropriate the conditions of their social life, particularly in modern settings where social life has eschewed traditional authority and opened up areas to reflexivity. Thirdly, it is incorrect to distinguish between malleable 'micro-settings' of action, such as family life and intimate relationships on the one hand, and impenetrable social systems on the other hand, which form 'an uncontrolled background environment' (ibid.). In avoiding these factors, Lasch's account, as far as Giddens is concerned, fails 'on an empirical level to grasp the nature of human empowerment' (ibid.). As a result the individual emerges as a powerless, socially shaped entity; a pinball knocked from side to side, her movement dependent on external causes. Narcissism is read off as the psychological consequence of a narcissistic culture, and the effective intervention of agency is thus excluded from Lasch's account. Giddens argues, on the other hand, that he recognises agency as a real and integral element in the formation of the social world.

Returning to the issue of capitalism, Giddens draws from his three 'tasks' of an adequate social theory in order to dismiss Lasch's, as he sees it, deterministic account, and justify further his own 'dialectical' approach. Giddens argues that: 'In assessing the prevalence of narcissism in late modernity, we have to be careful to separate the world of commodified images, to which Lasch frequently refers, from the actual responses of individuals' (1991: 178-179). Giddens criticises Lasch for

conflating the proliferation of commodified images with an assumed narcissistic response. While he acknowledges that commodifying influences are 'powerful', Giddens contends that 'they are scarcely received in an uncritical way by the populations they affect' (1991: 179). Thus Giddens's general critique of Lasch is reflected in the particular consideration of capitalism: 'people appear largely passive in their reactions' (ibid.).

Lasch's pessimistic account undoubtedly harbours deterministic tendencies. However, it is possible to suggest that Giddens's criticisms are at times over-stated. Lasch's account arguably illustrates an important aspect of contemporary self-identity, which can complement, but also query, Giddens's version of events. This is particularly apparent in examining the connections between identity and modern capitalism. Although critical of Lasch, often convincingly, Giddens's own recent analyses of capitalism seem ambiguous and occasionally contradictory. On the one hand, Giddens warns of the dangers of processes of commodification, whereby 'the project of the self becomes translated into one of the possession of desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed lifestyles' (1991: 198). 'Even more insidious', Giddens argues, is the commodification of 'self-actualisation'. The very process of authentic self-development is 'packaged and distributed according to market criteria', and 'marketed as pre-packaged theorems about how to 'get on' in life' (ibid.). In these statements, Giddens appears sympathetic to Lasch's pessimistic view of the opportunities for authentic self-development in contemporary societies.

Lasch, in following a similar path, tackles many elements of this capitalist culture which appears as such a threat to psychological health and autonomous self-

development. However, once Giddens has acknowledged the importance of capitalist culture, such as he does in the above examples from *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), he proceeds to virtually ignore its impact over the remainder of the discussion. He simply states that he has 'not sought' to establish the role of capitalist relations in contemporary social life, without further justification. This is even though capitalism 'is one of the main institutional dimensions of modernity' which 'may seriously impact upon self-identity' (1991: 197). Whatever one's conclusions might be, it seems problematic to bestow great importance upon a topic, only to jettison it from discussion once its importance is established. In doing so it can make Giddens's overall account seem at best partial and at worst deceptive.

Lasch & Agency

Furthermore, whether or not one agrees with Lasch's analysis, it is not always apparent that he is constructing a version of the self which can be construed as 'passive'. As has been indicated above, Lasch relies on a complex psychoanalytic framework and the domination of commodity capitalism for his concept of narcissism, but this does not necessarily exclude an adequate theory of agency. Just as Giddens connects the extension of reflexive awareness to the individual's 'disembedding' from previous certainties, Lasch sees 'an escalating cycle of self-consciousness' arising from the lost 'immediacy' of external reality (Lasch1979a). For Lasch, the consciously constructed self is a severely limited one, but not necessarily because individuals passively accept the narcissistic culture's offerings and then malfunction as a self. It is arguable that the individual in Lasch's account is actively involved in the construction of their sense of self. The problem for Lasch is

that commodity capitalism offers such a poverty of options as resources for that construction, whilst making any alternative difficult. Lasch seems in agreement with Giddens in that as the traditional contexts of reality have retreated, contemporary reality has become increasingly mediated. However, for Lasch, the forms of mediation are problematically shaped by capitalism, and other factors, narrowing an individual's options for how they make sense of them selves, others and the external world:

> the only reality is the identity he can construct out of materials furnished by advertising and mass culture, themes of popular film and fiction, and fragments torn from a vast range of cultural traditions, all of them equally contemporaneous to the contemporary mind (Lasch, 1979a: 91).

The individual in this quote could quite easily be Giddens's reflexive individual, constantly constructing a narrative in the choices he makes in the 'openness of the world' (Giddens, 1991: 189). Lasch argues that choices are not limitless however; they are shaped by the forces of commodity capitalism, amongst others.[4] In this sense individual agency may be limited, but not because the individual is seen as excessively passive. The problem according to Lasch is that, even as agents, we are all caught up in narcissistic responses. In the light of his psychoanalytic foundations, Lasch asserts that narcissistic traits have a potential for expression in everyone, if the necessary conditions exist and persist. Lasch claims that narcissism is in fact an understandable response to modern social and cultural conditions - it presents itself as an adequate way of making sense of modern life:

> Narcissism appears realistically to represent the best way of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life, and the

> prevailing social conditions therefore tend to bring out narcissistic traits that are present in everyone (Lasch, 1979a: 50; my emphasis).

It could be argued that Lasch, in this instance at least, is not conceiving of individuals as passively accepting the world. They are actively involved in it and appropriating their environment as best as they can. The problem for Lasch is that, in doing so,[individuals, unwittingly or not, become involved in a downward spiral of narcissistic psychological activity.

Particularly in encouraging consumption, and suggesting that consumption is a vehicle for meaningful forms of identity, though in conjunction with other factors, Lasch argues that modern culture engenders narcissism as a psychological response. In other words the 'psychological effects of consumerism' equate with some of the narcissistic traits summarised above. Mass consumption, Lasch argues, is 'part of a larger pattern of dependence, disorientation and loss of control' (Lasch, 1984: 27). In everyday life it encourages a passive response to the surrounding social world, as individuals are reduced to consumers rather than effective creators and producers. Thus passivity is engendered as a consequence of being situated, physically and psychologically, within the predominating conditions of contemporary capitalism. Similarly, Lasch points to the prevalence of a 'spectatorial state of mind, both at work and at play' (ibid.). This state of mind is reflected in what Lasch refers to, following Debord, as the 'society of the spectacle'. Individuals are bombarded with 'the proliferation of visual and audial images' (Lasch, 1979a: 47). Individuality is constantly reflected back to the individual, one's own self as much a spectacle as any other image.

I would thus argue that Lasch offers a more complex version of agency than Giddens's criticisms suggest. Narcissism is characterised as a meaningful, adaptive and understandable way of responding to social change. Thus he claims that 'the concept of narcissism provides us not with a ready-made psychological determinism but with a way of understanding the psychological impact of recent social changes' (1979a: 50). In defining his aim as 'the psychological impact of recent social changes', it is difficult to see how he differs from Giddens in his overall project in relation to the accusation of determinism. The opportunities and choices opened up by post-traditional society are in a sense inverted by Lasch, and regarded as pseudo-opportunities which in fact further ensnare the individual in a circle of narcissism.

Cults of Expertise / Expert Systems

Giddens's defence of the positive aspect of the reflexive project of selfhood lies in his analysis of the social world beyond the definition of 'capitalism'. Lasch's analysis also considers other aspects of that world. Both Giddens and Lash, for example, direct their attention to the role of expertise in the modern social world. Where Giddens finds room for optimism, Lasch unsurprisingly diagnoses a further shrinking of authentic selfhood. Besides the spread of capitalism, the rise of the modern bureaucracy and 'cults of expertise' are another key reason for the extension of narcissism in Lasch's account. In more traditional settings, Lasch argues that the boundaries of self-identity were more clearly demarcated, by established routines and habits. They were constructed and maintained within family units and at the level of small communities. The characteristics of capitalist culture encourage a narcissistic response, and according to Lasch this encouragement is increasingly consolidated by

the 'invasion' of family life, by 'agencies of socialized parenthood' (Lasch, 1979a: 169). However rigid and authoritative the family was, Lasch argues that at least an individual had a clear sense of who they were, what their role was, and what was expected of them, with a clear sense of the reality of the world and how to act in accordance with it. Lasch refers to these factors as aspects of 'the work of reproduction'; not just the facts of sex and childbirth, but the bringing up of a child and the nature of that child's environment (1979a: 154).[5] Modern bureaucracies, experts and consumer capitalism have, in combination over the last hundred years, gradually taken over the authority and resources necessary for such work:

> the advertising industry, the mass media, the health and welfare services and other agencies of mass tuition took over many of the socialising functions of the home and brought the ones that remained under the direction of modern science and technology (ibid.).

Thus the 'consensus among the 'helping professions' ', soon instilled into experiences of parenting, was that 'the family could no longer provide for its own needs'. The result is the 'socialization of reproduction' (1979a: 154-155). Questions involved in the 'work of reproduction' such as how to have a child, when, how to bring it up, what it should learn and when, where it will be cared for etc., have all, Lasch argues, become subject to bureaucratisation and the cult of expertise. Parents, encouraged to be 'afraid of repeating the mistakes of their own parents' are the new consumers of 'professional' advice, and so embrace the 'routinized half-truths of the experts as the laws of living' (1979a: 164). However, expert opinion is not uniform, and neither is it consistent. It is constantly updated, redefined and contradicted, and here it reconnects with contemporary capitalist culture. 'Knowledge' is offered up as part of the cycle

of mass production and mass consumption and never stands still for long. Thus Lasch labels psychiatry 'the handmaiden of advertising':

> It lays the emotional foundation for the insistence of the advertising industry that the health and safety of the young, the satisfaction of their daily nutritional requirements, their emotional and intellectual development, and their ability to compete with their peers for popularity and success all depend on consumption of vitamins, band-aids, cavity-preventing toothpaste, cereals, mouthwashes and laxatives (Lasch, 1979a: 164).

As a result, parental care, besieged by conflicting, chronically revisable advice, and allowed an increasingly marginal role, is nervous and vacillating. Parents are kept 'in a state of chronic anxiety' (ibid.). On the one hand external authorities take over many of the roles of the traditional family. On the other hand, what remains of parental authority is increasingly open to doubt and uncertainty. These factors have 'subtly altered the quality of the parent-child connection' (1979a: 169-170). The increasing socialization of the family conjures up 'an ideal of perfect parenthood while destroying parents' confidence in their ability' (ibid.).

Consequently, parents become indistinct forms of authority, who attend to their children with nervous energy and partially suppressed disdain. The infant is provided with 'an excess of seemingly solicitous care but with little real warmth' (1979a: 171), and 'suffocating yet emotionally distant attentions' (1979a: 172). As part of their own aggrandised images of selfhood, parents set themselves up according to an unattainable ideal, which owing to their narcissistic tendencies, they simply do not have the experience or motivation to fulfil:

> The modern parent's attempt to make children feel loved and wanted does not conceal an underlying coolness - the remoteness of those who have little to pass on to the next generation and who in any case give priority to their own right to self-fulfilment (Lasch, 1979a: 50).

The vicarious self-esteem of the parents is thus perpetuated. The infant becomes over-dependent on her parents, encouraging 'idealistically inflated impressions' of one or more parent, which are nevertheless constantly frustrated. These relationships encourage what Lasch refers to as a 'family tautology'; the inflated expectations of the infant 'the family members tacitly conspire to indulge so as to maintain the family's equilibrium' (1979a: 172). The family exhaustively try and validate exaggerated, fantasy-oriented wishes, creating in fleeting moments, a 'charade of togetherness' (ibid.), which, in the longer term encourage narcissistic preoccupations in the child. Overall then, it is this kind of child care which may encourage omnipotent fantasies and a collapse of the boundaries between self and other objects, i.e. narcissism, in the psychological development of the child. Their own grandiose aspirations and feelings of omnipotence are encouraged yet unsuccessfully realised, and so all the more devastating when unfulfilled.

Lasch's discussion of experts in relation to the family nicely illustrate the complexity of his account and its interconnectedness. Narcissism is explained as being a rational response to a variety of factors in combination. The practices of modern industry, mass production and consumption, in conjunction with numerous expert cults, diminish individual understanding and responsibility, and distort personal relationships (1979a: 180-182), encouraging narcissistic-type relations within the family, fuelling further narcissism. Outside of the family the culture of narcissism

encourages and panders to narcissistic responses in the search for identity, further perpetuating narcissistic traits. Thus the roots of a cycle of narcissism are in place. Modern culture, for Lasch, encourages a form of parenting which fosters narcissism in the young, a narcissism that is actively sustained as they grow up in the world of consumer capitalism: 'the prevailing social conditions...tend to bring out narcissistic traits.... These conditions have also transformed the family, which in turn shapes the underlying structure of personality' (1979a: 50).

Giddens's analysis shares some commonalities with Lasch's up to a point. Family life, and most other aspects of experience, are 'emptied' of their traditional functions in post-traditional settings. For the family, processes such as education, care, support and moral guidance are no longer passed on as fixed and certain qualities, to be imparted by knowledgeable members of a family unit. In Giddens's terminology, kinship ties can no longer be relied upon to 'meet a range of obligations', including the provision of 'a nexus of reliable social connections', and 'an organizing medium of trust relations' (Giddens, 1990: 102). These functions are remapped on to social institutions, often embodied in the form of expert systems. Giddens's primary account of expertise parallels Lasch's. They are an essential dynamic of the post-traditional disembedding of the individual, penetrating to the heart of everyday life. As well as ordering consumption, medicine, transport and other phenomena, they extend to the 'intimacies of the self', in the guise of 'the doctor, counsellor and therapist' (Giddens, 1991: 18).

The impact of expert systems is not construed as wholly or even predominately negative in Giddens's account however. The chronic revisability of expert knowledge

can lead to 'scepticism' and 'disenchantment' (Giddens, 1994a: 87). At the same time, expert systems open up the social world to individual decision-making, and as such provide opportunities for reappropriation which encourage more autonomous forms of self-identity. Thus 'in any given situation....the individual has the possibility of a partial or more full-blown reskilling in respect of specific decisions or contemplated decisions' (Giddens, 1991: 139). Individuals can reappropriate knowledge in a variety of combinations from these institutions in order to successfully re-embed themselves into post-traditional culture with a meaningful self-identity. This is the basis of a successful reflexive project of selfhood for Giddens: 'The reappropriation of expert knowledge....is the very condition of the 'authenticity' of everyday life' (Giddens, 1994a: 91). Expert knowledge, now 'open' to any individual, is portrayed as a mobile resource for self-identity, as likely to challenge conditions of social control as they are to perpetuate them. Thus Giddens believes that 'expertise is as disruptive of hierarchies of authority as it is a stabilizing influence' (1994: 85).

Who's analysis of the role of expertise is more valid? Lasch regards the appropriation of expert knowledge as an attempt to shore up a self which has been deprived of authentic independence. It is an attempt which is ultimately frustrated however. In the very act of removing authority from the context of daily life and offering it back as an endless series of choices, Lasch argues that expert systems consolidate a narcissistic psyche which originates in a culture of consumption. Whatever one makes of Lasch's analysis, in comparison Giddens does seem particularly uncritical of the type of knowledge provided by expert systems, and considers its utilisation only in positive terms - reskilling, re-embedding and

reappropriation. In conceptualising the relationship between the individual and abstract systems, of which expert systems form an important part, Giddens's analysis might be questioned for its simplicity.[6] Ian Craib develops a critique along these lines, and in part clarifies this claim. Craib argues that the individual is perceived as an agent in Giddens's theory, but only in relation to the choices she makes from the constellation of expert systems. In a sense, the individual is at the mercy of the expert system's definition of the world, whatever choices she makes:

> his concept of the agent is a shallow one, and pervaded by the social.... it is over-socialised. The conception of the person in modern systems is of someone who is both defined and constituted by and dealing with the problems of living with abstract systems (Craib, 1990: 187).

His vision of the reflexive, choice-laden individual is constructed only in response to wider social change, in a not dissimilar way to Lasch's account. There are examples in Giddens's work which confirm Craib's critique. Giddens understands the nature of the transformation of day-to-day life in terms of the 'impact of disembedding mechanisms' (Giddens, 1991: 22). We are 'caught up' in the modern experiment, which requires a 'multiplicity of changes and adaptions in daily life' for the individual (Giddens, 1994a: 60). Giddens's dialectical approach attempts to create a two-way flow of traffic between the individual and social conditions, but he still portrays self-identity as defined by its relationship to abstract systems: 'The reflexive project of the self....takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems (Giddens, 1991: 5); disembedding mechanisms 'intrude into the heart of self-identity' (1991: 148).

Craib argues, as I have done earlier in this thesis, that Giddens lodges his analysis at the level of 'the general tendencies of our society, the grand institutional clusters' (Craib, 1990: 187-188). As a result, Craib claims that Giddens is 'simply naive' about the relationship between social conditions and the individual. Giddens's apparent dialectical complexity, whereby reflexive individuals are offered an extension of choice which further diversifies that range of choice, is instead envisaged as overly simple representation of far more complex relationship between individuals and abstract systems. Craib argues that Giddens is simplistically positive about the 'opportunities' that modern society provides. A more complex reading of society, and its relationship to the individual, Craib argues, would question the plausibility of converting the choices that undoubtedly come with the modern world into unproblematic resources for self-identity. Craib actually turns to the work of Lasch to suggest that his more complex analysis problematises the opportunities provided by expert systems that Giddens is more keen to accept at face-value. Craib argues that Lasch is also discussing how individuals engage with the world, but with a detail which more effectively captures the complexity of the individual's association with an external world.

> Lasch's argument.... is that what comes from the outside world, *including expert knowledge*, is not being used to change the world, but to protect oneself, unrealistically, from unpleasantness and eventually from death. We're not finding better, wider identities but rather manic false selves (Craib, 1990: 188; my emphasis).

In a menacing and impenetrable outside world, the search for personal identity is encouraged to attach itself to fantasies of omnipotence and obliteration. Mass

consumerism and expert systems encourage these fantasies, suggesting individuals can make choices which add up to an unblemished selfhood: 'expert knowledge itself conspires in this, appearing to offer an insurance against growing old, growing ill, growing to a socially disapproved size' (1990: 189). In this context, the quest for a meaningful self-identity is seen in a different light. 'It becomes a search which destroys both the fabric of our interdependence, as relationships cannot be sustained, and which leaves the outside world moving along whatever course it is following' (ibid.).[7] Giddens's reflexive project is here disputed, with Lasch's analysis confounding Giddens's belief in an increasing and beneficial interdependence, a transformation of intimacy and a dialectical relationship with the social world.

The Therapeutic Sensibility

One particular element of expert systems, or the cult of expertise, depending on who's definition one adheres to, is the establishment of therapy as a profession. Therapy as an expert system reaches to the heart of both Lasch's and Giddens's understanding of modern self-identity.[8] For Giddens, therapy 'is an expert system deeply implicated in the reflexive project of the self' (Giddens, 1991: 180), while for Lasch, 'the contemporary climate is therapeutic' in general (Lasch, 1979a: 7). On this subject, Lasch and Giddens again offer conflicting analyses, and throw further light on the issue of self-identity.

The background to Giddens's account of therapy shares many of Lasch's concerns, the details of which have already been discussed in this thesis. To briefly reiterate, Giddens's own work emphasises the extent to which individuals have become

'disembedded' from a social environment which provided the 'supports on which self-identity was based' (Giddens, 1991: 149). And, paralleling Lasch, Giddens argues that the contemporary self has become disassociated from the experiences in daily life which once facilitated meaningful self-development. The individual has become 'sequestered from key types of experience which relate the tasks of day-to-day life, and even longer term life planning, to existential issues' (1991: 169). The daily routine has been set apart from the difficult but meaningful episodes in life such as madness, criminality, sickness and death, sexuality and nature (1991: 168). The individual has gradually relinquished their control over these events. This is in part due to the 'institutional sequestration' whereby organisations such as the 'mental asylum, the prison and the medical hospital' colonise some of the 'basic aspects of life experience' (1991: 156). This colonisation derives more generally from the impact of the dynamism of recent social changes: the separation of time and space, disembedding mechanisms and widespread reflexivity (1991: 20).

For Giddens, increasing individual reliance on internally referential abstract systems disconnects the individual from external ties. As a result, Giddens, echoing Lasch, acknowledges that self-development does become a prime concern: 'Lacking external referents supplied by others, the lifespan....emerges as a trajectory which relates above all to the individual's projects and plans' (1991: 147). Up to this point, although they rely on different terminologies, Lasch and Giddens seem to be in general agreement. Giddens, however, is quick to rally against more pessimistic interpretations of an increasing focus on self-development. He rhetorically poses the question; 'Does this phenomenon represent a defensive shrinkage of self-identity in the face of a recalcitrant outside world?' (1991:169). Giddens is wary of analyses

which have pounced on an increasing self-concern as evidence of social and psychological decline; those who 'see a preoccupation with self-development as an offshoot of the fact that old communal orders have broken down, producing a narcissistic, hedonistic concern with the ego' (Giddens, 1990: 122).[9] Others associate the same end with 'social manipulation' and the exclusion of the majority from decision-making processes of social value (ibid.). In pursuit of his scepticism Giddens specifically asks, after a representative quote from Lasch, if the 'search for self-identity' can be adequately conceived of as 'a form of somewhat pathetic narcissism' (Giddens, 1990: 123). Therapy, for Giddens, is centrally implicated in the successful reconstruction of identity in the context of disembedding mechanisms.

Giddens acknowledges that therapy 'can be an indulgence, and can perhaps promote narcissistic withdrawal' (Giddens, 1991: 180). To take such a view of therapy in isolation however, is to rely on a 'substantially inadequate' standpoint (1991: 34). In the shift to post-traditional settings, Giddens argues that the individual's sense of self has gone through massive changes. 'Therapy, including self-therapy, both expresses that change and provides programmes of realising it in the form of self-actualisation' (1991: 80). The rise of therapy is a symptom of that change, and it also provides a valuable resource for making sense of that change, for providing a guide in the newly reflexive ordering of self-identity. If the self is increasingly a reflexively organised project, then therapy can be seen as an important way of providing a consistent narrative for that project, of holding it together in a meaningful way. It can essentially be understood, Giddens explains, as a 'methodology of life-planning' (1991: 180). Consequently, 'a decision to enter therapy can generate empowerment',

by encouraging an individual to reflexively reconstruct their narrative of self-identity (1991: 143).

Lasch argues that mental and physical health have also been colonised by 'cults of expertise', centred around the notion of 'therapy'. The turn to therapy represents for Lasch another example of the self's dependence on external expert systems. For the modern individual, 'plagued by anxiety, depression, vague discontents, a sense of inner emptiness', therapy offers the promise of overcoming these qualities of alienation. Therapists 'become his principal allies in the struggle for composure; he turns to them in the hope of achieving the modern equivalent of salvation, "mental health"' (Lasch, 1979a: 13). The problem for Lasch is that the salvation therapy offers is unattainable. The therapeutic climate encourages dependence on external definitions of well-being which discourage autonomy and realistic appraisal of the limits to selfhood. It fosters a psychological state of constant mindfulness - 'the notion that health depends on eternal watchfulness' (1979a: 48), encouraging anxiety and self-doubt.

The therapeutic climate is in fact one of the most pervasive of social influences precipitating narcissistic characteristics in individuals for Lasch. It is 'another cultural change that elicits a narcissistic response and, in this case, gives it philosophical sanction' (1979a: 48). These two factors - the encouragement of narcissism and its rationalised endorsement - stem from a therapeutic ideology which attempts to prescribe the definitions of mental and physical well-being. The individual must constantly judge herself against these definitions, engendering a climate of relentless self-examination: 'the emergence of a therapeutic ideology

upholds a normative schedule of psychosocial development and thus gives further encouragement to anxious self-scrutiny' (ibid.). For Lasch, the therapeutic sensibility encourages new levels of self-awareness, and he here he may be in agreement with Giddens. However, Lasch sees this self-awareness as a banal and pseudo-liberatory characteristic of the contemporary self. It is an awareness facilitated and shaped by consumer capitalism, lauded and propagated by therapy, against a backdrop of powerlessness and uncertainty, in which authentic expression and autonomous selfhood are marginalised. Modern medical and psychiatric professions, and 'the therapeutic outlook and sensibility' (1979a: 49) in general, foster narcissistic patterns of anxiety and striving self-doubt;

> in which the individual is endlessly examines himself for signs of ageing and ill health, for tell-tale symptoms of psychic stress, for blemishes and flaws that might diminish his attractiveness, or on the other hand for reassuring indications that his life is proceeding according to schedule (ibid.).

Thus an obsession with the self is encouraged, rather than any kind of self-actualisation or self-development. In psychoanalytic terms, the individual seeks therapy in an attempt to overcome her gnawing self-doubt, and bolster her 'fantasies of omnipotence and eternal youth' (1979a: 40). The narcissist is thus susceptible to therapeutic solutions, which in fact perpetuate narcissistic traits.

Other consequences of the therapeutic sensibility equatable to narcissistic disorders include a sense of inner-emptiness and hypochondria. The connection to hypochondria is a straightforward one for Lasch. The 'endless self-scrutiny' Lasch indexes suggest an individual will tend to be 'chronically uneasy about his health',

which is only a small step away from hypochondria.[10] The attitude of the hypochondriac metaphorically indicates the nature of narcissism well for Lasch, as it avoids the tendency to conflate the term with a concept of self-love, vanity or arrogance: 'In order to polish and perfect the part he has devised for himself, the new Narcissus gazes at his own reflection, not so much in admiration as in unremitting search for flaws, signs of fatigue, decay' (1979a: 91).

Inner-emptiness stems from a focus on self-awareness against a backdrop of 'an impenetrable network of social relations' (ibid.). When the workings of the world are increasing inaccessible, then it follows that they are incapable of providing any meaning for the individual. In this context self-awareness and self-actualisation makes little sense for Lasch, yet they are a consequence of a 'waning belief in the reality of the external world' (1979a: 90). Narcissistic culture's response is to utilise 'a therapeutic jargon that celebrates not so much individualism as solipsism, justifying self-absorption as "authenticity" and "awareness" (1979a: 218), reinforcing a withdrawal into the self. The problem is that the individual, once face-to face with his own self, finds that there is nothing there to focus on which can fulfil him. Instead the individual becomes trapped in self-consciousness for-its-own-sake - 'imprisoned in his pseudo-awareness of himself', desperate for 'anything to get his mind off his mind' (1979a: 99) and 'longing for the lost innocence of spontaneous feeling' (1979a: 93).[11] The emptiness and despair of chronic self-awareness encourages a mistrust of the reality of one's self, makes it difficult to relate to others in an authentic way and blurs further the distinction between the self and the outside world - all traits of narcissism.

Conclusion

In summary, Lasch's key consequences of the therapeutic outlook, for the self, reinforce the impact of mass culture, bureaucracy, and the institutional colonisation of activities in that they encourage responses which parallel, in less extreme form, the characteristics of pathological narcissism. The modern self is understood by Lasch in terms of psychological responses to a changing culture, and the socialisation procedures which result. Contemporary forms of self-identity derived from this culture are beset with an erosion of any firm boundaries between the self and the object world, encouraging omnipotent fantasies alongside an inability to deal with the frustrations that accompany them, as well as a fear of dependency, long-term relationships, dying, and old age. Lasch sums up the 'new Narcissist' as follows:

> The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety. He seeks not to inflict his own certainties on others but to find a meaning in life. Liberated from the superstitions of the past, he doubts even the reality of his own existence.... but demands immediate gratification and lives in a state of restless, perpetually unsatisfied desire' (Lasch, 1979a: xvi).

Narcissism is both symptom and cause of a retreat from an increasingly meaningless social world which encourages an obsessive concern for self-fulfilment while rendering such a possibility increasingly unlikely.

It may seem possible to consider Giddens's work as an example of the therapeutic sensibility in the light of Lasch's critique. His advocacy of the reflexive formation of self-identity mirrors, in some respects, elements of the therapeutic climate which Lasch criticises. The reflexive project of the self encourages, or at least accepts,

'endless self-scrutiny' as a foundational principle of identity. As Giddens states, 'the reflexivity of the self is continuous, as well as all pervasive', in terms of 'a self-interrogation of what is happening' (Giddens, 1991: 76). Giddens undoubtedly focuses on concepts such as self-development and self-actualisation, and sees these as authentic possibilities in the context of a post-traditional world. In the view of Lasch then, Giddens's work might be seen itself as encouraging a narcissistic response, and bestowing a further 'philosophical sanction' upon it (Lasch, 1979a: 48). Lasch may be inclined to view Giddens's emphasis of the positive qualities of reflexivity as bringing an air of grandeur and authenticity to what Lasch reads as a narcissistic retreat. Some critics have indeed suggested that Giddens's work obscures the true nature of the opportunities for contemporary identity by transforming negative attributes of modern life into positive ones. Mestrovic argues that 'Giddens is not mindful of the fact that he is really promoting, albeit unwittingly, excessive narcissism' (Mestrovic, 1998: 155). Alexander similarly proposes a similar shortcoming in Giddens's work:

> The pathologies and alienations of modernity are converted into positive reaffirmations about the powers of the modern self and the emancipating contributions that apolitical scientific experts make to the reconstruction of the society (Alexander, 1996: 135).

These accusations reconnect with discussion in the previous chapter about possible ideological readings of Giddens. Lasch's critique of the therapeutic sensibility, and the critical comments here, further substantiates such a claim. Lasch's criticism illustrates how a lack of complexity in discussions of self-awareness may contribute to, and consolidate, problematic elements of contemporary culture and common

psychological responses. As discussed, O'Brien saw Giddens's later work 'as symptomatic of the rampant tide of individualistic neo-liberalisms that are infesting global political and economic institutions in the late modern era' (Hay et al, 1997 [1994]: 93). The supposed conversion of the 'pathologies' of modernity into opportunities for self-mastery fleshes out the possible nature of 'individualistic neo-liberalism' by connecting it to the pervasive therapeutic sensibility portrayed in Lasch's analysis.

Giddens sees the possibilities for new forms of engagement and empowerment, whereas Lasch sees a shrinking of the self. In this light, Giddens sees his own work as relating to the problems of agency and structure in a far more complex fashion than Lasch. In a way he is; Giddens's theory of structuration and particularly his concept of the reflexive self can allow for a diversity of experiences which simply cannot be reduced to the traits of one form of pathology. In stretching to accommodate such a diversity however, Giddens's work can seem to lose some complexity. Lasch takes the specific character of pathological narcissism and articulates a detailed, interconnecting account of its cultural and psychological extension. He also tries to account for the quest for identity, but due to his extensive analysis of capitalist culture, conceptualises the quest as largely futile in many ways. This is an aspect of modernity which Giddens admits he has not fully theorised in recent work. Thus Lasch's analysis provides an interesting and critical counterpoint to Giddens's analysis.

Giddens's and Lasch's differences could be pitted against each other endlessly, and at this point it is necessary to attempt to draw a close to this section of the discussion

and consider what Lasch's polemical critique of contemporary culture can contribute to Giddens's analysis. Although Lasch offers a convincing critical analysis in many of the areas important to Giddens's social theory, such as expert systems, the role of therapy, and mass culture, he does not undermine the latter's perspective on agency and identity. What Lasch does offer is an important counterbalance to Giddens's predominantly optimistic approach, which, perhaps not surprisingly, is underplayed in Giddens's own critique of Lasch. Giddens's dialectical approach allows him to incorporate many of the ideas Lasch develops, but that dialectic stops short in much of Giddens's social theory, leading to an imbalance which seems to stress the optimistic portents for self-identity over and above the kind of critical analysis which Lasch details so convincingly. This can suggest an oversimplifying tendency in Giddens's work which effectually reduces the importance of problematic issues which do not quite fit into his overall theory. The absence of any detailed description of consumer capitalism for example, although acknowledged, minimises the extent to which options for self-identity might be colonised by the organisation of mass production and mass consumption. Lifestyle, and the abundance of choice, is thus considered far less problematically than it could be. Lasch on the other hand, portrays choice as severely conditioned and defined by the conditions of modern capitalism, in conjunction with other factors. As a result he offers a picture of a self-identity which, though more pessimistic, seems to capture an important dimension of contemporary existence which is lacking in Giddens's recent theorising.

It is not possible to convert reflexivity, as formulated by Giddens, into a narcissistic pathology; to see reflexivity as merely a conceptual misinterpretation of self-absorption. Modern self-identity cannot be adequately defined as either a narcissistic

enterprise or a wholly reflexive one. I agree with Craib when he argues that Lasch's combination of psychoanalysis and his own social theory offer a compelling antidote to Giddens's neutral sounding, seemingly pragmatic account of modern life which is often drained of any expressly political agenda. In terms of therapy for example, Giddens states that 'it can promote dependency and passivity; yet it can also permit engagement and reappropriation' (1991: 180). This is undoubtedly correct, but could be seen as little more than a self-evident truth, which fails to grasp the particular dimension of therapy in its relation to contemporary self-identity in any detail; it offers no motive or reason for social critique and change.[12] Lasch's detailing of modern capitalism, and his critical analysis of the therapeutic climate and the role of experts, consolidates the importance of a critical notion of reflexivity; the flip-side of its positive impact upon the psyche, characterised by Lasch as narcissism. In this sense Lasch's concept of narcissism offers a more adequate dialectical antithesis to the concept of reflexivity than Giddens's own concessions.

It seems incorrect to view Lasch's work as portraying humans as excessively passive, or as appearing to reduce social life to a crude dichotomy between 'micro-settings of action' and an 'uncontrollable background environment'. Lasch admittedly does not pay much attention to opportunities for individual appropriation, which may indeed be a serious shortcoming. Lasch's critique is problematic, in that he theorises any kind of *successful* resistance at all out of his account of narcissistic culture. The individual appears to be locked into a culture which offers no option but the perpetuation of that culture and, consequently, increasingly narcissistic leanings. As Tucker states: 'The requirements of consumer capitalism and the personality structure of the narcissist fit into a coherent whole which leaves few possibilities for alternative

paths of social change' (Tucker, 1998: 169). While this level of pessimism may not be wholly displaced, it seems to negate the myriad ways in which the social conditions Lasch elaborates upon are, and can be, challenged by individuals and social groups. Lasch admits that 'much could be written about the signs of new life' emerging, and in this admission the shortcomings of Giddens's analysis are replicated in reverse. Giddens however, does more to try and balance his account of self-identity, and in doing so provides an at times excellent defence of the ways in which self-identity can find space to develop and thrive reflexively in modern settings. Lasch serves as a useful reminder of the challenges that the contemporary self faces, and the dangers of associating the rise of a vocabulary for self-development with authentic progress too unequivocally. The concept of narcissism, as utilised by Lasch, suggests a darker side of the reflexive project for the psyche, which must be taken seriously. It is a distortion of reflexive awareness which does not rely on the chance outcome of social stratification - narcissism is an understandable response to the predominant conditions of modern society. Thus it is an issue not necessarily attributable to questions of the social distribution of reflexivity. Instead it further problematises the assumption that reflexivity is necessarily a liberating and authentic phenomenon.[13]

Both authors, whatever their benefits and shortcomings, conceptualise contemporary identity as a *response* to social changes, regardless of what that response may be. Neither author stops to question the uniformity of their analysis in enough detail. Giddens, as has already been discussed at length, conceives of individual responses to social change in excessively universal tones. He makes little attempt to consider the diverse ways in which the dynamics of modernity impact upon different individuals

and social groups, and as a result, the differentiated opportunities for the construction of self-identity. Similarly, Lasch sees narcissistic culture as a blanket term, affecting all individuals in roughly the same fashion. Neither reflexivity, nor its critical nemesis, narcissism, can be adequately understood as homogeneously experienced phenomena. In the concluding chapter the discussion will return to focus on issues around the distribution of reflexivity, and/or narcissism, centring on Scott Lash's notion of reflexivity's 'winners and losers'.

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[1] In the quote taken from Lasch above, the term 'cultural authority' instantly suggests a more deterministic and pessimistic view of recent cultural changes. Indeed Lasch's premise is that 'a thoroughgoing analysis of modern society and politics has to explain among other things why personal growth and development have become so hard to accomplish' (Lasch, 1979a: 16). In a sense the differences between Giddens and Lasch stem more from their underlying assumptions, as their social analysis is often very similar. On the one hand Lasch assumes, inheriting the mantle of critical theory and psychoanalysis, that the alienated individual is the starting point of any social understanding of the self. Giddens, however, begins with a more phenomenological assertion that agency has to be theorised at the heart of any social theory - an agent who is always actively involved in the construction of the social world one is attempting to understand.

[2] The term originates in Greek mythology with the character of Narcissus. As a punishment from the gods for wilfully discarding the affections of others, Narcissus was condemned to fall in love with the next person he came across. This happened be his own image, reflected in a pool. Thus he fell in love with his own image. At any attempt to embrace the object of his love, it fled, and nothing he could do was ever rewarded with a reply. He fell in love with himself. He brought his lips near to take a kiss; he plunged his arms in to embrace the loving object. It fled at any touch, but returned again after a moment and renewed the fascination. He could not tear himself away; he lost all thought of food or rest, while he hovered over the brink of the fountain gazing upon his own image. 'With this, and much more of the same kind, he cherished the flame that consumed him, so that by degrees he lost his colour, his vigour, and the beauty which formerly had so charmed the nymphs'. Eventually he pined away and died. For the full story of Narcissus see *Bullfinch's Mythology - The Age of Fable*, Bullfinch, 1855: 105 - 108.

[3] For an extensive list of recent clinical literature on narcissism, see Lasch (1979a), pp.254-256.

[4] In fact, the promise of unfettered self-development and ungoverned choice Lasch sees as one element of contemporary narcissistic culture, and relates to a banal, 'pseudo-self-awareness' characteristic of narcissism rather than any authentic self-liberation. In this context, Giddens's work could be seen as a contributory element to a narcissistic culture, an idea which will be taken up later in this chapter. This issue connects also with the possible ideological reading of Giddens's work discussed in the previous chapter.

[5] Lasch has often been accused of harbouring an implicit 'conservative nostalgia' (Frosh, 1991: 63) for the exercise of authority within the family. For a feminist critique of Lasch's analysis in this and other areas, see Barrett and McIntosh, 1982. For a more detailed version of Lasch's account of the family in relation to capitalist culture, see Lasch (1979b).

[6] Giddens has already been criticised in this thesis for conceptualising expert systems as undifferentially accessible. A stronger theorisation of social structure has suggested that, access to the information

embodied in these systems, and the ability to utilise it, is compromised by issues of stratification and inequality. Lasch's criticism of expertise can be utilised to question the positive nature of expert systems rather than issues of accessibility.

[7] I would add that Lasch's account, rather than leaving the world to follow any course, sees narcissistic responses as further strengthening and consolidating a narcissistic culture, initiating a kind of vicious circle of narcissism this gives further credence to the complexity of Lasch's analysis of the relationship between the individual and the social, and will shortly be discussed in more detail.

[8] Both are, in effect, building on a long and distinguished debate on the effectiveness and function of therapy, established in the work of Cooper (1970), Jacoby (1977), Kovel (1988), Laing (1967) and others.

[9] Giddens here makes the mistake of associating narcissism unequivocally with hedonism, a tendency criticised by Lasch: 'The culture of narcissism is not necessarily a culture in which moral constraints on selfishness have collapsed or in which people released from the bonds of social obligation have lost themselves in a riot of hedonistic self-indulgence' (Lasch, 1984: 193). Lasch's careful tracing of the clinical origins of the concept of narcissism, he states, is carried out 'in order precisely to forestall the temptation to misread my book....as another protest against the 'me decade' ' (Lasch et al., 1979: 195) Those who equate narcissism with a self-seeking mentality can all too easily oppose it with a counter-claim that people are in fact concerned with an authentic self-actualisation, and thus reduce the debate to a simplistic dichotomy. Lasch's concept of narcissism instead, he argues, signals a 'loss of ego' (ibid.), 'better described as a state of chronic uneasiness and anxiety' (Lasch, 1984: 28), rather than hedonistic, self-seeking or self-developing.

[10] A recent newspaper article suggested that following a survey of GP's, a 'modern epidemic' of 'worried well' - 'people who think they are sick but are, in fact, perfectly healthy' - was increasingly visible, with doctors quoting figures of between 10 and 20% of their patients fitting into the category of 'worried well'. The 'worried well' are informed, often after consulting internet sites, or as a result of the increasing number of 'health scares', but nonetheless have no great health problems (Emily Wilson, *The Guardian* 3/8/99). This example suggests a possibly widespread stepping stone between self-awareness in terms of health, and hypochondria. For a parallel discussion see Sophie Radice's article on 'Health Anxiety' in *The Observer* magazine 04/03/01, 49-50.

[11] Lasch uses a quote by Andy Warhol to convey the state of mind expressed by the 'banality of pseudo self-awareness' which is worth reprinting here for its illustrative clarity.

> The best love is not-to-think-about-it love. Some people can have sex and really let their minds go blank and fill up with the sex; other people can never let their minds go blank and fill up with the sex, so while they're having sex they're thinking, "Can this really be me? Am I really doing this? This is really strange. Five minutes ago I wasn't doing this. In a little while I won't be doing it. What would Mom say? How did people ever think of doing this?" So the first type of person.... is better off. The other type has to find something else to relax with and get lost in (Warhol, cited in Lasch, 1979a: 98).

[12] Certainly Giddens is at times far more ambivalent in his claims than Lasch: 'Modern social life impoverishes individual action, yet furthers the appropriation of new possibilities; it is alienating, yet at the same time, characteristically, human beings react against social circumstances they find oppressive' (1991: 175). If this is seen to be a positive step, taken as a more dialectical account of the realities of agency, then Giddens is indeed more sophisticated than Lasch. At other times Giddens is also unreservedly positive about opportunities for the contemporary self in search of identity; 'the reflexivity of self-identity.... is more often an engagement with the outside world than a withdrawal from it' (1991: 178). This in fact more closely represents the emphasis of Giddens's more recent work. It is Giddens's emphasis of agency which validate his more upbeat assertions.

[13] It might be useful to think of self-identity as existing along a reflexivity/narcissism continuum. At one end could be placed the successful reflexive project of the self. At this extreme the individual's post-traditional self-awareness unproblematically contributes to a reflexively constructed, increasingly autonomous self-identity. How the individual sees herself is the result of her own choices about who she is, what she enjoys, believes in, and so on. At the other end of the scale is Lasch's narcissistic self. Here, as an extreme, self-awareness descends into chronic self-absorption. The individual is concerned with their own sense of self to the point of obsession, detaching them from meaningful relationships with others, with a diminished grasp of external reality, and consequently, a vicarious self-identity. He oscillates between feelings of omnipotence and inferiority, is a hypochondriac, is petrified of his own mortality, fascinated by celebrity, and so on. At one end self-awareness and self-actualisation, at the other end self-absorption and self-destruction.

The metaphor of a continuum can only be stretched so far, and there are certain discontinuities between the two author's work. Giddens's theoretical background is very different from Lasch's and their own specific complexities dispute the compatibility of narcissism and reflexivity in any final sense. Still, although the details have not been examined here, it is possible to imagine the potential for both narcissism and more positive reflexive responses in the context of Giddens's social analysis. He himself acknowledges the potential for narcissistic disorders, but a fuller appreciation of Lasch's work suggests they have a closer proximity to the concept of the reflexive self than Giddens implies.

Chapter 7 Conclusions: Revising Reflexivity

This thesis has attempted an exegesis and critical assessment of Giddens's understanding of the role of reflexivity in contemporary self-identity. In summary, Giddens argues that contemporary social conditions facilitate unparalleled contexts for new forms of self-development. These conditions - particularly time/space distanciation, disembedding mechanisms and reflexivity - amount to a post-traditional society. The self can no longer rely on the props of cultural traditions to provide ontological security. Individuals are increasingly reflexive about traditional practices. All traditions are opened up to each other in the post-traditional world and thus become relativised, unavoidably presented as one 'lifestyle' option amongst many. The habits and customs generated by kinship relations, the local community, religious cosmologies and tradition can no longer offer the relatively prescribed narratives of identity which they did in more traditional settings (Giddens, 1990: 102). Individuals draw from elements of the social world to generate a meaningful sense of self, but this is a chronically reflexive process. The self is thus constructed and maintained from a series of reflexive choices. The individual as an active agent is implicated in their own sense of self to an unprecedented degree. The self 'becomes a reflexive project' (Giddens, 1991: 32), involving 'the strategic adoption of lifestyle options' related to a planned 'trajectory', all geared to maintaining a meaningful biographical narrative (1991: 243-244). In this context, one's self-awareness is no longer so severely conditioned by one's specific cultural and historical settings. Self awareness

becomes, in a sense, 'pure', standing outside of tradition and reflexively selecting beliefs and practices - a lifestyle - which contribute to a self-identity.

Without the support of traditional criteria for how to act, what to do and what to be, the self is offered new opportunities, and new problems. Maintaining a meaningful self-identity is not easy when all knowledge is corrigible. Chronic doubt can become an existential condition, and thus the modern self is faced with a 'dangerous adventure', which is 'both liberating and disturbing' (Giddens 1994a: 59; 87). Tucker sums up the ambivalence of the modern project of selfhood in Giddens's account: 'Th[e] project is fraught with new possibilities and dangers, as traditional road maps for the development of personal identity crumble in the face of the juggernaut of late modernity' (Tucker, 1998: 207). However, Giddens is critical of social theory which has suggested that 'the modern age is specifically one of high anxiety' (Giddens, 1991: 32), and, particularly in his more recent work, has emphasised the positive potential of living in post-traditional settings. The reflexive monitoring of selfhood creates the possibility for a more autonomous sense of self-identity, which consciously transcends previous constraints. The potential of reflexivity extends to the revolutionising of personal relationships - 'the transformation of intimacy' (1992), and even, to a more democratic global society - 'a cosmopolitan conversation of humankind' (1994b: 100).

Giddens documents a number of recognisable social changes. He manages to untangle the immediacy of processes that distinguish the modern world, and offer them back to the reader with an eloquence that seems to uncover many of the contemporary nuances of selfhood. His dialectical concept of reflexivity, and its

impact upon self-identity, encapsulates many of the themes of structuralist and post-structuralist debate, as well as more traditional theories of alienation and fragmentation, whilst offering an original conceptualisation of the particular problems faced by the modern self. Giddens's concept of the reflexive self is also appealing because it offers a discourse of hope and optimism which is complexly substantiated. It suggests to the reader that they are caught up in developments which strain toward self-actualisation and a democracy of emotions, at least as much as they do towards self-disintegration. And it is these opportunities, such as the emergence of the 'pure relationship' (e.g. 1991: 6-7), which Giddens often chooses to emphasise, offering a useful vocabulary for more optimistic readings of the future of the self.

However, Giddens's analysis of contemporary selfhood and its social context has come under a great deal of criticism, some of which has been drawn upon in preceding chapters. While acknowledging his accomplishments, and incorporating his own qualifications, this thesis has focused largely on a critical account of Giddens's recent social theory, particularly regarding his theorisation of personal identity. I have discussed the various ways in which reflexivity, particularly in the context of self-identity, serves only as a partial explanation of the processes involved in the concrete experience of selfhood in contemporary settings. In doing so I have questioned Giddens's portrayal of the modern subject, and the social changes which situate it. As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the density of Giddens's work, as well as its quantity and breadth of themes, meant that at times this thesis was as much a work of exegesis as it was a critique. In establishing Giddens's position, however, certain critical points emerged and recurred. These criticisms, strengthened by the support and confirmation of existing critiques, are the evaluations which have

been pursued in the preceding chapters. In conclusion I will draw these criticisms together in the hope that they present something of a coherent and consistent appraisal of Giddens on self-identity.

For the purposes of a conclusion, the criticisms composed in this thesis can be attributed to one of two critical tendencies which have underpinned my analysis of reflexivity. These two areas serve as a useful way of summarising possible bases for further analysis, examples of which I will also outline. Firstly, it has been argued that reflexivity, and more particularly, the potential for reflexivity to transform self-identity, is more limited *within the self* than Giddens suggests. Secondly, it has been claimed that reflexivity and its transformational potential is more limited *within a population* than Giddens attests. In other words, on the one hand it could be argued that effective reflexivity is bounded by factors operating at the level of individual psychology. On the other hand, it has been suggested that an effective reflexivity, tied to a transformative project of selfhood, is also restricted to a certain proportion of selves, depending on structural conditions. Critiques of Giddens's theory of self-identity then, tend to fall either in to the category of his conceptualisation of the psyche, or social structure. There are numerous points of overlap between these two critical elements, and certain analyses which fit comfortably into neither category. As a theoretical device the distinction should not be overstretched. It may serve, however, as a useful umbrella; a way of thinking about the critiques raised here in an inclusive fashion.

Reflexivity, Identity & the Psyche

In chapter one, I examined Giddens's model of the self. Although comprehensive, I argued that there were a number of inconsistencies in this model. His version of the unconscious, one part of a tripartite model, often appeared self-contained and isolated in relation to reflexive awareness. Particularly in comparison to psychoanalytical understandings, Giddens's conceptualisation often appears as an excessively 'tidy' portrayal of unconscious mechanisms, lacking complexity with regard to its relationship to the thoughts and actions of the self in everyday life. I argued that reflexive awareness is a more culturally embedded process than Giddens acknowledges. Drawing on the work of G.H. Mead, I considered reflexivity as a fundamentally social process, tied to the individual's development within a cultural and social mileux. As a result, all forms of self-awareness are bound by the particular normative discourses in which the self develops. Reflexivity is thus always a relative process rather than one capable of standing outside of the culture which formed it. Overall I suggested the distinctions between the various elements of Giddens's model were more ambiguous than Giddens suggests. In this light, the development of a self begins to appear as a more complex and compromisable process than Giddens implies.

In chapter two I argued that to consider self-identity as a reflexive project adequately, one needs to account for certain boundaries to reflexive thinking. While Giddens acknowledges some of these boundaries, he does not always consider their ramifications, which can lead to a distorted, excessively rationalised portrayal of the processes involved in contemporary self-identity. Pursuing some of the themes

developed in chapter one, it was suggested that Giddens exaggerates the potential for reflexivity to become disembedded from cultural situatedness. I examined critiques of Giddens which have labelled him a 'neo-modernist' as a consequence of his faith in contemporary faculties of reason and rationality which are seen to be embodied in reflexivity. It was reasoned that cultural boundaries play an important role in shaping and defining the nature and scope of reflexive awareness. Reflexivity, and associated concepts of rational choice and the self as a 'project', were seen to be culturally relative terms rather than processes which had become liberated form the traditional constraints of cultural and social norms.

In chapter three I suggested that the potential for reflexive awareness to construct identities in a rational and ordered fashion was also questionable. I emphasised criticisms of Giddens's understanding of the processes involved in self-identity as over-cognitive (Lash & Urry, 1994b; Mestrovic, 1998). In connection with this I also considered critiques which have suggested that Giddens fails to accommodate fully the existence of an emotional life (e.g. Mestrovic, 1998: 90-93) and an active unconscious. It was argued that, as with his concept of the unconscious, emotions are also made 'safe' in Giddens's account, presenting a view of self-identity in which emotions take a back-seat and are effectively subdued by reflexive mastery. I considered the arguments of critics who want to retain an 'unfathomability' in concepts of the unconscious and emotional life (e.g. Lash & Urry, 1994b: 42-44), and suggest that individuals are internally more complex and ambiguous than Giddens's cognitivist account acknowledges. I claimed, building on these criticisms, that selfhood is more ambiguously experienced than Giddens indicates. Contemporary self-identity is characterised as much by a lack of definition and precision as it is by a

calculable boundary and trajectory. Giddens's version of reflexive self-identity was argued to be a rationalist caricature of the processes involved in self-identity. I proposed that it may be possible to think of alternative ways of constructing identity which rely less upon cognitive models of self-awareness.

The exploration of possible alternative formulations of reflexivity, in both analytical and normative terms, is a possible avenue for the further development and application of the criticisms raised here. Nicholas Mouzelis attempts such an analysis, and has already been briefly discussed in this thesis (see chapter three). To reiterate, Mouzelis has some sympathy with Giddens's attempt to differentiate between traditional and post-traditional forms of reflexivity, but attempts to criticise the nature of Giddens's formulation of that reflexivity. He argues that it might be more constructive to focus criticism of Giddens's notion of self-reflexivity 'less on the uniqueness or spread on the phenomenon in time and space, and more on the one-sided manner in which the notion has been achieved' (Mouzelis, 1999: 85). Mouzelis retains Giddens's claim that post-traditional society has opened up 'spaces' in which self-identity is constructed, but is critical of Giddens's perceived responses to these spaces. He argues that Giddens's notion of reflexivity is 'western-specific', leading to a narrowness of definition. Giddens develops an 'over-activistic' understanding of reflexivity, which excessively emphasises and lauds an ordering, instrumental, chronically monitoring and revising approach to self-identity (1999: 85-86). Mouzelis argues that this is a severe limitation of possible forms of reflexive response to post-traditional settings. It is a conceptualisation rooted in western traditions which have celebrated activistic aspects of self-experience and self-development.

It is worth developing an account of Mouzelis's distinction between different reflexivities here. Mouzelis's critique incorporates many of the criticisms which have recurred in this thesis concerning Giddens's understanding of the processes of self-identity. An over-cognitive and rational, non-emotional, tidy and individualistic self all broadly fall under the category of 'over-activistic' as defined by Mouzelis. A possible direction for further critique and refinement of Giddens's concept of reflexivity may thus be the exploration of alternative versions of reflexivity, within and outside of dominant western cultural traditions. Mouzelis refers to Giddens's reflexivity as 'cataphatic', which has an 'exact opposite', labelled 'apophatic' by Mouzelis.[1] In general terms, cataphatic reflexivity emphasises the role of cognition, and the application of rational thinking, in the affirmation of identity. Apophatic reflexivity, on the other hand, stresses that rational thinking should be minimised, used to keep the mind 'empty' for a non-rational, supposedly more authentic, experience of self-identity. Apophatic discourses, Mouzelis argues, can offer an important insight into other understandings of reflexivity, and thus reveal aspects of self-identity which Giddens neglects: '[Giddens's] theory of reflexivity over-emphasises the activistic, purposive, instrumental aspects of intra-active, self-self relationships, and under-emphasise their apophatic, non-instrumental, non-activistic aspects' (1999: 95). Apophatic reflexivity originates in religious attempts to attain spiritual purity; it 'aims at cleaning out the material and spiritual self so that the believer becomes an 'empty vessel' ready to receive divine illumination' (1999: 86). However, Mouzelis is more interested in secular accounts of apophaticism.[2] He draws from the work of the anti-religious spiritual philosopher Krishnamurti to provide an example of a secular, apophatic, discourse of reflexivity.

Krishnamurti's supposedly apophatic perspective demands that individuals give up on almost all forms of rational thinking in ordering their existence meaningfully. Furthermore: 'Beliefs, divine revelations, sacred texts, as well as rationalistically derived moral codes, are not only quite irrelevant in the search for a spiritual, meaningful existence today, but they actually constitute serious obstacles to such a search' (Mouzelis, 1999: 88). Krishnamurti's belief is that genuine self-awareness comes about only when rationalised schemes and projects for the self are abandoned; 'when ratiocination, planning and cognitively constructed means-end schemata are peripheralised' (ibid.). He argues that 'the fundamental understanding of oneself does not come through knowledge or through the cultivation of experiences' (Krishnamurti, 1970: 25). To exist authentically, one has to explore one's own self through 'silent and continuous gazing inwards' (Mouzelis, 1999: 89). From this state, 'a tranquility that is not a product of the mind, a tranquility that is neither imagined nor cultivated' is possible (Krishnamurti, 1970: 28).

Mouzelis argues that Giddens's and Krishnamurti's approaches to self-identity both amount to forms of reflexivity, and both operate, to various degrees 'whatever the type of communication one has with one's self' (Mouzelis, 1999: 90). They are both potential and actual elements of reflexive self-identity in post-traditional settings, and 'the theorisation of both is absolutely necessary in order to make sense of the complex ways in which subjects face the 'empty space' of growing choices created by detraditionalization' (1999: 95). I have not sought to explore Krishnamurti's perspective in any detail here, nor indeed Mouzelis's. What Mouzelis's analysis indicates is that alternative formulations of reflexivity are possible. In this instance, goal-oriented thought processes take a back seat to a more contemplative and tranquil

awareness of self. Adorno is similarly critical of dominant formulations of emancipation, which, he argues, focus upon 'the conception of unfettered activity, of uninterrupted procreation, chubby insatiability, of freedom as frantic bustle'. (Adorno, 1951: 156). Adorno illustrates a concept very similar to Mouzelis's apophatic reflexivity when he imagines a world where 'lying on water and looking peacefully at the sky, being, nothing else, without any further definition and fulfilment, might take the place of process, act, satisfaction' (1951: 157). Apophatic reflexivity is just one way of considering reflexivity differently. In pursuing these alternatives, a more complex and representative understanding of reflexivity and self-identity may be generated. At the same time, alternative discourses may further illustrate and problematise the one-sidedness of Giddens's analysis of the reflexive self depicted in this thesis.

Reflexivity, Identity & Social Structure

A second category with which the criticisms raised in this thesis can be summarised concerns the social limitations of an effective reflexive project of selfhood. I initially argued, drawing from G.H. Mead and others, that all forms of identity, including reflexive self-identity, are always socially and culturally situated. In chapters four and five a number of specific criticisms were raised which questioned Giddens's appreciation of socially structured conditions of action. These conditions were seen by some authors, myself included, to persist in contemporary settings. In doing so the potential for reflexivity to be transformed into an emancipatory structuring of one's identity is differentiated. In other words, it was suggested that it is easier for some people to construct their sense of self reflexively than it is for others. Furthermore, it

was argued that life-chances were not necessarily improved because of reflexive awareness - the ability to utilise reflexivity may be partially shaped by social conditions which favour some more than others whilst not necessarily appearing to be open to change.

More specifically, in chapter four it was argued that power could usefully be given a more central role than Giddens suggests in the modern construction of identity. I considered the work of authors such as O'Brien (1999) and Craib (1992), who assert that self-identity is still permeated by power relationships. Resources for self-understanding are still confined and regulated by the impact of power, and 'can serve to undermine as much as enable processes of self-development' (Hay et al., 1997; 103). The realm of identity was claimed to be a hierarchical, highly politicised and conflictual domain of experience. This analysis was contrasted with Giddens's looser and more pliable conceptualisation of social structure in his recent work. Specific examples of Giddens's under-theorisation of a stratifying social structure were considered; his universalised understanding of the impact of the 'dynamism of modernity' (1991: 14-21); his analogy of modernity as a juggernaut (1990: 139), and his references to humanity as an undifferentiated 'we' in the face of post-traditional transformations (1994a: 56). Craib's notion of 'degrees' of freedom to construct self-identity depending on the flexibility of social structure in a given situation was considered as an alternative (Craib, 1992). Lash and Urry's (1994b) concept of reflexivity 'winners and losers' was also touched upon. Overall it was suggested that the relationship between an individual, social structure, and opportunities for reflexively ordered self-transformation is more complex than Giddens often depicts.

In chapter five I pursued some of the consequences of Giddens's weak sense of social structure in the context of his overall message and assessed its contribution to the discourse of contemporary social theory. The absences in Giddens's accounts are seen by some authors to be obfuscating the inequalities which shape modern identity. His analysis was seen be a symptom of a hegemonic individualism which took for granted the premises of that individualism rather than questioning them. Giddens's theorisation of the self and its relation to the social was capable of being read, even if not intentionally, as an assertion of 'individualistic neo-liberalism' (Hay et al. 1997; 93). Giddens was seen to be ceding all responsibility for one's opportunities for self-development to the individual, and ignoring the social stratification of life-chances and their impact upon self-identity. In portraying the relationship between the self and social structure in an over-simplified, excessively voluntaristic and individuated fashion, Giddens was seen to be contributing to problematic discourses which further nullified the important and complex links between a sense of self and the environment one is born and socialised into. Thus Hay et al. suggest that Giddens is 'hollowing out' social theory, consolidating a vague and problematic normative agenda. Other authors, such as Mestrovic (1998: 148-78) and Alexander (1996), similarly accuse Giddens of offering up a 'lite' social theory which engenders feelings of optimism and completeness, but is in fact more of a distraction from persistent and problematic issues of self-identity than an inclusive account.

In chapter six I considered the work of Christopher Lasch. Lasch's project was particularly interesting because although it offered a far more critical analysis both of the changes defining contemporary society and their psychological effect, there were still many similarities between his and Giddens's work. Lasch elaborated the

negative potential of the possibilities outlined by Giddens, whilst Giddens did the reverse - he highlighted the potentially positive ramifications which Lasch also acknowledged. Lasch saw the dominant response to modern social change not as reflexivity but as narcissism - a state of weak and dependent self-obsession (Lasch 1979a,1984). Giddens criticises Lasch for marginalising the role of agency, arguing that 'the individual appears essentially passive' in the shadow of determining social forces (Giddens, 1991: 175). It was argued that Lasch's analysis is more complex than Giddens suggests, and that his critical reading of social change is one possible alternative discourse which offers an important counterbalance to Giddens's analysis.

The avenues for a further application of the criticisms raised in these chapters might be to consider the ways in which modern conditions of existence *are* still stratified, and to consider social, collective ways of overcoming inequality, thus contributing to a critical, socially-oriented discourse of modern identity. One potential area of development might be to consider contemporary culture in terms of Scott Lash's concept of winners and losers for example (Lash, 1994a; Lash & Urry, 1994b). As discussed in chapter four, Lash understands gain and loss in terms of an individual's positioning in relation to burgeoning information and communication structures which are replacing traditional social divisions. In fact a number of authors who have examined social structure have found it to be a changing but persistent force, with consequences for self-identity which show some affinity with Lash's work (e.g. Sennett, 1998; Lasch, 1995). What these authors suggest is that the transformative potential Giddens associates with self-reflexivity may apply to some, but at the same time there are many who are excluded from this potential. What might be called the division between reflexivity 'winners and losers' is seen to be increasing in many of

these accounts. In terms of health and access to health care, working practices, educational opportunity, access to information and life expectancy surveys studies point to an increasing *polarisation* in the lifestyles of populations.[3]

Many authors explicitly connect this polarisation to a concept of a social structure which generates inequality (Bauman, 1998; Lasch, 1995; Sennett, 1998). These kind of analyses imply that the benefits Giddens associates with reflexivity - such as a freedom to construct one's identity against a backdrop of 'open' expert systems - are at best more easily utilised by only a certain proportion of the population. Such analyses may not dispute the existence of reflexivity and its increasing importance in the formation of self-identity. What they do question is the universality of reflexivity and the neutrality of the social world in which identity is played out. There is not the space in this concluding chapter to offer an alternative study of polarisation and its effects. It will be useful however to briefly survey a handful of studies to convey just one way in which reflexivity can be more suitably contextualised, and thus, revised.

To reiterate Lash and Urry's position, it is clear they agree with Giddens on some points, particularly his dialectical reading of agency. The modern forms of capitalism 'do not just lead to increasing meaninglessness, homogenization, abstraction, anomie and the destruction of the subject' (Lash and Urry, 1994b: 3). Like Giddens, they indicate that there is more to modern life than many theories of alienation and social fragmentation can account for. Some of the processes of modern society 'may open up possibilities for the recasting of meaning in work and in leisure, for the reconstitution of community and the particular, for the reconstruction of a transmogrified subjectivity' (ibid.). Lash and Urry also think about the

transformations of subjectivity in terms of an 'increasingly significant reflexivity' (ibid.). The authors are also careful, however, to qualify what a 'sociology of reflexivity' means for them: 'we do not argue that this entails some sort of end to the value of structural explanation *tout court*.... we propose to the contrary that there is indeed a structural basis for today's reflexive individuals' (1994b: 6). These are 'information and communication structures', and are the basis and condition of contemporary reflexivity (1994b: 7).

These structures utilise modern technologies to create new forms of knowledge and power. Those at the helm or close to the heart of these structures - such as those creatively involved in the design, finance, publishing and advertising industries - are the 'winners' of reflexive modernity. Lash and Urry refer to these as the professional-managerial classes and the skilled working class (1994b). But there are also many losers, evident when Lash and Urry ask: 'What sort of reflexivity for those effectively excluded from access to the globalized, yet spacially concentrated information and communication structures?' (1994b: 143). In the sweatshops of clothing manufacturers, the assembly lines of electronics firms, the development of crack economies, the rising homelessness numbers, swelling minority ghettos, Lash and Urry see a growing battalion of reflexivity 'losers'. Some have directly benefited from the increased reflexivity of society while some service it from the increasingly wilder margins. They have little choice but to occupy these positions as traditional forms of working and lower-working class work and leisure have been eroded by these new structures: 'the new lower class represents a sort of structural downward mobility for substantial sections of the [previously] organised-capitalist working class' (1994b: 145).

As a result, Lash and Urry argue that the social world is subject to a heightening polarity, or a 'bimodal pattern', of reflexively organised opportunity (1994b: 160). On the one hand the new middle classes occupy the management and design end of 'advanced services'. These include 'software, personal finance, education and health, business services, the culture industries and parts of hotel, catering and retail services' (1994b: 163), who are more likely to process, and consume, highly valued 'symbols' rather than material goods (1994b: 64). They rely on an increasingly service-intensive lifestyle which, as well as providing a market for each other, provides a market for 'the casualised labour of the new lower class' (1994b: 165). Lash and Urry illustrate what they see as an increasing polarisation with various statistics which show lower wages and less employment prospects for the poorest third of the population, despite more education (1994b: 148-150; 160-163). The reasons for polarisation are cited as a decline in manufacturing and unionisation, the increasing number of women in the work place and the geographical redistribution of jobs. At the same time new forms of employment arise which depend on new rules of engagement with information and communication structures. The specialised knowledge, training, and location operates as a selection process which excludes many.

Other studies and statistical surveys have similarly suggested an increasing polarisation, or at best, a continuation of inequality (see footnote 3). Christopher Lasch argues that there is a new class of elites emerging. Lasch draws on Robert Reich's category of 'symbolic analysts' to describe this new class, which is very similar to Lash and Urry's concept of information and communication structures, and reflexivity 'winners':

> These are people.... who live in a world of abstract concepts and symbols, ranging from stock-market quotations to the visual images produced by Hollywood and Madison Avenue, and who specialize in the interpretation and deployment of symbolic information (Lasch, 1995: 35).

This class is contrasted with routine production workers and 'in-person servers'.[4] These are workers who might be employed within industries close to the core of information and communication structures, but, as in Lash and Urry's account, simply meet the service needs which come about as a consequence of the improved (increasingly reflexive) lifestyle of those higher up. As a result Lasch sees social mobility as increasingly difficult, and thus the polarisation is further entrenched.

Richard Sennett's recent study also highlights polarised aspects of contemporary culture. He considers the 'personal consequences of work in the new capitalism' and argues that the benefits of modern working practices are reserved for a relative few (Sennett, 1998). Sennett argues that the 'flexibility' of modern capitalism seems to offer new opportunities to the individual: 'flexibility is used today as another way of lifting the curse of oppression from capitalism. In attacking rigid bureaucracy and emphasising risk, it is claimed, flexibility gives people more freedom to shape their lives' (1999: 9-10). There are some similarities between Sennett's definition of flexibility and Giddens's concept of reflexivity, and Sennett does go on to discuss themes which partially parallel Giddens's work such as the dissolution of traditional routines, the re-articulation of time, increasing interdependence, and questions of identity in the context of these changes (e.g. 1999: 44; 57-59; 106; 26).

Sennett focuses on concrete examples of working practices and informal interviews. In fact, Sennett argues, the concept of flexibility obscures already complicated systems of control, and a meaningful identity is difficult to maintain as a result. Recent social changes provide opportunities for some, but for many they encourage despondency and confusion. Sennett considers the process of deskilling, as does Giddens, but his analysis illustrates his understanding of work and identity as a polarised field of experience rather than spaces waiting to be reskilled. In terms of recent computerisation for example, Sennett suggests that such a development has allowed for new levels of creativity and control which refracts back upon a stronger work-identity: 'At higher levels of technical work, the advent of the computer has enriched the content of many jobs' (1999: 73) Computer-aided-design for example, has transformed the work of civil engineers and architects, allowing them to manipulate images and foresee possible structures in new ways; 'this use of the machine certainly has stimulated its high-level users to think' (ibid.).

However, computerisation can have the opposite effect, depending on the nature of one's work. He uses the example of a bakery he visited twenty-five years earlier, during his research for *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1977). Back then the bakery was run by a number of male Greek workers. Although Sennett acknowledges there were numerous problems - the bakery was noisy, hot and dangerous, the work was physically exhausting, long hours were worked - he argues that it still offered a sense of character through craft pride, intimate co-operation, work discipline and trade unionism (1999: 65-66). Plenty had changed by the time Sennett returned in the late nineties. The bakery is now run by a giant food conglomerate, using advanced technology. It is cool, quiet and a safe place in which to work. The baking is done by

people from a mixture of backgrounds, often on part-time, short term, shift work contracts. The process of making bread - a once 'balletic exercise which took years of training to get right' (ibid.) - has now been transformed:

> Now the bakers make no physical contact with the materials or the loaves of bread, monitoring the entire process via on-screen icons which depict, for instance, images of bread colour derived from the temperature and baking time of the ovens; few bakers actually see the loaves of bread they make.... Bread had become a screen representation (1999: 68).

Consequently, the 'bakers' do not know how to actually bake bread. Sennett argues that their work-identity is weak, although they still see work as important. They feel confused about their role at work. Paradoxically, everything they operate is user-friendly and supposedly easy to understand. While their simple task is easy to understand, knowledge of the actual workings of the machines, or the programs they use, or the actual processes involved in bread making, are all alien to them. They operate in a vacuum of meaning which provides no reference points for a sense of meaning and personal involvement. The workers here are 'programme-dependent - 'operationally, everything is so clear; emotionally, so illegible' (ibid.) In Sennett's account computerisation can deskill and create problems for identity at least as much as it can provide opportunities for reskilling.[5] In terms of Lash and Urry's information and communication structures, those who are dependent on the simplistic, carefully controlled computer systems, and 'flexible' systems in general, are at the outer edges of these structures, involved in routinized, superficial and illegible working practices: 'Flexibility creates distinctions between surface and

depth; those who are flexibility's less powerful subjects are forced to remain on the surface' (1999: 75).

For Sennett, in a world of short-term 'flexibility' those on the 'surface' are beset by a lack of continuity, alienation, fragmentation and the threat of meaninglessness. Thus he makes explicit connections with the notion of identity, and asks: 'How can a human being develop a narrative of identity and life history in a society of episodes and fragments?' (1999: 26). A 'sense of sustainable self' is corroded (ibid.), as modern capitalism is 'threatening the ability of people to form their characters into sustained narratives' (1999: 31). Sennett's work is useful because it roughly maps on to the stratification of experience which make up the winners and losers of Lash and Urry's information and communication structures, whilst portraying those experiences in some concrete detail. Combine the effect of deskilling with lower wages in real terms, as well as the polarisation of life-chances in general, and a clearer picture of Lash and Urry's reflexivity 'losers' emerges. These examples further substantiate the supposed extremities of opportunity for individuals which condition their ability to be reflexive and the ability to utilise that reflexivity effectively by converting it into life-chances.

In the accounts drawn upon here, turning reflexivity into an opportunity for self-development depends on the vagaries of the emerging social structures and one's position in relation to those structures. As Bauman succinctly states, 'one thing which even the most seasoned and discerning masters of the art of choice do not and cannot choose, is the society we are born into' (Bauman, 1998: 85). Although only briefly touched upon, the research mentioned here illustrates ways in which elements

of the social world can be examined in more detail to reveal the need for a more complex and differentiated version of reflexivity. An analysis of contemporary social stratification is only one example.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has proposed that the concept of the reflexive project of the self be extensively revised in the light of numerous critiques. These revisions amount to a sustained critique of Giddens's concept of the reflexive project of selfhood in post-traditional settings. I have not intended to suggest that the concept of reflexivity ought to be abandoned in an analysis of self-identity. Giddens's work on self-identity is an important contribution to the issue of contemporary understandings of selfhood. He has justifiably had an enormous influence within social theory, and generated a new and useful terminology for framing recent social changes and their impact upon self-identity. What I have argued, as this concluding chapter has made clear, is that the concept of reflexivity can be more fruitfully understood if it is researched in conjunction with other salient factors and revised accordingly. These factors have been grouped into two categories, as a means of summary and as a basis for future research; in terms of the psychological and the social implications of Giddens's theorisation of reflexivity in relation to the self.

Even a revised version of reflexivity in relation to self-identity faces certain problems when applied across a broad social spectrum, particularly the 'globalising society' (Giddens & Pierson, 1998c: 223) in which Giddens argues we live. Here the problems and agendas of living are increasingly shared across national boundaries,

and imply a global culture. The problematic part of this equation is that reflexive self-identity, as an off-shoot of the dynamism of modernity, is also seen as increasingly global in Giddens's account, as has been discussed in chapter four and above. The problems such an account of reflexivity face is that it does not adequately account for the socially structured distribution of reflexivity. As discussed above, the work of Lash & Urry (1994b), Sennett (1998) and Lasch (1995) all suggest that modern structures of employment, education, housing and health provide reflexive opportunities for some social groups while denying them to others. Even if it can be agreed that reflexivity is an increasingly predominant aspect of self-identity, it has been argued that analyses of this growth need to be understood further by examining the distribution of reflexivity. This has to be done by considering the patterns of, for example, work and leisure generated by new information and communication structures, and the gradients and polarities that exist within these structures in terms of opportunities for resourcing a meaningful and reflexive self-identity. The issue here is not simply one of whether or not there is an increased reflexive relationship to one's self-identity detectable in only certain groups within a global society. It is equally important to examine the opportunities individuals have to transform reflexive awareness into an opening out of choices for an effective and autonomous self-identity, focusing on the ways in which opportunity, or the lack of opportunity gravitates towards particular social groups. For as Bauman argues, our society is certainly one of choices, but the ability to choose is still unevenly distributed: 'All of us are doomed to the life of choices, but not all of us have the means to be choosers' (Bauman, 1998: 86).

Another dimension to a possible revised concept of reflexivity that has been the concern of this thesis is the continuing importance social and cultural practices have in shaping self-identity. While Giddens acknowledges that the reflexive project of the self is a product of contemporary cultural and social changes, these elements are not integrated. The patterns for one's self-development, and the specific discursive nature of self-awareness have not in any final sense become transparent, that is, open to 'pure' reflexive ordering. The self is still constructed according to established patterns, set by the cultural norms, traditions and sanctions in which one's self-development takes place. Giddens may be correct that, as a result of numerous social changes, reflexive awareness has allowed for the relativisation of a whole body of cultural patterns which may have once been experienced as taken-for-granted stocks of knowledge. Consequently identity may indeed be a more chronically reflexive process. Nonetheless cultural understandings of gender, sexuality, relationships, work, leisure, consumption, communication and so on are still loaded with assumptions and practices that persist, are difficult to change and even distinguish in everyday experience, and undoubtedly impact upon self-identity.

Furthermore, it has been argued in this thesis that Giddens's notion of the reflexive self is itself a product of its time. The fact that he has been labelled a 'neo-modernist' (Alexander, 1996) or the 'last modernist' (Mestrovic, 1999) is an indication of this charge. He has been so called because his understanding of self identity is seen to reaffirm the normative cultural motifs of the modernist project. He is 'wedded ambiguously to.... modernist narratives....Giddens's underlying aim seems to be to rescue the Enlightenment project by softening and taming it' (Mestrovic, 1999: 169). Giddens's tendency to have faith in social progress, in the championing of rational

faculties and self-analysis, his focus on ordering, control and the hint of a 'magical, universalist outlook' are possible examples of Giddens's modernist thinking (1999: 155). What this suggests is that Giddens is also bound by the cultural situatedness of western academic disciplines, namely an updated version of modernism. The notion of a reflexive project of selfhood is thus itself permeated by cultural factors, factors which underpin concepts such as 'reflexivity' and so precondition the ability of 'reflexivity' to see through cultural forms and expose identity to some kind of transparent self-awareness.[6] These problems all suggest that there is a limit to the scope of reflexive awareness, and/or that reflexivity, and its relationship to self-identity, can be formulated in other ways than Giddens's approach. Reflexivity needs to be considered alongside the persistently non-reflexive or partially reflexive elements of experience, both psychologically and socially. In doing so, different versions of reflexivity may emerge, as has been outlined in this chapter and in other discussions (e.g. Adorno, 1951; Mouzelis, 1999; Lash, 1994).

The concept of reflexivity, and the many associated terms introduced by Giddens, undoubtedly marks an important contribution to the study of the contemporary nature of self-identity. It excellently illustrates peculiarly modern forms of self-awareness and self-knowledge. The notion of a reflexive self-identity cannot, however, offer a complete understanding of the experience of selfhood in contemporary settings. The arguments developed in this thesis suggest that identity needs to be more fully understood as a socially situated, highly differentiated, and experientially ambiguous phenomena.

[1] 'In the Greek, *cataphaticos* entails the notion of affirmation, and is the opposite of *apophaticos*' (Mouzelis, 1999: 96).

[2] For an account of the connections between a number of social psychological theories of self-identity and Eastern religions, see Claxton (ed.), 1986. Of particular relevance is Claxton's chapter on 'The Psychology of No-Self' (51-70), where he talks about 'becoming disillusioned' as a positive, rather than negative, process within Buddhism, involving a surmounting of the illusions of a rationalised self (Claxton, 1984: 51). Buddhist practice, Claxton argues, aims to overcome the 'choosing, deciding, intending, willing' domination of the psyche (1984: 57), and acknowledge 'a deeper, more organismic, more whollistic, more tacit level of processing' (1984: 61). Claxton's discussion of Buddhism thus has certain parallels with Mouzelis's analysis of certain forms of secular spiritualism.

[3] A number of recent reports have indicated some intensifying disparities. Research by the Smith Institute, with a sample of 16,000, studied the relationship between social background and achievement. They found that the 'opportunities gap' between those from different social backgrounds was no different for those born in 1958 and 1970, suggesting that 'today's 30-year-olds are still haunted by disadvantage and poverty at birth' (reported in *The Guardian* 12/7/00). In terms of 'information structures', home access to the internet may be a small example of stratification. The number of UK households with internet access has doubled in the last year to 6.5 million (25%). However, of the poorest third of the population, access varies between 3% and 6%, while for the more affluent, it reaches about 48%. There are further regional variations. One report agreed that there was a growing internet economy, suggesting parallels with Lash and Urry's information and communication structures. However, 'if you don't have access to the skills and the knowledge to thrive in that economy because of where you live, or how much money you earn, you won't be included' (Office of National Statistics report, in *The Guardian* 11/7/00.). An article by the economist Larry Elliot drew on figures which suggest that as well as an increasing income gap between and within rich and poor countries, there is also a growing difference in life expectancy (*The Guardian* 29/6/00).

[4] Douglas Coupland, in his novel *Generation X*, coins the apt phrase 'McJobs' in reference to the forms of employment available to a widening lower class. He defines a McJob as 'a low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector' (Coupland, 1991: 5). George Ritzer similarly describes the 'McDonaldization' of work processes, whereby in service industry jobs, and increasingly in other employment sectors, tasks are excessively rationalized and emptied of any sense of purpose or creativity (Ritzer, 1993).

[5] Deborah Lupton's research into the relationship between computers and computer users reaches similar conclusions (1995, 1997). Lupton and Noble argue that the personal computer has become a predominant element of most 'white-collar' work environments. Their work sets out to specifically address 'people's relationships to computer technology as a routine experience in the workplace' (Lupton & Noble, 1997: 85). They found that despite attempts to humanize and domesticate computer technology, it was often perceived as impersonal, and leaving most users feeling powerless as soon as anything goes wrong:

> They are surrounded with mystery as extremely complex and arcane technologies that require advanced training to understand and manipulate at higher levels. Many, perhaps the vast majority, of personal computer users, understand little of what lies within the plastic shell of their computer (1997: 97).

For a related discussion on the connections between contemporary computer use and identity, see Turkle (1984, 1996).

[6] As discussed in chapter 5, this puts Giddens's work, and other texts generally in the same vein, in an interesting position. They circulate as discourses upon the self which are themselves incorporated into social discourse, and as a result impact upon the resources available in the reflexive formation of self-identity. They are thus involved practically in the formation of self-identity and have an important

ideological aspect. I would not want to over-stress the importance of Giddens's work to the general public, or exaggerate its readership. However, Giddens is seen by some authors (e.g. Alexander, 1996; O'Brien 1999) to be symptomatic of a 'neo-liberalist' tendency in modern academic, journalistic and political spheres. Taken together, these tendencies may possibly amount to a discourse of self-identity which itself contributes to the dominant understanding of the formation of self-identity, whether problematic or not.

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