Reconciling Archer and Bourdieu in an emergentist theory of action*

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Abstract

Margaret Archer and Pierre Bourdieu have advanced what seem at first sight to be incompatible theories of human agency. While Archer places heavy stress on conscious reflexive deliberation and the consequent choices of identity and projects that individuals make, Bourdieu's concept of habitus places equally heavy stress on the role of social conditioning in determining our behaviour, and downplays the contribution of conscious deliberation. Despite this, I argue that these two approaches, with some modification, can be reconciled in a single emergentist theory of human action which is sketched out in this paper.

The paper examines how human dispositions and our reflexive decisions are related to the determination of human action, linking dispositions and decisions to their neural base in human physiology and to the social factors that influence them. As a result, it argues, we can see human action as the outcome of a continuous interaction between dispositions and reflexivity.

The paper goes on to relate this explanation back to Bourdieu's concept of the habitus and Archer's account of reflexivity. It argues that the weaknesses in Bourdieu's theory of action can be resolved by a reasonable reinterpretation of the habitus that makes it consistent with the emergentist theory and creates space for human choices as well as social influences on our behaviour. This opens up a role for the sort of reflexive deliberations advocated by Archer and thus to a reconciliation of the key contributions of both Archer and Bourdieu.

Reconciling Archer and Bourdieu in an emergentist theory of action

Margaret Archer has placed reflexivity at the heart of her account of human agency, in which she argues that our action can be guided by the capability that human beings have to develop normative projects as a consequence of reflexive deliberations upon our social situations. At first sight this would seem to be radically incompatible with the approach to agency implicit in Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, which stresses that human action can be "coherent without springing from an intention of coherence and a deliberate decision; adjusted to the future without being the product of a project or a plan" (1990b, p. 51). While Archer stresses our reflexive deliberations, Bourdieu stresses the possibility of acting without such deliberations, and the ways in which the dispositions that mould such action may in turn be formed without deliberation. It might seem that Archer enthrones reflexivity while Bourdieu condemns it to servility. Yet this paper will advance a theory of human action that has an equal place at the table for both Archer's reflexive deliberations and Bourdieu's habitus. It thus joins a growing body of work that seeks to hybridise reflexivity and the habitus (surveyed in Adams 2006).[1]

This is not to suggest that Archer and Bourdieu can be completely reconciled; their divergences are multi-layered, and the cost of bringing their key concepts together will sometimes be re-interpretations of their arguments. Two layers of divergence in particular must be isolated (though they interact): the ontological and the theoretical. This paper will advance a theoretical account of human action that rests upon an emergentist ontology. Individual agency, in this theory, may be identified with the emergent causal powers of human individuals. Like all emergent entities, human individuals are part of a hierarchy of such entities, each with emergent causal powers of their own, including in this case both the biological parts of human beings and the higher level social entities composed (at least in part) of human beings.[2] At the ontological

level, then, my argument is similar to Archer's; but I believe that Bourdieu's theoretical position is only loosely articulated with his own ontology, and so can be re-cast into an emergentist framework without losing its inherent structure or strengths.

At the theoretical level, we need to fill out this framework with an explanation of how human dispositions and decisions are related to the determination of human action. It is at this level that the conflict between reflexivity and habitus appears. The paper offers an explanation that links dispositions and decisions to their neural base in human physiology and to the social factors that influence them, to show how these elements combine with the unique causal powers of human beings to co-determine human action. The resulting theory has a place for both reflexivity and habitus and, I believe, is largely consistent with both Archer's and Bourdieu's theoretical positions, though perhaps at the expense of the respectively more voluntaristic and more socially determinist flavours of their expositions.

The paper begins by discussing Bourdieu's habitus and the conflicting interpretations of it in the literature. Bourdieu also discusses reflexivity, though reflexivity of a somewhat different variety than Archer's, and the next section examines his account of reflexivity. The paper goes on to explain the apparent conflict between Bourdieu's position and Archer's conception of reflexivity and to discuss the ontological differences between Archer and Bourdieu. The next part outlines an emergentist theory of action. Finally, the paper returns to habitus and reflexivity to show how this theory can resolve both the apparent gaps within Bourdieu's theory and its apparent incompatibility with Archer's.

Habitus and its critical reception

Bourdieu has centred his influential account of human social behaviour on the concept of habitus. Habitus, for Bourdieu, is the set of dispositions inculcated in each of us by the conditioning that follows from our social environment.

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu 1990b, p. 53).

The conditioning that follows automatically from the opportunities and necessities inherent in our social position, he argues, tends to "generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands" (Bourdieu 1990b, p. 54). This is an effect that is particularly powerful in early life, generating a durable attitude to the world (the primary habitus) that motivates us to see the world in the terms dictated to us by our early social position, and to behave in the ways more or less mandated to us by that position (1990b, p. 53). Since all those who share a given social position are exposed to similar opportunities and necessities, they tend to develop a similar habitus, hence their social practices tend "to be objectively harmonized without any calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction or, a fortiori, explicit co-ordination" (1990b, pp. 58-9).

Thus, the habitus, produced by social conditioning, tends to encourage us to behave in ways that reproduce the existing practices and hence the existing structure of society. This conditioning is so effective that the dispositions it generates are below consciousness, and in some cases embedded in the most physical ways in which we use our body, becoming "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history" (Bourdieu 1990b, p. 56). Thompson illustrates the point with Bourdieu's explanation of accents: the disposition to form our mouths into certain shapes, and thus produce a certain accent, when we speak is one that is

generally neither consciously learned nor consciously considered when we speak, yet it tends to reflect our social origins (Thompson 1992, p. 17). This is an example of what the neuroscientist Walter J Freeman calls "classical conditioning of behaviour, by which we can learn without being aware of the process and the outcome or being able to recall them" (Freeman 2000, p. 191).

The dispositions that make up the habitus do not operate in a rule-like fashion, mandating particular specific actions; rather, each disposition provides a "generative capacity" (Bourdieu 1990a, p. 13; Bourdieu 1990b, p. 55), a transposable potential to react in a certain style, which may be realised in a range of different behaviours depending upon the situation (Bourdieu 2000, p. 149): "It is only *in the relation to* certain structures that habitus produces given discourses or practices" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 135). Thus, what the habitus produces is not automatically determined actions, but what has been called a "capacity for constant improvisation" (Postone, LiPuma, and Calhoun 1993, p. 4). Hence, Bourdieu argues, the habitus provides a "'creative', active, inventive capacity" (Bourdieu 1990a, p. 13).

This, however, is not a creativity that necessarily involves conscious deliberation of our action. The habitus, Bourdieu tells us, provides "a spontaneity without consciousness or will" (Bourdieu 1990b, p. 56), and this is typical of his way of presenting the habitus – he frequently (though not always, as we shall see below) neglects the role of conscious thought in both the development and the operation of the habitus.[3]

The omission of conscious thought from the development of our dispositions is clearly untenable as a general claim, but perhaps the less serious problem for Bourdieu's argument. Many (though certainly not all) of our dispositions seem to be learned quite consciously via explicit verbal instruction, rather than being absorbed and embodied sub-consciously. Sayer illustrates the point nicely with the example of learning to stop at red traffic lights: this may become a habit that we reproduce unthinkingly, but it is a habit we consciously develop because

we understand the consequences of not doing so (Sayer 2005, pp. 26-8). Bourdieu, however, could presumably accept this modification of the argument while still maintaining that such learning subsequently becomes embodied, internalized, and forgotten – as happens when we learn a new sport, for example. This would still leave us with a habitus of dispositions derived largely from the opportunities and necessities inherent in our social position, and able to operate sub-consciously on our subsequent behaviour.

A similar but more significant objection can be made to the suggestion that the operation of habitus is sub-conscious. A number of authors have criticised Bourdieu for his apparent denial of conscious decision making in the determination of human behaviour, in marked contrast to most theorists of agency. In their view, habitus becomes nothing more than a conveyor belt for the determination of human behaviour by social forces. In one of the most trenchant critiques, Alexander, for example, argues that "Bourdieu wishes not to free up creative and interpretive action but to attach it to structures in a noninterpretive way… Far from an alternative to social structural explanation, habitus merely operationalizes it" (Alexander 1995, p. 135). King lists no less than eight authors who have interpreted Bourdieu in this way (2000, p. 418) and Wacquant lists another three (1993, p. 238). Even Crossley, who argues that Alexander's criticisms are excessive, concludes that "Bourdieu allows the concept of the habitus, for the most part, to pre-empt his conception of agency… Indeed sometimes he substitutes the habitus for the agent" (Crossley 2001).

However, as Wacquant points out, there are many authors who see another side to habitus (1993, p. 238). Brubaker and Bouveresse, for example, both suggest that Bourdieu positions habitus as the explanation for a certain class of actions, rather than the single principle of all actions, and thus as operating alongside other principles, such as rational calculation or conscious

norm-observance, which explain other classes of actions (Bouveresse 1999, p. 49; Brubaker 1993, p. 214).

One reason for the divergence between these two interpretations of Bourdieu may be the way he positions habitus against voluntaristic philosophies of action:

> The idea of 'voluntary deliberation'… leads it to be assumed that every decision, conceived as a theoretical choice among theoretical possibles constituted as such, presupposes two preliminary operations: first, drawing up a complete list of possible choices; secondly, determining the consequences of the different strategies and evaluating them comparatively. This totally unrealistic representation of ordinary action, which is more or less explicitly applied by economic theory and which is based on the idea that every action is preceded by a premeditated and explicit plan, is no doubt particularly typical of the scholastic vision. (Bourdieu 2000, pp. 137-8)

Against this view, "the theory of habitus has the primordial function of stressing that the principle of our actions is more often practical sense than the principle of rational calculation" (Bourdieu 2000, pp. 63-4). In presenting the theory of habitus as resolutely opposed to "philosophies of consciousness that situate the mainspring of action in the voluntaristic choices of individuals" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 25), Bourdieu perhaps overstates the case against conscious deliberation. While he does not deny that agents sometimes make decisions, his critique of rational action theory tends to be dismissive of conscious decision making in a way that may generate the impression that he sees such decision making as entirely marginal and unimportant.

Bourdieu, however, does recognise that reflective choices may be made at times of crisis, or critical moments. Consider two quotes:

> [Wacquant:] Does the theory of habitus rule out strategic choice and conscious deliberation as one possible modality of action? [Bourdieu:] Not at all… Times of crises, in which the routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures is brutally disrupted, constitute a class of circumstances when indeed 'rational choice' may take over, at least among those agents who are in a position to be rational (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 131)

> In a more general way, habitus has its 'blips', critical moments when it misfires or is out of phase: the relationship of immediate adaptation is suspended, in an instant of hesitation into which there may slip a form of reflection which has nothing in common with that of the scholastic thinker and which, … like the tennis player re-enacting a missed shot, takes stock

> with a glance or a gesture of the effects of the movement performed or the gap between it and what should have been done (Bourdieu 2000, p. 162)

Though carefully hedged around with qualifications, these two quotes seem to describe two moments of a situation that encourages conscious reflection. "Blips" in the operation of the habitus – occasions when it leads to actions that do not have the expected or desired effect – indicate a mismatch between the habitus and its objective environment. Crises, of a variety of types, are possible causes of such mismatches. The individual may be thrown into a radically new situation by external factors – redundancy or war, for example – or they may face a similarly unfamiliar situation as a result of moving voluntarily into a new field – becoming an academic, say, or moving out of the family home into the housing market. Such mismatches, gaps between expectation and experience, tend to generate not only a need for conscious deliberation but also a need for modifications to the habitus itself (Bourdieu 2000, p. 149).

So Bourdieu does recognise at least some role for consciousness in the determination of action. But this still leaves us with another reason for the divergence of interpretations: "it is not clear how dispositions produce practices" (Jenkins 2002, p. 79) and thus "it is difficult to know where to place conscious deliberation and awareness in Bourdieu's scheme of things" (Jenkins 2002, p. 77). As Crossley puts it, although Bourdieu is "by no means oblivious to the question of reflexivity… the nature and possibility of reflexivity are something of a mystery in his work" (Crossley 2001, p. 117). In the absence of a clear explanation of how dispositions produce practices and hence of how consciousness might sometimes be involved in the process, it is understandable that there is confusion about the apparent conflict between Bourdieu's stress on the subconscious operation of habitus and his heavily qualified acceptance of some role for conscious thought.[4]

Bourdieu and reflexivity

Such confusion is no doubt amplified by the strong stress placed by Bourdieu himself on the concept of reflexivity. Wacquant goes so far as to say that "If there is a single feature that makes Bourdieu stand out in the landscape of contemporary social theory, it is his signature obsession with reflexivity". But, as Wacquant continues, "without further specification, the label [reflexive sociology] is vague to the point of near vacuity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 36). For Bourdieu, reflexive sociology is characterised by the turning of the sociological gaze back upon sociology itself, and in particular upon "the collective scientific unconscious embedded in theories, problems, and (especially national) categories of scholarly judgement" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 40). This has been a major focus of Bourdieu's research programme, as evidenced by books such as *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu 1988) and *Pascalian Meditations* (Bourdieu 2000).

Bourdieu argues that "the sociology of sociology… is the necessary prerequisite of any rigorous sociological practice" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 68). One implication is that a sociology that cannot explain sociology itself in the same terms that it applies to the rest of society is seriously flawed. Accordingly, Bourdieu applies the same conceptual structures to the explanation of academic sociology (and indeed related subjects, particularly philosophy) as he does to the explanation of society in general. In our early childhood, he argues, we acquire a *primary habitus,* but as we subsequently enter into new social fields, we develop a habitus that is specific to this field: [5]

> The specific logic of a field is established in the incorporated state in the form of a specific habitus, or, more precisely, a sense of the game, ordinarily described as a 'spirit' or 'sense' ('philosophical', 'literary', 'artistic', etc.), which is practically never set out or imposed in an explicit way. Because it takes place insensibly, in other words gradually, progressively and imperceptibly, the conversion of the original habitus, a more or less radical process (depending on the distance), which is required by entry into the game and acquisition of the specific habitus, passes for the most part unnoticed (Bourdieu 2000, p. 11)

Academic dispositions, then, are also to be explained as unconsciously acquired. This leads, for Bourdieu, to a tendency for academics to accept certain arbitrary aspects of academic

behaviour, and in particular a theoretical style of thinking about the world, as natural and self-evident, and it is this that must be challenged by a reflexive sociology (Bourdieu 2000, p. 29). This style of thinking leads to a number of scholastic fallacies, of which the first is the most important here:

> Projecting his theoretical thinking into the heads of acting agents, the researcher presents the world as he thinks it (that is, as an object of contemplation, a representation, a spectacle) as if it were the world as it presents itself to those who do not have the leisure (or the desire) to withdraw from it in order to think it (Bourdieu 2000, p. 51)

In other words, researchers tend to think of "acting agents" as thinking theoretically about the world, as they themselves do (under the influence of the academic habitus), rather than recognising that these agents are driven by the practical logic of the habitus. This is a claim that is open to a range of interpretations. On the one hand, it may seem like a restatement of his opposition to rational action theory – the absurd idea that we consciously and objectively evaluate all the options open to us and make a rational choice between them before each action that we perform. From this perspective, it is entirely reasonable to deny that non-academic actors share the "contemplative relation to the world" of academics (Sayer 2005, p. 26). After all, even academics are not contemplative about every aspect of their lives. But on the other, it can be read as a claim that academics have the capability to reflect upon the world while "denying or marginalising the life of the mind in others" (Sayer 2005, p. 29). Bohman, for example, complains that Bourdieu allows reflexive capabilities to academics that he appears to deny to others (Bohman 1999, p. 136). This would seem to be the natural consequence of understating the role of conscious deliberation in everyday life.

Archer vs. Bourdieu

Bourdieu's work on reflexivity, then, makes clear that he does accept that conscious deliberation has a role in determining our practices, but it is a role that is always presented as

secondary to the practical logic of the habitus. By contrast, Archer's account of human action places conscious reflexive deliberation at its heart.[6,7]

For Archer, reflexivity is a power which human beings possess: it is the ability to monitor ourselves in relation to our circumstances (2003, pp. 9, 14). It is exercised through a process of conscious reflexive deliberations during which we conduct internal conversations with ourselves about ourselves (2003, p. 25) – our situation, our behaviour, our values, our aspirations. The inner conversation "is a ceaseless discussion about the satisfaction of our ultimate concerns and a monitoring of the self and its commitments" (2000, p. 195).

Such reflexivity, she argues, is a "mature ability" and a precursor to the development of a personal identity and a social identity. These senses of who we are depend upon us delineating what we care about (thus defining one's personal identity) and relating it to our social context to develop projects that are based upon our ultimate concerns and which we use to guide the conduct of our lives (thus defining our social identity) (Archer 2000, pp. 9-10, 219). And for Archer reflexivity is specifically a causal power (2003, p. 9). Thus in our reflexive deliberations we come to conclusions that affect our behaviour in the social world.

There is a strongly humanistic element to Archer's stress on the conscious nature of our reflexive deliberations and the opportunity that they present us to make decisions for ourselves about how we will conduct our lives. This is not, however, at the expense of social influences on human behaviour; as she says, "we do not make our personal identities under the circumstances of our own choosing. Our placement in society rebounds upon us, affecting the persons we become, but also and more forcefully influencing the social identities which we can achieve" (2000, p. 10). And indeed Archer has devoted two volumes to showing that social structures and cultural systems have causal powers in their own right (1995; 1996). At the same time, she rejects the implication that one's social position fully determines one's subjectivity or behaviour,

pointing out (contra Bourdieu) that these develop in very diverse ways amongst people with the same social background (2003, p. 348).

What is critical for Archer in these relationships is that we continue to recognise that human beings, social structures, and cultural entities each have their own distinct existences and influences on social outcomes. She sustains this view with an emergentist realist ontology of the social world. Elsewhere I have argued for some modifications to Archer's analysis of emergence, but only in order to strengthen the emergentist conclusion – that human individuals, social structures, and cultural entities, while causally inter-related, nevertheless each possess distinct properties and powers of their own. Thus none of these types of entity can be eliminated from the explanation of social events, nor conflated with each other in such explanations (Elder-Vass 2006, pp. 126-37; Elder-Vass 2007a).

In accordance with this ontology, Archer rejects views of human action that deny causal power to individual humans and their reflexivity. Thus she criticises those who argue that human action can be explained without recognition of the causal powers of human beings as such – whether because they substitute the powers of our biological parts for the powers of the whole human being (e.g. neural reductionists) or because they substitute social forces for them (e.g. accounts of human action as socially-determined discourse) (2003, pp. 10-14). And she criticises the view that human agency and social structure can be conflated, which she perceives most clearly in Giddens' structuration theory (Archer 1982) but also in the work of Bourdieu himself (Archer 2003, pp. 11-12). [8]

Archer and Bourdieu are therefore opposed at two distinct levels: in terms of both their theoretical and their ontological views of human agency. At the theoretical level, the conflict turns on the extent to which human beings influence their own destiny. While Archer rejects "contemporary social theory that seeks to diminish human properties and powers" (2000, back

cover) Bourdieu sees human action as driven by a socially-derived habitus that provides "a spontaneity without consciousness or will" (1990b, p. 56). At the ontological level, the question turns on whether social structure can be seen as distinct from human beings or whether the two are mutually constitutive.

Archer discusses the ontological differences using the example of how Bourdieu might see one of her research subjects ('Graham') – perhaps making some conscious choices, but, "largely unaware that his horizons have been socially reduced" as a consequence of social conditioning (Archer 2003, p. 11). For Archer, the problem with this position is that

> there never comes a point at which it is possible to disentangle Graham's personal caution (a subjective property of a person) from the characteristics of his context (objective properties of society)… All that is certain is that he does not have the last word about himself, his intentions or actions. Therefore, it becomes impossible that Graham can deliberate upon his circumstances as subject to object, because these are now inseparable for 'Graham' (Archer 2003, p. 12).

This is an example of the more general ontological error of conflationism, which "rests upon conceptualising 'structures' and 'agents' as ontologically inseparable because each enters into the other's constitution" (Archer 2003, p. 1).

Thus Archer sees the divergence between Bourdieu and herself as primarily ontological, mirroring precisely her well-established critique of Giddens' structuration theory (Archer 1982; Archer 1995, ch. 4). By comparison with both Archer and Giddens, however, Bourdieu is rather vaguer about the ontological relationship between structure and agency. Like both, he clearly rejects both methodological individualism (in the form of Sartre's subjectivism) and methodological collectivism (in the structuralism of Levi-Strauss and Althusser), and seeks to find a middle way that can accommodate some features of both (Bourdieu 1990a, pp. 9-13). But does he take the conflationist or the emergentist route between these two? Strong support for the accusation of conflationism can be found in Bourdieu's description of habitus as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring

structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations" (1990b, p. 53). Dispositions are features of human individuals, so here he seems to be equating structure with internal human properties in much the same way that Giddens equates structure with rules (Giddens 1984, pp. 17-25).

This seems to fit Archer's characterisation of conflationism (cited above), with agency and structures each entering into the constitution of the other. On the one hand, agents and their knowledge are constitutive of structures:

> To speak of habitus is to include in the object the knowledge which the agents, who are part of the object, have of the object, and the contribution this knowledge makes to the reality of the object. But it is not only a matter of putting back into the real world that one is endeavouring to know, a knowledge of the real world that contributes to its reality (and also to the force it exerts). It means conferring on this knowledge a genuinely constitutive power, the very power it is denied when, in the name of an objectivist conception of objectivity, one makes common knowledge or theoretical knowledge a mere reflection of the real world (Bourdieu 1984, p. 467).

And on the other, structures are constitutive of agents:

> Overriding the spurious opposition between the forces inscribed in an earlier state of the system, outside the body, and internal forces arising instantaneously as motivations springing from free will, the internal dispositions – the internalization of externality – enable the external forces to exert themselves, but in accordance with the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated (Bourdieu 1990b, pp. 54-5).

If both of these claims are maintained, then it is difficult to see how agents can be distinguished from structure and vice-versa. However, I suggest, Bourdieu's position can be made compatible with an emergentist ontology with some relatively subtle changes that leave his theoretical agenda intact.

To begin with, we need not alter the claim that agents are constitutive of structures. Indeed, the emergence relationship is concerned precisely with the question of how parts interact to generate wholes with emergent properties. Thus it is perfectly compatible with an emergentist ontology to argue that structures ('the object') are made up of agents, thereby inherently including in the structure the knowledge that agents have of the structure by virtue of including the agents

as its parts. This knowledge has a central role to play in the interplay of structure and agency which perpetuates that structure. It is therefore perfectly compatible with the emergentist position to see this knowledge as constitutive of structure.

The second claim, however, brings us to the heart of the ontological disagreement, with the phrase "the internalization of externality". On a metaphorical reading of internalization, the second claim is entirely compatible with an emergentist ontology; on a literal reading, it is entirely incompatible. Let me begin with the metaphorical reading. In this sense, when we 'internalize' something, our beliefs about the world are affected by our experience in such a way that we accept it as a fact. Thus, for example, we may internalize a sense of inferiority as a result of being persistently treated as though we are inferior by people around us. Metaphorically, we may say that we have internalized our inferiority, but literally, what we mean is that we have acquired the belief that we are inferior. Now in this sense of internalization, Bourdieu's passage above means that our beliefs about the world, or our dispositions towards acting in it, are affected by our experiences of social structures, and as a consequence those social structures have an effect on our behaviour. These beliefs and dispositions are not to be equated with social structure, nor to substitute for the notion of a distinct social structure, but to be seen as features of the human beings who are parts of the structure. This does indeed overcome a "spurious opposition between the forces inscribed in an earlier state of the system, outside the body, and internal forces arising instantaneously as motivations springing from free will" since it helps to make clear the mechanism through which the external forces causally affect the internal ones. Here, the 'external forces' do not disappear into the body but their effectiveness derives in part from a process that depends upon their effects on the body.

Unfortunately the literal sense of internalization leads to a very different interpretation of Bourdieu's argument, and it is this sense that is encouraged by the description of habitus as

"structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures". In this sense, when we internalize something it becomes literally part of us. In this sense, habitus is not merely a set of dispositions that has been causally influenced by our experiences of social structure. Instead habitus literally is structure, internalized into our bodies. And on this reading, Bourdieu is not simply rejecting a spurious opposition between external and internal forces, but also denying the real distinction between external and internal forces. Now, beliefs and dispositions are no longer properties of human beings who are distinct from social structures; rather they represent an ontological penetration of the individual by the social structure. On this reading, structures really are parts of people. If this is what Bourdieu intends, then his position is indeed conflationist. Such a view, however, is not only incompatible with an emergentist ontology; it is also a clear ontological error, in that it fails to distinguish between a thing and its causal consequences. To be more specific, it fails to distinguish between a social structure and the consequences it has for our mental states. This is the same species of error as the claim that a child leaving a zoo has animals in their head, rather than thoughts or beliefs about the animals they have seen.

Distinguishing which of these readings Bourdieu really intends is not easy. He does not seem to have considered emergence at all, and he pays little attention to the ontological niceties required to distinguish an emergentist from a conflationist perspective, and so his account is open to a variety of ontological interpretations. At the ontological level, then, I suggest there is scope for reconciling Archer and Bourdieu through an emergentist reading of Bourdieu's ontology.[9,10] And indeed, I would agree with Archer that the conflationist version is untenable anyway, as she has shown in her critique of Giddens.

Ontology, however, is not entirely independent of theory; this strategy will therefore only work if Bourdieu's theoretical position is compatible with such a reading. And of course we must still consider the second apparent conflict between Archer and Bourdieu: their differing

perspectives on the theoretical relationship of human causal powers to human action. The theory of action outlined below provides the basis for resolving both of these questions.

Before examining my proposed resolution to the conflict between Archer and Bourdieu at the theoretical level, we must briefly consider the most obvious way of resolving it – the argument that some actions are reflexively determined and others are determined by the habitus, so that both Archer's and Bourdieu's theories are right, but about different subsets of human action. Thus, for example, I might exercise my reflexivity when deciding how to vote, but be driven by my habitus in the degree of deference I display when greeting the officials in the polling station.

In a sense, both authors allow space for just such a reading of their argument. Bourdieu, for example, writes "if one fails to recognize any form of action other than rational action or mechanical reaction, it is impossible to understand the logic of all the actions that are reasonable without being the product of a reasoned design" (1990b, p. 50), confirming what was suggested in the previous section: that he accepts that some actions are indeed the product of reasoned design.[11] And Archer suggests that personal identity, which seems to be a corequisite of reflexive deliberation "comes only at maturity but it is not attained by all" (2000, p. 10). Hence at any one time some people will not yet have become reflexive, and others will never do so – leaving them, it would seem, in the grip of their habitus. On this reading Bourdieu's insistence on the role of the habitus, and Archer's insistence on the role of reflexivity can be seen as logically compatible, with their different emphases reflecting either a desire to stress the importance of their own theoretical perspective; or an implicit argument about what proportion of our actions fits into each category.

This paper will argue, however, that there is a stronger way to reconcile these two theoretical perspectives. The heart of the argument will be that many and perhaps most of our

actions are co-determined by both our habitus and our reflexive deliberations; and that despite the apparently conflicting implications of these two perspectives for our sense of our ability to choose our actions, they in fact represent two complementary moments of one and the same process. To see how this could be, we must look more closely into the theory of human action.

The emergence of the mental

This section and the next will construct a theory of human action based on the argument that we human individuals do, as Archer claims, have emergent causal powers of our own.[12] In this view human individuals are part of a hierarchy of entities, each of which can possess causal powers in its own right because it is a particular organisation of particular sorts of parts that that interact in a particular way to produce those powers. Thus, in explaining the powers of human individuals we must consider the following questions: What are the parts, how related, that constitute human individuals, how does this sort of structure lead to the powers that they possess, and how is this sort of structure brought about and sustained? This section will be concerned with the emergent roots of our power to act, and will offer an explanation of human action in terms that allow appropriate roles to both mental entities and the 'hardware' of our brains.[13]

We must begin by asking what mental phenomena are. While there is some agreement on what sorts of things are mental phenomena – sensations, beliefs, desires, intentions, concepts, reasons, and decisions, for example – the criteria that circumscribe the mental are more controversial. I shall accept Searle's approach, which implies that mental phenomena are thoughts of any type of which we can be conscious. Thus, for something to be mental, we must be able to think it. This does not mean, of course, that we are conscious of it, or thinking it, all the time; we always have a great many concepts and beliefs that we are not conscious of at that particular moment (Searle 1992, p. 172).

This immediately leads us on, however, to another question: how can mental phenomena exist? What is it that connects the 'mind' – the array of mental phenomena we experience, if experience is the right word – to our bodies? This is, of course, the classic mind/body question that has preoccupied philosophers of mind since Descartes, but it is increasingly being recognised that the newly developing sciences of the brain will help us answer it. Indeed these neurosciences are starting to provide answers already, although they are still highly incomplete.[14] What they do seem to show is that mental phenomena, both when we are conscious of them and when we are not, are somehow produced by the operation of the networks of neurons that make up a large part of our brains.

John Searle, for example, argues that consciousness itself must have neurophysiological causes: "the mental state of consciousness is just an ordinary biological, that is, physical, feature of the brain" (1992, p. 13). Searle sees this as an emergence relation:

> The brain causes certain 'mental' phenomena, such as conscious mental states, and these conscious states are simply higher-level features of the brain. Consciousness is a higher-level or emergent property of the brain in the utterly harmless sense of 'higher-level' or 'emergent' in which solidity is a higher-level emergent property of H_2O molecules when they are in a lattice structure (ice) (Searle 1992, p. 14).[15]

Although much of the underlying neuroscience remains to be developed, there are features of the mechanism that are well established. In particular, the networks of neurons and synaptic connections between them that make up much of our brain are conditioned or configured by our experience. The mechanisms by which such networks can be conditioned to store knowledge, beliefs, and the like are relatively well understood as a result of computer simulations of neural networks (Holland 1998, ch. 5). Our mental states, such as beliefs, seem to be stored at the neuronal level in the form of network of connections of varying strengths (frequencies) between neurons and groups of neurons. These connections tend to be strengthened when we have experiences that appear to confirm the mental state, and weakened when we have experiences that undermine it. These neural connections, then, do not represent individual

experiences, one at a time, but a kind of weighted summary of them. Our experiences, then, are a cause of the particular configurations of neurons and synapses that are the emergence base of our mental states. Mental states are thus emergent properties of neural networks, and can therefore be causally effective. Beliefs, for example, may have causal effects on us that neurons cannot have when they are not structured through synaptic connections into just this sort of higher level entity.[16]

It is the effects on our neural networks, and therefore on our beliefs, of our experiences that 'condition' us to possess certain mental states. Such conditioning need not be conscious – if we experience a particular pattern of events repeatedly then our brain will learn it without any necessary conscious intervention, as for example in the phenomenon of subliminal learning (Freeman 2000, p. 191). On the other hand, our conscious thinking may itself provide inputs to the learning process. This conditioning mechanism provides the route by which 'socialisation' or analogous processes may play a significant role in establishing our beliefs and dispositions.

On the basis of this account, we can loosely describe the emergence relation by which mental properties emerge from neural networks. In this emergence relation (i) the parts are neurons; (ii) these are related by synaptic connections which connect some pairs of neurons and not others, and in which the synaptic connections can have various strengths (firing frequencies); (iii) this network can produce a meaningful mental state because the varying strengths of these connections cause us to think of concepts as having certain types of relationships with other concepts; (iv) the network connections expressing a given mental state are created as a result of our experiences, and may be modified, weakened, or strengthened by further experiences; (v) the network representing a given concept is sustained over time by physiological processes that need not concern us here, except to say that such networks may fade over time and be forgotten or

partially forgotten, but repeated exposure to or exercise of particular mental states will tend to lead to renewal of their strength.

This picture of mental phenomena and their emergence base is admittedly incomplete, and it is no doubt over-simplified in many respects. However, I believe it is sufficiently accurate to serve its purpose here: to make clear that a full account of human action must recognise and seek to theorise the biological basis of that action and its relationship to the higher-level influences on that action, and to show that this relationship can potentially be theorised as an emergence relation of mental phenomena from our physical brains and perhaps bodies.

An emergentist theory of action

With this picture of mental entities and their emergence base, we can now turn to the question of how they contribute to the determination of human action. Davidson has famously argued that mental entities, specifically reasons, can be causes of our actions (2001).[17] Here I would like to consider how this could be the case.

We must begin by asking what is meant by reason in this context. There are at least three alternatives. The first is an after-the-event description of what we now believe our motivation was for the action in question. We could call this a post-event reason or a rationalisation. But the verbalisation of such after-the-event descriptions is a separate action from the one we are attempting to explain. Such verbalisations may misrepresent our thinking at the time of the action, and since they occur after the event to be explained they cannot be its causes. At best, they are useful but fallible evidence about our motivations at the time of the original action. The second alternative is what I will call a conscious reason. This version of the concept implies that we acted because of a decision we made, through a process of conscious consideration of the reason in question. The third alternative we may call an unconscious reason. This would count as a cause of

an action if there were beliefs, desires, and hence reasons implicit in our neural networks at the moment immediately preceding the action – as mental entities that we were not conscious of at the time – and these combined to generate our action without us being conscious of the fact. Davidson appears to intend the second of these alternatives, but I will argue below that to construct a viable version of the argument requires that we explain human behaviour in terms that combine explanations of both the second and the third type.

The argument is most easily approached by considering how decisions and behaviour are related to each other over time. Experimenters have shown that to take a conscious decision and implement it takes a minimum of a quarter of a second; yet top tennis players, for example, can react to a serve in a tenth of a second (Dennett 2003, p. 238).[18,19] How can this be? Dennett argues that "the tennis player commits to a simple plan and then lets 'reflexes' execute her intentional act" (2003, p. 238). The 'simple plan' here consists of a set of consciously-chosen strategies, the precise strategy to be adopted being conditional on what type of serve is received, and the 'reflexes' consist of the ability of our brain and body not only to execute pre-determined strategies but also, when they have already been suitably trained by previous experience, to determine how to execute them (e.g. just how high and how wide to swing the racquet head) independently of any further conscious decision-making. Thus, the conscious decision takes place at one time, and the execution of that decision is done non-consciously at a later moment.[20] Furthermore, the conscious decision only partially describes the behaviour to be undertaken, leaving other details to be 'filled in' non-consciously.

Yet it is also true that our brains at least sometimes offer us the opportunity to consciously review and alter our behaviour when we are on the point of implementing it, as suggested by Freeman: "Brain activity preceding the initiation of an intentional act starts before the onset of awareness of an intent to engage in that action. The subjects also report that, after

becoming aware that they are about to act, they can abort the action" (2000, p. 170). In cases like this, it seems that the brain activity preceding the initiation of the action represents the beginning of an action implementation process, which may be driven to some extent by past decisions, but which is potentially modifiable by a 'last minute' conscious review.

I suggest that all decision making works like this: that we do make conscious decisions but these decisions are only the indirect and partial causes of our behaviour, in that (a) they occur a variable length of time before the action concerned; and (b) they are always incomplete regarding the details of the action to be taken.

Let us imagine, for example, the case in which I decide 'I'll have lunch when I've finished this paragraph'. Clearly I could represent this as a decision based on a conscious reasoned balancing of a number of beliefs and desires, and argue that these reasons caused my subsequent action of ceasing to write, getting up from my chair, walking into the kitchen, and preparing my lunch. However, it is clear that this is an incomplete account of the causation of this behaviour. First, some explanation is required of how my decision at one point in time becomes activated at another, say ten minutes later, when I come to finish the paragraph. Note that this is far from an automatic process. I may, for example, become engrossed in what I am writing and go on for several more paragraphs before I remember my intention. Or I may find the current paragraph impossibly difficult and decide to give up and have lunch before I finish it. Or I may finish the paragraph, start getting up for lunch, but alter my decision at the last minute because something else now seems more important. Yet, if I do have lunch at the end of the paragraph, my earlier decision to do so surely contributed causally to that outcome.

Secondly, this decision is incomplete as a determination of my action because it says nothing about how I will implement that decision. It is quite likely, for example, that when I get up out of my chair I will walk through to the kitchen without paying the slightest conscious

attention to how I move my legs in order to achieve this – there is no conscious decision at all involved in this part of my behaviour. As Freeman says, "we perform most daily activities that are clearly intentional and meaningful without being explicitly aware of them" (2000, p. 23). Thus, some parts of the behaviour I have decided upon are not themselves decided upon. Other parts may be decided upon, but as a result of some other decision at some other time. Take the question of what I am going to eat – another part of implementing this decision to have lunch. I may have decided years ago that on weekdays I will eat rice and vegetables for lunch, and so go on to do so without re-making this decision.

Decisions, then, may have variable size or scope, in the sense that, say, a decision to drive to work has greater scope than the decision to turn left at a particular junction on the way. This in turn has greater scope than the decision to turn the steering wheel a bit further to get round this corner successfully (although, of course, experienced drivers often do not make conscious decisions about how far to turn the wheel; they delegate this to a non-conscious skill established by previous training). Thus any single human action may represent the (full or partial) realisation of a series of nested decisions of various sizes or scope.

It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that our decisions, and with them the conscious reasons that motivate them, are merely inputs, among others, into the determination of our behaviour. Furthermore they are inputs with variable degrees of effect. As Loyal and Barnes have suggested, "Might it not be that all actions are chosen but that there is a range of chosen actions from those readily modified to those carried out with implacable will and determination?" (Loyal and Barnes 2001, p. 523). Decisions, then, do not seem to produce behaviour directly, but rather produce dispositions to behave in a given way in the future in certain circumstances. These dispositions then seem to be held with varying degrees of commitment, through being

implemented in the brain as neural networks, in an analogous way to beliefs which we hold with varying degrees of confidence.[21]

This suggests a model of the determination of human behaviour which fits neatly with Bhaskar's conception of actual causation as the outcome of the interplay of a variety of causal powers (Bhaskar 1978). Let me represent this analytically as a series of steps:

(i) belief formation: we develop beliefs and dispositions as a result of our experience, which are implemented at the neural level as neural networks;

(ii) decision making: we possess the causal power to think consciously about our plans, and make decisions, which are co-determined causally by our thinking powers and the network of beliefs that they work upon;

(iii) decision storage: having made decisions, these are stored in our neural networks as new or modified dispositions (note that there may be multiple loops back to step (ii) before an action actually occurs, including the 'last minute' conscious review of some of our decisions);

(iv) action implementation: our actions are determined directly and immediately by non-conscious brain processes which use our beliefs, dispositions, and skills as inputs.

This same story can be told in two apparently contradictory ways. We can tell it with our conscious thinking 'in charge', on the grounds that we do consciously make decisions about what we are going to do – thus emphasising reflexivity. Or we can tell it with our nonconscious behaviour-determination processes 'in charge', on the grounds that decisions are merely inputs to the real determination, that they can be overridden, and that they only ever relate to part of the determination of what we do in any single action – thus emphasising acquired dispositions. While each story may have its merits for the purpose of answering different questions, the more balanced story is one in which our conscious decision-making and our non-conscious behaviour-

determination appear as complementary and mutually-necessary moments in the causation of our actions.

Where does this leave Davidson's account of reasons as causes? Whether we read it in the second or the third of the senses suggested earlier, as describing the role of conscious or nonconscious reasons, it seems that reasons can indeed be causes of our actions, but they are only ever partial and contingent causes. Reasons co-determine our decisions, and decisions are stored in our brains as neural configurations – dispositions – which in turn co-determine our actions. But other factors are also involved, and these other factors can lead to some of our decisions not being realised. There are therefore good reasons why there is no exceptionless empirical regularity connecting reasons and actions: like any other causal power, the causal powers of reasons to motivate actions are contingent on the operation of other causal powers with the capacity to co-determine our decisions and our subsequent behaviour.

Thus, the theory of action briefly outlined here shows how it might be possible that our actions are directly and non-consciously determined by our current dispositions, while allowing that those dispositions are themselves the outcome of a series of past events. Those events include (i) very recent reflections that we tend to see as directly causally effective 'decisions'; (ii) older reflections that shaped our dispositions consciously at the time but which we may now have forgotten; and (iii) experiences that affected our dispositions (for example in the subliminal acquisition of a habit or skill) without us ever consciously deciding how.

Reconciling Archer and Bourdieu

This theory of action, I argue, and the emergence relation it describes between the mental and the neural, provides a viable route to reconciling the contributions of Archer and Bourdieu in a unified theory of action, subject to some reasonable modifications to their theoretical

perspectives. On the one hand, my argument that our actions are caused by the dispositions stored in our neural networks as a result of past decisions and experiences maps closely onto Bourdieu's claim that our practices are caused non-consciously by our habitus. Although Bourdieu tends to present this claim in somatic rather than specifically neural terms, he did identify dispositions with beliefs and even with "the reinforcement or weakening of synaptic connections" in his later work (Bourdieu 2000, pp. 136, 177). On the other, the role I allow to decision-making in amending this set of dispositions provides the mechanism by which the reflexive deliberation emphasised by Archer can enter into the same process of action determination as the habitus – not directly, in the action-implementation phase, but indirectly, in the decision-taking phase of the process, which can be invoked up to the very last moment, most obviously when the set of existing dispositions does not provide decisive guidance to the brain on how to implement a given action. This process of interaction between an emergent mental layer invoked in the process of decision-making and the underlying neural layer which translates our dispositions into actual behaviour explains how dispositions can indeed produce practices while leaving space for conscious decision making within the very same process (and thus supporting Crossley's argument that "contrary to what Bourdieu sometimes suggests, reflective and reflexive projects do not presuppose a different principle of action to the habitus" (Crossley 2001, p. 113)).

Just as importantly, this account shows how some parts of our actions can be determined more or less unconsciously whereas others are determined as a consequence of conscious, and perhaps rational, decision making. Where the translation into behaviour of a disposition that has been embedded in our neural network is unproblematic – such as the usual way in which we shape our mouth to speak, and thus the accent that we produce – then the process of action implementation can proceed with no reference to the conscious level. But where this translation <u>is</u> problematic – say, when we need to decide which way to turn <u>en route</u> to a place we have never

visited before – then our consciousness must be invoked to provide a decision which will complete the set of dispositions required to determine the action to be implemented.

Thus it is not only in moments of crisis that our habitus does not provide a fully worked out response to our situation. Such situations are radically more frequent than Bourdieu seems to believe, and thus we are constantly presented with opportunities for reflexive review of our beliefs and intentions. As Crossley puts it,

> Bourdieu underestimates the extent to which 'rational and conscious calculation,' indeed reflexivity, enter into everyday life as a matter of course… Individuals have choices to make every day of their lives, e.g. about jobs, money, and leisure activities. And this is all the more so in the present, given the new demand for 'flexibility' in economic and political life. We cannot therefore make choice an exception in the way he seems to want to do. Choices, albeit rooted in a feel for the game, routinely enter everyday life… (Crossley 2001, p. 97)

Nevertheless, some aspects of our behaviour may be attributed more directly to habitus and others to conscious reflection. It is, however, typically different aspects of the same behaviour that need to be explained in these two different ways, as opposed to entirely distinct actions. Say, for example, I need to reply to a difficult question. In doing so, I may reproduce an accent by shaping my mouth in ways that I implement entirely without conscious thought, but in the very same speech act I may express an idea which I must carefully think through in a conscious decision-making process. Even the implementation of a conscious decision into the form of a socially competent performance is thus achieved as a matter of routine. We can relate this back to the voting example introduced earlier: it is not that the act of voting is consciously reflexive while the act of speaking to the polling official is driven by habitus. Rather, some aspects of both actions are driven by conscious decisions taken in the very recent past, whereas other aspects of the same actions are driven unconsciously from our accumulated set of dispositions – our habitus.

Although this account of action is therefore consistent with many aspects of Bourdieu's habitus, it provides an explicit role for conscious input to our dispositions that Bourdieu largely

neglects. Of course, that decision-making itself is always heavily influenced by our existing set of dispositions (Bourdieu 2000, p. 161; Thompson 1992, pp. 16-17). But it does provide a mechanism for the amendment of our dispositions, most obviously in response to new situations which are not congruent with our previous experience. For example, when we adopt a new role, we may have to think carefully about how to perform it, and this may be guided not only by the dispositions arising from our previous social positions, but also by consciously absorbed new information, such as instruction from a supervisor, or information from a book.

In practice this means that when we act, some aspects of our actions may be determined with little or no conscious input, while others are strongly influenced by recent reflection. The extent to which reflection affects our actions is, however, left open by this theory. It seems likely that this extent is highly variable, across a number of dimensions. Let us consider four of these.

First, the same individual may be highly reflexive with regard to some aspects of their behaviour, but strongly driven by their social conditioning with regard to others. Consider, for example, the radical male political activist who is highly reflexive in his response to globalization, war, or capitalism, yet uncritically reproduces the attitudes and behaviours towards women acquired from the culture of his upbringing. Second, different individuals from the same social group may have very different degrees or styles of reflexivity – a possibility that tends to contradict Bourdieu's argument, but one that Archer provides strong empirical evidence for in her work on different modes of reflexivity (Archer 2003, Part II; Archer 2007). Third, individuals from different backgrounds may display a different balance of reflexive and unreflexive action – which is, of course, a key part of Bourdieu's argument – such that on average individuals from an intellectual background, for example, may be more questioning of their dispositions than those from a working class background. And fourthly, as noted above, different societies in different historical periods may show marked differences in the degree of reflexivity demonstrated by their

members; thus, for example feudal societies probably discouraged any sort of challenging of the habitus, whereas contemporary post-industrial societies positively demand it, with their constantly changing environments constantly disrupting the assumptions of the habitus, and with education systems that must increasingly prepare children to be flexible in later life (cf. Bourdieu 1990a, pp. 73-4).

If these speculations are valid, the contribution of reflexivity to the causation of human action varies by situation, by individual, by social class, and by historical context. Hence we need to theorise the ways in which reflexivity develops and operates, as well as theorising the less reflexive aspects of the development and operation of the habitus. We need a theory of reflexivity to complement Bourdieu's theory of the habitus, and Archer's Being Human and the fascinating empirical work in Structure, Agency, and the Internal Conversation offer a substantial contribution to just such a theory.

Once again, however, some reinterpretation of the argument will be required. Archer's analysis of the acquisition of personal and social identity is a compelling story about the development of reflexivity, but it is a story that neglects the role of the habitus. Archer certainly argues that social structure does affect human action, but she does not see its effects being channelled through our dispositions. Thus, for example, she argues that "we do not make our personal identities under the circumstances of our own choosing. Our placement in society rebounds upon us, affecting the persons we become, but also and more forcefully influencing the social identities which we can achieve" (Archer 2000, p. 10). Thus both our choices of primary concerns, and our choices of roles and projects through which we can pursue them, are constrained by our social context. However, Archer tends to stress the externality of social forces, as when she says that the individual is right to believe "that he lives in a social world that has different properties and powers from his own – ones which constrain (and enable) his actions.

These are temporally prior to his conceiving of a course of action, relatively autonomous from how he takes them to be, but can causally influence the achievement of his plans by frustrating them or advancing them" (Archer 2003, p. 14, also see pp. 134-5). Structures are thus seen as having an influence on the outcome of our plans rather than on our subjectivity itself. The reason appears to be her desire to retain the human individual as an independent actor in their own right:

> Our reflexive deliberations are held to be the processes through which we agents selectively mediate structural and cultural properties and also creatively contribute to their transformation. Therefore to rob agency of its first-person powers, by accrediting them to third parties, is to cut back on the causal powers which make each and every agent an active contributor to social reproduction or transformation. Agency needs to be granted autonomous properties in order to play this role. To eliminate their first-person perspective on themselves deprives them of this autonomy by discrediting their powers and explaining them away as the results of childhood influences, society's discourse or brain states (Archer 2003, pp. 38-9).

Like Archer, I strongly believe that we cannot eliminate the first-person perspective, nor the causal powers of human individuals, from the explanation of human action. But I believe we can retain these without denying the impact of the social world on human subjectivity, and without denying the role of our biological parts in underpinning our behaviour. I argue, in short, that we can explain the powers of human individuals without explaining them away.

Thus we can accept that some day we may be able to explain the neurological underpinnings of human behaviour without this entailing neurological reductionism. To say that we might be able to identify the neural network that has a particular disposition as an emergent property, for example, is not to say that our behaviour is determined purely by our cells. Those cells can not produce our human causal powers unless they are combined in the particular set of structural relations that constitutes them into a human being.[22] Similarly, to say that our social background and experiences influence our dispositions is not to cede all causal power to the social level at the expense of the individual. Our dispositions may sometimes be heavily and unconsciously affected by social factors, but none of us is ever completely at the mercy of our habitus. Our habitus at any one time is not the unmediated product of social structures, but the

result of a lifetime of critical reflection upon our experiences, including our experiences of those structures. Thus the human individual remains the prime mover of human action, even if we accept that social conditioning plays a crucial part in forming our dispositions.

Once this is accepted, then Archer's account of the development of personal identity and social identity can be seen as an argument about the extent to which we are able to modify our habitus. As we develop a personal identity, we become more able to evaluate our concerns – to become reflexive – and to modify our dispositions as a consequence. Indeed, developing projects is precisely this – an example of the process of modifying our dispositions for future action. Reflexivity thus becomes a critical attitude towards the dispositions we have acquired from our past, as well as towards the contemporary social situation that we face.

With these re-interpretations, then, Archer's account of reflexivity can be integrated with the theory of action outlined in this paper and thus with a similarly reinterpreted version of Bourdieu's account of the habitus. The resulting synthesis, I argue, provides us with a powerful and coherent account of human action.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined a theory of human action that encompasses both the conscious reflexive deliberation stressed by Archer and the acquired dispositions embodied in Bourdieu's habitus. In doing so, I argue, it has constructed a synthesis that has the best properties of both accounts, while eliminating their tensions with each other and their major lacunae. Both of their accounts require reinterpretation to bring them into this new synthesis, and both must give up something in the process; but the net result is a theory that preserves the most central intentions of both.

From Archer, this theory takes both her ontological insistence on the distinct existence of uniquely human causal powers and her theoretical insistence on the need to take account of conscious reflexive deliberation in the explanation of human action. It is thus able to draw on her account of the development of personal and social identity to expand and consolidate its account of reflexivity. But her account must also be modified, most particularly to allow for the role of acquired dispositions on our beliefs and behaviour, and the effect of social context on those dispositions.[23]

From Bourdieu, the theory takes his penetrating examination of the construction and operation of the habitus, and his recognition that our socially-influenced beliefs contribute to our reproduction of social structure. But his account too must be revised. Ontologically, it must be clarified by recognising that social structures are not literally internalized by individuals, but only metaphorically, through the influence they have on our subjectivity. Theoretically, it must be modified to show how we, as reflexive beings, are sometimes able to critically evaluate and thus modify our dispositions in the light of our experience, our reasoning capacities, and our value commitments.

While this paper has only been able to present the briefest sketch of the resulting theory of action, I suggest that this synthesis overcomes the imbalances in earlier accounts. The consequence of placing Archer and Bourdieu's theories within the emergentist framework developed here is a coherent view of how human action can be the product of "a permanent dialectic between an organizing consciousness and automatic behaviours" (Bourdieu 1990b, p. 80). This arises, I believe, from the adoption of an emergentist perspective in which social structures, cultural systems, human individuals and indeed our biological parts are all recognised as possessing relevant causal powers, and examining how those causal powers interact in practice, rather than seeking to deny the causal influence of any of these, or to conflate multiple levels into

one. Thus it carries forward the emergentist project in sociology that was effectively launched with Archer's critiques of Watkins and Giddens (Archer 1979, ch. 1; Archer 1982).

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Footnotes

[1] An early call for such hybridization was made by Mouzelis (1995, pp. 113-4).

[2] This is therefore a similar ontology to Shilling's corporeal realism (Shilling 2005, pp. 12-14)

[3] Even when he does acknowledge it, he often stresses the significance of structural rather than agentic factors, prompting Alexander to argue that "Bourdieu seems unable to keep himself from affirming determinism 'in the last instance'" (Alexander 1995, p. 140).

[4] Thus the divergent views on habitus are not just a product of the inappropriate imposition of categories derived from Anglo-American sociology on Bourdieu's work, as Wacquant suggests (Wacquant 1993).

[5] *Field* is another important concept for Bourdieu. A good account of its meaning can be found in (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp. 94-114).

[6] Archer herself was taught by Bourdieu in Paris for a year in the 1980's, but he seems to have had relatively little influence on her thinking. She subsequently published two papers criticising his neglect of structural differences in education systems (Archer 1983; Archer 1993).

[7] Archer's recent work on reflexivity is summarised clearly and placed in the context of her earlier work in (Vandenberghe 2005).

[8] John Parker has also argued that Bourdieu conflates structure and agency (Parker 2000, pp 48-51).

[9] Note that my retention of the argument that people in the present are the parts of social structures in the present conflicts with some views expressed by Archer. I defend this approach in (Elder-Vass 2007a).

[10] A strong affinity with Archer is also suggested by Bourdieu's endorsement of realism: "So it is the simple observation of a scientific world in which the defence of reason is entrusted to a collective labour of critical confrontation placed under the control of the facts that forces one to adhere to a critical and reflexive realism which rejects both epistemic absolutism and irrationalist relativism" (Bourdieu 2000, p. 111).

[11] Bouveresse reads him in this way: (Bouveresse 1999, p. 49). And Bohman argues the case for explaining some social phenomena in terms of habitus but not others (Bohman 1999, p. 132-3).

[12] Earlier attempts to provide an emergentist reading of the habitus can be found in (Lau 2004) and (Pickel 2005). Neither, however, proceeds on the basis outlined below. It is beyond the scope of this paper to outline the general theory of emergence. For explanations of the principles upon which my application of the theory here is based, see (Elder-Vass 2005; Elder-Vass 2006; Elder-Vass 2007a; Elder-Vass 2007b).

[13] See (Searle 1992, pp. 234-7) for more on 'hardware' processes in our brains.

[14] The term 'neurosciences' encompasses a range of disciplines and subdisciplines, which have mushroomed in recent years, each seeking to explain different aspects of the functioning of the brain, although the different pieces of the jigsaw are still far from being pieced together (Rose 2006, pp. 2-5).

[15] Also see (Searle 1997, pp. 17-18).

[16] There is, however, a great deal of debate amongst philosophers on whether mental properties are emergent. Jaegwon Kim, in particular, has expressed a careful scepticism for many years (see, for example, Kim 1992; Kim 1993; Kim 1997; Kim 1999). This remains very much a live issue, with new papers appearing constantly, including for example a special issue of *Synthese* on reduction and emergence in 2006.

[17] Various objections have been raised to Davidson's argument. Bhaskar has replied to many of these in one of the canonical texts of critical realism (Bhaskar 1979, pp. 80-97)

[18] Tennis players are also one of Bourdieu's favourite illustrations of the theory of action (e.g. Bourdieu 1990a, p. 11; Bourdieu 2000, p. 162).

[19] Although Dennett and Searle have clashed repeatedly over the nature of consciousness, the arguments from their work employed here would appear to be compatible with each other.

[20] I follow Searle here in using nonconscious to refer to brain entities and events of a type which we can never be conscious of, and unconscious to refer to those that we are not conscious of at the time but could be conscious of at some other time (i.e. mental entities and events which we are not currently conscious of) (Searle 1992, p. 155).

[21] Lahire has also argued that dispositions may be of varying strengths, and that their effects depend upon their interaction with other dispositions, non-dispositional beliefs, and the situation (Lahire 2003).

[22] One merit of the emergentist approach is that it enables us to connect the human individual back up to the whole person including the non-mental aspects of the body – its emotions, physical needs, health and disease, and the use and constraint of that body in time and space.

[23] Indeed her forthcoming book begins to address this question, by examining how contextual differences affect the mode of reflexivity each of us adopts (Archer 2007).