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**DECONSTRUCTED TOURAINE:
THE RADICAL SOCIOLOGIST FOR THE SAKE OF
SOCIAL ACTORS AND SOCIETY¹**

The academic and political significance of Professor Alain Touraine is such that he can be regarded as an important intellectual not only in France, but also in Europe. Quite recently he has expressed his views about liberalism and the welfare state. He has said that there is no such thing as a liberal state, but that liberalism is a shock treatment which we use when society is shifting from one system of control of the economy to another. The problem is that there is no model for the new system. He stresses the importance of renewing the welfare state through major political reforms. For him these reforms will have to be as big as the social democratic project was in the early years of industrialization. Rescue of the European welfare state is important for him, because the welfare state and social security are symbols of our civilization. The pressure for change is being generated through the citizen's fear of insecurity, not by any single political force.

This short description of Touraine's recent political statements embodies Alain Touraine's thinking. First, he is not afraid of expressing his political views. Second, for him the role of social science is closely linked to politics and policy-making. Third, he does not trust classical objectivism, where the researcher seeks to distance him/herself from the subject of his/her investigation and tries to avoid personal involvement. Fourth, his background in history can be seen not only in his statements, where he emphasises the importance of historical actors, but also in his theory. Fifth, as Matti Hyvärinen (1985) has expressed it, Touraine is militant like his fellow countryman, Pierre Bourdieu (d. January 2002). Both are militant in two ways: they perceive themselves as critics of society without (any longer) being marxists; both are committed sociologists and swear by sociological knowledge, which is, if not always a way to a better society, at least an instrument for the emancipation of individuals or actors. Sixth, as Crozier (1996) has characterized Touraine, he is a maverick despite his prestigious training at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. A maverick and "normalien" means in this case a person who is self-assertive, independent, a free-thinker, a wanderer and courageous. For instance, Touraine left the Ecole Normale to work in the mines to experience first-hand the plight of the miners. He spent time in Hungary to learn not only from the outside but also from the inside the transition to socialism. His wanderings also include a year in Chile (1956-57) as an advisor to the Institute of Industrial Sociology and fieldwork in Poland while studying the Solidarity movement.

Although authors have described Touraine as a scholar of politics, strategy and figuration of the political will (e.g., Hyvärinen, 1985), for instance, Daniel Pécaut (1998) has argued that despite these obvious interests, essentially he asserts the

primacy of social actors and the system of social action, relegating (transferring) politics to a secondary and subordinate role. Therefore the aim of this article is to explore Alain Touraine's thinking: as an influential contemporary sociologist, whose work has been devoted to understanding and analysing the role of social movements in societal transformation processes, as well as in developing theoretical tools and systems of interpretation on the complex interplay between the societal structures and social action. The emphasis of the article is on social movements and theory of social action. Thus this article is grounded mainly on Touraine's writings of the 1970 and 1980s and so omits most of his important recent contributions (e.g., Touraine, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2001) to the general sociological debate.

TOURAINÉ AS A CONTROVERSIAL INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGIST

Touraine's work is internationally recognized in both the disciplines of sociology and politics, although until recently more in continental Europe and Latin America than in the Anglo-Saxon world. The editors of the book *Alain Touraine*, Jon Clark and Marco Diani (1996), write that his work is highly relevant to key debates in the social sciences in the 1990s, most notably his writings on social action, social movements, democracy and modernity. Bauman (1983) sheds light on Touraine's role in sociology by explaining Touraine's pioneering role in the study of how history is made by people. He further elaborates on the revolutionary character of Touraine's ideas bringing up three important aspects of Touraine's work. First, Bauman pays tribute to the fact that Touraine's ideas regarding the intrinsic pliability of social reality alongside the undetermined and creative nature of collective action were formulated as long ago as 1974 (*Production de la société*) and mature already in 1978 (*Le Voix et le regard*). Second, he praises the radical and uncompromising nature of his ideas, which challenged the 'deterministic' tradition of sociology. Third, Bauman states that perhaps Touraine's most enduring heritage is to have gone beyond the stage of ideology-critique and translated his theoretical framework into a boldly designed and indefatigably executed programme of research.

In his research Touraine has managed to combine developing theoretical entities with empirical research programmes. For instance, Oommen (1996, p. 111), characterises Touraine as an acute theorist and astute researcher. At the theoretical level his achievements are both on what might be called 'meta-theoretical', meaning his theory of social action, and on the more middle-range level, in his developing of the theory on how societies transform themselves from one type to another, e.g., from industrial to post-industrial (Scott, 1996, p. 77). The more empirically oriented Touraine has analysed social movements in at least three types of societies. The first of these are the post-industrial (or programmed) democratic capitalist societies to which Touraine refers as our type of society. Although Touraine refers to the programmed society as a whole, the reference is to France or Western Europe. His empirical studies, such as on the student movement of 1968 and anti-nuclear protest, were done in France. The second type is the industrial, socialist totalitarian societies. Here Oommen refers to the study of the Solidarity movement in Poland. The third type is the industrializing, non-democratic, dependent societies which are economically controlled by a foreign bourgeoisie. Here Oommen refers

to Touraine's analysis of the revolution in Chile. In contrast Scott (1991) focuses our attention on an ambitious project Touraine has had already for decades. Touraine has constructed a unique theoretical and methodological system, which consists of both a comprehensive analysis of contemporary society and a method which can broadly be called 'critical'. This he has done by also bringing to bear the theories of many major figures in the sociological tradition, not merely the 'classics,' but also more contemporary figures such as Parsons and Merton. Scott (1991, p. 29) compares Touraine's project to the corresponding project by Habermas, where the concern is in developing a theory which promises a research program. The difference is that Touraine has developed a method of research which accords with his theoretical and historical speculations.

Alexander (1999) perceives Touraine as having a unique position among the leading theorists in the world, not only because of his desire to understand, analyse and explain a changing world, but also because of his ambition to follow Marx's dictum that the reason for understanding the world is to change it. This deeply historical and political intellectual was the only important theoretical sociologist who took the conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s seriously and systematically. Among the three most important predecessors or influential scholars² to Touraine, Marx is the one to whom Touraine can best be compared as, according to Alexander (ibid.), he identified with these new social movements just as strongly as Marx had identified with the old ones, and with the same intellectual ambivalence. The sociological significance of Touraine lies both at the level of general theory, e.g., social action theory or the theory of post-industrial society, but also at level of one particular field in sociology, namely social movement research. To quote Alexander on Touraine, one may say that in the spirit of Marx's theory:

Touraine tried to develop a grounded theory of the contradictory, anti-human forces and dynamics of post-industrial society, and to identify, on the basis of structural strains, social groups that were bound to overturn them. Like many people in those times, Touraine was convinced that it was possible to carry out this revolutionary change. What made him different from others was that he had developed a highly original theory of why. (Alexander, 1999, p. 100)

To evaluate further Touraine's contribution to sociology and particularly to the field of social movement studies, we can ask what is so enduring in Touraine's studies on social movements. Scott (1996) stresses that the reason why Touraine's analysis of social movements has been so influential in social movement research within both sociology and political science is that he has "recognized earlier than perhaps anyone else the significance of social movements not merely as objects of empirical investigation, but also as stimuli to the development of social science itself" (p. 77). Fuchs' (2000, p. 70) answer is that Touraine indicated the constructive side of social movements during an age when they were perceived either as symptoms of disturbed, alienated and hysterical masses or reactions to structural changes in society. Touraine's novel idea was to give movements a central role in the working of society³, that is to say that social movements are important actors at the heart of the social fabric itself. Brincker and Gundlach (2005, p. 366) conclude

that in sharp contrast to the tendency within the mainstream of sociology to analyse how processes and structures determine action, Touraine's main contribution to contemporary sociology is in drawing attention to the impact of collectives on social change.

Aronowitz (1988) argues that Touraine may be the leading social theorist to continue the tradition of seeking to discover the conditions that can produce social relations in which freedom and not repression prevails, but he is also widely regarded as one of the world's major students of contemporary social movements. What marks Touraine from his sociological contemporaries, according to Aronowitz (*ibid.*, p. xii) is his intrepid efforts to comprehend the new without regard to the possible consequences for the truth status of received wisdom. Touraine was an exception among the scholars in trying to understand the student movement of the 1960s, because of his disposition to understand students sympathetically as historically significant actors. Aronowitz describes how Parsons interpreted the demonstration by thousands of students for Free Speech against the repression of the "technoversity" from a Freudian perspective and ascribed the causes of disruption to a displaced Oedipal conflict. Another example is Daniel Bell, who perceived such indications of change as confirmation of his thesis that contemporary democratic countries have found mechanisms to overcome the need for ideology, whereas Touraine viewed the student movement as the coming into power of new social agents, who arm themselves with path breaking ideologies (Aronowitz, 1998, pp. xi-xii).

Although Touraine is highly esteemed, the perception of Touraine's work and theories has varied from enthusiasm to strong criticism. For instance at the beginning of his career he founded a special journal, *Sociologie du Travail*, in 1959 together with Michel Crozier, Jean-Daniel Reynaud and Jean-René Tréanton. Michel Crozier (1996) says that during those days Touraine was the most enterprising and successful guru in their group of young sociologists and that he had the gift of inspiring young people and obtaining grants from government agencies. Crozier's sceptical assessment of the importance of Touraine as a leading sociologist of their generation is that his brilliance was due to his personality and not his academic credentials. Clark & Diani (1996) point out that Touraine's major publications, and the elaboration and application of the method of sociological intervention, have excited controversy for more than forty years, starting with his empirical study of shop floor work at Renault, published in 1955 and continuing into the late 1990s with the publication of his *Critique de la modernité* (1992, English translation *Critique of Modernity* 1995) and his extended essay on democracy (1994).

THEORY OF SOCIAL ACTION

The body of Alain Touraine's work constitutes a "sociology of action", as the title of his doctoral thesis published as *Sociologie de l'action* (1965) proclaims. For him society is a product of collective endeavour, conscious decision-making and organization, not one of immovable social structures, petrified and autonomous social systems or determinist social forces. Society is not a stable structure, which is held together by meta-social forces. For him "society is the result of its decisions, which themselves refer back to the interests, arguments, conflicts, and transactions

by means of which [...] there occur the changes that point in the direction of a greater diversification, a growing flexibility, a relaxation of social norms, symbolic systems, and constraints” (Touraine, 1977, p. 3). The term relaxation refers to a state of affairs which is the opposite of that in Durkheimian sociology, according to which modern societies are characterized not so much by common or collective or even universal social norms or values, but by greater diversification, growing flexibility, and relaxation of norms, symbolic systems and constraints. Although a feeling of unity is felt inside a social movement, in general Touraine does not perceive so much space for the feeling of unity, because decision making is bound up with the interests of different parties, and conflicts, e.g., about appropriate means to achieve goals, and multiple transactions. Thus society is a product of “a conflict or at least constant negotiation in which the aim is to bring together the actors involved and broaden the field of acceptable reforms” (Touraine, 1996, p. 294). Social evolution is not seen as continuous or linear, and it cannot be reduced merely to a general tendency of social systems towards growing differentiation, complexity, and flexibility, as more emphasis is given to these kinds of historical actors. Touraine wants also to differentiate between various systems of historical action. These systems of historical action correspond to a particular mode of knowledge, type of accumulation, and cultural model. At the end of the 1970s Touraine saw the beginning of a post-industrial society, one which is characterized by self-production of itself.

Touraine shares some of the tenets of rational action theory, namely an emphasis on social action rather than on social structures, but he does not believe that the theory of action can be methodologically individualistic. The rejection of individualism is seen in his ideas of a sociological actor. In the first place, subjects are social, not isolated egos and second, they are embedded in historical projects in which the stakes are not merely goods but also identities. Third, sociological actors can also be collectives with fluid identities, in other words, social movements (Scott, 1996, pp. 78-79).

Combining functionalism and conflict theory in a theory of social action is an indication of Touraine’s creativity or even perhaps of an obsession to challenge conventional ways of thinking (see e.g., Arnason, 1986, p. 138). Touraine adopts the functionalistic idea that shared norms and values lie behind the behaviour of actors, but at the same time emphasises that the actors are aware of those norms and values. For him actors compete for control over the system of norms which govern the rules of the game (meta-theory of action). He shares the idea of conflict theory that there is always struggle and divergence of interest.

The ultimate aim of conflictual collective action and social struggle is control over historicity. As Touraine has stated, the historicity of a society is the set of cultural models through which it gave meaning to its experience (Touraine, 1996, p. 330). Crystallisation of this aspect of the relationship between society and history is given by Arnason (1986, p. 148). He interprets Touraine’s idea on historicity by saying that historicity represents “history in society”, i.e., the ability of society to initiate and shape its own history, whereas on the contrary social change involves “society in history” as it is impossible to separate the internal field of his-

toricity from the broader horizons and the more far-reaching dynamics of inter-societal configurations. Another slogan provided by Touraine himself is that historicity is society's "capacity to act upon itself" (Touraine, 1977, p. 379) or, simply, the self-production of society (ibid.). The components of historicity are: 1) the cognitive model, e.g., the emergence of modern science and scientific thinking and its impact on societal development; 2) form of accumulation, by which Touraine refers to the idea of productive investment and economic capability to transform productive activity, not to the surplus withdrawn from consumption or not used in a directly productive way; 3) the cultural model, i.e., an image of creativity which translates the self-determinative and self-transformative capacity of society into a more concrete project and channels it in a specific direction (Touraine, 1977, p. 18 and p. 66; Arnason, 1986, pp. 142-143).

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS SOCIAL ACTORS

The advice Touraine (1981, p. 29) gives to a scholar who is interested in studying social movements is not to get stuck on the idea of exceptional and dramatic events arranged by social actors. Although social movements may in the form of massive mobilizations and impressive mass appearances indeed express the collective will of the people, and may have an effect on public policy or political decision making, the picture is biased if no thought is given to social theory. When conceptualized from the perspective of conflict theory, social movements are not only "moments of omnipotence", but they lie permanently at the heart of social life. From the perspective of consensus theory order comes first and anything that tilts the balance is interpreted as an exception. For Touraine it is the work society performs on itself which comes first. Here Touraine refers to the idea that in the societal fabric norms, institutions and practices are invented. Although his emphasis is on this societal innovation process, he has to admit that these "products" do not evolve randomly out of nowhere, but are guided by cultural orientations. These cultural orientations, which he calls historicity, consist of patterns of knowledge, types of investment, and cultural models. It is important to notice that for Touraine this idea of cultural determination is present only because within society there is continuous struggle over the social control of historicity, which Touraine interprets as a class struggle. His idea is that the sociology of social movements cannot be separated from the representation of society as a system of social forces competing for control over the cultural field. Therefore social movements are not a marginal rejection of order; instead they are central forces fighting one against the other to control the production of society by itself and the action of classes seeking the shape historicity. Thus his definition of a social movement:

A social movement is the collective organized action through which a class actor battles for the social control of historicity in a given and identifiable historical context. (Touraine, 1981, pp. 31-32)

In order to indicate how permanent such a definition of a social movement is in Touraine's sociology of action, we can compare it to his recent work (e.g., Touraine, 2004). Before revealing his recent definition of a social movement, let me clarify the controversial message of his article "On the frontier of a social

movement". Touraine suggests that we should all but abandon the concept for two reasons. First, he points out that it is related to a certain type of society (for example, industrial society), which, following the logic of the definition, seems to lock the scholar into a type of society that belongs mainly to the past. Therefore we no longer need to use the notion of social movements unless we are dealing with really important social movements. Second, the recent societal development to which we refer to by the term globalization has, according to Touraine, shifted the sites of and issues in conflicts considerably. Touraine is interested in real social movements, where the struggle is over control of the mode of cultural development. Such movements like the anti-globalization movement have to have real importance for the development of conglomerates of societies, not singular societies. In his list of priorities the only movements which are worth studying are those that challenge the mechanisms of globalization. He is no longer interested in social movements which operate within a well-defined political or territorial field ruled by an elite or ruling class and which also set social categories in opposition. In other words, he rejects the idea that the concept of social movement should be applied to just any kind of collective action, conflict or political initiative. He suggests that it would be wise to reserve use of the category 'social movements' to refer to the group of phenomena that have in fact received this name over the course of a long historical tradition.

The essential thing here is to reserve the idea of social movement for a collective action that challenges a mode of generalized social domination. I mean by this that a social relationship of domination cannot provoke an action that deserves to be called a social movement unless it bears upon all of the main aspects of social life, thus extending far beyond the conditions of production in one sector, or of commerce or trade in another, or even of the influence exerted on information and education systems. (Touraine, 2004, p. 718)

Earlier his goal was to seek the social movement which could replace the workers' movement in industrial society and the bourgeoisie movement in mercantile society (Touraine, 1971), while admitting that social movements have much cultural capacity. The search for a collective agent comparable to the working class can be seen in his definition of a social movement. He writes that social movements are, in essence, "... *the conflict action of agents of the social classes struggling for control of the system of historical action.*" (Touraine, 1977, p. 298; italics in original text). An indication of this capacity is cultural innovation, which, according to him, is not truly linked to a social movement unless it is polemical (Touraine, 1977, p. 330). Here, for Touraine, cultural innovation is only valid in cases where it challenges the mechanisms of cultural reproduction maintained by the dominant class. Touraine makes use of a fairly mechanical distinction between the ruling or dominant class and popular class. His ambitions are in understanding how profound the consequences of the transformation of society from manufacturing-based to information-based production have been for the nature of social relations throughout the social field, in particular on class power. For Touraine the principal opposition between the classes results from the fact that the dominant

class disposes of knowledge and control information, not only wealth and property (Touraine, 1971, p. 61). Older conflicts have become institutionalized (workers' movement) and new social movements come in being to resist the new forms of domination (Scott, 1996, p. 81). Therefore not merely the source, but also the focus of conflict has shifted away from relations of production and the state towards civil society and culture.

Scott (1996, p. 82) argues that Touraine is a pioneer of culturalist interpretations of the new social movements. This is because Touraine emphasises that 1) the aims of movements are cultural rather than political; 2) they operate in civil society rather than the state; and 3) they are concerned with life-style and quality of life issues rather than political and economic issues of distributive justice and rights. Also Tucker (2005, p. 53) praises the cultural elements of Touraine's theory, where creativity of social actors is central ingredient of any good society. In contrast, Knöbl (1999) argues that Touraine was very late in thinking about the heterogenization of living conditions, individualization of life designs, and the process of cultural pluralization. It became increasingly apparent in the 1970s and 1980s that hopes for unified dynamic of social conflict were not going to be fulfilled. The field of collective actors was too fragmented. A uniform social arena in which a few collective actors struggle for a cultural model of society lost gradually theoretical and empirical relevance. The idea of "unity of historical action and historical meaning" and a unified historical dynamic contain the same kinds of assumptions as the functionalism Touraine was criticizing. Touraine's main interest was the cultural orientation of movements.

There is also a lack of institutional analysis in Touraine's work. Institutions and structures were viewed at most as the less important, marginal conditions of endlessly continuing processes. Thus the mobilization of a social movement was assumed to be more or less given, quite unlike the resource mobilization approach (Knöbl, 1999, p. 412). Because Touraine neglected the institutional arrangements in the political system and in civil society, he overestimated the dynamics of new social movements. Brincker and Gundelach (2005) point that one reason for this lack of institutional analysis lies at the heart of Touraine's theory of social change. In the line with the Marxist tradition Touraine sought to identify "the real social force" behind the social changes in question. To understand the nature of societal reality and transformation processes we must seek the central social conflict of our time. This conflict embodies the struggle over 'historicity', i.e., control of direction of social change. Problems emerge when this kind of "pure" theory of social action is interpreted in the context of a more realistic theory of social development. The shift from industrial to post-industrial society also means a structural change in the settings of the main social struggles. Previously, in the industrial society, the central social conflict took place within the economic sphere where workers and capitalists were in opposition whereas in the post-industrial society the relationship between the economic processes of capital accumulation and key social struggles are more difficult to analyse. According to Touraine, the central social struggle has shifted from the sphere of production to the cultural arena as social actors struggle over knowledge, information and control of historicity. Brincker and Gundelach (*ibid.*, p. 367) argue that Touraine has forgotten to integrate the economic structure of society into the theory of collective action and social change. They state that

present-day civil society does not have the same kind of structural force as accumulation with respect to social change. They ask whether social forces and the structural foundations of social change belong to completely different spheres, civil society and the market, or is it more correct to assume that the fundamental driving force in society is the state.

Despite Touraine's extensive work on contemporary social movements his earlier formulations received at least two sorts of caveats. Arnason (1986, p. 151) refers to these criticisms by emphasising that we have to bear in mind that even in industrial society the co-existence of several important social movements is a fact, whereas Touraine has argued on behalf of single important movements in the scene of historical action and has neglected to analyse the importance of the increased reflectivity that he ascribes to social movements. Alan Scott (1996) has stated that there is a contradiction between Touraine's theory of social action and his theory of post-industrial society. Scott concludes his analysis by stressing that the theory of social action is context-specific, historical and restricted and the theory of post-industrial society⁴ is general, teleological (periodization of society) and historicist (meaning that social changes can be traced back to changes in production techniques).

But we shall not bear false witness against Touraine, as in one of his recent articles he has tried to overcome some of the criticism. First, he proposes a more general and also ahistorical definition of a social movement, one where a social movement is seen as a combination of a conflict between organized social adversaries and a shared reference by both adversaries to a cultural 'stake' without which they would not confront each other (Touraine, 2004, pp. 718-719). Here the emphasis is on the shared battlefield or areas of debate on which both parties agree. Second, he takes into account the possibility that seemingly innocent conflicts may not only bear a resemblance to a social movement, but also that small conflicts may have rather general symbolic importance (ibid., p. 719). Third, the method of sociological intervention includes the idea that social actors may not themselves be aware of their ultimate objectives. Sociologists have to intervene in the social reality and try to help the actors deeply involved in a conflict to raise the level of understanding of their situation and the real aims of their action. Fourth, he concludes his intellectual experiment by stating that there is a need to maintain the concept of social movement in the study of contemporary societies, of whatever type, even if they seem at first glance not to require the use of such concepts. For him the continuity of sociological analysis is more important than is the observation of the profound differences that exist from one societal type to another.

SOCIAL ACTOR AS A PRIMARY CAUSE

Touraine is intellectually engaged by the very basic question of how to understand the complex interplay between social actor, social relations and social order. The configuration of a social system is a very fundamental question in sociology. His ambition is to study the actor as an autonomous being, as an agent of transformation of his environment and of his situation, as a creator of imaginary worlds,

and as capable of referring to absolute values or of being involved in love relations (Touraine, 2000, p. 900).

This seemingly naïve definition in no way means that Touraine perceives the actor as disconnected from the material world or from different social, economic, or cultural circumstances. This can be seen from his definition of sociology⁵. He employs a classical definition of sociology, where the emphasis is on the study of social relations. These relations are meaningful and take place within a social framework defined either as a social order, as a process of social change, or as both at once. Interestingly enough, Touraine understands social circumstances as both affecting social actors and modified by social actors, but he does not focus on the intermediate levels between social relations and the social order. There we might find those more concrete societal structures, such as, the social, economic and cultural structures “around the actor”. His purpose is to remain on a very high level of abstraction. He admits, of course, the need for socio-economic, socio-historical or socio-anthropological studies, but for him it is more important to operate on another level of abstraction. He sees the social actor in the context of the social system: i.e., more important than analysing the actor in varying contexts is to understand the social actor in the framework of a general social theory.

The domain of sociological exercises is study of the relations between social determinism and freedom, between the application of social norms and reference to human values, and between institutional order and practices that voluntarily deviate from such norms. Touraine never tires reiterating his basic axiom that social actors are capable of acting and producing even irrevocable changes, when interpreted from the point of view of history.

Actors ... are not defined by their conformity to rules and norms, but by a relation to themselves, by their capacity to constitute themselves as actors, capable of changing their environment and of reinforcing their autonomy. (Touraine, 2000, p. 902)

Touraine is not interested in routine or every-day dimensions of social action. It is rather difficult to imagine Touraine as a family researcher or a researcher of education or on the upbringing of a child, where routine, repetition, socialization of norms occupy a major role. For him the fascinating element in social action is non-conformity, innovative disobedience, creative discordance and the ability to overcome social norms and institutions. If, by accident, Touraine were to become interested in, e.g., family research his interest would fall into the study of disharmonious family life or children's attempts to escape omnipresent socialization. In emphasising the autonomy and independence of individuals over social norms and institutions Touraine operates with the concept of the Subject⁶. This is because the idea of the Subject contains the idea of opposition to the classical conception of socialization as the internalization of institutionalized norms, and in particular education, as a means inhabiting social roles. Therefore Touraine (1996, p. 307) emphasises the German word *Bildung*, which refers in particular to increasing of individual's capacity to act freely and responsibly, to be an actor and an innovator and to be able to resist forces and pressure.

Touraine explains that the idea of the Subject is founded on the premises of his theory of society, which allows no room for transcendental principles such as the

existence of God or the perfect society. The most elementary action of all is resistance to society, which should be interpreted "...as the search for a self-created human being who is also a creator of his social environment to the extent that he is involved in conflicts, negotiations and the struggle for freedom" (Touraine, 2000, p. 909). Here he refers to the idea of the Subject, i.e., to individual and collective claims to the right to become free actors.

In a recent article Touraine acknowledges at least two reasons for developing an actor- and subject-oriented society. First, he refers to societal development, which has eroded the ability of social systems to produce norms. Capitalism and industrialization as modernizing forces have produced conditions where legal and political institutions have lost their control over social life. Second, his analysis indicates that we have to acknowledge that there is a tendency for political and economic domination of the Subject, and also manipulation and cultural alienation (Touraine, 2000, p. 909). The obligation of sociologists is to intervene in these kinds of processes and to bring forth demands for reforms.

PROGRAMMATIC SOCIOLOGY

A crucial question for the self-understanding of sociologists is "Why do we need sociology as a discipline?" The answer to the question also provides instruments for legitimizing the discipline's role in society. For Touraine there is a danger in these kinds of questions, because sociology can easily be made a prisoner of societal institutions and it may face difficulties in freeing itself from the dominant class in order to function as a creative force. The history of the discipline during the 20th century shows that sociology has been an important instrument in the modernization of societies, and that before that pre-sociological ideas were associated with the triumph of industrialization, of industrial capitalism and the colonial empires. In some of his writings (e.g., Touraine, 1985) his basic interest has been criticism of the dominant image of society in sociology or the idea of how sociology is dominated by the ideology of modernization. The aim of these types of generalisations has been to offer a stepping stone toward his alternative, namely the sociology of social action. The one-sidedness of Touraine's image of sociology has been elaborated by Arnason (1986). His analysis suggests that Touraine should not neglect the legacy of theorists whose relationship to modernity is more problematic, e.g., Max Weber's analysis of the paradoxes of modernity (*ibid.*, p. 140).

Touraine has given an answer to this question about the role of the discipline not only from the point of view of a single practitioner but from the point of view of systems theory. Already at the end of the 1960s he perceived that sphere of sociological analysis was growing, because societies as social systems were increasing their capacity to act on themselves (Touraine, 1971, p. 232). At the end of his book he proposed a question for himself: Why sociologists? His answer was that a new type of society, the post-industrial or programmed society, was gradually being organized and that the progress of sociological analysis has to be combined both with society's will to react to its own changes, and with the social and cultural conflicts through which the direction of those changes and the form of the new society

may be debated. He strongly questioned the need for an analysis of behaviour, because an analysis of the society as a whole was urgently needed. A society is then understood as a system of action, a network of cultural orientations and power relationships. (ibid., pp. 228-229)

For Touraine societies learn to know themselves sociologically when they recognize themselves as the products of their labour and their social relations and when what at first seems to be a set of social data is recognized as being the result of a social action, of decisions or transactions, of domination or conflicts (Touraine, 2000). The self-reflection, self-evaluation and increasing self-control of societies has produced a situation where societies are coming to recognize themselves as a network of actions and relations. For him the social self-reflection of societies (with the help of the social philosophy of progress) has reached a level of solid certainty about their ability to have total control over themselves.

Touraine views sociology as being concerned with the study of actors and communication. The sociology of the actor is seen as a specific domain of sociology, where the interest is in the study of the relations between social determinism and freedom, between the application of social norms and the reference to human values, and between institutional order and practices that voluntarily deviate from such norms. "The study of social movements constitutes the heart of a sociology of the actor" (Touraine, 2000, p. 907). Despite his devotion to social movements we should not forget that his analysis also functions on the macro level. Thus beside social movements the other actors in his social theory are society itself and social classes. He reduced social classes to two opposing camps, the ruling class and popular class, which struggle over historicity.

Touraine's answer to the question "Why do we need sociology?" is that actors, particularly subordinated groups, need sociology to enable them to act on the stage of historical action and to discover the highest possible meaning of their action. The sociologist must create a social situation where an entire group is forced to interact with their real opponents who hold positive or negative positions in relation to itself (Touraine, 2000, p. 906). Therefore the role of the sociologist has to be active, not passive.

sociologists must create an adequate context, not only by choosing the time and space for the observation, but by directly intervening. (Touraine, 2000, pp. 903-904)

The aim of the sociologist is to reveal claims, conflicts and debates which are often overshadowed by the authority of social norms and by repression, which is imposed for the sake of institutions or of those who hold positions of power. The critical stance adopted by Touraine can be seen in his definition of the social norm.

social norms have not [...] been created for the common good, but rather [...] they are the expression of a power which endangers the freedom, responsibility and the dignity of people. (Touraine, 2000, p. 904)

POLITICALLY ORIENTED SOCIOLOGY

An important epistemological question every sociologist has to ponder over and over again is the political function of knowledge produced in her/his studies. In Touraine's vision of the political function of sociology in contemporary societies there is a strange ambiguity, because he only partially rejects objectivism, and smuggles the objectivism-subjectivism dispute into his method of studying social movements. Clearly he neglects the idea that sociologists have to find universal laws of social action or laws of history and society. This is something many sociologists agree and is nothing new in the sense that varying social and cultural contexts increase the difficulty of developing an all-embracing explanation for social action or societal development. It is more difficult to agree with him that sociologists have to intervene in social struggles, as scholars are not observers who remain outside the field, but they should be regarded as interlocutors and even activists. Here we see Touraine siding with the aims of the social movement under study.

With these considerations in mind we may lean to the view that Touraine is subjectivist or that his sociology is politically oriented, but this does not mean that we should hesitate in judging Touraine. Two observations can be made on this issue. Firstly, the key to understanding phrases like, "sociologists do not lay outside the field", is Alain Touraine's moral commitment to the role of sociologist as a catalyst accelerating societal development without full participation in the process. In order to serve societal development (or the struggle over the control of historicity) sociology must produce knowledge for the social actors instead of, as in the conventional way of thinking, producing knowledge of social actors. Or to be more precise, the aim is to engage activists in a prolonged series of discussions aimed at making subjects reflect upon the meaning of their action, and ultimately raising that action to "a higher level of struggle".

Secondly, his manoeuvre of importing the objectivist-subjectivist distinction into the method of sociological intervention deserves comment. For Touraine the sociologist must be close to the action, but must also keep at a distance from it, i.e., the researcher should not identify with the group she/he is studying. The aim of the sociological intervention is to enable the group to undertake self-analysis and the sociologist to do analysis of their self-analysis. Together, researchers and actors seek to develop hypotheses for bringing to light the hierarchy of meanings that shape collective action.

An intriguing question concerns how Touraine perceives the object of sociological research. His methodological advice is that sociologists have to delve deeply enough within subjectivity to reach what constitutes the individual, or the group, as an actor. One has to go beyond subjectivity to discover subjectivation⁷, meaning that sociologists have to search for how an individual or a group represents itself as an actor seeking to impose their own ends on their environment (Touraine, 2000, p. 911; see also, Tucker, 2005, p. 49).

Thus from the point of view of the researcher the starting of a process of self-analysis of a social movement means being simultaneously an objective investigator of self-analysis and the actor of an intervention emphasising the subjective

meanings the actors in the movement attach to their action. More complexity attached to the role of a scholar leads to Touraine's claim that in the actual intervention phase at least two sociologists are needed. One has the role of agitator who organizes the group, prepares the confrontations, conducts the sessions, and helps the group "agitate" - pushing it to the limit. The other scholar is more in the service of science in the sense that she/he must work as a secretary taking minutes, recording discussions, preparing the reports of the session, providing documents etc. Both during and after the intervention the agitator has to interpret the subjective meanings of actors and produce a hypothesis, which the groups can discuss and finally accept as the real or objective meaning of their action. During the intervention process the secretary can also become a counsellor or even analyst participating actively in the self-analysis of the group.

Moreover obscurity in the objectivism-subjectivism dilemma generates the idea of permanent sociology. The final outcome of the process of sociological intervention is to produce something permanent or lasting. To understand what it means, we need to take a look at the intervention process. The intervention consists of four phases, the first of which the group bears testimony to the collective action, as in a group interview organized by an interlocutor. During the second phase activists take distance from their role as activists rejecting their natural language as a frame of reference. The third phase is when the group adopts an analytical viewpoint as a result of conversion negotiated jointly with the analyst. Finally, sociology takes a back seat as the action moves forward into the phase of permanent sociology, now that it has enabled analysis to progress continuously and the movement to act on the basis of an increasingly clear image of itself, its opponents and their field of conflict (see, e.g., Touraine, 1981, p. 183). In addition to the logic of social action, Touraine has an axis of social change, which refers to the functioning of the society, changes in the society or even changes of type of society.

In the phase of permanent sociology, the discipline has made its contribution both to the actors and to society in general, and the knowledge produced in cooperation with the actors is not - as mentioned earlier - knowledge of the actors but knowledge for the actors to continue their collective action at a more conscious level. As a result sociologists may have speeded up societal development, because actors have a more comprehensive understanding of their "real" aims in society. We should emphasise that the acceleration of societal development is conditional, because the reaching of the aims depends on the political action the actors are taken after the process.

SOCIOLOGICAL INTERVENTION AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL INNOVATION

The life and the writings of Touraine tell to us that there are benefits in getting involved. Pécaut (1996, p. 159) stresses that nothing would be more false than to attribute to Touraine a lack of interest in political themes. His personal stance, as well as his numerous works which constitute interventions in particular political circumstances, are more than sufficient to demonstrate this. It is interesting that he locates the political dimension within the context of the social. Touraine clearly is not in agreement with the idea of conservative sociology, where one important rule is that the sociologist should not meddle with things that are none of his/her busi-

ness in questions of society and societal development. To clarify this rejection of naive objectivism, we should look at his most influential methodological innovation, namely sociological intervention.

Touraine's early writings show that his methods were drawn from stock in the sociological trade (Dubet & Wiewiorka, 1996, p. 55). Early writings about social movements (*Le Mouvement de Mai, ou le communisme utopique* 1968 or *Vie et mort du populaire* 1974) relied heavily on a historical method (owing to his initial education) that combined document analysis, interviews and observation. With *La voix et le regard* (1978) Touraine proposed a method he called sociological intervention.

Sociological intervention as a methodology marked a radical break with the then stake of play of the subjectivism-objectivism debate. For Touraine it was important to make a distinction between social scientific knowledge and knowledge produced through natural scientific procedures. The reason why Touraine regards social scientific knowledge as a special type of knowledge in opposition to the natural scientific kind is because of Touraine's commitment to ideas that sociology and social action have to be in relations of interaction and that the object of the study must be included as an active subject in production of knowledge. The sociologist can give feedback from scholarship to social action and thus aid the social actors in their struggle to achieve their aims on the stage of historical action. The other side of the epistemological distinction is that a sociologist cannot construct external descriptions of actions or ideologies, because these do not bring us close enough to an understanding of social phenomena. The crucial point is to be involved in social action and to let the actors participate in the production of knowledge.

the purpose of this research work is to contribute to the development of social movements. ... Our real objective is to enable a society to live at the highest possible level of historical action instead of blindly passing through crises and conflicts. (Touraine, 1981, p. 148)

Touraine had both theoretical and historical motives for developing a new method for studying society, societal development and social actors. For him it was theoretically important to develop an analytical method for the sociology of action, formalized as a theoretical system in *The Self-Production of Society* (1977) (original *Production de la société* 1973). For a sociologist living through the turbulence of that decade it was a duty to interpret the ongoing historical changes in industrial society; however in addition to this, the sociologist had the heroic mission of intervening in contemporary societal developments.

As the aim was to test hypotheses about post-industrial society with new social movements in the leading role, the method had to enable both the direct observation and analysis of these relations. A precondition for this methodological development work was the refinement of theory. He rejected the idea that society should be conceptualized by thinking only about its institutions⁸. Instead, Touraine saw that society should be defined in terms of social relations: organizations and their relations to authority, political decisions and the influences leading to them, and class relations and systems of order considered in their role of exclusion and elimi-

nation. Sociology's chief task was to bring these kinds of invisible social relations to the surface. This has to be done through active intervention: "We must come face to face with the social movement" (Touraine, 1981, p. 142). Thus the most important actors are collective actors: social classes and social movements. They enter into the centre of Tourainian analyses. These actors fight for the realization and institutionalization of values and they question and overstep given social structures again and again.

In focussing on the social actor Touraine saw that, e.g., in any social struggle social relations have to be understood as organized or ranked in a hierarchy, each level having its own rationale or logic. A social actor's identity cannot be separated from the social relations wherein it is formed nor from the meaning given to these relations. By defining their identity, social actors also identify their opponents and delimit the field in which common issues bring actors together and set them at odds, i.e., define the conflicting elements. This is the system of IOT - interplay between the principles of identity, opposition and totality.

In *The Self-Production of Society* Touraine (1977) emphasises that interpreting social action from the perspective of historicity is not only a means to understanding singular events or past actions in the context of a long process which leads up to the present but also, and at least equally if not more importantly allows events, particularly actions, to be viewed from the perspective of the non-determinate future, which is an ongoing process. For instance collective action can be defined as a social movement insofar as it challenges other social actors who are contending for control over the cultural model of a particular phase of societal development. For Touraine collective action is a social movement only at this level.

UNDERSTANDING TOURAINE AS A SOCIOLOGIST

Touraine arrived on the scene of French intellectual life in the late 1940s. Despite its honourable history, French sociology was then in a shabby-genteel condition. This poor state of affairs was the direct and indirect result of the two world wars. The First World War created a generation gap. For instance, most of Durkheim's students were killed in the war and the master himself died in grieving. The few survivors were drafted into positions of academic power and almost forgot sociology. Crozier (1996, p. 9) describes their generation in sociology as a generation without fathers: no elder figure was there to help them or provide a feeling of security. The Second World War also increased the gap between the French academic world and the international trends of the period. By the time of Liberation the discipline's past had been wiped out and for France, a country with a great respect for history and the world of ideas, this was something unique. Aronowitz (1988), analysing for the context of Touraine appearance in the field of sociology, argues that during the first two decades after the Second World War three paradigms held sway. The general theorist, structuralist theorist and middle range theorists were more interested, respectively, in issues like the survival and recovery of European societies, social processes as articulations of transhistorical social forms, and the study of social problems in specific institutional contexts than the classical preoccupations of sociology, namely sources of change, the place of ideology and politics in history and the fundamental character of social relations. Within this

context, where almost all social scientists except Marxists had turned away from questions of historical agency, such as class and power, Touraine occupied a unique position. Although his interests were also in issues like the problem of historicity (i.e., how society is like cybernetic system functioning towards itself but also self-monitoring, self-correcting and self-modifying itself) and the cultural model by which we represent ourselves and also act, the categories of class relations and accumulation were crucial for his work.

Crozier (1996) emphasises that French sociology was stuck in the rationalist philosophy of the 1900s. This provided an opportunity for the younger generation of sociologists, who reached intellectual maturity in the 1950s and ultimately obtained recognition in the early 1960s. Sociology was to be reconstructed anew. Crozier, Touraine and their fellows experienced a great sense of freedom from the past, which was attractive for young people who had a pioneering spirit. Lack of empirical work was obvious and there was hardly any fieldwork being done on French society. Young pioneers and their research assistants and students started a counter movement against the rationalist philosophy of their pre-war elders. This counter movement was to last till the end of 1968. They had a passion for fieldwork, their methodological orientation was that through empirical knowledge they would rebuild the world; they were Marxists in their orientation, but believed more in fieldwork, which would or would not confirm the theory; they were fascinated by new methods, like interviewing, surveys, qualitative methods, research design, but above all about meanings instead of simple counting. This research movement gave rise to the special journal, *Sociologie du Travail*, which was founded in 1959 by Touraine, Reynaud, Tréanton and Crozier.

Crozier's (1996) analysis of their movement indicates that there were contradictions within it. First of all there was a tension between empiricism, which held centre stage, and the new revolutionary philosophy. It was probably difficult to effect a compromise on the priorities within sociology, because, as Crozier has pointed out, empirical analysis destroyed the simplicity of the theory that modern social problems were rooted in working conditions and work relationships. Secondly it was difficult to combine the romantic spirit of revolution with the technocracy of Gaullist government (independent-mindedness versus utilitarian answers). Finally, because sociology was recognized by the authorities as a leading modernizing discipline, it became a popular field and the sociology of work its most popular sub-field in the 1960s.

America was seen as the Mecca of the social sciences and many believed that the social scientific know-how originated there. However, a number of young French sociologists fiercely opposed American policy and were inclined to side with the USSR. Touraine had spent time in America and he valued the training he had received. In the mid 1960s they experienced the "Golden Age" of French sociology. The student revolution brought it to an end. The events of May 1968 in Paris were both difficult and challenging for Touraine. He was deeply involved as he was close to the CFDT (Confédération française démocratique du travail), a labour union, which was dominated by socialists, and it was imbued with a new kind of thinking about society. In the eyes of his own generation he had been too involved,

but in the eyes of the younger generation not enough. He was already then a bridge-builder between empirical work and social theory, between the revolutionary left and Gaullist technocrats, between university students and university authorities, between political commitment (to the left) and fierce independence of mind and spirit. This seemingly chaotic situation matured his sociological thinking. Bauman (1983) describes this period thus:

Touraine's sociological revolution had been triggered off by shock waves sent through the intellectual Paris by the spectacular failure of the abortive political revolution of May 1968. Everyone emerged from the experience with his/her pen-holding fingers singed. (p. 596)

Unlike, e.g., Althusser and others of the obdurate left who found the "safe haven of 'theoretical praxis' which no prospective street riots could penetrate", Touraine went in the opposite direction (Bauman, 1983, p. 596) In his colourful account of the consequences of these events to Touraine, Bauman explains how "[T]he streets of Paris had not been yet swept clean of the student graffiti and the broken glass, when in *La Société post-industrielle* Touraine proclaimed the approaching 'class struggle without classes', the impotence of the institutionally entrenched old conflicts and the task of sociology as the midwife of confrontations and the struggles to come" (ibid., p. 596). After that he distanced himself from Paris and went first to Chile and then to Los Angeles (Freiberg, 1977).

CONCLUDING REMARKS: UNDERSTANDING TOURAINE'S SOCIAL THEORY

What characterize Touraine's works are a particular kind of radicalism and the avoidance of conventional sociological thinking (see, e.g., Knöbl, 1999, p. 404). In addition to this we can say that Touraine's social theory is also characterized by a kind of dualism, the use of dialectical method in developing relevant conceptualizations, and in some cases this appears to consist of contradictions. His social theory is an idiosyncratic combination of the creative power of individualism and collectivism over social structures; he balances between complete voluntarism while recognizing the existence of determining social forces; he perceives societal evolution from the perspective of societal cybernetics but puts faith in the capability of the social actor on the stage of historical action; and he rejects the idea of ahistorical rational action in favour of more contextual rational action, in which the interventions of social sciences can be included.

Freiberg (1977, p. xi-xvi) has compared the American sociology of the 1960s and 1970s to its European counterpart, and sees Touraine as a representative of the latter. Freiberg notes that already during his American years Touraine was philosophical and full of theoretical thinking. For him the most exciting thing was to know a sociologist working with a unified, theoretically sophisticated perspective. When compared to American sociologists of those times Touraine's students were surprised by how different was the "European" way of interpreting, e.g., the events surrounding the student movement. Whereas, according to Freiburg, for American sociologists the social world was "a haphazard collection of independent events", Europeans "searched for the unity hidden beneath the surface of everyday phenomena" (ibid., p. xii). Touraine symbolized the European way of thinking sociologi-

cally (broad societal issues) and conducting research (contextualize singular events philosophically and historically).

The above distinction drawn between European and American sociology may not be the whole truth, because Touraine, despite his criticism of Talcott Parson's functionalist theory, owes a debt to the American sociologist. The other theoretical issue concerns his critique of economically determined Marxism. According to Knöbl (1999) in both cases Touraine's criticism is based on Sartrean ideas of radically free individuals and the freedom of the subject. Arnason (1986, p. 138) agrees with Knöbl about the dual nature of Touraine's project, but stresses that one has to bear in mind Touraine's affinity with Marx. Arnason states that before the second half of the 1980s Touraine's sociological project was characterised by interconnections between a radical critique of functionalism, a rejection of the Marxist tradition while sharing a fundamental affinity with Marx and a professedly post-socialist analysis of post-revolutionary societies.

Touraine's sociology exists in a special relation to Talcott Parson's structural functionalism, which continued to dominate sociology in the 1960s. Touraine's theory of social action is partly a critique of the Parsonian consensus model, because Parson was far too much of a consensus theoretician to comprehend the collective conflicts of modern industrial societies. Despite his fierce criticism Touraine adopted some functionalist ideas about social systems, cultural values and norms, but stressed the importance of conflict in societal development.

Knöbl (1999) has drawn our attention to Touraine's passion for freedom and actors with free will. Touraine rejects ideas about social order and a unified society, and stresses the freedom and possibilities of human action. Touraine's critique of structuralist functionalism was harsh because functionalism left no room for actors to shape their own lives and, in particular, direct the development of their societies. Touraine was influenced by Sartrean Philosophy, although he had difficulties in applying Sartre's ideas to sociology. One problem was that the concept of freedom inherent in Sartre's thinking was highly individualistic. Sartre's idea of isolated individuals with a radically free choice of values was not a suitable basis for his theory of social action. Touraine developed this idea of freedom sociologically and was far more interested in collective actors than individuals. He emphasised that individual and collective behaviour is never absolutely free and unconnected. They are bound together.

The importances of traditions are diminishing and are being replaced by the kinds of knowledge needed for the self-steering of society (decisions and debates or conflicts produced by decisions). Societies are free to choose and make decisions and they have become disengaged from the constraints of traditions. The emphasis is more on voluntarism than determinism, because the determining forces are few and there is a multitude of options, decisions and choices. Touraine rejects both liberalism and Marxism, because they "converge toward the economically oriented analysis of social behaviour, which cannot be but marginal to the sociologist" (Touraine, 2000, p. 908).

Arnason (1986, p. 147) has revealed how Touraine's sociological project has been influenced both by theoretical and real world societal developments. On the

level of his own culture the backdrop (the New Left debate of the 1950s and 1960s) to Touraine's thoughts is political critique of the petrified structures of the left-wing parties (particularly the French Communist Party) as their theory was a biased towards economically oriented Marxism and towards the determinism which ruled out any creative dimension to individual or collective behaviour; however it is more important to note how he has sought to understand contemporary societal developments during the post-war period both in the West and in the East. Arnason (1986, p. 148) suggests that Touraine's approach to post-revolutionary societies is more distinctive than his specific version of the idea of post-industrial society. His argument is that although *The Self-Production of Society* does not contain any detailed discussion of Soviet-type societies, its conceptual apparatus is clearly designed to serve this purpose among others.

In particular, the class structure of industrial society is defined in such a way that a recurrent pattern of conflict can be identified without obscuring the differences between capitalist and non-capitalist variants, and the Marxist-Leninist doctrine can be understood as a particularly rigid version of a cultural model that centres on the idea of progress. (Arnason, 1986, p. 148)

Aronowitz (1988, p. xiii) argues that Touraine is not a historical or epistemological essentialist, because of his devotion to three issues: 1) class relations as the proper object of knowledge, not social class itself, 2) social agency and social action without predetermining the course of the action and 3) the struggle over the cultural model which determines the agenda of action itself. This rejection of essentialism can be seen in the idea of social relations, which implies a system of mutual determination in which action has consequences for changing power relations and the shape of the system itself. Therefore, class relations are both a determinate and an indeterminate category. It is determinate, because it specifies both a system of action and the actors that constitute it. It is indeterminate insofar as the struggle entails a contest over who will set the agenda of action itself, and who determines the cultural model. Touraine's theoretical scheme is that history is made up of social actors, not merely constructed by the conjunction of elements of structured totality. Moreover, Touraine (1981) perceives that scholars can hasten the process of historical transformation:

In analysing the nature of a struggle, intervention reveals to the actors their utmost capacity for historical action, thus helping them to raise the project level of their movement. Such is its function: knowledge and action associated. (p. 216)

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NOTES

¹ The author wishes to thank, first and foremost, professor Alain Touraine for encouraging and inspiring young students in their studies. While visiting at the University of Jyväskylä on 18 November 2002 professor Touraine participated in our seminar and actively engaged in an interview by the students. The Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy held a seminar on Social Movements, where the aim was to familiarise the students with social movement theories and particularly Touraine's theories and his social movement theory. The course included introductory lectures about Alain Touraine as a sociologist, about his social theory and about his methodological thoughts, given by senior assistant Tapio Litmanen, and particularly Touraine's own lecture, "The Breakdown of European Social Movements". Touraine's lecture was part of an annual lecture series dedicated to Professor Emeritus Martti Takala. The aim of Prof. Touraine's visit was to contribute to the long-standing research that Professors Martti Siisiäinen and Kaj Ilmonen and senior lecturer Esa Konttinen have advanced. One outcome of Professor Touraine's visit was that he became an Honorary Doctor of the University of Jyväskylä in May 2004. Special thanks goes also to the students of this sociological course, who came from various backgrounds, such as sociology, political science, cultural policy, philosophy and language studies, and from different universities, as the institute has eight Erasmus exchange agreements based on an international network of researchers in social movements. Leena Aholainen, Minttu Helin, Elina Hirsjärvi, Njeri Kiguru, Päivi Kivelä, Hannele Kosonen, Tomi Oinas, Tytti Ollila and Antti Sadinmaa were the students from the University of Jyväskylä. Marcin Mlynczak and Bartłomiej Wozniak were exchange students from Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan. Jana Safrova came from Charles University, Prague and Judit Zotter from Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest. Together with the senior lecturer, the students worked during the autumn term, participated in lectures, read Touraine's production (especially the book "The Voice and The Eye"), wrote essays and engaged in debate. The efforts of the seminar were aimed at being able to discuss with professor Alain Touraine about his theories and studies during the meeting. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Sociological Conference of the Westermarck Society, Joensuu 1.-2.4.2005. Acknowledgement also to lecturer Michael Freeman, who checked the language. Research funding for this study was provided by the Academy of Finland (project no. 106322) and is gratefully acknowledged.

² Other theoretical influences have come from the developer of functionalism Talcott Parsons and existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Needless to say, this conception of Touraine's theoretical roots is an artificial one as he is famous for his wide reading, but it serves the purpose of this introductory article. The influence of Parsons and Sartre will be explored later in this article.

³ In *The Voice and the Eye* (1981) Touraine gives a definition of both society and social movement. "A society is a hierarchized system of systems of action. *Action is the behaviour of an actor guided by cultural orientations and set within social relations defined by an unequal connection with the social control of these orientations*" (ibid., 61, italics in original text) "... I hold that the cultural field, the historicity of a society, represents the stakes in the most important conflicts. Society is conflictual production of itself. The idea of social movement should therefore be preferred to that of conflict. The field of historicity is the ensemble formed by the class actors and by that which is at stake in their struggles, i.e. historicity itself. *The social movement is the organized collective behaviour of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community.* (ibid., 77, italics in original text)

⁴ Touraine's 1969 "*La Société post industrielle*" (English translation 1971) was immediately translated into several languages and became, next to Daniel Bell's equally successful "*The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*" (1973) four years later, a standard work for the early sociological debate on processes of change within European-American modernity (Knöbler, 1999, p. 410).

⁵ He needs a definition when looking for the "right" method to employ in studying social actors, specific methods for use in sociological research and, finally, when redefining the object of sociology.

⁶ Tucker (2005, p. 55) points out that the subject is for Touraine 1) an attempt to combine instrumental rationality and cultural meanings into a coherent unity, 2) a process, not a person, 3) historically developed as it was earlier associated with nation-state and working class and nowadays operates on a more personal level, 4) attempt to create and sustain a coherent personal narrative in a social context defined by choices and change, 5) takes place in a social context as both the individual's integrity and others right to individuation must be recognized, 6) constituted in intercultural communication, 7) reflects the rise of a desire for authenticity and the right to define one's experience.

⁷ Put briefly, subjectivation refers to the idea that the collective actor realizes its potential for social change (Brincker & Gundelach, 2005, p. 372) or to the process where a critical subject realizes its distance from social roles and generates liberating visions of social life (Tucker, 2005, p. 49). In trying to construct a more sophisticated understanding of subjectivation we can refer to how Warnier (2001) describes Foucault's idea of subjectivation. Warnier (2001, pp. 10-11) has stated that, as a matter of fact, Foucault never really gives strict and unequivocal definitions of it, but writes that subjectivation brings two dimensions of the subject to the fore. First, the subject is the acting and desiring subject in his/her relations to the other and to the ethical law. As such he/she is also the self-knowing subject. Second, the subject is the acting subject insofar as he/she is subjected to sovereignty. The two aspects are closely linked because acting means acting by oneself and on the actions of other subjects. Action on other people's actions defines the space of power, and, when organized, assumes the shape of historically construed 'governmentalities'. The process of subjectivation is, according to Warnier, confrontation with other subjects mediated by moving in a material world. In such a confrontation, the subject finds a number of givens that are required for him/ her to structure his/ her own desire. Such givens are his/her own sexed body, whatever his/her own sexual preferences, the social setting in which he/she was born, with its language, material culture, social and political organization, and significant others such as parents or siblings that he/she did not choose. In other words: being a subject is not primarily being what one chooses to be.

⁸ Interpreting a society from the point of view of a system of action, Touraine emphasises that society is a hierarchy of systems of action whereas, in contrast, action is the behaviour of an actor guided by cultural orientations and located within social relations. The social relations within the system of action are defined by unequal connection with the social control of these cultural orientations (Touraine, 1981, p. 61).