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Residuality and Inconsistency in the Interpretation of Socio-theoretical Systems

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Abstract

This article addresses the interpretation and criticism of theoretical systems. Its particular focus is on how to assess the success of theories in dealing with some specific phenomenon. We are interested in how to differentiate between cases where a theory offers an unsatisfactory acknowledgement of a specified phenomenon and those where a theory offers a deeper, more systematic understanding. We address these meta-theoretical issues by developing Parsons's analysis of positive and residual categories in various respects including a focus on mutual support as the basis of positivity, differentiating synectic (reconcilable) and antinomic (irreconcilable) residual categories, and distinguishing divisions that are central to systems from those between centre and periphery. We also consider how this conceptual toolkit can be put into practice.

1. Introduction

A familiar feature of theoretical debates is dispute about which kinds of phenomena a theory gives a satisfactory account of. Critics may say, for example, that Bourdieu cannot account appropriately for agential reflexivity (e.g. Archer 2010a), or that Foucault does not account in a sufficiently rich way for the notion of resistance (e.g. Hartsock 1990). Those familiar with these debates will immediately recognize that such criticisms are often contested. In this article we develop an approach to organizing the assessment of contending claims about what a theory can and cannot systematically account for.

In terms of the wider issue, there is a great deal that can be said about the interpretation of texts, addressed by approaches such as hermeneutics. Our intention is not to contribute to debates about how to interpret the *meaning* of texts; rather our argument is a meta-theoretical one insofar as we are not engaging in the critique of any specific theory, but exploring the more 'meta' question of how critical reflection on theories can be productively organised. Metatheoretical reflections on modes of critique frequently classify them as either external or internal, although there is some variation in their accounts of what this entails (Turner, 2014 [1986]; Savage, 1981; Ritzer, 1988).

For example, Ritzer's (1988) internal/external division captures the difference between exploration of meta-theoretical features such as cognitive structures, paradigms and units of thought that are internal to sociology as a discipline and those that are external – e.g. rooted in philosophy, economics etc. – but impact on sociology (see Ritzer, 1988). In parallel to this, and despite other differences, Turner (2014 [1986]) and Savage (1981) both see the divide as between internal critiques that assess a theory using its own assumptions and theoretical tools and external critiques that make an assessment using elements that are drawn in from other theories.

We argue that what is overlooked in the literature is that metatheories constitute both toolkits for the organization of critique and 'topographies' of theory-formation. In fact, the former depends on the latter, in that the frameworks for organization of critique require an analysis of the *potential* divisions among different classes of theoretical elements. Our approach highlights this dual role of metatheory by offering an internalist metatheory of core and peripheral theoretical elements, an analysis that can help theorists in the evaluation of a theory in its own terms. We are not offering arguments *against* external modes of critique (though see Savage, 1981; Kemp, 2003 for some thoughts), so much as arguing *for* the value of an internalist approach which focuses on the coherence of the theoretical elements avowed by an author. In order to do so we will be drawing on the work of Talcott Parsons. Although Parsons was genuinely concerned with meta-theoretical issues at various points in his writing (see Parsons, 1938, 1948, 1950, 1961, 1970, 1979) we focus on the first chapter of *The Structure of Social Action* (1937) which offers a promising, though now largely forgotten, analysis of consistency and residual elements. It is these early ideas that, in our view, constitute the most promising material for the development of a metatheoretical account of internal critique.

Finally, this dual role of internal metatheories holds for the analysis and critique of different modes of social theorizing whether they set out to explain, to interpret or to critique the social world. For, interpreters should be expected to provide a consistent account of the basis of their interpretation. And critics can be more or less systematic in their theoretical accounts of the social activities they are critiquing. Whether theories are engaged in explaining, interpreting and criticising, we want to argue that there is a key difference between mere acknowledgement of some phenomena and a *systematic* accounting of it.

Following these lines, our development of Parson's idea of residual categories works out as an internal framework of systematization in social theory, as well as a toolkit of internal critique. Section 2 starts from Parsons' metatheoretical analysis of positive and residual

categories and critically appraises this to develop a toolkit for analysing social theories. Section 3 locates our approach in relation to existing theoretical and philosophical approaches. In Section 4 we consider how the toolkit can be put into practice by analysts. Section 5 provides a brief conclusion to the article.

2. Developing the Parsonian notion of residual categories

In order to develop our account of positive and residual categories we have opted not to give a full exposition of Parsons' account but rather to address the features of his analysis that inspired us and then take these forward, noting briefly where our account differs from that of Parsons. In our view, the key insight of Parsons on theoretical systems is this: *the sheer inclusion of an element in a theoretical system is not sufficient to consider that it has been appropriately 'taken into account' by the theorist; what is required is an assessment of how systematically the element is incorporated.* We also follow Parsons' argument that identifying where theories fail to achieve systematicity helps us to reflect on how such theories can be improved by further development.

Parsons' most helpful tool for thinking about the systematic character of a theory is his idea that analysts should differentiate the positive and residual categories in a theoretical system (for a valuable treatment see Holmwood, 1996). Admittedly, Parsons does not say very much about what makes a category 'positive', but he does indicate that these are categories that are 'sharply' defined within the system, that they are not based on unstated assumptions, and have logical implications for at least some other categories and propositions in the system (Parsons 1937: 17). This is in contrast to 'residual categories', about which Parsons states:

'…they tend to be given one or more blanket names which refer to categories negatively defined, that is, of facts known to exist, which are even more or less

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adequate described, but are defined theoretically by their failure to fit into the positively defined categories of the system.' (Parsons 1937:17)

Thus, for Parsons, a residual category is an element that does not cohere with the positive part of the theoretical system. Parsons used these concept to analyse the development of theoretical systems over time, arguing that the desirable dynamic is one in which residual categories get transformed into positive categories. He states that:

'…one kind of progress of theoretical work consists precisely in the carving out from residual categories of definite positively defined concepts and their verification in empirical investigation. The obviously unattainable, but asymptotically approached goal of the development of scientific theory is, then, the elimination of all residual categories from science in favour of positively defined, empirically verifiable concepts.' (Parsons 1937: 18-19)

For this kind of progress, what is needed, according to Parsons, is to find a way to move categories from the residual to the positive. One particularly noteworthy aspect of Parsons' account of this is that he thinks this process will also have consequences for positive categories and accepted factual claims. Indeed, for Parsons, this may require the 'reconstruction of theoretical systems' such that they are 'altered beyond all recognition' (Parsons 1937: 19).

Having identified the basic elements of Parsons' approach, which provide us with a useful basis to theorize upon, we want to explain how we are developing his ideas. Our aim here is to elaborate on Parsons' concepts to give a more developed and useful set of tools for analysing theoretical systems. One, initial, point is that whereas Parsons focuses his analysis on *categories* of theoretical systems, we are also interested in *claims* and *arguments* made using

those categories. Because we consider that positive and residual status can apply also to claims, statements and arguments that are part of a theoretical system we refer to positive or residual *elements*. This allows a wider scope to the analysis of positivity and residuality

Secondly, we want to develop the analysis of what makes elements positive and residual to get a clearer sense of what analysts should be looking for in this respect. When thinking about positivity, Parsons focuses a great deal on the clarity with which concepts are defined. While we don't see definitional clarity as irrelevant, we want to argue that it is more useful to draw on another aspect of Parsons' approach: his interest in the logical relations between categories. An initial development of the concept of positive system elements would involve the proposal that positive elements are those that are not inconsistent with one another. We argue that consistency between statements/categories is a good thing, and may be associated with internal semantic relations of inclusion or exclusion – in the sense that the co-production of meaning that is allowed in and through the combination of some set of sentences of a theoretical system can entail the possibility of inclusion of other sentences or the exclusion of certain elements.

However, it is worth being clear that lack of inconsistency is not sufficient for referring to a set of statements as the positive part of a theoretical system. After all, statements about a range of wildly different phenomena – e.g. the zebra is stripy, Henry is bathing in baked beans, clouds are pretty – can be not inconsistent with one another without being anything like a theory. A more meaningful relationship seems to be required. We would argue that a better account of a positive relationship between categories/statements is therefore one which considers the extent to which these elements are giving some degree of support to one another. In a very interesting dialogue with Gross (1961), Parsons himself explains that:

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Besides the all-important empirical relevance, the principal criteria of good theory are conceptual clarity and precision and logical integration in the sense not only of the logical compatibility of the various propositions included in a theoretical scheme, but of their mutual support, so that inference from one part of the scheme to other parts becomes possible. (Parsons, 1961: 137)

For example, some sets of statements – e.g. that social activities are shaped by norms; that norms of politeness prevent individuals from eating with their hands in certain social settings; that norms can overcome self-interested motivations – have some degree of supportive relation to one another. Of course the level of mutual supportiveness can vary, and there is much more that could be said about relations of support. Nevertheless, we would argue that the basic idea that positive elements are those that are not inconsistent with one another and are mutually supportive, is a useful way to analyse positive elements.

Having conceptualized positive elements of the theoretical system in this way, it makes sense to draw on the same underlying ideas to analyse residual elements. In our approach, residual elements are those that are not in a relation of mutual or a kind of individual support with a set of central statements which are densely connected to one another in relations of consistency and mutual support.[1] Thus, we are arguing that lack of inconsistency is a necessary condition and mutual supportiveness is a sufficient condition for the characterisation of a set of statements as the positive core of a theoretical system[2]. Note that statements that are peripheral to this core are not necessarily residual elements, but may be elements that are not inconsistent with and *individually* supportive to the core, that is, non-anomalous elements which however can be 'extracted' from the system without changing the meaning of the key categories and claims of the core.

By contrast, residual elements are out on a limb, and have no meaningful connection to the positive part of the theory in terms of support. And it is at this point that we want to distinguish between two kinds of residual elements, with regards to the issue of (in-)consistency. Both kinds of residual elements share the characteristic of not being mutually or individually supportive with a certain set of central statements, as we have already claimed, which means that they both lack the sufficient condition of positivity. Therefore, antinomic and synectic elements both have in common that they cannot be included in a non-anomalous part of periphery, the statements of which are in a state of individual support with the centre. We call *synectic* residual elements those which can be found in a theoretical system without being supportive of a set of central statements, but for which relations of inclusion and/or supportiveness can potentially be built, with the result that we can further elaborate their semantic connection with that set of central statements. In contrast, what we call *antinomic* residual elements are those that are part of the set of claims made by a theorist or within a theory, but are neither supportive of, nor consistent with, a set of central statements. Actually, in this case, a core set and the antinomic elements are characterised by relations of mutual exclusion and the necessary condition of positivity cannot be fulfilled as well.[3]

Another way in which we would like to elaborate on the notions of positivity and residuality is to take the concern with systematicity which is the impetus behind them, and expand this to analyse a different kind of systematic problem within a theory. In order to do so, we want to distinguish between cases where there is: (i) a division between a relatively unified system and outlying, disconnected, residual elements; and (ii) a division or a tension within the centre of the theoretical system, i.e., the possibility of having two or more relatively distinguishable exegetical narrations, derived from the co-production of meaning of the same set of central elements. We want to argue that the idea of residuality is more accurately applied to the first case than the second. In the first case, we have peripheral categories and claims,

which, importantly, are in a state of lack of individual support with the central body of argument. But in the second case we have the possibility of two or more narrations supervening upon one *single* core set of central statements which use key concepts. Though we cannot remove any of the elements from the core set without radically changing the author's views – or even without running the risk of failing to make sense of them at all – there is always the possibility that some ambivalences in the use of these concepts by certain elements of the core can generate such an instability of meaning, resulting in two or more narrations. In this kind of case there is a shared set of claims and categories which densely links the sides of the system, but these are elaborated in two different directions, each of which has arguments that are in a state of tension with the other.[4] This takes us beyond Parsons' analysis because, as Holmwood (1996) points out, in his treatment of systems (theoretical or otherwise) Parsons rarely considered the idea that they might have deep-lying contradictions within them. But this kind of tension is clearly problematic for a theoretical system.

Let us take a moment to sum up the arguments made in this section so far. We have contended that Parsons offers crucial insights into theoretical systems by arguing that analysts should not only check if a phenomenon is included by theorists but need to also consider whether it is positively characterised. But we have also developed this insight in various ways in order to produce a more extensive conceptual toolkit with which to analyse theoretical systems. Firstly, we have argued that it is better to focus on theoretical elements rather than categories, such that we can refer to categories, statements, arguments and so on being positive or residual. Secondly, we have built on Parsons' considerations about the logical relations between elements of a system to argue that positive elements are those that provide support to one another, with residual elements being those which are neither supportive of, nor supported by, the core. Thirdly, we distinguished between potentially reconcilable residual elements (synectic) and irreconcilable residual elements (antinomic). Finally, we have distinguished

between two problematic states of a theory: one where there is a tension within the centre of a theoretical system and the other where there are residual elements in the periphery[5].

3. Placing Residuality, Anomalies and Coherence

Given our sense of the importance of analysing positivity and residuality, we find it surprising that these concepts seem to have been rarely used or developed by analysts, save for a few instances[6]. Despite the limited uptake of concepts of positivity and residuality in the literature there are useful connections that can be made with other debates, particularly in post-positivist philosophy of science and epistemology, which may help to clarify our views further. The post-positivist debate that is most germane to our concerns is the question of how seriously inconsistencies between core theoretical understandings and other elements need to be taken by investigators. On one side we have Popper and allied thinkers who argue that the existence of incompatible elements (what we refer to as antinomic residual categories) should always be treated as problematic for a theory, and that addressing them is a central part of theoretical development (Popper, 1963; Lakatos, 1980). On the other side, we have thinkers such as Kuhn who argue that theories are always faced with anomalies, and that it would be unhelpful for investigators to focus all of their attention on swatting these away rather than seeing through their own positive programme of inquiry (see Chapter 9 of Kuhn, 1977).[7]

It will come as no surprise to the attentive reader that we lean towards the Popperian side in this debate. However, we would argue that a subtle Popperian argument, akin to that of Lakatos (1980), can take on board some of the arguments made by Kuhn (1977) and others. We are not arguing that if any possible inconsistency is not immediately resolved a theory should be abandoned. However, we are arguing that theorists should be concerned about the relations of (in-)consistency of the theoretical elements *that they acknowledge*, and they should be particularly concerned when their theory contains antinomic residual categories.

Another useful way to position our arguments is with reference to coherentist theories of knowledge in analytic philosophy. There are various versions of coherentist theories; some (i) understand a statement to be true and/or justified as long as it coheres with (or is inferred from) a core (believed to be justified, undeniable or basic) coherent set of statements (for a discussion of this, see Williams, 1980). Other coherentist theories (ii) argue for internal logical consistency among statements and (a kind of an) overall coherence (or support) of a theoretical system as the sole or the most crucial epistemic criteria for the justification and/or the truth of that theory (see, for example, Bonjour, 1976; Davidson, 1986; Young, 2001). Parsons seems to be closer to the latter (ii). In an interesting discussion, Schwanenberg (1971) suggests that Parsons' belief in the orderly character of the universe meant that he saw the level of orderliness − coherence − that a theory achieved as an index of its truth. Of Parsons' approach, Schwanenberg states:

… since this system character of theory, when it has been achieved, is seen to be the true representation of the orderliness and connectedness of the universe, to work theoretically means to methodologically order knowledge so that systematic coherence may be accomplished. The more coherent a theory is, the more truth it contains, i.e., the more it depicts the universe. (Schwanenberg, 1971: 572-3)

In relation to (i), we need to underline that we do not take a certain level of coherence of a core set for granted, towards which certain individual elements can be assessed for their coherence so as for one to decide upon their justification and/or truth – but, in relation to socio-theoretical systems, we have rather discussed the possibility of internal tensions even within the theoretical centre. Additionally, and in relation to (ii), we would like to clarify that although we have argued for a positive stance towards internal consistency and mutual support, we are

not promoting a coherentist theory of *truth*, as our argument here has nothing to say about truth conditions. We are discussing consistency and mutual support, in the case of socio-theoretical systems, in terms of internal semantic relations of co-production of meaning, and not of either linear or holistic modes of inferential justification of individual statements or of choosing between rival social theories.

Our focus has been on the development and metatheoretical appraisal of social theories in their own terms, and it is in this context that judgements of (in-)consistency are relevant: among the elements that exist within a socio-theoretical system, we distinguish between core/central and peripheral elements; and we identify the *possibility* of inner division in the former and of anomalous status in a certain part of the latter. This metatheoretical image works out as a toolkit for the organization of internal critique and challenge for theoretical development.

Hence, Parsons's more general and broader epistemological commentary on residual categories and the need for their semantic or logical development within theoretical systems, so as to achieve more theoretical coherence, is hereby modified as a meta-theoretical framework of internal consistency and toolkit for critique in social theory.

4. Applying the Concepts

So far, this article has extended the tools for analysing theoretical systems and positioned its arguments in relation to relevant literature. What we would like to explore now is how these analytical tools can be applied. This could be done in various ways, but here we briefly consider how these concepts can be used to analyse a contemporary debate in social theory about whether Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical work can account for agential reflexivity, that is, the capacity of agents to take a distance from, and reflect on, the social situation which they find themselves in, as well as on their own beliefs and ultimate concerns. Because of

Bourdieu's tendency to see the agents' practices as cognitionally deriving *mainly* from the pre-reflective dispositions of the habitus, and not from conscious contemplation (see, for example, 1990a: 56; 1990b: 108), it is frequently assumed that agential reflexivity does not fall within the core of his analysis. On the question of how to respond to this, we can distinguish between authors who think that agential reflexivity is – in our terms – a synectic element for Bourdieu, and those who see it as an antinomic element.[8]

Beginning with the former approach, authors like Sweetman (2003) and Decoteau (2016) think that agential reflexivity is a synectic element in Bourdieu's thought, arguing that it can be made consistent with Bourdieu's core ideas by developing the concept of the 'reflexive habitus'. Others, like Elder-Vass (2007) and Sayer (2010) treat it as a synectic element that can be further developed – by bridging the acknowledged gap between Bourdieu's habitus and Margaret Archer's notion of agential reflexivity which takes the form of 'internal conversation' (Archer, 2003).

Archer, by contrast, is very resistant to attempts to connect her ideas with those of Bourdieu, which she sees as importantly incompatible with aspects of her critical realist approach. As a critical realist, Archer argues for a differentiated ontology of elements in the natural and social worlds, and she makes a clear separation between the powers of social structures and those of social agents (see Archer, 1995). The powers of the latter include the ability of agents to take a distance from their social situations and their ultimate concerns, and decide on courses of action in a conscious, intentional and reflective manner.

Contrary to the authors mentioned above, Archer believes that agential reflexivity is fundamentally incompatible with Bourdieu's core conceptual scheme – that is, it is an antinomic residual – since, through the notion of habitus, he conflates objective structural conditions with agential powers (Archer, 2007: 41-44). According to Archer, even the late Bourdieu's account of sociological (or epistemic) reflexivity 'still left his theorising far short of recognising the

necessity of reflexivity for social life and life in society' (Archer 2007: 46). For Archer, Sweetman's (2003) effort to reconcile Bourdieu's habitus and agential reflexivity in the hybridizing form of reflexive habitus is a contradiction in terms, for 'it elides two concepts which Bourdieu consistently distinguished: the semi-unconscious dispositions constituting habitus, and reflexivity as self-awareness of them.' (Archer 2010a: 126). This disagreement turns on whether agential reflexivity is a synectic or antinomic residual in Bourdieu's theory.

But, let us turn the tables: while Archer at some points seems to be clear, as we have just explained, that self-reflection and the habitus cannot be reconciled, at some other points, she does not clearly exclude Bourdieu's habitus as a key concept in the explanation of social action. She has implied that the habitus was perhaps more relevant in traditional societies (2010b: 287); and she claims that the habitus is the key element in explaining human action in a varying proportion to agential reflexivity depending on the situation and/or the stratum of reality in which a certain action takes place (2010b: 292, 293), that the practical order is 'undoubtedly Bourdieu's territory' (2010b: 294), and that it is still active in cases of contextual continuity (2010b: 287). Archer even admits that one of her proposed types of agential reflexivity (communicative reflexivity) is related to the pre-reflective dispositions of Bourdieu's habitus (2010b: 300). These are surprising admissions of an empirical relevance of a theoretical combination which she has in principle denied: Archer could have discussed the role that habitual action plays in our inner dialogues (as in Archer, 2003: 108, 111, 126), without using a concept, i.e., habitus, which excludes, as she in principle thinks, agential reflexivity. It seems that the habitus has entered into Archer's work as an antinomic residual category, an unrelated but also internally excluded category via the back door.

Admittedly, attributions of residuality, and judgements that elements are either antinomic or synectic are intrinsically fallible (as with all other judgements), and much disagreement can emerge about the nature that a residual phenomenon can take in a socio-

theoretical system. But our main argument is that unless analysts critically engaging with a theory are clear about whether the problem is based in an internal division in the core of a theory, or with the existence of residual categories of the synectic or antinomic kind, this can cause serious confusion about the possibilities of further development of the theoretical system, as well as in our interchange of ideas. In the case of an inner division of the core, a radical decision should be made on the part of the defender so as to pursue internal coherence. Alternatively, identification of residuals in the periphery can entail fruitful suggestions about theoretical interchange between seemingly incompatible theories. The identification of a synectic residual element might not only be a challenge for further internal development of the theoretical system in question, but also be the linking point between two rival theoretical systems – with theoretical synthesis as a potential outcome.

In the case of antinomic residual elements, defenders might wish to exclude references to or downplay the relevance of the phenomenon in question. Another, more bold strategy is to consider whether the existence of residual categories points to deeper problems. We agree with Parsons that residual categories are valuable to attend to, not simply because of their own limitations, but because they frequently reveal something about the limitations of the theoretical system as well. Indeed, Parsons anticipates Kuhn with his remark that 'the surest symptom of impending change in a theoretical system is increasingly general interest in…residual categories.' (Parsons 1937: 18).

All in all, many critiques in social theory identify internal anomalies in certain theoretical systems by adopting a homogeneous, unhelpful, vocabulary for different cases, that is, without distinguishing between core and peripheral anomalies, or among the cases in the periphery we identify in this article. Distinguishing among them can enhance the clarity of our critical engagement as well as theoretical mutual understanding. For example, a mischaracterization of a synectic residual as 'another contradiction', can work out as a

discussion-stopper; a misrecognition of a core tension for a common conceptual ambiguity can generate categorical confusion in sociological research that draws on the related theory; or, a misidentification of an antinomic residual as a 'reconcilable' (synectic, in our terms), can lead to new synthesised theoretical frameworks with intensive inner core tensions.

5. Conclusion

If we could imaginatively extract the core set of sentences from a theoretical system we could see that among the different arguments that remain there are some residues that seem anomalous and alien to this core set. It should be clear from the preceding discussion that we see the presence of residual elements as problematic for a theory, and therefore as sparking the need for change. However, the change that is required depends on the nature of the residual element. If the residual elements are synectic, there is an opportunity to reconcile and support these with core statements by means of further elaboration and even connection between rival theoretical schemes. Antinomic elements, by contrast, require a more decisive intervention, which may involve trying to find plausible reasons to eradicate these elements, making important changes to the core of the system – or abandoning the whole system.

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Endnotes

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[1] By 'densely connected' we mean that each core central statement is in relations of mutual support and consistency with several other statements rather than, say, being connected to just one other statement in this way.

[2] Note that the core can contain theoretical elements of metaphysical and/or epistemological character, as well as other types of substantive elements and/or regulative doctrines.

³ This does not mean that antinomic residual elements contradict every single sentence that exists in this core set, but with the mutually produced directions which are irreversibly antithetic to these elements. In this sense, the category of synectic residuals is a broad and encompassing one, incorporating elements that are not inconsistent (but still unsupported by and unsupportive) with the core, as well as elements which are inconsistent with certain elements of the core, but which are still not excluded by the coproduction of meaning of the elements of the core.

⁴ This is a paradoxical case of the non-positivity of the core, in which each emerged narration supervenes upon the same set of mutually supported elements of the core, and thus, we end up with the predicament of the partial fulfilment of the sufficient condition of positivity, while facing issues with the necessary one – since the two or more narrations are in a state of tension.

⁵ We want to contend that our support for a modified version of Parsons' meta-theoretical distinction between positive and residual categories does not entail acceptance of key Parsonian theories such as the voluntaristic theory of action or structural functionalist theory of systems (Parsons, 1937; 1951). It may seem surprising that we are defending a version of the process of evaluation that Parsons recommends in his meta-theoretical analyses, but not the products which he generates from theoretical work. But this is because we accept Holmwood's carefully elaborated argument that in both the voluntaristic theory of action and the theory of systems Parsons does not successfully realize the key aspects of the process of theoretical analysis he has defended (Holmwood, 1996). Thus we would argue that Parsons has a valuable meta-theoretical insight into how the appraisal and development of theories should be conducted, but his theoretical work did not see this through as required.

⁶ One of these is Jeffrey Alexander's multi-volume Theoretical Logic in Sociology, published between 1982-4, which employs these conceptualizations in its readings of other thinkers. However, Alexander does not offer a substantial development, exposition and defence of the idea of residual and positive categories. The helpful work of José Domingues (1996) considers the role of positivity and residuality in evaluation and usefully places an emphasis on the reconstructive impetus that should be taken from the identification of residual categories, but does not elaborate upon these concepts, focusing more on the dialectical relationship between theory and research. Other thinkers, like Star and Bowker (2007) have used the concept of residual categories in an interesting way but without citing Parsons' work, and their approach, unlike ours, focuses on processes of classification where cases that do not fit are being forced, without acknowledgement, into existing categories.

⁷ Kuhn arguably has more than one approach to coherence; here we refer to the approach he takes in *The Essential Tension* (1977)

⁸ Another kind of critique, which we will not consider here, argues that there are internal contradictions that exist within Bourdieu's core analysis (see King, 2000).