With an initial idea of Touraine’s ‘proto-hermeneutical turn’ established, we are in a position to look more closely at its impact on his social theory. In chapter three, we will consider its ramifications for his theory of modernity; before we do so, however, we will examine the reorientation of his conceptual framework it has prompted, and begin to consider its implications for the project to ‘bring agency back in’ to social theory. As we will see, Touraine’s innovations in *Critique of Modernity* have opened up fertile new possibilities for conceptualising human agency, but they remain unevenly developed, and their broader implications are incompletely clarified.

The imbalance we will find in Touraine’s analysis stems in part from the not altogether anticipated outcome of his initial strategy of conceptual renewal. The conceptual innovations which crystallised in *Critique of Modernity* were conceived as an extension of the ‘actionalist’ conceptual framework outlined in *Self-Production of Society*—they were invoked in an attempt to better achieve that work’s meta-theoretical objective of going beyond
over-integrated conceptions of society, and the development which set them
in motion was Touraine’s decision to ground its action-theory conceptual
framework in an analysis of the actor as subject—but in the process of the-
matising the subjectivity of the actor, what had begun as a subject-centred
analysis of the actor tipped over into a theory of the acting subject. The result
has been a not-insignificant not reorientation of his conceptual apparatus he
uses to analyse large-scale social configurations; the analysis of the modes of
action which produce distinctive societal types has given way to a demarca-
tion of successive phases of modernity based on shifts in the relationship
between rationalisation and “subjectivation.” The ramifications of this greater
than expected shift, however, have not been fully worked through, and while
Touraine has provided a finely articulated elucidation of his new conceptual
keystone of the subject, the shifts it has prompted in his broader conceptual
apparatus are less systematically clarified.

Two issues in particular stand out in this regard. In the first place, while the
conceptual framework elaborated in *Self-Production of Society*—revolving
around the concepts of historicity, accumulation and historical system of
action—has been dismantled, there is in *Critique of Modernity* no comparable
attempt to specify the elements of the apparatus which has taken its place.
The broad contours of his new conceptual infrastructure are clear; his thesis,
that the ‘production of the subject’ is as central to modernity as processes of
rationalisation, is built on the premise that rationalisation and subjectivation
are not only social processes, but also, and in the first instance, cultural ori-
entations. However, while his analyses contain some highly suggestive insights,
the conceptual underpinnings of this approach are not explicitly clarified,
and as we will see, one consequence is a significant imbalance in his new
framework and substantive analyses.

The second notable absence is a reflection on the relationship between his
new conceptual framework and the one it grew out of. As we will see, the
idea of ‘action’ plays an important role in *Critique of Modernity* on a number
of levels, but the introduction of the concept of the subject has unsettled the
action-based conceptual infrastructure it was designed to strengthen, and
despite the significance of developments involved, Touraine reflects on its
ramifications for neither his action-theory framework, nor his broader pro-
ject to conceptualise social creativity.