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978-0-521-87423-6 - Making our Way through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility

Margaret S. Archer

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Making our Way through the World

How do we reflect upon ourselves and our concerns in relation to society, and vice versa? Human reflexivity works through ‘internal conversations’ using language, but also emotions, sensations and images. Most people acknowledge this ‘inner dialogue’ and can report upon it. However, little research has been conducted on ‘internal conversations’ and how they mediate between our ultimate concerns and the social contexts we confront. Margaret Archer argues that reflexivity is progressively replacing routine action in late modernity, shaping how ordinary people make their way through the world. Using interviewees’ life and work histories, she shows how ‘internal conversations’ guide the occupations that people seek, keep or quit; their stances towards structural constraints and enablements; and their resulting patterns of social mobility.

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To the memory of
Luminița Caibăr

Who made her way lovingly through the world

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This book was an adventure. After commuting to the University of Warwick for thirty years, I finally got to know the city of Coventry. To do so means unpacking ‘the decline of British manufacturing’ into the painful lived reality of many people: the young without work, the families with first-hand knowledge of redundancy, and the older ones who will try anything rather than say ‘I’ll never work again.’ My first and deep thanks go to those who generously gave hours of their time to being interviewed and shared the good, the bad and the mundane so openly. I sincerely hope that I have given their life stories the respect and understanding they deserve – and not only because these are the book.

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