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Sociology 1998; 32; 747
DOI: 10.1177/0038038598032004007

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SOCIOLOGY Vol. 32 No. 4 November 1998
747–769

MODERNITY AND THE EMOTIONS: CORPOREAL REFLECTIONS ON THE (IR)RATIONAL

SIMON J. WILLIAMS

Abstract Taking as its starting point the 'irrational passion for dispassionate rationality', so prevalent in Western thought and practice, this paper traces, through the emotions, current debates surrounding the *ambivalent* nature of modernity as both order and chaos, conformity and transgression. Reason and emotions are not, it is argued, antithetical to one another, rather there is a need to fundamentally rethink existing epistemological models and ontological ways of being and knowing. These issues are traced, on the one hand, through the increasing rationalisation of Western society, the latest expression of which, it is claimed, is a new form of 'postemotionalism', and, on the other hand, through the resurgence of more Dionysian values and collective forms of effervescence. The paper concludes with a critical assessment of these contradictory features and the corporeal dilemmas which underpin them, speculating on the 'fate' of emotions at the turn of the century in the light of current postmodern theorising.

Key words: Authenticity, collective effervescence, corporeality, emotions, modernity, rationality.

> Life as immediately experienced is precisely that unity of being formed and that reaching out beyond form . . . Life is always more life than there is room for . . .
>
> (Simmel 1971:370)

> The history of corporeality is not merely the disciplining of the body and the destruction of sensuality any more than it is the great emancipation of the body's potential: it is the paradoxical combination of the two.
>
> (Falk 1994:66)

Whilst much has been written about processes of Western rationalisation and the 'crises' of modernity, few writers have sought to address these issues through the specific lens of the emotions. To be sure, writers such as Marx and Durkheim, Weber and Simmel were not blind to the emotional implications of their analyses, yet these insights remain at best partial and underdeveloped in comparison with their more explicit theoretical focus on questions of social order and social action, liberty and discipline, autonomy and control. In contrast to these traditional sociological concerns, we now have a rapidly growing body of literature on the emotions in social life: issues which, in turn, connect up with the proliferation of body-oriented discourse and the move to a more 'postmodern' form of theorising

It therefore seems both timely and instructive to relate these disparate bodies of literature together through a focus on modernity and the emotions. Central

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issues here include the problematic relationship between reason and emotion, the contradictory features of modernity as both order and chaos, and the search for alternative, more 'authentic', ways of being and knowing; ways which overturn centuries of dualist thought and practice, opening up new possibilities for the 'resensualisation' or 're-enchantment' of Western society.

It is within this intellectual climate and context that the present paper is located. In particular, I wish to argue for a position which, rather than seeing reason and emotion as fundamentally opposed, instead views rationality itself as a 'passionately' held belief or cherished ideal: one which is, in large part, 'irrational' or 'unreasonable'. Western thought, in other words, both traditionally and to the present day, displays an 'irrational passion for dispassionate rationality' (Rieff 1979), the contradictions of which are only now becoming fully apparent.

Seen in this new more sensual light, reason and emotion are not in fact antithetical to one another. Rather, the duality which, analytically speaking, has cast them as two separate 'things' has in fact been turned, over the course of Western history and culture, into a dualism; an ideological position in which the former has been prioritised (if not reified or fetishised) over the latter, for social and political ends. To be sure, 'gains' have undoubtedly occurred through this rationalising process, from the civilising of bodies to the historical decline of infectious diseases, yet the tensions within modernity itself, as both order and chaos, are now becoming increasingly apparent. Modernity, in short, is collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions. Where this leaves us, of course, is a hotly debated issue. What seems clear, however, is that the obituary for modernity should not yet be written: intimations of postmodernity remain just that. Emotions, as we shall see, lie at the heart of these issues, reflecting and reinforcing these dilemmatic features of modernity at one and the same time.

In the first section of this paper, I examine these claims further through a preliminary discussion of what, precisely, emotions are, and how they relate to dominant structures of Western rationality. The aim here is to paint, in broad brush strokes, a more 'integrated' model of being and knowing in which emotion is no longer seen as the embodied enemy of disembodied reason but is in fact its ally. It is reasonable, in short, to re-think reason itself. Having done so, I then proceed to consider, through the lens of the emotions, the contradictory features of modernity as both 'order' and 'chaos'. In particular, following the recent work of writers such as Meštrović and Mellor and Shilling, I argue that what we are currently witnessing, for better or worse, is the rise of new 'effervescent' forms of the 'sacred': developments which are changing the ways in which people 'see' and 'keep in touch' with the world around them. Modernity, I conclude, is, at one and the same time, both the antithesis and confirmation of a more sensually based order; one in which the emotions come to the fore and rationality, as traditionally conceived, fights an increasing 'rearguard action'.

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Being and Knowing: 'Re-embodying' Reason

Historically and to the present day, emotions have been regarded as the very antithesis of the detached, scientific mind and the quest for objectivity, truth and wisdom. Whilst the split between reason and emotion was never, in fact, absolute for the Greeks,[1] these divisions were greatly sharpened during the seventeenth century when reason became redefined as a purely 'instrumental' faculty 'uncontaminated' by values and emotions. Linked to the rise of modern science, this positivist doctrine stipulated that trustworthy knowledge could only be established by methods which neutralised the values and emotions of its (dis)embodied practitioners. The objective scientific mind could, therefore, enjoy access to the 'facts' of nature, in an unmediated manner, devoid of subjective baggage or the value-laden clutter of human feelings.

This, in turn, relates to a broader set of distinctions which, traditionally speaking, have sought to separate mind from body, nature from culture, the public from the private. As defining characteristics and dominant features of Western thinking, these divisions, together with the broader rationalist view of the world which underpins them, have come under increasing attack from a variety of quarters (Seidler 1994). Recent approaches to epistemology, for example, have served to undermine rigid distinctions such as 'fact' and 'value', 'head' and 'heart', and to question the notion that emotions are simple instinctual responses with no role to play in knowledge acquisition or cognitive reflection (Rose 1994). Similarly, work within cultural anthropology has done much to challenge the rationality/emotionality divide, including the role of symbols and meanings in the development of mind, self and emotion (Lutz 1988; Rosaldo 1984; Shweder 1984; Shweder and Le Vine 1984).[2]

Contra centuries of Western thinking, reflective thought, as Damasio (1994) convincingly demonstrates, requires the 'tagging' of cognition with emotions. Without this capacity, decision-making becomes difficult if not impossible as there is no criterion with which to drive cognition in a given direction. Emotions, in other words, are central to the 'effective deployment' of reason. They are also involved, on a deep level, in all observation, from the supposedly dispassionate observations of science to the common perceptions of everyday life (Jaggar 1989:153–4). This is not, of course, to deny that our feelings can wreak havoc with the processes of logical thought and rational decision-making: they can and do. Yet, the absence of emotion, as recent studies show, is apparently no less damaging or devastating (Damasio 1994).[3]

Seen in this light, emotions and feelings are not in fact 'intruders' into the bastion of male reason, rather they are 'enmeshed within its network, for better or worse (Damasio 1994:xvi). Rather than repressing emotion in Western epistemology, therefore, it is necessary to fundamentally 'rethink the relation between knowledge and emotion and construct conceptual models that demonstrate the mutually constitutive rather than oppositional relation

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between reason and emotion. Far from precluding the possibility of reliable knowledge, emotion as well as value must be shown as necessary to such knowledge' (Jaggar 1989:157). Just as 'appropriate' emotions may contribute to the development of knowledge, so too the growth of knowledge may contribute to the development of appropriate emotions. Emotion, in short, is vital to systematic knowledge: a relationship which, at its best, is reciprocal and mutually informing/reinforcing (Jaggar 1989:163).

Underpinning these issues lies a deeper set of questions concerning what, precisely, emotions are, and the role they play in the very constitution of society and the dynamics of everyday life. These are issues I shall elaborate on more fully below. For the moment, however, let me address the specific ontological issues they raise. Whilst debates continue to rage over the relative contribution of biology and society to that intangible human compound, 'the emotions',[4] they are, I suggest, best seen as complex, multi-faceted phenomena which are irreducible to any one domain or discourse. Emotions, in other words, are thinking, moving, feeling 'complexes' which, sociologically speaking, are *relational* in nature and linked to 'circuits of selfhood' (Denzin 1984); comprising both corporeal, embodied aspects, as well as socio-cultural ones.[5]

Whilst basic emotions – rooted, it would seem, in our biological make-up and shared amongst all human beings as embodied agents – are involved, they are endlessly elaborated, like colours on a painter's palette, across time and through culture. As Burkitt (1997:42) states:

> Emotions . . . are multi-dimensional and cannot be reduced to biology, relations, or discourse alone, but belong to all these dimensions as they are constituted in ongoing relational practices. As such, the objects of our study in the sociology of emotions cannot be understood as 'things', but are complexes composed of different dimensions of embodied, interdependent human existence.

Seen in this way, emotions are essentially communicative, intercorporeal and intersubjective, constituted as physical and cultural dispositions through techniques of the body, forged within a particular social habitus. These body techniques, in turn, can only properly be understood within the context of the power relations of particular social and cultural groups, located within historical space and time (Burkitt 1997:42). Emotions, in other words are *emergent* properties, located at the intersection of physiological *dispositions*, material *circumstances*, and socio-cultural *elaboration*.

Not only do emotions underpin the phenomenological experience of our bodies in sickness and health (Bendelow and Williams 1998), they also provide the basis for social reciprocity and exchange – what Wentworth and Yardley (1994) term the 'deep sociality' of emotions – and the 'link' between personal problems and broader public issues of social structure: itself the defining hallmark of the 'sociological imagination' (Mills 1959).

This interactive, relational character of embodied emotional experience and

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expression, offers us a way of moving 'beyond' microanalytic, subjective, internal or individualistic analyses, towards broader landscapes and wider vistas in which embodied agency can be understood 'not merely as individual but also as institution making' (Csordas 1994:14; Lyon and Barbalet 1994). The emphasis here is on the active, emotionally expressive body as the basis of self and sociality, meaning and order, set within the broader socio-cultural realms of everyday life and the 'ritualised' forms of interaction and exchange they involve (Williams and Bendelow 1998).

How then, do these emotional issues translate into current debates about the future of modernity, and what questions do they raise concerning the relationship between bodily order and corporeal transgression? It is to these specific issues that I now turn.

Modernity and Ambivalence: A Preliminary Sketch

A fundamental point of departure in this paper is that, far from being an inherently stable, rational 'order', modernity, however we describe it, is in fact highly ambiguous and contradictory. Cutting a swathe through the proliferation of current literature and debates on the 'fate' of modernity, it can simply be stated that modernity, ever since its inception, has embraced, in paradoxical fashion, the centrifugal tendency for 'order' and the centripetal tendency for 'chaos'. The history of modernity, in short, involves both liberty and discipline (Wagner 1994), certainty and doubt, the Apollonian (i.e. control) and the Dionysian (i.e. chaos) (Rojek 1994, 1995).

Bauman (1992, 1991) is perhaps the key exponent of this view, noting how the roots of so-called 'postmodernity' are firmly located within the contingent 'project' of modernity itself. Seen in this light, postmodernity, properly interpreted, does not necessarily signify the end of modernity. Rather, it is no more or less than the modern mind (Bauman 1991:272) taking a . . .

> long, attentive and sober look, at its conditions and its past works, not fully liking what it sees and sensing the urge to change. Postmodernity is modernity coming of age: modernity looking at itself at a distance rather than from inside, making a full inventory of its gains and issues, psychoanalysing itself, discovering the intentions it never before spelled out, finding them mutually cancelling and incongruous . . . coming to terms with its own impossibility; a self-monitoring modernity, one that consciously discards what it was once unconsciously doing.

For Bauman, order and chaos are twin features of modernity: two sides of the same coin. The modern project – the elements of which include the legislative ambitions of philosophical reason, gardening ambitions of the state, ordering ambitions of the applied sciences – construed under-determination, ambivalence and contingency as a threat; making their 'elimination into one of the main *foci imaginarii* of social order' (1991:16).

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Order, in other words, tied as it is to a rationalist ambition of an inherently controllable world, is continuously engaged in a war for survival: a war in which chaos – i.e. 'the miasma of the indeterminate and unpredictable' – is its only alternative. It is against this chaotic negativity, that the positivity of order construes itself. The negativity of chaos, in other words, is itself a product of order's self-constituted positivity: 'its side-effect, its waste, yet the *sine qua non* of its (reflective) possibility . . . without chaos, no order' (Bauman 1991:7).

From this it follows that raw existence – i.e. existence free of intervention, unordered existence – now becomes allied or associated with *nature*: 'something to be *mastered, subordinated, remade* so as to be readjusted to human needs . . . [a] socially effected order in which artificiality is natural' (Bauman 1991:7). Here, we return again to the earlier discussion concerning the ideological association of the emotional body with nature as opposed to culture, biology as opposed to society, the private as opposed to the public.

This, in turn, raises deeper ontological questions concerning the nature of bodily order and corporeal transgression. As sensual as well as sensory beings, our corporeality is inextricably bound up with '(human) desire as opposed to (animal) need' (Falk 1994): an 'exuberant', 'uncontainable' flow which is centrally organised around the pleasure/pain axis. Eroticism and the emotions lie at the heart of these issues. To be sure, bodies, as the history of Western civilisation shows, are amenable to discipline and control – from the prison to the factory, the school to the asylum – but they are also fundamentally 'excessive': always leaning, through their libidinal flows and corporeal desires, their pleasures and their pains, their agonies and their ecstasies, in the direction of excess and threatening to 'overspill' their culturally constituted boundaries.[6]

As thinkers as diverse as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Simmel remind us, the will or passions are stronger than the mind, threatening to overturn the rationally ordered world. Indeed, it from this very 'recalcitrance', including the supposedly 'unruly' nature of bodily emotions and desires, that the need for 'discipline' and control arises (cf. Bakhtin 1968 and Elias 1978 on the (un)civilised body). Bodies, in short, rooted as they are in the problem of human desire and the vicissisitudes of the emotions, are sensual rather than ascetic, fluid rather than static, volatile rather than fixed.

From this it follows that questions surrounding modernity and ambivalence, are intimately related to problems of bodily desire and the vicissitudes of human emotions in Western thought, expressing, on the one hand, the rational impulse for order, and on the other hand, the corporeal spectre of chaos and transgression. It is to a fuller account of these dual features of modernity as both 'order' and 'chaos', 'regulation' and 'transgression', together with their emotional consequences for embodied individuals, groups and collectivites, that I now turn.

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The Apollonian Impulse for Rational 'Order'

To be sure, 'disciplined' bodies have been around since time immemorial. From religious denunciation of the slimy desires of the flesh in Christian Pauline teaching, to the long historical curve of the civilising process from the Renaissance onwards, the body has been steadily socialised, rationalised and individualised (Shilling 1993). In mediaeval times, as Elias's (1978) work on the history of manners so clearly shows, desires and impulses were freely and directly expressed in conscious thoughts and actions: from warrior nobilities' brutal killings to the grotesque realism of Rabelaisian carnival culture and its parodying of feudal hierarchies. With the subsequent development of 'civilised bodies', however, a growing division occurs between consciousness and drives, as thresholds of shame and embarrassment rise and foresight, forward planning and strategic decision-making increase. As Elias (1978:257) explains:

> The autonomous individual self-controls produced in this way in social life, such as 'rational thought' or 'moral conscience', now interpose themselves more sternly than ever before between spontaneous and emotional impulses, on the one hand, and the skeletal muscles, on the other, preventing the former with greater severity from directly determining the latter (i.e. action) without the permission of these control mechanisms.

These civilising processes, and the psychogenetic transformations they involve, are not without their costs. Rather, as Freud's (1982/[1930]) deliberation on *Civilisation and its Discontents* suggest, the passionate affects struggle no less violently within: the well-spring of discontent, the tragedy of the human condition in civilised times. The civilising process, in short, is never entirely without pain: 'it always leaves scars' (Elias 1982:244).

If this is true of civilised bodies in the past, then it is particularly true of consumer bodies in the present. Within consumer culture our relationship to commodities is predicated less upon real need than upon their inexhaustible ability to 'incite desire'. 'I consume therefore I am' becomes a dominant cultural motif (Falk 1994), as representations (of the 'good' life) are substituted for reality, and settled convictions are overturned in favour of 'flexibility, mobility and an incessant search for the new' (Featherstone 1991). It is against this backdrop that the project of the self becomes translated, to a greater or lesser degree, into the possession of 'desired goods' and the pursuit of 'artificially framed lifestyles'. As Giddens states: 'The consumption of ever-novel goods becomes in some part a substitute for the genuine development of self; appearance replaces essence as the visible signs of successful consumption come actually to out-weigh the use-values of the goods and services in question' (1991:198).

Given these commodifying pressures, there is a tendency for individuals to place ever more importance upon the appearance and presentation of the body as constitutive of self-identity. Here, in a seemingly 'narcissistic' (Lasch

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1979) or 'reflexive' age (Giddens 1991), a premium is place upon corporeal images of youth, beauty, health and fitness. The closer the body approximates to these idealised images, the higher its 'exchange-value' (Featherstone 1991:177). This, together with the 'sexualisation of wants and desires' (Seidman 1991), means that the body itself becomes something of a 'fetishised' commodity; one which has to be attractively 'packaged', 'marketed' and 'sold'. Indeed, it would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that within consumer culture the balance has tilted from bodies producing commodities (i.e. 'externalising objects of labour'), to commodities producing bodies (i.e. 'internalising objects of consumption') (Faurschou 1988).

It is within this context that body maintenance comes to the fore. Whilst in pre-modern times, bodily discipline/asceticism was sought to serve higher spiritual ends and repress the 'temptations' of the flesh, today it is instead concerned with the (aesthetic) cultivation of outer appearance and the (hedonistic) expression of desire. Here, 'inner' concerns with health and the optimal functioning of the body merge imperceptibly with 'outer' concerns with appearance (i.e. 'the look'), movement and control of the body across social time and space (Featherstone 1991). Today, the firm, well-toned and muscled body has become a symbol of 'correct *attitude*'; 'it means that one "cares" about oneself and how one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to "make something" of oneself' (Bordo 1990:94–5).

Even emotions, the last bastion of 'authenticity' in an 'inauthentic' age, have been 'put to work', so to speak, in advanced capitalist society. Hochchild's (1983) *The Managed Heart*, for example, is replete with references to the 'human costs' of emotional labour, from 'burnout' to feeling 'phony', 'cynicism' to 'emotional deadness', 'guilt' to self 'blame': costs which, she suggests, could be reduced if workers felt a greater sense of control over the conditions of their working lives.

In highlighting these emotional dilemmas, particularly amongst the middle classes, Hochschild forces home the more general sociological point, alluded to above, that human feeling, in advanced capitalist society, has itself become increasingly 'commoditization'. As she states (1979:569):

> When deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector and are bought and sold as an aspect of labour power, feelings are commoditized. When the manager gives the company his [sic] enthusiastic faith, when the airline stewardess gives her passengers her psyched-up but quasi-genuine reassuring warmth, what is sold as an aspect of labour power is deep acting.

As Stearns (1994) perceptively argues, twentieth-century cultural styles, particularly those cultivated in contemporary America, stunt and stifle the emotions behind a veneer of '*cool*' – a situation succinctly summarised in the street credible phrase 'chill out'. These issues have recently been taken further by Meštrović (1997), who claims, radically perhaps, that we are now living in

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what he terms a 'postemotional' age; a 'neo-Orwellian world' of 'mechanised feelings' and 'quasi-emotional responses'. Modernity's diametrically opposed tendencies toward *order* and *chaos* have, according to Meštrović, resulted in a new hybrid world of rationally ordered, McDonaldised emotions (i.e. bite-sized, pre-packaged, rationally manufactured emotions): a 'happy meal' consumed by the masses (cf. Ritzer 1992). Postemotionalism, as Meštrović explains, is a system designed to avoid 'emotional disorder', prevent 'loose ends' in emotional exchange, civilise 'wild' arenas of emotional life, and in general to order emotions so that the social world 'hums as smoothly as a well-maintained machine' (1997:150). The power of the rational mind, enshrined by the Enlightenment, has therefore given way to an 'indolent mindlessness' and kitsch emotional reactions to serious problems and world issues.

Central to these developments has been the emergence of the 'post-other-directed' type who takes his/her cues from peers and the media as to when s/he should rationally choose to exhibit curdled/vicarious indignation, niceness or other pre-packaged emotions. Within such a neo-Marcusean society of 'happy consciousness', feeling becomes increasingly separated from action, and 'compassion fatigue' looms large: a 'viscerated compassion' churned out by the culture industry which is really more like pity. The 'ways of escape' have also, Meštrović claims, been rationalised and McDonaldised, from leisure to pseudo-therapy: leaving little room for a truly 'authentic' or spontaneous emotional response. Even sexuality has lost its more spontaneous connection with eroticism, through the prioritisation of reflexive (i.e. cognitive) control (cf. Giddens 1992) over embodied sensuality and the temporary fusion of selves (cf. Bataille 1985, 1987/[1962]): what Jackson and Scott (1997) have succinctly termed the 'Taylorisation of sex'. The result is the dawning of artificially contrived 'authenticity' – what Meštrović appositely refers to as the 'authenticity industry'. The McDonaldisation of emotions, in short, has been an attempt to make the 'Enlightenment project, therapy, civilisation, and communities all seem predictably "nice" and to create Disneyesque, artificial realms of the authentic' (Meštrović 1997:98).

Seen in this light, postemotionalism, as Meštrović insists, is best viewed as an extension of the 'cult of the machine'. As such, it holds the potential to degenerate further into an entirely new form of totalitarianism: one which is so 'nice', 'tolerant' and 'charming', whatever the event, that it is hard to resist. Within this 'counterfeit' logic, a new form of barbarism is dressed up in refined language and cultural euphemisms (such as 'ethnic cleansing') are used to disguise motives that should never qualify as 'civilised' (i.e. a 'counterfeit civilising process') (Meštrović 1997).

Discussion of these postemotional issues, in turn, simultaneously points us in two temporal directions. On the one hand, looking *back*, it recalls Simmel's (1971) classic essay on the fate of mental life in the metropolis. For Simmel, there is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved

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for the city as the blasé outlook and its associated features of reserve, aversion and indifference, both to people and the distinctions between things. On the other hand, looking *forward*, it succinctly captures the cultural contradictions and banal features of what is fast becoming an 'information-overloaded' society – including the advent of so-called cyberspace – in which fact becomes fiction and television reality. (See also Tester (1998) and Williams (1998) for a debate on the relative merits of this case).

Postemotional or just plain bored and blasé, the tensions and dilemmas of modernity as a rationally ordered, McDonaldised world, are therefore thrown into critical relief through a focus on the vicissitudes of emotions and the problem of 'authenticity' in a seemingly 'inauthentic' age. Yet is this the whole story? Are we simply 'passive dupes' of the system, postemotional or otherwise, or are the 'lines of escape' still open for our 'recalcitrant' bodies and 'unruly' minds? It is to these questions that I now turn through a consideration of modernity's chaotic tendencies and the ever present threat or promise of corporeal 'transgression'.

The Corporeal Desire for 'Transgression': The Return to 'Dionysian' Values?

> Transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends and completes it.
> (Bataille 1987/[1962]:63)

> The gods, their myths and rituals have changed their names, but they are still hard at work in both sociality and the environment
> (Maffesoli 1995:139).

As I have argued, the full story of modernity has never simply been about order and discipline, but also about chaos and disorder, liberty and autonomy, the contingent and the unpredictable. From Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, Bataille to Simmel, the passionate unruly will to life, and the Dionysian quest for the 'authentic', have been constant themes; haunting the ambitions of the modernist 'gardener' and disrupting the vision of a 'perfect', rationally ordered world.[7]

Whilst Meštrović's thesis ends up prioritising rational control and mechanised logic as the order of the (postemotional) day, I wish to hold on, instead, to what for some may be a seen as a more optimistic view of the body and the emotions in contemporary society as the most autonomous and recalcitrant aspect of human social life; feelings and passions which, whilst central to society and amenable to (rational) management and control, always threaten to 'overspill' or 'transgress' the socio-cultural boundaries which currently seek to 'contain' them.

To be sure, Meštrović acknowledges the continuing existence of this more autonomous realm of human feelings, yet the general thrust of his analysis reduces them to the status of mere 'pockets of authenticity' in an 'inauthentic

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age'; a colonisation, in effect, of that last true bastion of human freedom and spontaneity, the emotions. The arguments contained in this paper, however, suggest that this can never be case: the neo-Orwellian fiction of a fully mechanised world, like the dreams of the modernist 'gardener', remain just that. Rational colonisation of the life-world can, in short, never be absolute. Lines of escape will always be found: our transgressive bodies/recalcitrant minds will see to that. Here we return again to an ontological view of the body as fundamentally excessive/transgressive; something which is related, in *dialectical* fashion, to the broader socio-cultural 'order', constituting both its confirmation and repudiation all at once.

More generally, I wish to pick up on a theme only partially addressed earlier: namely, the emotional underpinnings of reason and the social order, from the Enlightenment onwards. As Shilling (1997) has shown through a close re-reading of the so-called 'underground wing' of Durkheim's sociology, his vision of society, *contra* rationalist interpretations, was of the emergence of a moral order shaped less by cognitive control than the sensual impulses and possibilities of 'effervescent bodies'. For Durkheim, in other words, the rational demands of society are intimately related to the 'irrational "fires" of effervescent sociality': forms of sociality which, through the immanence of powerful passions and emotions associated with the 'sacred', sensually transform people's experiences of their 'fleshy selves and the world around them' (Shilling 1997).[8]

As Durkheim reminds us, the Enlightenment, properly understood, made a 'religion' out of rationality: a veritable 'cult' of reason which, paradoxically, since its inception, has involved an 'irrational overestimation of its powers' (Meštrović 1997:80). Worshipping reason, both inside and outside the academy, has (until quite recently) been the order of the day, a ritual dance of identification if not 'salvation' in a secular age: one which, like all forms of worship, takes on certain 'sacred' qualities which both shape and sustain its fetishised existence. Emotions, in short, *contra* centuries of dominant Western dualistic thinking, are central to reason, even when ideologically denounced as its antithesis.

More generally, in worshipping the Enlightenment, its 'dark side', including the Holocaust, Communism and fascism, has conveniently been left out of the equation: a legacy founded, as Meštrović rightly reminds us, on both 'science and irrationalism, human rights as well as brutal oppression, cosmopolitanism as well as nationalism' (1997:86). Seen in this light, the Enlightenment project, like the civilising process itself, has something of a 'counterfeit' logic or feel to it: a 'one-sided ideological commitment' to the seemingly 'positive' aspects of rationality at the expense of the negative; the 'virtuous' and 'humanitarian' at the expense of the 'violent and destructive' (Meštrović 1997:86). Indeed, even so-called critical social theorists, such as Adorno and Marcuse, Horkheimer and Habermas, paradoxically support the Enlightenment 'project' through the sanctification of seemingly 'rational' solutions to

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problems of 'over-rationalisation': an 'emotional sanctification' of a truly 'authentic' rationality to counter the worst excesses of capitalism and its pernicious brand of instrumental rationality (Meštrović 1997:80–6).

Against this allegedly 'postemotional backdrop' and 'counterfeit logic', new decivilising trends, waves of informalisation, and manifestations of collective effervescence are, it is claimed, coming to the fore, for better or worse. Taking each of these issues in turn, whilst an overall direction is certainly detectable concerning the development of civilised bodies, it is none the less clear that these civilising processes are uneven and can indeed go 'into reverse'. This is particularly so when groups are threatened with the loss of their existing social position, or when relations between 'established' and 'outsider' groups in society lead to the use of violence as a means of frustrated expression on the part of these latter groups (Shilling 1993:168–70).[9]

Waves of both formalisation and informalisation complicate the picture further: processes in which, during periods such as the 1960s, a highly 'controlled decontrolling of the emotions' took place (see, for example, Wouters 1998, 1987, 1986, and Mennell 1990). As Mennell (1990) notes, civilising processes take centuries to solidify and years to inculcate in the young, yet only moments to break down or transgress. At the very least, arguments such as the 'controlled de-controlling of emotions notwithstanding', these decivilising processes suggest a situation that sits 'uneasily beside the stable internalisation of behavioural codes' and socio/psychogenic restraints and controls (Shilling 1993:173). This, coupled with the fact that individuals may 'selectively apply these civilised standards, depending on the differing social contexts they inhabit', and the situational imperatives embedded within them (Shilling 1993:172), suggests that a focus on 'civilised bodies' may in fact miss a significant part of contemporary 'decivilised' social life: both public and private.

These issues have been taken much further by recent writers such as Maffesoli, for whom waves of informalisation are merely part of a broader picture concerning the resurgence of Dionysian values. Rooted in a Durkheimian concern with 'collective effervescence' and the 'sacred', together with the Bataillean theme of the 'heterogeneous' – i.e. a concern with all those 'excessive' things which stand opposed to the rationalistic, capitalistic, profane world and the instrumental push towards social 'homogeneity – Maffesoli celebrates, in true Nietzschean style, what he claims to be a shift from the Promethean to the Dionysian in Western culture. A shift, that is, from the Weberian Protestant Ethic (i.e. productivist modernity) towards a society, or more precisely a form of *sociality*, governed by the 'empathetic logic of emotional renewal' and the (non-productivist) expressivity of collective effervescence. We are living, Maffesoli claims, at a decisive moment in the history of modernity, one in which the 'rationalization of the world' is being displaced if not replaced by a 're-enchantment of the world': i.e. a period of 'emotional renewal'.

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In advancing these arguments, Maffesoli appears, at first sight, to be developing a distinctively different view of social life and social change, one which is more or less opposed to the rationalistic assumptions embedded in notions such as 'modernisation', the cognitively oriented emphasis on issues of 'individualisation' and 'social reflexivity' in late modernity (cf. Giddens and Beck), or the mechanised logic of 'postemotional society' (cf. Meštrović). For Maffesoli, in contrast, we live in an age characterised by a 'decline of individualism' and a 'return of the tribes': a form of 'sociality' based on a new 'culture of sentiment' and multiple forms of 'being together' (what he terms '*proxemics*') (Evans 1997).

The 'sacred canopy' has indeed all but collapsed, only to be replaced by a series of more shifting alliances and sensual solidarities which, taken together, spell a 're-enchantment' of the world in a multitude of disparate, effervescent ways. Signs of this, Maffesoli (1996:72) claims, are all around us:

> even in the most aseptic places, and in the gregarious solitude that the contemporary techno-structure has contrived to construct, we already see a collective reappropriation of space that ploughs its furrows deep. Sporting events, musical or political gatherings, the sounds and hubbub of the streets of our towns, and festive occasions of all kinds forcefully underline the pre-eminence of the whole. What is more, its pre-eminence increasingly tends to result in a fusional reality, or in what is termed 'the return of Dionysiac values', with individual characteristics being replaced by organicity or what Fourier called the '*architectonic*' of the whole.

For Maffesoli the 'underground centrality' of sociality – one which "bubbles up" in resistance to stifling Promethean instrumental rationality – bestows strength, vitality and effervescence to social life: an emotional rejuvenation of social life and an antidote to the cultural 'crisis' of individualism (Evans 1997). From New Age movements and alternative therapies, to the 'relativization of the work ethic', and from networks of 'amourous camaraderie' to the importance of dress and cosmetics, the emblematic figure of Dionysus gives rise to what Weber termed '"emotional cults" as opposed to the atomization characteristic of bourgeois or aristocratic dominance' (Maffesoli 1995:156). Sociality, in other words – a 'fusion realm' or 'communalised empathy' – constitutes all those forms of 'being together' which, for the past few decades, have been transforming society. 'Losing one's body' within the 'collective body', in short, either literally or metaphorically, 'seems to be a characteristic feature of the emotional or affective *community* that is beginning to replace our utilitarian "society"' (Maffesoli 1996:154).

This, in turn, as Evans (1997:231) notes, marks a shift from morality as an overarching, universal system of duties and obligations to a system of rules, to a more 'protean, ambivalent, fractal and relativistic' emphasis on local ethics and a 'stylisation of life' more in keeping with Foucault's deliberations on the 'care of the self' in Ancient Greek culture (i.e. an '*ethics of aesthetics*') than with the Kantian tradition of 'legislative' reason.

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Certainly, Maffesoli paints a very different picture of contemporary social and emotional life than any other we have so far encountered: a view which, as suggested above, champions the Dionysian over the Promethean, the polymorphously perverse over the orderly and rational, the fusional over the individualistic, and so forth. In this respect, like Latour (1993), he forces us to confront the intriguing question of whether or not we have ever truly been 'moderns', stressing instead important elements of cultural continuity with the past, including the 'traditional world' of clans, bands and 'tribes' (Evans 1997). Seen in this light, Giddens's emphasis on late modernity as a detraditional order based on a reflexively mobilised self, appears, at the very least, problematic (Evans 1997).

Maffesoli's own position, however, is equally problematic. Perhaps the main problem concerns the fact that, in adopting this largely one-sided Dionysian stance, the contradictory features of modernity as *both* 'rationalisation' and 'subjectification' – i.e. the dialectic between the instrumentalisation of the world as embodied in science and technology, and the growth of individualism, expressivity, freedom and democratic rights (cf. Touraine 1995) – are underplayed (Evans 1997). Underpinning this, as I have argued throughout this paper, is a 'modernist' binary view of reason and emotion as somehow distinct or separable. This, coupled with an overly felicitous view of neo-tribes – including the fact that 'neo-tribalism' itself rests on a highly individualised society (Evans 1997) – which fails to acknowledge the dangers of Dionysian orgiastic sociality, means that, like Meštrović, Maffesoli too falls foul of the temptation to overstretch his explanatory frame of reference. To be sure Maffesoli puts his finger on an important trend in contemporary society, yet in doing so the picture he paints remains at best partial: the 'truth', in truth, is somewhere in between. Modernity, as Evans states, 'is not simply identified with a reified totalised system of rationalised oppression and disenchantment, but rather, is a complex network of *mixed possibilities* involving a constant *dialectic* between the subject and reason' (1997:240).

Seen in this light, Mellor and Shilling (1997) present a more promising line of development. In keeping with Maffesoli, Mellor and Shilling point to the rise of a new virulent, effervescent form of the 'sacred', a reconfiguration of embodied sensuality which, they claim, is changing how people 'see' and 'keep in touch' with the world around them. In contrast to Maffesoli, however, they go on to offer what is, perhaps, a more 'balanced' assessment of its legacies, for better or worse.

On the one hand, early forms of Protestant modernity (for example, the disciplined and individualistic) are, they suggest, being extended through 'banal forms of sociality' and the 'individualisation of contracts'. On the other hand, these disciplined bodies are 'slowly but surely giving way to more sensual forms of sociality; forms which echo the seductive sacred corporeality of Counter-Reformation baroque cultures, substituting "tribal fealties" (i.e. 'blood commitments' which reject rationality as a basis for sociality) for indivi-

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dual contracts' (1997:173; see also Melucci 1996 and Ruthven 1989). In this respect, information-based society may indeed have become banal, but it has not yet (fully) absorbed 'people's sensualities into its circuitry' (Mellor and Shilling 1997:173).

Seen in these terms, the Janus-faced nature of modernity as both order and chaos, discipline and liberty, is again fully evident. The return of the sacred and the resurgence of more sensual, carnal forms of knowledge and experience is not, in other words, simply the return to prominence, in time-honoured Durkheimian tradition or Maffesolian postmodern theorising, of effervescent forms of *solidarity*, but also the opportunity for new conflicts, dangers and fears to emerge. Indeed, from the bloodshed of the Balkan war to the resurgence of neo-fundamentalism, feelings and passions can run high in ways which prove both troubling and difficult to 'manage' rationally. The sacred, in short, can be 'virulent, violent and unpredictable'. As Mellor and Shilling (1997:201) state: 'The emotions that emerge from social relationships and solidarities may enable people to "keep warm together" in a world which too often appears out of control and morally bankrupt [cf. Maffesoli], but they can also prompt a passionate intensity, hatred and blood revenge.'

Whatever the outcome, one thing remains clear, namely the 'resilience' of human bodies to cognitive control and the enduring significance of more sensual (i.e. emotional and 'sacred') forms of solidarity and 'carnal forms of knowledge'; good or bad, bloody or harmonious, binding or destructive. Postemotional control, in short, can never be absolute. Herein, as ever, lie the corporeal dynamics and emotional underpinnings of modernity as *both* order and chaos, liberty and discipline, transgression and taboo.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Where, then, does all this leave us in terms of current debates on modernity and the emotions at the turn of the century? First, as I have argued, we need to divest ourselves of centuries of former dualistic thinking which has cast emotions as the poor relation, if not the scandal, of reason. Not only do emotions, as embodied, relational modes of being, underpin our most intimate thoughts and actions in the social world, they are also, as we have seen, central to the very process of rational thought itself. Without emotions, social life, including our decision-making capacities and our ability to make informed choices amongst a plurality of options, would be impossible. It is time, therefore, *contra* Enlightenment Utopian/dystopian visions of a 'pure' (i.e. 'uncontaminated') rationality, to construct epistemological and ontological models of being and knowing which incorporate rather than repress the emotions in Western thought and practice.

Seen in this light, even those who emphasise the so-called 'extra-rational' dimensions of writers such as Durkheim (such as Shilling or Maffesoli),

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inadvertently perpetuate the very dualisms from which we have been trying to escape, missing something important in the process. Emotions do not have to be, and indeed never should have been, 'extra-rational'. To be sure, like the body to which they are so closely tied, they can prove recalcitrant things, wreaking havoc with processes of logical thought and rational decision-making. Yet their absence, as we have seen, appears no less devastating: loosening our hold on all that we, as thinking, feeling subjects and knowledgeable human beings, hold dear. The 'irrational passion for dispassionate rationality', in short, appears wholly unreasonable: the relic of an outdated, 'counterfeit' Enlightenment model that turned reason into a 'project', and which, throughout the centuries, has served to justify the disadvantage experienced by 'marginalised' groups in society (for example, women, children, ethnic minorities). 'Outlaw' emotions and recalcitrant feelings, therefore, have a legitimate role to play in the questioning of what is, in effect, a highly questionable order: one founded on, and organised around, the 'driving out' of emotions by the steady hand of (male) reason (Jaggar 1989). Even if we accept, for a moment, the analytical distinction between reason and emotion, it is clear, as Weber's deliberations on 'world religions' and the fate of 'charismatic leaders' so clearly testify, that processes of rationalisation do not lead to the disappearance of emotions, but rather to their *redistribution* or reappearance in a variety of different forms (Hervier-Leger 1993). Emotions and reason, in short, are never entirely separable.

This, in turn, leads us on to a broader set of questions concerning the nature of modernity itself. As I have argued, following writers such as Bauman, a defining feature of modernity concerns its *ambivalence*, founded as it is on both order and chaos. Indeed, far from seeing the recent cultural emphasis on the emotions as somehow 'postmodern', I have chosen instead to emphasise the fact that, ever since its inception, modernity has always rested on and wrestled with its emotional foundations, including the passionate sanctification of rationality itself. What we are currently witnessing, therefore, is simply modernity facing up to the 'limitations' of its own over-hyped/disingenuous model of disembodied rationality, including a (grudging) acknowledgement of its emotional foundations and their role in knowledge generation, transmission and acquisition. Rationality and the emotions, in other words, are starting to coalesce in a more 'open' climate of discussion and debate than ever before. To call this 'postmodern' is, however, clearly premature; the rational project is not in fact dead. Rather it is simply undergoing a period of (uncomfortable) readjustment. It is also not difficult, as Meštrović rightly argues, to discern the outlines of an alternative, 'authentic' Enlightenment project: one involving an honest, if somewhat painful, appraisal of its 'mixed legacies' and a 'dialogue with other non-Enlightenment traditions in the spirit of accommodation and common ground, rather than the imposition of yet another ideology based on a dead past' (Meštrović 1997:86).

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Certainly, as we have seen, contemporary Western societies are currently undergoing something akin to a 'return of the repressed': one involving a shift to Dionysian values, a resurgence of effervescent bodies and the rise of new forms of sensual solidarity and the 'sacred' (Mellor and Shilling 1997). Seen in these terms, we are not, to answer Agnes Heller's (1989) tantalising question, 'living in a world of emotional impoverishment': quite the reverse!

Underpinning this is a translation of modernity's problems of order and chaos into corporeal questions of conformity and transgression: issues which point us to the broader historical, social and cultural relations within which human corporeality is itself inextricably entwined. Bodies, as I have argued, through their corporeal flows and libidinal desires, their pleasures and their pains, passions and intensities, are fundamentally 'excessive'. To be excessive, however, implies the existence of 'limits' from which these corporeal transgressions take place. According to Falk (1994:61), human corporeality, in other words, as a form of transgression

> demands the existence of limits confining, restricting and defining the human body, just as transgression itself generally demands borders. Corporeality is a cultural and also an historical category. As the orders, as a system of boundaries, change in history (and from culture to culture), so the crossing of boundaries and thus the forms of corporeality also change.

While eroticism, for example, like dirt and pollution, is universal, the transgressions it embraces have their own historicity (cf. Douglas 1970, 1980 [1966]). Similarly, the manner in which corporeal flows are (sexually) coded, and the ritually guarded boundaries they transgress, are also a product of the socio-cultural webs within which human corporeality is de/confined. Human corporeality, in short, is never lived 'in the raw' (Grosz 1994). As Falk (1994:65, my emphasis) states:

> The increase in the density of limits, categories and norms related to corporeality produces a multiplicity and diversification of transgressions as a complementary opposition, though primarily in the *experience* [as opposed to the *expressive*] dimension of corporeality . . . The more articulated and multifarious the restrictions on corporeality, the more sophisticated the forms of transgression become. Lack of restraint emphasising corporeal expression is replaced by a diversification of the scale of sensory pleasures.

Given this view, it is possible, following Falk, to interpret the history of human corporeality across the long historical curve of the civilising process as a paradoxical combination of both discipline and emancipation. As the scale of human corporeal *expression* becomes restricted through the 'shielding' and 'instrumentalising' of the body, the field of *experience* widens, diversifies and becomes more sensitive. An increase in the quantity of restrictions placed on the direct expression of corporeal pleasures, in other words, is accompanied by a diversification and intensification of the quality of human sensual experience. The history of corporeality is not, therefore, merely the 'disciplining' of the

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body and the 'destruction of sensuality', any more than it is the 'great emancipation of the body's potential'. Rather, it is the 'paradoxical combination of the two' (Falk 1994:66). As a consequence, transgression itself becomes more complex, subtle and sophisticated: including the 'transgression of transgression' itself (Grosz 1994, 1995). Emotions, as I have argued, lie at the heart of these corporeal issues and the sensual dilemmas they embody.

So what, then, of the 'fate' of emotions at the turn of the century? More specifically, how do the issues discussed here translate into questions of 'authenticity' in what is clearly an *ambivalent* or uncertain age? On the one hand, following Meštrović, the neo-Orwellian spectre looks set to continue apace, with further McDonaldisation, and an 'authenticity' industry bent on 'inauthenticating' everything. Here we confront at least two closely interrelated paradoxes. First, that the more we search for the 'authentic', the more 'inauthentic' it becomes. Secondly, the fact that our contemporary obsession with the manufacture of so-called 'real feelings' (cf. Baudrillard's simulacra) ultimately translates into a repressed longing for the 'authentic'; one which, to return to the first point, can never be reached in a culture such as ours (Meštrović 1997:74).

On the other hand, as I have argued throughout the course of this paper, the very nature of human embodiment and corporeal desire as fundamentally excessive/transgressive, together with the positive and negative features of emotions as both 'world-building' and 'world-destroying', 'knowledge-generating' and 'knowledge-disrupting', suggests that what at first sight may seem like 'pockets of authenticity', in fact turn out to be as much vistas of defiance and resistance, sensuality and effervescence. From the loss of self in eroticism to the aggression vented in gang warfare, and from the 'unruly' behaviour of a child to New Age movements, communal festivities, sporting and musical events, spontaneous emotions are 'hard at work' in apparent defiance of social conventions, for better or worse, richer or poorer. In doing so, however troubling their manifestations may be, they none the less express the irrepressible spirit and recalcitrant language of the heart: one which, despite its best efforts, rational modernity will never manage to crush or destroy.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the anonymous reviewers, one in particular, for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Notes

1. Even Plato, who compared emotions to galloping horses, which had to be 'tamed' by the charioteer of reason, recognised that without the horses the charioteer would be redundant (see Jaggar 1989).

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2. See also Crossley (1998) for an emotionally informed reconstruction of the Habermasian project and his theory of communicative action.
3. A classic example of this was the case of Phineas Gage, a nineteenth-century railroad worker whose frontal lobes were damaged when an iron bar shot through them as the result of an accidental explosion. Along with the emotional deficits which followed this damage, Gage had great difficulty in planning his ordinary life: making disastrous social decisions whilst dithering endlessly over inconsequential issues. Damasio (1994) and colleagues have now studied many patients with this kind of damage, and propose that it was this socio-emotional guidance system which was affected in the brain of the original Phineas Gage and many other such cases since his time. Emotions, in short, guide reason and furnish us with priorities amongst multiple goals and options.
4. Broadly speaking, approaches to emotions can be conceptualised on a continuum ranging from the 'organismic' (i.e. biological) at one end of the 'social constructionist' (i.e. cultural and discursive) at the other, with 'interactionist' approaches, as the term implies, somewhere in between. For useful recent critiques of the constructionist approach, see Lyon (1998) and Craib (1997, 1995).
5. Whilst, at an analytical level, terms such as 'feeling' may be further subdivided into their component parts – i.e. the split between emotion and sensation, so central to social constructionist accounts (Harré 1986; Armon-Jones 1986) – these distinctions are rarely acknowledged or invoked at the level of lived experience. Rather, embodiment, emotionality and sensuality are thoroughly interfused and inextricably intertwined. Only when this taken-for-granted, pre-objective relationship we have to our 'mindful bodies' (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) is disrupted, do such categories come into play (Leder 1990). The point, therefore, is not to abandon these and other analytical distinctions (such as the distinction between emotions and sentiments), nor to blunt our conceptual tools, but rather to acknowledge their limits at the pre-objective level of lived on-going experience.
6. It is tempting, in fact, to push these claims further through a privileged ontological position: namely that bodies are *first and foremost* excessive. Clearly, as discussed more fully towards the end of the paper, order and transgression exist in a symbiotic relationship to one another, yet recourse to a *process* metaphysic would undoubtedly see bodily order, fixity and stability as secondary to corporeal fluidity and flow: a position strongly endorsed in recent post-structuralist feminist theorising (Battersby 1998).
7. See Jackson and Scott (1997) for an interesting recent discussion of these contradictory themes and conflicting imperatives in relation to modern discourses surrounding (hetero)sexuality – i.e. the tension between the (late) modernist rationalisation or 'Taylorisation' of sex on the one hand, and the shift towards other, more 'post-Fordist' forms of sexuality, permitting greater diversity and flexibility, on the other. See also Crawford (1980, 1984, 1994, 1998), Lowenberg and Davis (1994) and Martin (1994) for related themes surrounding health.
8. Whilst Durkheim's use of the term 'effervescent' may indeed have been a helpful one, Mellor and Shilling's corporeal appropriation of it is, at times, problematic. Can one really, for example, have an 'effervescent' body? A nice analogy perhaps, but not a very accurate descriptor. Seen in this light, efflorescent/efflorescence may, perhaps, be more appropriate. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for drawing this corporeal point to my attention.
9. See, for example, Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1988) on the decivilising surge of violence in Britain, and Elias and Scotson (1994/[1965]) on *The Established and the Outsiders*.

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