

# Social Theory and Emotion: A Philosophical Tour

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores and problematizes the explanatory value behind diverse sociological and philosophical traditions on understanding emotion. In particular, the paper attempts to 'dig' into history to reveal macro and micro arguments relating to US and European social theory which have attempted to unravel the contours of the social and experiential construction of emotion. The paper is enriched by an examination of Marx, Durkheim and Mead to an examination of symbolic interactionism to the postmodern question. Such is the diversity of social philosophies, we need a diverse approach to holistically understand emotion in its theoretical context and social processes.

**Keywords:** holistically understand emotion; theoretical context and social processes

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article illustrates and problematizes how social theory can analyse the ways in which social life is shaped, organised, sustained, experienced and transformed with regard to 'emotions'. It will critically question the everyday assumptions which shape individual and collective lives and reflects in a systematic manner on such issues as the division of power, the nature of identity, forms of structure, agency and rationality and our experiences as modern or postmodern subjects. Although some theoretical analysis of emotions has been developed, it is still rather on the edge than at the centre of social theorising (Barbalet 2002). There are striking intimations of theoretical understanding of emotions that are latent in both classic and contemporary social theories identified in this book: in the rise of Enlightenment philosophy and consequences for emotion with Kant's analysis of rationality. The idea of controlling the unstable and irrational emotions in order to enable the superior rationality to take power is found in a context where science and scientific reasoning was proving its power to control nature; in Weber's concerns for legitimation, status, charisma, tradition and rationality; in Durkheim's theory of social solidarity, moral force, and symbolism; in Marx on alienation, class consciousness, and conflict mobilisation; in Freud's work on the mind and relationship to repression of memory; in G.H. Mead's and Goffman's theories of symbolic interactionism on taking the role of the 'other' and on the internalization of the generalised other in constituting the individual mind and social contexts.

In contemporary social theory, there exists a body of knowledge that can be revisited to highlight how social theory can make sense of emotion: in Parsons's (1957) structural functionalism and Luhmann's (1989) systems theory which assumes that emotions are in concord with social systems; in Giddens' (1990) theorising on ontological insecurity and risk;

in Bourdieu's (2000) theorisation on how individuals are constantly opened to and in relation with the world in order to strive, cope, and carry on with life's daily emotional contingencies; in Feminist theorising emotion is seen as gendered and shaped by ideas and forces of patriarchy (Marshall and Witz 2004); in relationship of discourse and governmentality to the management of emotion (Foucault 1977; Dean 2007); and in Postmodernism in how emotions are becoming 'simulated' in hyper-reality (Baudrillard 2005). By using 'emotion' as a key theme, it is hoped that a critical orientation toward social theory in particular and social interaction in general can illustrate the central paradox in social relations: how history makes people as much as people make their own history.

This can clearly relate to the beauty of the 'sociological imagination' (Mills 1959) that is the ability to look at the everyday world and understand how it operates in order to make sense of people's lives and experiences. It is a state of mind, which enables social analysts to think critically about and understand the society in which they live, and place in that world as individuals and as a whole. An understanding of the sociological imagination is 'a quest for sociological understanding' involving 'a form of consciousness for understanding social processes (Mills 1959: 76). It is a pathway for a person to look at their life as a result of their interaction with society.

The 'sociological imagination' requires an engagement to the study of an individual's biography but to place that biography in the wider social context of the history and tradition of the society in which an individual lives. Mills suggests that a useful way of understanding this 'imagination' is to use the 'fruitful distinction' between on the one hand 'the personal troubles of milieu' and on the other, 'the public issues of social structure'. (Mills 1959: 14). For Mills the all too common misperception on the part of many individuals is that they perceive their own biographies as just personal and private. Far too often there is a failure to see their own biographies as being interwoven and interrelated to the wider public and political 'stage' of society. Thus an 'emotion' as a 'private trouble', however for Mills the individual needs to recognise that it is not unconnected with wider social forces of 'public issues'. For example, Elias (1994) has a similar configuration to Mills (1959) in his analysis of individual/public issue analysis. For Elias (1994) individual control as well as public regulation of emotions is interpreted as central part of the process of the civilising process.

There is much debate as to how to conceptualise emotion. It has been collapsed into some category – as an adjunct to rationality, as a form of behaviour or as an aspect of bodily physiology (Harré 1986). Emotions are also linked to role identities through their common affective representation and quality. In this way, emotional lives of people are a function of the confirmation of their identity-situated selves in social interaction. For example, in 1997 when Princess Diana died the mass media suggested that the British population were 'weepers' and 'were traumatised' that she had died (Layder 2004). The media played a key role in defining the emotionality expression of 'public issues' through normative means. Expressions of emotion such as 'distress', 'passion' and 'desire' have marked out a territory that is alien to the surfaces of modernity and posed difficulties to the Enlightenment project since its inception. Emotions may be seen to be integral to everyday life playing a role in 'communication, commitment and co-operation with others (Giddens 1992: 202). Within some traditional societies, the coding and regulation of powerful emotions was (and still is to an extent) closely linked to spiritual belief and religious practice. Such forms of emotionality may be seen to have fragmented within the transition to modernity. As rationality replaced organised spirituality as a guarantor of social order, emotionality, no longer tied to social constructions of spirituality, presented itself as a threat: a powerful force that threatened to scandalise reason and undermine running of modern society (Layder 2007). Not only was

emotion potentially disruptive to the sway of rationality it had the capacity to carry messages about the operation of injustice and discrimination:

*A very large class of human emotions results from real, anticipated, recollected or imagined outcomes of power and status relations.*

(Kemper 1984: 371)

Yet if we are to see emotion as having a social relational component, we need to consider to what extent this is socially shaped in the dialectical relationship between human behaviour and social structure. Bendelow and Williams (1998) argue that there is a need to 'bring emotions back in' to social theory in a more concrete way, as they have always been present implicitly in the work of previous theorists. Williams (2000) believes that emotions have a 'deep sociality' in that they are embedded in and constitutive of social interactions, and following Bourdieu (1984) he suggests that possessing the right sort of emotional capital can help us to distinguish between different groups in society. Thus if a person appears to be highly anxious, tense and embarrassed around others, we might interpret their emotional state as being 'shy', and this can have significant implications for our reactions to them, in terms of social inclusion or exclusion. Furthermore, we can suggest that emotions are 'embodied': we do not simply have feelings that are 'all in the mind', but rather we express our emotions through bodily signs and 'symptoms', which in the case of existential characteristics such as being 'shy' or 'embarrassed', for example, might include 'blushing', 'shaking', 'gaze aversion' (Layder 2006). As Denzin (1984) argues, emotions are temporarily embodied, situated self-feelings (1984: 49) which are highly dependent on our perceptions of others and their (imagined) perceptions of us. Emotional practices can therefore be seen as social acts which are significant in revealing the complex inter-relationships between the individual and society via the body (Layder 2004).

This is also reflected in the culture of late modernity, in which talk *about* emotions is almost as important as the emotions themselves: Mestrovic (1997) claims that we are living in a 'post-emotional society' (Linton 2006). Further argues that these discourses about emotion are extremely powerful in shaping our understandings of what certain emotions are, and may be nothing more than linguistic categories used to differentiate between different social groups. Emotion may be seen as a socially constructed and socially structured force playing a role in the maintenance of social relations. It is the missing link between Mills's (1959) personal troubles and public issues of social structure.

The following discussion attempts to understand emotion by looking at three broad approaches that capture the theorisation of emotion: rationality, emotionalism and social structure (that includes Durkheim, Marx, Freud, Weber, critical theory and feminism); social interactionism (that includes some of the influential themes drawn from Garfinkel, Goffman and Mead); and (social constructionism that includes Foucault, Bourdieu and Baudrillard). The extending of the 'sociological imagination' is in its ontological flexibility to accommodate both micro/macro debates about the construction of biographies and relationship to history of the present. Emotion is a key vehicle that can be used to shed light on its epistemological gaze and ontological understanding. Is emotion regulated through structure? How relevant is micro analysis to its explanation? Can we articulate discourse, embodiment and hyper-reality as conceptual tools to illuminate its complexity? The answers to these questions illustrate the relationship between micro levels of interaction amongst people (personal troubles) and structures (public issues). We begin our discussion with emphasis on how emotion can be theorised by social structural approaches.

## 2. STRUCTURE, RATIONALITY AND GENDER

Social structural approaches assess the interpenetration of emotions and sociocultural phenomena by understanding that emotions emerge from the operative social structure in a situation, and emotions allow people to sense that structure, as well as the social consequences of actions. Moreover, because displays of emotion broadcast a person's subjective appraisals to others, emotions contribute tacitly to sharing views about social structure and to synchronization of rational action and feeling within a group. Both Durkheim and Marx are relevant here.

Durkheim (1895) proposed that rituals hold society together by producing sacred objects and moral constraints, and Collins (1990) expanded on Durkheim's theme by proposing that a common emotional mood generated in rituals creates social solidarity and diffuses charismatic emotional energies that preserve and disseminate normative group patterns. Profaning a symbol usually will elicit anger and conflict between groups or between group factions, but reaffirming symbols generates positive emotion and synchronization within the group. The inherent emotionality of even commonplace interaction rituals is the glue that holds society together such as religion (Durkheim 1895).

Conversely, Karl Marx (1843) saw society in terms of a conflict between economic classes that created 'alienation'. A dominant class (the bourgeoisie, 'capitalist' class) owns and controls the means of production; an industrial working class, the proletariat, is exploited by them. Marx (1843) claimed that revolution was 'inevitable' because of the oppression of the working class. For Durkheim (1895) for members of modern society who did not feel part of the collective conscience could be led to anomie, a state of normlessness. For Marx to prevent alienation is to engender what could be called 'emotional consciousness' to unite against the capitalist system. Although they do not explicitly speak about emotion, both Durkheim and Marx saw the problem of modernity was a recognition of alienation and normlessness that impinges on the regulation of individual behaviour.

Rationality was also a major concern of Freud. Freud was struck by the way that people could be more or less rational most of the time, but that they, on occasion, behave in very irrational ways. For Freud, this was very much to do with the tensions between, on the one hand culture, and on the other, instinct. For Freud the condition of humankind is in part a product of the fact that we live in a modern 'civilised' world. That is, Freud believed that 'civilization' was a modern phenomenon, and involved the development of control over individual emotions. A Freudian viewpoint would see the emotional contents of the unconscious are not easily available to consciousness because they have been repress well out of reach of our awareness because they are painful and in some sense dangerous. This unconscious is dynamic - it contains memories, perceptions, fantasies, impulses, conflicts that must be pushed back or repress in order to make life less conflictual. For Freud, this defence strategy would be uncostly for most people but for some people it leads to the development of 'neuroses'.

*Freudian theory is more than a theory of dualism, it is a theory of contradiction and struggle.*

(Kristeva 1999: 327)

Following Freud, Lacan developed a concept of 'desire' that originated of processes of emotional identification with significant others and then became encoded within systems of symbolic representation, as an infant, for example, became inducted into the world of language and discourse. At the point when a child is able to speak and think as 'I' he or she is cut off from all of the flows of his/her emotional experience. Lacan (1992) presents a stark choice; the price to be paid is that for social power to be gained by entry into the world of

language is having to submit to the rules of operation of the symbolic order and hence to lose touch with much of one's previous experience of desiring. This perspective can be seen as maintaining the absolutist of the rationality/emotionality dualism.

We can say that rationalisation is the process by which rational action becomes predominant in the social action of individuals and rationality becomes predominant in the patterns of action which are institutionalised in groups, organizations, and other collectivities. Max Weber (1883) was particularly interested in the rise of instrumentally rational action among individuals and formal rationality in organizations that crushed any form of human emotionalism in western modernity.

When we talk about rational-legal authority, and bureaucracy, we are talking about instrumentally rational action as institutionalised in the formal rationality of modern social organisations. This rationalisation of social life involves an ever-greater development of technical means and a progressive relegation of the ends towards which these means are supposed to lead. An example may make this clearer. Weber argues in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, that Calvinist religion represented a rationalisation of human behaviour, which focussed people's constant attention on the relationship between their everyday activity and their hope of salvation. This obsession with making the most of each minute, with the rationalisation of everyday life, particularly economic life, gradually came to take complete precedence over the intended goal, of demonstrating to oneself that one was likely to be destined for salvation equates with working hard now and reap future emotional rewards of post-physical happiness in heaven. Weber's analysis of the development of bureaucracy is similar. Bureaucracy, for Weber, is simply the most technically efficient means of rationalisation. This means that increasingly bureaucratic structures take on a life and a logic of its own which may engender an 'iron cage of rationality' (rules, routines and regulations) from which there is no escape. Weber held a view where means are seen as pursuing a variety of ends, not always in a rational manner. The most important of these ends is the power to affect decisions of authorities. Norms and values are internalised to the extent that authorities have legitimacy. Legitimacy can be obtained by personal charisma: "Claiming special knowledge and demanding unquestioning obedience was power and privilege. Leadership may consist of one individual or a small group of elite leaders" (Powell and Moody 2001: 4). Charismatic leadership has its dark side (ie) Hitler. The goal was to kill as many people as possible in the most efficient manner, and the result was the ultimate of dehumanisation (cf. Bauman, 1989) - the murder of millions of Jewish men, women and children.

Similarly Adorno and Horkheimer sought other strategies for a critical theory of modern society (relevant to understanding the positioning and detachment of emotions. Horkheimer and Adorno (1949) book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* believed that reason had been instrumentalised (see Weber's influence) and incorporated into the very structure of society. Thus reason was being used to strengthen rather than transform the system. Enlightenment had turned into its opposite and turned from being an instrument of liberation to domination. Enlightenment had always been infused with myth, and the project of dominating nature, of using reason to control and dominate the world, was being applied to humans in oppressive and monstrous ways (Adorno and Horkheimer 1949; Bauman 1989). The Nazi rationalisation of death in the concentration camps and the rationalization of war during World War II raised deep questions concerning the progressive force of reason and the efficacy of immanent critique in the light of such powerful social systems. This takes a view of what Mestrovic (1997) labels as 'post-emotionalism' whereby rational means are the only manner to objectify human behaviour.

In systems theory the concept of emotions is related to theorising in the context of anxiety/angst-communication regarding environmental issues (Luhmann 1989). In risk-communication the special characteristics of angst-communication is understood as a kind of communication that cannot be reduced by rational argumentation or scientific analysis, and reproduces and amplifies itself easily. Even attempts to reduce angst by information strategies rather support the amplification of angst than its reduction (Luhmann 1989). The emotional impact of angst-communication seems to be self-evident contrary to the binary coded functional systems (economics, science, justice) and cannot be reduced by the logics of economics, science or law itself. Angst communication narrows the societal perspective on negative aspects of risks and therefore fades out the positive gains. Such negative emotional communication is understood as being risky as far as it blocks necessary societal decisions and developments of knowledge. Emotion is also linked to the concept of trust. However, maintaining emotions is not necessary for trusting, which could be detached from the original emotions. Trust as linked to emotion is understood as rational irrationality (Luhmann 1989). Where learning by trial and error is not possible (for example, nuclear power, genetically modified food) progress and decisions are only possible with regard to trust (Powell, Wahidin and Zinn 2007). When expectations are not institutionalised or ritualised, expectations can only be based on the subject and its emotions. Therefore in the view point of Luhmann (1984: 365) a modern society, characterised by a higher amount of dynamics and changes is 'endangered by emotions'.

Giddens (1990) implicitly links the problem of emotions to the concept of 'ontological security'. The emotion of ontological security is based on the unconscious and linked to routines of everyday life:

*Ontological security and routine are intimately connected, via the pervasive influence of habit. ... The predictability of the (apparently) minor routines of day-to-day life is deeply involved with a sense of psychological security. When such routines are shattered—no matter whatever reason—anxieties come flooding in, and even very firmly founded aspects of the personality of the individual may become stripped away and altered.*

(Giddens 1990: 98)

Giddens points out that with growing risks in modernity notions of fatefulness would return in a secularised world which he understands as managing its problems successful by rationality (1990: 133). New risks would strain the emotional secure basis in late modernity and threaten the personality/identity of people. Because new risks and uncertainties cannot be solved ultimately, they must be handled in several ways. Giddens distinguishes four coping strategies: pragmatic acceptance, sustained optimism, cynical pessimism and radical engagement (Giddens (1990:134-37). *Pragmatic acceptance* is a response to the insight that many things in the outside world cannot be controlled individually. Therefore in this perspective there is a priority to manage everyday problems. The life threatening dangers of nuclear power or terrorism are suppressed for the price of psychological costs. *Sustaining optimism* stands for a sustaining faith in science that things can still be managed as in the past. Religious concepts of the world can come close to this kind of belief that things will become good. In contrast to pragmatic acceptance *cynical pessimism* manages the lack of control regarding the future and the involved anxieties actively for example with the help of 'dark humour'. *Radical engagement* sticks to the necessity to do something actively towards the perceived sources of danger.

The ‘McDonaldization’ thesis picks this point up but takes it in a different trajectory. It is also a very popular formulation in social theory influenced by Weber with three characteristics (Ritzer, 2004) - *efficiency* means choice of efficient means to achieve specified ends (includes assembly-line philosophy of Macs, drive-throughs, making the customer work to assemble own burgers and dispose of waste), *calculability* of process and product (quantification of meals, portion, times), *predictability* (standardised meals and Mcworkers all over the world - trained by the Hamburger University), non-human technology - factory farms, microwaves, computerisation eg cash tills, drinks dispensers - and robot workers) (Ritzer 2004; Ritzer and Ryan 2007). Clearly, what is efficient for the company is not necessarily so efficient for consumers. The downside of the organisation and its associated negative effects - cruelty to animals, harmful components, poor health safety, worker tedium and exploitation. Ritzer has gone on to suggest there are possible ways in which rationalisation will triumph. Ritzer takes the case of Japan and *hyper-rationality* - a fusion occurs between rationality of companies and what people want in life. Examples of this are fast food and its growth, the credit card; and Disney, shopping malls, package tours, convergences in ‘McWorld’ equate with virtual tourism. Emotion becomes detached from any connection with the experience of real emotions and has been McDonaldised able to be synthesised within theme parks and heritage centres (Ritzer 2004).

For Feminists, playing out the dichotomy of modernity in terms of rationality and emotion may also be seen in the public/private split that constructed the family, for example, as an oasis of emotionality, ‘a haven in a harsh world’ (Watson 2001). In this picture, emotions are seen as central to the rationalisation of family life whereby women are situated, discursively and economically in positions where they may be given a ‘duty’ to care emotionally for others – children, older relatives and men. However, as Marshall and Witz (2004) points out this emotion bargain may actually be more complex than it appears. Women and men may enter ‘partnerships’ on an unequal basis in terms of material relations and this can serve to reinforce gendered inequalities in emotional relations:

*Women have been in the position of being economically dependent within patriarchy but the relationship between economic dependency and emotional dependency is not straightforward. Although this is not usually made explicit within the relationship, mens dependency needs are most often met within marriage and their emotional worries by their wives. No equivalent place exists for women.*

(Eichenbaum and Orbach 1985: 86-7)

Thus womens unequal social position may place them in the contradictory position of feeling dependent on men but actually being depended on by men for the servicing of *their* emotional needs.

In the context of eurocentricity of emotions, Franz Fanon (1986) analysed the emotional alienation of black people within racist and colonial social orders, being given little choice but to take on and live within a white worldview whilst being inferiorised within it.

### 3. INTERACTIONISM AND SYMBOLISM

Social interactionists approach the interpenetration of emotions and social phenomena by understanding that emotions are both constructed and determined. The interactionist model

points to a certain paradox; a *feeling* is what happens to us in terms of private troubles. Yet it is also what we do to make it happen. (Goffman 1959) Emotions erupt during social interaction. Then they are judged for suitability according to cultural and ideological standards, and managed to effect culturally acceptable displays that yield social accord. Employing a symbolic interactionist perspective, emotion can be conceptualised in a number of ways. Foremost, emotion can be considered more than merely a biological act of procreation or pleasure or pain (Gane 2005). It is a complex social interaction between two or more people. It is the dynamic interaction not only between one's own personal values, attitudes, personality dispositions, cognitions, wants, desires, and behaviours, but more importantly, the interaction between these entities and those of others (Layder 2004). For example, sexual behaviours, including acts of 'courtship' can be interpreted not simply as means to ends, but as acts invested with meanings that are interpreted differently by different people (Layder 2004).

Both G. H. Mead and Goffman propose that people construct and understand social action so as to have important symbolic meanings affirmed by impressions generated in manifest behaviour. People credit themselves and others with specific identities during social encounters. They then engage in physical and mental work so that events create impressions that maintain sentiments attached to their identities, as well as to other categories of action (i.e., behaviours, settings, and emotions included). We may wish to know what happens to the emotions in the context of social interaction? Freud (1998) argues that individuals try to regulate their feelings to fit in with the norms of the situation, and that if there are conflicting demands upon us, people may feel 'dramaturgical strain'. So people may feel 'sad' or 'happy' because a particular social situation requires that we act a certain way while inside their minds and bodies individuals may feel a different way. Put together, these two oppositional motivations can leave people feeling ambivalent and uncertain (Layder 2004), as well as ill-equipped to deal with the situation, and this in turn leads to greater self consciousness:

*We all believe that everyone else knows and understands the 'rules' governing social interaction, even though nobody ever talks about them explicitly, and so we might be forgiven for thinking that we 'ought' to disguise our ignorance with a show of confidence.*

(Hochschild 1983: 87)

This emotion work (Hochschild 1983) forms part of everyday lives, both in the private world of the self and in the public spheres of interaction where individuals learn socially appropriate ways of reacting and expression management. Hochschild referred to these codes as 'feeling rules' and argued that they were historically and culturally specific; in contemporary Western societies, the emotions had become commercialised and were often found to be 'sold' in the form of marketable services.

The personal and the normative systems unite when group members are deeply committed to their group identities; in that case, people spontaneously emote and act according to group norms in order to experience affirmation of self through the reflected appraisals of others (Burke and Reitzes 1991). The two systems diverge when a person maintains multiple definitions of a situation simultaneously, and the actor's deepest commitment is to an identity other than the public identity. In that case, emotion management is required to prevent the display of emotions appropriate to the private identity, and to authenticate one's supposed commitment to the public identity as a public issue.



#### 4. DISCOURSE, EMBODIMENT AND HYPER-REALITY

A social constructionist literature on emotions has been steeped in the Cartesian tradition which treats emotions as an awkward mix of physical/physiological processes, on the one hand, and personal experiences on the other, with the bulk of attention given over to the analysis of the latter (Layder 2004). More recently, social constructionist theory has more plausibly tried to minimize the experiential element in emotion and emphasis the construction of the social setting and role that discourses play in constructing truth games impinging on the social construction of emotions.

Within early modernity, emotions could be interpreted as ‘romance’, ‘sentiment’ or spiritualism. In late modernity, emotions have become commodified that may be consumed, induced or traded within an, to mis-paraphrase C.W Mills, ‘emotional industrial complex’:

*From psychiatrists to Agony Aunts, psychotherapists to GPs, social workers to self help manuals, we are increasingly advised or cajoled on how to manage our emotions, resolve our troubles and make the most of our lives, thereby achieving full potential.*

(Williams 2001: 10)

Foucault’s (1965, 1977) approach to the interpenetration of emotions focuses on understanding the expression of emotions as personal conduct and contrived according to power and discourses so as to effect desired interpersonal outcomes. In this perspective, displays of emotion are not uncivilized eruptions coming from deep within individual psyches, but rather amount discourse that is employed to influence others (Foucault 1977). Discourses are a set of statements, labels and assumptions that operate to ‘pin’ “true” definitions on what is or what is not the case. For example, the power of psychiatry in defining “mental illness” (Foucault 1965). The power to label an individual as ‘mad’, ‘psychotic’, ‘anxious’, ‘phobic’, ‘schizophrenic’ and ‘neurotic’ and the process of pinning such discourses to people reveals a complete lack of power from being defined as “mentally ill”. Foucault (1973) has further argued persuasively that the birth of the medical profession brought with it a different way of seeing illness and well-being related to structural and personal spaces. Most notably, the sick other became an object to be modified (Powell and Biggs 2004). Under the ‘medical gaze’, a process of normalisation is engendered in that people become their bodies, bodies disaggregated into a series of dysfunctional parts (Foucault 1985).

The Foucault inspired ‘governmentality approach’ sees emotion as an expression of a specific style of governance, typical for neo-liberal societies which use statistical risk calculation (as in epidemiology and (social) insurance) and tend to ascribe risks to individual’s decision making in order to govern populations (Foucault 1991). Individuals become object of governmental strategies not as a person but as a bearer of indicators or factors (Dean 2007). Because governmentality relies on the governmental, institutional, and medial construction of social reality, emotions are included too. But emotion and affect are conceptually subordinated under the moral technology of governmentality. Subjectivity comes in sight as far as it is addressed and constituted by governmentality. Governmental strategies use people’s enthusiasm by opening opportunities and stressing towards them how much better their life would be if they took up those chances (Rose 2006).

Bourdieu’s interpretation of emotions rests on the assumption that there is a continuous process of embodiment, whereby individuals are constantly opened to and in relation with the

world in order to strive, cope, and carry on with life's daily emotional contingencies. According to Bourdieu, social agents's experiences of embodiment differ, because they are in a way situated in a different place in the world (Bourdieu 2000). One can easily see such differences when one considers gender, social class, sexuality, ethnicity or age. This approach is best illustrated through Bourdieu's space of social positions, where each social position – which in his case is often defined by economic and cultural capital – is associated with a distinctive view-of-the-world that regulates emotional spaces (Bourdieu 1984; 1998). It is through the embodied practices of everyday life that social agents are in a relation to the world, that they give meaning to it and that they comprehend it (Bourdieu 2000). The habitus provides such a practical understanding through the action of practical sense, a notion that refers to the unconscious adjustment of social agents's practices to the constraints and opportunities imposed or offered by their emotions (Bourdieu 1990). The emotional body for him is an individual's way of being-in-the-world: 'the body is in the world but the social world is in the body' (Bourdieu 2000: 152). It is as much a social construction, where social structures are internalised, as the site of experience, desire and creativity. Similarly to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological bodily schema, which showed how the body adapts to its environment through a system of sensory and motor relations (Detrez 2002), Bourdieu contends that 'we learn bodily'. Often unconsciously, the body becomes attuned to the world by being exposed to its regularities (Bourdieu 2000).

As emotional individuals, we have the built-in capacity of being opened to the world and of being modified by it. This is exemplified in *Distinction* (1984), where Bourdieu focused on the body of social classes (Bourdieu 1984) and in *Masculine Domination* (2001), where he applied his approach to the 'gendered body'. These studies have shown that distinctive bodily forms are reproduced through agent's practices, which themselves are the product of the internalisation of social spaces. The body, for Bourdieu a core entity for the reproduction of power relations and social order.

For postmodernists such as Baudrillard (2005) in the postmodern media-laden condition, we experience something called "the death of the real": we live our emotions in the realm of hyperreality that is simulated, connecting more and more deeply to things like television sitcoms, music videos, virtual reality games, or Disneyland, things that merely simulate reality. In his book *On Seduction*, he traces *social construction of love*. He suggests that seduction is artificial and symbolic, involves flirtations, double entendres, sly looks, and whispered promises. It involves the manipulation of signs like makeup, fashion, perfumes/aftershave and gestures to achieve control over a symbolic order. On top of each of these modes, we now layered the 'cool' seduction of media images disseminated by television, radio and film. In his work *Cool Memories*, Baudrillard (1993) has claimed that the Gulf War did not happen, it was only a representation of reality of what the media told us that happened, that reality is *simulation* (he points to the side example of TV programmes with canned laughter and on cue applause to suggest to viewer when to laugh and when not to). In western culture, claims Baudrillard (2005), we take 'maps' of reality like television, film, etc. as more real than our actual lives and these 'simulacra' (hyperreal copies) precede our lives. According to Baudrillard (2005) individuals communicate by e-mail, and relate to video game characters better than friends and family. Charles Lemert makes the point that individuals drive on freeways to shopping malls full of identical chain stores and products, watch television shows about film directors and actors, go to films about television production, vote for ex-Hollywood actors for president (Lemert 2006) – the death of the

emotional social. In fact, individuals get nervous and edgy if they are away too long from computers, e-mail accounts, or texting on mobile phones (Powell, Wahidin and Zinn 2007).

In response to the criticisms of the project of modernity made by postmodernists, Habermas wishes to consolidate the ‘project of modernity’ and further argues that we should not completely abandon the possibility of a rational pursuit of truth and happiness of which emotion is shaped (Steerman 1992: 107). He defends modernity and argues that what is needed is more philosophical discussion, not less (Steerman: 1992, 113). Habermas states that through the use of communicative action, language and rational dialogue, the Enlightenment aims of truth, justice and freedom are still attainable alongside social consensus (Powell and Moody 2004).

## 5. CONCLUSION

We have focused on viewing differing perspectives that can be applied to understanding emotion – we highlighted how emotion shifts the focus of our attention away from the idea of individual, private worlds of emotion to the wider context of social relations and the way in which language is used with power to identify subject positions. Themes in the epistemological excursion of revisiting C. Wright Mills’s (1959) *sociological imagination* and emotions are inextricably linked to ‘private troubles’ (micro/agency/individualised) and ‘public issues’ (macro/systemic/structural) in both classic and contemporary social theories: in Weber’s concerns for legitimation, status, charisma, tradition and rationality; in Durkheim’s theory of social solidarity, moral force, and symbolism; in Marx’s analysis of consciousness to class alienation; in Mead on taking the role of the other and on the internalization of the generalized other in constituting the individual mind, and in the discursive, habitus and hyperreal of postmodernity.

### Biography

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