

# Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure

*A Macrosociological Approach*

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## 2 Emotion and rationality

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The conventional approach holds that emotion is the opposite of reason. But such a view is ultimately subverted by the fact that those who wish to suppress emotion in fully realizing reason are typically engaged by an emotional commitment to the project. Some of the key issues which arise through these currents are discussed in this chapter. Three approaches to the relationship between emotion and reason or rationality are identified: the conventional approach, in which the two are opposed; the critical approach, in which emotion supports rationality by providing it with salience and goal-formation; and the radical approach, in which emotion and rationality are seen to be continuous. Each approach is discussed in what follows.

Max Weber's treatment of rationality as oppositional to emotion represents the conventional approach in the following discussion. The critical approach, in which the problems of rationality are solved by emotion, is then discussed. This approach has gained recent support in economic, psychological, and neurological literatures, and these are treated in what follows. While accepting that emotion supports reason, the critical approach is apprehensive about emotion's undermining of instrumental reason. The radical approach, on the other hand, fundamentally qualifies this concern by arguing that instrumental action is founded upon particular emotions. William James provides a version of the radical approach in this chapter. Indeed, while James and Weber apparently hold opposite views concerning the relationship between emotion and rationality, it is shown that they in fact converge. This is because, whereas Weber shows that the actor's control of circumstances is required for rationality, James shows that such control is achieved through the experience of particular emotions.

Finally, it is explained that the conventional opposition between emotion and reason persists because of the cultural discounting of what in the discussion are called "background emotions." These are absolutely necessary for instrumental rationality; nevertheless, these are seldom acknowledged and always regarded as attitudes, customs, or as belonging

to some other category which obscures their fundamental emotional nature.

### **Introduction**

What we know of emotion is characterized by its contrast with reason. The very language through which we refer to emotion, feeling, and affect opposes them to reason, intellect, and rationality. In the conventions which shape our thoughts on the matter, reason and emotion are alternatives: one is defined by what the other is not. But the sharp relief of these conventions does not bear close scrutiny. The actual opposition of emotion and reason is much less durable than the idea of that opposition. Indeed, two other possible relationships between emotion and reason or rationality (the latter terms become interchangeable in these considerations) are much more creditable than the one usually claimed.

In addition to the view that reason and emotion are opposed, there is the idea that emotion supports reason, a view which is widely favored in current specialist literatures. There is also a third possibility, that emotions and reason are continuous with each other, that they are different ways of regarding the same thing. Each of these approaches will be examined in this chapter. Discussion of them allows us to formulate the problem of emotion, and reason, in a new light.

Of the three just mentioned, the notion which continues to have widest currency is the one which claims that emotion undermines reason. Acceptance of this idea is generally taken to lead to another, namely that where possible emotion is to be discounted and suppressed. A history of Western philosophy, which is largely a restatement of these notions, can be traced from Plato (in the *Phaedrus*) to Descartes, and from Kant to the Logical Positivists. Spinoza is typical in not only regarding the intellect as associated with human freedom, but the emotions as associated with human servitude. Even a writer as sympathetic to feelings and emotions as Rousseau was able to insist that “the passage from the state of nature to civil society produces a very remarkable change in man . . . he is forced to . . . consult his reason before listening to his inclinations” ([1762] 1973, pp. 177–8). The vast majority of accounts of rational thought and action avoid positive reference to emotion. Emotion is mentioned only to deny its importance or to warn against its disruptive influence on the proper conduct of human affairs.

This approach – we can continue to call it the conventional approach – makes much of the fact that emotions may be experienced as compulsive forces and at the same time as labile in their manifestation. These dual

themes recur in conventional accounts of emotion: emotions may distract persons from their purposes, while at the same time being difficult to make sense of or to grasp firmly. This contrasts fundamentally with the conventional characterization of ideas and thoughts. These latter can be consciously formed and developed, given communicable expression, tested, and improved, and applied in the construction of scientific and moral technologies. Yet even this description of the stark contrasts between emotion and reason does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they are opposed so much as distinct contributions to a division of labor of human effort.

If emotions distract persons from their purposes, then, at the same time, emotions establish afresh what their purposes are to be. Viewed from this perspective, emotions need not oppose reason so much as give it direction. Emotion and reason, then, are simply different. A classic representation of this alternative view is in the work of the eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume. He held that passion directs the will, and that reason serves the passions ([1740] 1911, pp. 126–7). In more modern terms this is to say that actions are emotionally motivated and executed by means selected with and applied through reason. Emotion is interested, reason disinterested. We shall see that reason unguided by appropriate emotion leads to a disjointedness of purpose. Drawing upon this perspective is a recent literature which regards emotion as rational, or at least as necessary to the enterprise of rationality.

Hume raises a further possibility. He observed that every action of the mind which operates with calmness and tranquility is regarded as reason. At the same time, he distinguished between calm passions and violent passions. Not only are calm passions, therefore, frequently taken to be reason ([1740] 1911, p. 129), but such calm passions are what might be meant by reason ([1740] 1911, p. 147). From the conventional perspective, these two positions are as distinct as an error and what the error is an error of. But Hume's discussion, however it is read, raises the further possibility that emotion does not simply direct reason, but that reason is itself constituted of particular emotions. Against the background of a convention which holds that reason and emotion are opposed, the idea that reason is made up of particular emotions may seem absurd. Yet it is a position which every day is demonstrated to make perfect sense.

In Chaim Potok's (1970) novel *The Promise* a yeshiva student, Abe Greenfield, is taunted and shamed by his Talmud teacher, Rav Kalman, for neglecting class preparation of Talmud by devoting time to revision for a math exam (Potok 1970, pp. 142ff.). Kalman's attacks become too much for Greenfield, who faces Kalman angrily saying that it is he,

Kalman, who wastes time by picking on students. Greenfield's anger carries with it strenuous moral conviction and, standing facing his teacher, he demands an apology from him. But suddenly Greenfield realizes that he alone is standing. He becomes released from his anger, regains the demeanor of his student role, and if not in panic at least in retreat, leaves the room. Reason had returned to Greenfield. But of what does this reason consist?

Outside the class, Greenfield says: "I didn't know what I was saying. My God, what did I do?" (Potok 1970, p. 149). He did not know what he was saying because it was said by the anger which gripped him. His anger is portrayed conventionally, as an external force for which Greenfield could not be responsible. Answering Greenfield's question the narrator says, "You lost your temper" (Potok 1970, p. 149). Literally, Greenfield lost his command over his emotions. Regaining his temper is to regain that command. The dialogue reveals what is the substance of the reassertion of reason over Greenfield's anger.

In response to Greenfield's assertive demand for an apology, Kalman (Potok 1970, p. 148) says: "I did not mean to upset you." The narrator describes what follows:

Abe Greenfield stared at him. I saw him blink his eyes. He seemed to come suddenly awake. He looked quickly around the room and became aware that he was the only one standing. He stared at the eyes that were staring at him. A look of enormous astonishment came over his thin face. (1970, p. 148)

Outside the classroom Greenfield says to the narrator, "What did I do? I just killed myself . . . How can I go home" (1970, p. 149). The regaining of his temper, the return of reason that overcame his anger, was a mix of Greenfield's astonishment at his own boldness and his fear of the consequences of standing up to Kalman. Astonishment and fear, therefore, are the emotional substance of Greenfield's reason.

This scene and its dialogue reveal how important it is to reflect critically on conventional understandings of the relationship between emotion and reason. Different emotions, and the same emotion in different contexts, conduct different relations with reason. Claims about the opposition between emotion and reason must be independently appraised and not simply taken at face-value.

The task of the present chapter is to reveal the role of emotion in rationality. This contrasts with the usual practice of attempting to demonstrate the role of emotion in irrationality. By showing that emotion has a significant purpose in rational thought and action, areas from which it is conventionally excluded, the value of studying emotion in social life in general is strengthened. The focus of discussion will be the treatment of

emotion and rationality in the sociology of Max Weber. The work of more recent researchers, as well as that of William James and Georg Simmel, will also be discussed.

### **The conventional approach: opposition between rationality and emotion**

If there is a single aphorism or credo which summarizes the cultural formation of the modern Western world it would have to be René Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*: I think therefore I am. Indeed, what is remarkable is how well this simple phrase of a seventeenth-century French philosopher captures an entire psychological anthropology and social history. Key aspects of this idea associated with Descartes, and widely accepted since, resonate with elements of the philosophical system of Immanuel Kant, developed a generation later. The concern here is not to elaborate the quite different philosophies of Descartes and Kant. Rather, our attention is focussed only on that part of each which places reason at the center of human being and, consequently, distrusts emotion. Indeed, these ideas are not simply part of philosophical traditions but possess practical currency, and function as second nature in the way in which reason and emotion are understood today, and have been for the previous three centuries.

The idea that human being is uniquely characterized by thought or the activity of thinking places humans clearly apart from non-human animals. However, it does much more than this. It fully locates "responsibility" in the individual person: what one does must be a consequence of what one thinks. This idea is widely taken for granted; but it implies an asociality of human being which is simply erroneous. Indeed, that one even thinks at all is an inter-subjective experience based as much on the communicated experiences of others as on the individual's own internal mental processes.

Our endowments and our purposes are made of the world we inhabit and are fabricated with the involvement of those with whom we share that world. As these change, so the actions and thought of individuals change. Yet in the conventional approach the process of thought, which is taken to be an autonomous capacity of individuals, is seen as the basis of their reasons for action, their decision to act, and their calculations of the success or failure of their actions. The idea, that the defining capacity to think is a proclivity of individual persons, is reinforced by an associated stream of modern Western political thought. This is the idea that by annulling their individuality in collective experience, persons lose their

capacity to think and reason. By submerging themselves in crowds persons become subject to a common emotionality of the mass (Le Bon 1895; McClelland 1989).

Descartes was uninterested in crowds, but he was convinced of the subversive influence of emotion on thought. In the *Passions of the Soul* ([1649] 1931), for instance, he held that persons can take no responsibility for their feelings and emotions. This is because these are not things that persons do, but what their bodies do to them. It is on these grounds that he established the division between mind and body, and allocated reason to the mind and emotion to the body. This is the other side of the *cogito*; namely that persons have no control over the emotions which subvert their thoughts and reason. If I am because I think, then I am undone if I feel. The best thing to do with the emotion which subverts reason is suppress it.

In summary: a definition of persons as thinking beings entails that individuals exist apart from others, that emotion disrupts reason, and therefore, if persons are to remain reasonable, that the influence of emotion must be removed from them. Emotion, in this perspective, is understood to arise not from the mind but the body. It is regarded as a compelling force, which leads persons away from the decisions they make, the reasons they have, the choices they take, and is responsible for disrupting the calculations they perform. Each of the highlighted terms characterize thought against emotion.

The commonplace ideas just described do not simply have philosophical origins; they are part of a continuing technical apparatus of much psychology and sociology, and also of everyday conceptions of mind and society. Sigmund Freud, for instance, is widely thought to provide an alternative to this tradition because he paid considerable attention to emotion. But he saw the emotions as part of the *id*, not the *ego*, as part only of the instinctual energy of biological functions, not as contributing to the discernment, memory, judgment, and reasoning which make up personality. Emotion which fails to dissipate and which is inadequately controlled, Freud saw as a force subversive of reason and disruptive of normal personality. And although it is seldom understood in this light, the single most significant text of sociology, Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* ([1905a] 1991), is similarly a manual of Cartesian and Kantian principles concerning reason or rationality, emotion, and the opposition between them. Indeed, there is no better way of demonstrating the limitations of this approach to emotion as the subverter of reason than by following Weber's argument and indicating the contradictions to which it leads him.

For Weber, conduct which is rational is that which results from human deliberation. Thus culture, the product of deliberative activities, and not



nature, is the locus of rationality. Parallel to this consideration is a distinction between culture and nature in terms of hermeneutic utility, a distinction between that part of “existing concrete reality” which has meaning and significance conferred by human interest on the one hand, and the “meaningless infinity of the world process” on the other (Weber [1904] 1949, pp. 81, 76). For those who are familiar with it, the Kantian orientation will be evident particularly in Weber’s notion of rationality and its attendant concepts.

The Kantian sources of Weber’s sociology are well known (see Albrow 1990, ch. 2). Less frequently acknowledged is the role of Descartes’ *cogito* in the Calvinist rationalization treated by Weber ([1905a] 1991, p. 118), and in Weber’s own understanding of the rationalization process. This latter can be discovered in methodological essays written and published by Weber during the period in which *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* first appeared. In one of these in particular, “Knies and the Problem of Irrationality” ([1905b] 1975), Weber set out his own position not only on rationality but also emotion. These positions are identical with that which he finds in Calvinism, as related in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Weber’s notion of rationality, and his distinction between culture and nature, come together in the proposition that culture is more rational than nature. In “Knies and the Problem of Irrationality,” an essay in which many of the methodological principles characteristic of his sociological corpus are first worked out, Weber says that: “because of its susceptibility to a meaningful *interpretation* . . . individual human conduct is in principle intrinsically less ‘irrational’ than the individual natural event” ([1905b] 1975, p. 125). The interpretability of human action derives from the possibility of ascribing to it motives, intentions, and beliefs (see [1905b] 1975, p. 127). In doing this, action becomes meaningful to the actor; it has a significance not only in the passive sense that there is cognitive discernment, but, more importantly, in the active sense that the actor’s own deliberation is experienced as the source of what is rational in the action.

Weber goes on to make exactly this point when he insists that in order for an act to be rational the end must be “clearly conscious and intended” and the means to be applied in achieving that end must be selected on the basis of a “clear knowledge” ([1905b] 1975, p. 186). In other words, rational action is that which follows from the actor’s own deliberative considerations. Thus motives, decisions, and calculations are aspects of thought and cognitive processes in general which make action rational. Any interference with the freedom of these deliberations is characterized by Weber as “‘external’ constraints,” which he says may appear as “irre-

sistible ‘affect’” ([1905b] 1975, p. 191). Here is emotion, outside of thought and undermining of it. In opposition to the deliberations of rationality is the compulsion of emotion, its irresistibility. Weber’s neo-Kantian concept of rationality is connected with a neo-Cartesian conceptualization of emotion.

This characterization of emotion, as inherently irrational because it is compulsive and disruptive of thought and reason, is elaborated in a number of places in the “Knies” essay. For instance, feelings, according to Weber, cannot be defined analytically and must therefore remain cognitively vague because they are “mental experiences ‘introjected’ into us” ([1905b] 1975, p. 178). But not only are emotions or feelings, according to Weber, vague though compelling, they are fundamentally inchoate: he says that they “cannot be conceptually articulated” (p. 179); that they “are intrinsically unarticulated” (pp. 179–80); that they are “not . . . analytically articulated” (p. 180). And, as if the situation were not clear enough, Weber (p. 182) goes on to say that: “In contrast to mere ‘emotional contents,’ we ascribe ‘value’ to an item if and only if it can be the content of a commitment: that is, a consciously articulated positive or negative ‘judgment,’ something that appears to us to ‘demand validity.’” Again, we see the free and deliberative qualities of value in the notion of commitment, and their opposite in emotion.

Weber’s discussion in the “Knies” paper is tortuous and inconclusive, but the characterization of rationality and emotion in it is consistently developed. Indeed, the position on these matters outlined in this text is to be found in Weber’s other works, including his account of “affective action” in *Economy and Society* ([1921a] 1978, p. 25), to which we shall return. It is particularly instructive to consider the treatment of these themes in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. This is because it will not only become clear that Weber’s account of Calvinist rationality conforms with his own understanding of the nature of rational action, but also because the opposition between rationality and emotion which Weber accepts and which he shows to be articulated by Calvinism becomes obviously impossible to maintain.

Weber shows that the ethical creed of the Puritans is a particular apprehension of Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*: “Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature” (Weber [1905a] 1991, p. 118). He goes on to say that: “The Puritan, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions” ([1905a] 1991, p. 119). Rational action, in realizing motives which are long-held and seriously regarded, must be against the emotions because, as Weber immediately explains, the emotions are

spontaneous and impulsive forces which distract a person from their purposes. The implication is that emotion will create disorder in human affairs, whereas rationality will “bring order into the conduct” of persons.

This is precisely Weber’s understanding of rationality: the realization of individual purpose against impulse and against nature. The “definitely rational character” of “Christian asceticism” is described by Weber ([1905a] 1991, pp. 118–9) in the following terms:

It had developed a systematic method of rational conduct with the purpose of overcoming the *status naturae*, to free man from the power of irrational impulses and his dependence on the world and on nature. It attempted to subject man to the supremacy of a purposeful will, to bring his actions under constant self-control with a careful consideration of their ethical consequences.

In this account the qualities of purpose, self-control, and forethought not only constitute the substance of rationality but are contrasted with irrational impulse, dependency, and nature. In the Calvinist form of Christian asceticism these latter qualities crystalize as emotion. Here is the full structure of the Cartesian *cogito*.

Weber refers to the “entirely negative attitude of Puritanism to all the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion” ([1905a] 1991, p. 105). He also reports that “Calvin viewed all pure feelings and emotions, no matter how exalted they might seem to be, with suspicion” ([1905a] 1991, p. 114). Indeed, Weber ([1905a] 1991, p. 123) refers to “[Calvinism’s] rational suppression of . . . the whole emotional side of religion.” In these statements Weber is reporting the conceptions and actions of others. But through his indication that Calvin and the Calvinists were not only suspicious of emotion but suppressed emotion in their construction of a rational program and practice, Weber indicates his own acceptance of such an account of rationality, of emotion, and of the relations between them. In his own voice, Weber ([1905a] 1991, p. 136) refers to “emotional elements” as “anti-rational.”

Naturally, the narrow focus and attention to purpose typical of Puritan rationalism would lead to an opposition not only to emotion but to anything which negated or disrupted the application of energy to the achievement of particular outcomes. In line with such a prospect, Weber ([1905a] 1991, p. 168) reports “the Puritan’s ferocious hatred of everything which smacked of superstition.” It is important to pause a moment at this remark and notice that here a particular emotion, hatred, is in the service of rational asceticism. Earlier in the text, Weber ([1905a] 1991, p. 122) recounts the Puritan’s response “toward the sin of one’s neighbor,” which was “hatred and contempt for him as an enemy of God.” The most telling aspect of Weber’s discussion in this passage is his description of these feelings not as an emotion but as an “attitude.”

The apparent inconsistency of Puritan suppression of emotion on the one hand, and hatred of sin on the other, is not solved by describing such particular emotions as attitudes. Indeed, the concept of attitude has performed a purpose in the development of social psychology similar to that which Weber applies here (see Fishbein and Ajzen 1972; McDougall 1933). The concept of attitude implicitly acknowledges a role for affective or emotional factors in cognitive and purposive, and indeed in rational, processes. But it does so by excluding emotion in its own right from consideration of such processes and therefore leaves unquestioned the conventional view, that reason and emotion are opposed. Weber is correct to acknowledge the importance of emotions in setting goals and forming motives and orientations. But it is inadequate license to treat emotion in general as irrational by describing a particular emotion as an attitude.

What we find in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is typical of the conventional understanding of emotion. It is held that rational action is undermined by emotion, and that rationality opposes and suppresses emotion. It also emerges that particular emotions or “attitudes” may function to define purposes which become subject to rational realization. Weber, no more than other adherents to the conventional view, does not deal with the obvious question which arises from this characterization of his position: the ultimate impossibility of the rational suppression of emotion in general and the requirement of particular emotions for deliberately formed motives. Indeed, the obfuscation of the real contribution of emotions in goal-defining practices, by incorporating them in the concept of attitude, reflects the limitations of a general opposition of reason and emotion.

#### **The critical approach: emotion as a solution to problems rationality cannot solve**

Weber’s invocation of emotion terms in his characterization of Calvinist attitudes and practices reveals something of the unavoidability of emotion in reasoned conduct. In spite of his intentions and primary analysis, Weber in effect indicates that emotion can not be eliminated from human affairs and also that it has a positive role in clarifying intentions and ordering action. This points to a quite different understanding of the relationship between rationality and emotion than the one Weber assumed and set out to portray. Against the conventional approach, therefore, is a critical perspective which holds that reason and emotion are not necessarily opposed but clearly different faculties, and that their differences allow each to serve in a division of labor in which their distinct capacities contribute to a unified outcome.

The critical view, that reason and emotion are different but mutually supportive, is not entirely new. Its most prominent classical exponent was David Hume, as indicated earlier. After a long period of neglect this position has been developed in a growing recent literature. Representative statements of it are found in philosophy (de Sousa 1990), psychology (Oatley 1992), economics (Frank 1988), and neuroscience (Damasio 1994).

The contribution of emotion to reason, as it is understood in the critical approach, is summarized by Ronald de Sousa (1990, p. xv, emphasis in original) in the following terms: "Despite a common prejudice, reason and emotion are not natural antagonists . . . Emotions are among the mechanisms that control the crucial factor of *salience* among what would otherwise be an unmanageable plethora of objects of attention, interpretation, and strategies of inference and conduct." The critical contention, then, is that knowledge and, by extension, action cannot organize themselves, and that a crucial organizational function is performed by emotions. This clarifies and resolves Weber's apparently anomalous claim concerning the anti-emotional Puritan's hatred of sin.

Within the critical perspective emotion is relocated from a hostile and distant position in the process of human cognition to a supportive and integral one: reason and rationality require emotional guidance. If anything, then, the critical approach is critical of reason and rationality, regarding these as more limited and incomplete than they are understood to be in the conventional perspective. The critical insights regarding the limitations of rationality resonate with the theme of the unreasonableness of rationality, a theme which has a certain currency today.

It is likely that any popular distaste for rationality results from disquiet concerning particular outcomes of specific practices identified as "rational," such as the nuclear arms race, the ascription of supreme value to economic gain, and so on. The point to be made here is that popular perceptions of the unreason of rationality are likely to be formed through a judgment concerning the inappropriateness of a particular purpose or goal. This is essentially the premise of the critical approach. It holds that inappropriate, ambiguous, and competing goals undermine reason and rationality, and also that imperfect, disorganized, and absent knowledge have the same effect. It goes on to indicate that emotion may overcome these limitations of rationality by clarifying or defining goals and by "bridging" information. This is possible because inherent in a goal is an emotion.

The importance of the articulation of appropriate goals or purposes for rational action to occur, and the contribution of emotion to this approbation, are the concerns of Robert Frank's discussion in his *Passions within Reason* (1988). Frank distinguishes two main accounts of rational

behavior, which he calls the “present aim theory” and the “self-interest theory” (1988, pp. 67–8). Each of these, he says, is flawed.

The present aim theory holds that whatever serves the realization of an actor’s present aim is rational. Thus it conceives of rationality in terms of efficient means–ends relations. But this ignores the possibility of irrational preferences; it ignores the question of the need to define the ends or purpose of an action in order to know whether the action is in fact rational. Frank (1988, p. 68) says that this theory of rationality “permits virtually any behavior to be considered rational merely by asserting that a person prefers it.”

The self-interest theory, on the other hand, resolves the problem of the purpose of action by defining rational action as that which serves the actor’s interests. This approach therefore rules out self-damaging or irrational preferences. It remains flawed, however, in its inability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate means which might be drawn on in satisfying the actor’s interests. The view from this theory holds that avoiding undetected cheating, for instance, is irrational: cheating confers advantage, and to avoid using it therefore avoids a means of satisfying self-interest. Frank’s point against the self-interest theory of rationality is that moral behavior confers greater advantages than this model of rationality is able to apprehend.

Frank provides ample evidence and argument for the claim that social morality, even though it may prove to be contrary to an actor’s immediate interests, nevertheless confers real advantages in the long run. It can be taken as given that dishonest, narrowly selfish, and socially unresponsive behaviors do reduce an actor’s opportunities for satisfaction in the medium and long term. The problem of a “commitment” to socially responsive behavior, which opens opportunities for cooperation with others and therefore advantages otherwise denied, is solved by emotion. Frank (1988, p. 237) says that:

The commitment and self-interest models paint strikingly different pictures not only of human nature, but also of its consequences for material welfare . . . People who love, who feel guilty when they cheat, vengeful when they are wronged, or envious when they get less than their fair share will often behave in ways that reduce their material payoffs. But precisely because of this, they will also enjoy opportunities that would not be available to a purely opportunistic person.

It can be seen from this that Frank’s opposition to the self-interest model is in the form of a qualification rather than a rejection. Indeed, this is how he goes on to describe his position (Frank 1988, p. 258).

The “commitment problem” is a problem of appropriateness of goals or purposes of action. The narrowly conceived self-interest theory of rationality defines the self-interested actor from a limited and individual-

istic perspective. Taking into account an actor's emotional commitments broadens the scope of their opportunities and satisfactions, and therefore redefines the goals or purposes which must be satisfied if an actor's self-interest is to be better understood and more fully realized. Frank's discussion of the relevance of emotion has therefore arguably enhanced the understanding of rational action by expanding the goal or purpose of action to more appropriate dimensions. But it is not clear that it has done this unambiguously, neither is it evident that his discussion has advanced the understanding of emotion to a satisfactory degree.

Frank's uncertainty concerning the relation between what he calls the "commitment model" and the "self-interest theory" – whether they are opposed (1988, p. 237) or are complementary (p. 258) – is not difficult to resolve. His argument against self-interest theory opposes a narrow conception of self-interest, not the concept of self-interest itself. He wishes to show that unselfish and non-opportunistic behavior in the long run will yield greater material benefits for the person who engages in them, and he is therefore arguing for a broader conception of self-interest. The realization of the broader conception of self-interest, Frank shows, is through the emotions which he indicates solve the commitment problem; these are the emotions which set goals for action wider than the purely opportunistic ones, which produce greater benefits, and which are more rational in doing so. Thus emotion provides appropriate or enhanced goals for self-interested action, enlarging its rationality.

Frank has indicated the relevance of emotion to rational goal-formation, through its solution of the commitment problem. But this correction of the account of rationality is not an adequate or complete account of emotion. For instance, the limited and opportunistic goals of lesser or deformed rationality are not free of emotional content. Indeed, fear and shame are likely emotional sources of opportunistic and narrowly selfish behavior (Bowlby 1973; Tomkins 1963), just as other particular emotions will be the sources of more giving and socially committed behavior. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that an understanding of emotion explains both rational and non-rational behaviors. Neither does the commitment problem discussed by Frank alert us to the contributions of emotion to reason and rationality beyond the issue of goal-formation. A more detailed account of reason and rationality will provide a more detailed account of emotion.

At the core of reason is the process of decision-making. Antonio Damasio (1994, p. 165) goes so far as to say that decision-making is the "purpose of reasoning" because reasoning is the business of selecting an appropriate and effective "response option" – a verbal or non-verbal action – to deal with the exigencies of a given situation. It is conventionally

assumed that the decider or actor “possesses some logical strategy for producing valid inferences on the basis of which an appropriate response option is selected” (p. 166). This “high-reason” approach holds both that logical inference will provide the best available solution to any problem, and that this will be achieved by the exclusion of emotion from the process (p. 171). Damasio argues that these expectations could never be realized.

The conventional approach assumes that a rational actor would infer which is the best course of action for them from the information they have concerning their circumstances against their desires, expectations, or intentions. In contrast with this scenario, Damasio (1994, pp. 171–2) argues that even the most unimposing set of circumstances and the most modest desires will generate so many possible courses of action that rational calculation would occupy more time than could be available for effective action. Indeed, the time spent in identifying and evaluating each of the logically possible courses of action is likely to remove the possibility of action in any finite time-frame. But there is a further problem which Damasio fails to notice, but which provides even stronger support for his rejection of the “high-reason” account of decision-making.

In any decision-making situation, the weight of alternative possible courses of action will be based on the balance of what might be called a conditional inference: in simple terms, on speculation about what *might* happen. All action is taken in the face of an unknown future. Indeed, any given action changes the conditions of all future actions. This means that the unknowability of the future is not something which might be overcome in time. The problem for calculation is that unknown futures yield no information about themselves and they therefore offer nothing from which a calculation can be made. Damasio’s supposition that rational calculation would be an inordinately lengthy procedure must be replaced with the proposition that rational calculation is in fact not possible for most social and interactive situations. The evidence for whether an action will succeed comes only when the action is completed, not when the decision to take it must be made. We shall return to this problem when discussing the radical approach to the relations between rationality and emotion.

These problems of decision-making, concerning logical inference or rational calculation, are solved for human actors by what Damasio (1994, pp. 173–5) calls “somatic markers.” Somatic markers are those emotionally borne physical sensations which “tell” those who experience them that a circumstance or event is likely to lead to pleasure or pain, to be favorable or unfavorable. This is because emotion has a necessary phys-



ical component, as the conventional view correctly insists. Damasio (p. 159) says that emotional feelings:

offer us the cognition of our visceral and musculo-skeletal state as it becomes affected by preorganized mechanisms and by the cognitive structures we have developed under their influence . . . Feelings offer us a glimpse of what goes on in our flesh, as a momentary image of that flesh is juxtaposed to the images of other objects and situations; in so doing, feelings modify our comprehensive notion of other objects and situations. By dint of juxtaposition, body images give to other images a quality of goodness or badness, of pleasure or pain.

In monitoring and presenting an actor's body images juxtaposed with their circumstances, emotion provides cognitive or decision-making processes with a framework and reference point for reasoning and rationality.

Emotions, according to this argument, indicate which problems reason has to solve, and they assist in delimiting a set of likely solutions. This outcome is possible because of a dual capacity in the nature of emotion itself: emotion combines a mental evaluative process with a dispositional response to that process (Damasio 1994, p. 139; see also Scherer 1984, p. 294). It is not necessary, and frequently unlikely, that the actor will be consciously aware of these emotional sensations. Somatic markers precede thought and reason. These markers or emotional feelings do not replace inference or calculation, according to Damasio, but enhance decision-making by "drastically reduc[ing] the number of options" for consideration. Thus a "partnership" of cognitive and emotional processes make decision-making humanly possible (1994, p. 175).

Key aspects of emotion, which are simply not visible from the conventional perspective, which claims an opposition between reason and emotion, are amplified in the argument concerning the role of somatic markers in decision-making. Damasio (1994, p. 174) says that: "somatic markers are a special instance of feelings generated from secondary emotions. Those emotions and feelings have been connected, by learning, to predicted future outcomes of certain scenarios." This statement explains that emotions can guide reason because they are tutored by experience. Such a perspective is quite at odds with the conventional view, which holds that emotions are innate and indifferent to modification through experience.

Research has long demonstrated that emotions are both deeply embedded in physical structures and also subject to socialization and learning processes (Emde 1984; Lewis and Saarni 1985). As indicated in the preceding quotation, Damasio argues that the emotions which learn from experience and which guide reason are "secondary emotions." The distinction between primary and secondary emotions has a long history and

is unavoidable in a general discussion of emotion. This distinction can be drawn with a number of lines, but for Damasio (1994, pp. 131–9) they all point in the direction of whether the emotion can be changed through experience: primary emotions are “preorganized” and secondary emotions modified by learning.

Not all emotions researchers find value in this distinction, and of those who do there is little agreement concerning which are the primary emotions (Kemper 1987; Ortony, Clore, and Collins [1988] 1990, pp. 25–9). Also, Damasio’s insistence that only secondary emotions are modified by experience is not an entirely successful boundary-drawing claim concerning the emotional contribution to decision-making through somatic markers. Fear, for instance, is one emotion which features in all typologies of primary or basic emotions. As a primary emotion fear can be simply “triggered” by a stimulus without prior experiential preparation or learning. But the objects of fear, while preorganized in significant cases (every child and many higher mammals fear looming objects), are also frequently learned and therefore vary with experience. Children have to learn to fear traffic, communists, and being late for school. Even though a primary emotion, it is difficult to believe that fear would not function in somatic markers as Damasio describes them, in assisting decision-making in the way he suggests.

It is important to get over this problem, because it is necessary to make it clear that the difference between those emotions which assist rationality and those which undermine it cannot be distinguished with the aid of the distinction between primary and secondary emotions. While the critical perspective understands that emotion can support reason, it does not deny that there are circumstances in which the conventional opposition to emotion, as a saboteur of reason, will not find justification. Somatic markers, and through them emotions, “are essential for rational behaviors,” Damasio (1994, p. 192) says, “although they can be pernicious to rational decision-making in certain circumstances by creating an overriding bias against objective facts or even by interfering with support mechanisms of decision-making such as working memory.”

The critical perspective holds that emotion is especially inappropriate in decision-making about technical problems (Damasio 1994, pp. 191–2; Oatley 1992, p. 164). These are areas in which calculation must be most clearly regarded as the sole substance of reason, because they are domains in which the purposes of action are resolute and in which the courses of action are procedurally limited by the nature of the tasks. While rejecting the blanket denial of emotion’s role in reason and rationality found in the conventional approach, the critical perspective insists on the more limited claim that emotion is disruptive of narrowly technical reason. This is not

the last word on the matter, however. There is an argument which claims that emotion has a central role even in technical reason: this we can call the radical argument.

### **The radical approach: emotion and rationality as continuous**

The limitations of rationality highlighted in the critical approach and the solution offered by this approach of emotional salience were spelled out over a hundred years before the publication of its recent exponents. In an essay provocatively called “The Sentiment of Rationality,” William James ([1897a] 1956), the late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American psychologist and philosopher, made the following observation: “The absurd abstraction of an intellect verbally formulating all its evidence and carefully estimating the probability thereof by a vulgar fraction by the size of whose denominator and numerator alone it is swayed, is ideally as inept as it is actually impossible” ([1897a] 1956, pp. 92–3). Such an operation is “impossible” in James’s account because intellect does not exist except as a category of thought; it is not an independent operation of mind. In reality, says James ([1897a] 1956, p. 92), the whole person is involved in the formation of philosophical opinions just as they are in practical affairs.

James’s further claim, made in the context of the remarks just quoted, that intellect, will, taste, and passion all work together, is not a moral injunction holding that aesthetic consideration and emotional commitment, say, should fashion a person’s thoughts and that these together should influence their actions. Rather, he is saying that intellect, will, taste, and passion in fact necessarily support each other. From James’s perspective, then, reason and emotion are not opposed phenomena but distinct names for aspects of a continuous process. This radical approach to the relationship between rationality and emotion has a number of dimensions.

James begins his account of “The Sentiment of Rationality” by asking how a rational conception might be recognized. It is recognized, he says, by a feeling of rationality. In the first instance this latter is constituted by “the absence of any feeling of irrationality” ([1897a] 1956, pp. 63–4). James acknowledges that, on the face of it, this appears to be a less than satisfactory account, but it is not a vacuous or flippant one. He explains that our strongest feelings are those discharged under impediment or resistance, so that we do not experience a particular pleasure of free breathing, for instance, but intense distress when breathing is prevented. So it is with the feelings of rationality and irrationality: “so any

unobstructed tendency to action discharges itself without the production of much cognitive accompaniment, and any perfectly fluent course of thought awakens but little feeling; but when the movement is inhibited, or when the thought meets with difficulties, we experience distress" (James [1897a] 1956, p. 64). Thus James accounts for the lack of intensity in the feeling of rationality in terms of the facilitation of thought associated with it.

With regard to its emotional content, as opposed to its intensity, James understands the "sentiment of rationality" to be a "feeling of the sufficiency of the present moment, of its absoluteness – this absence of all need to explain it, account for it, or justify it . . . As soon, in short, as we are enabled from any cause whatever to think with perfect fluency, the thing we think of seems to us *pro tanto* rational" ([1897a] 1956, p. 64). The "feeling of sufficiency of the present moment," which James regards as the feeling of rationality, has been independently described as an "emotion of security" (de Rivera 1977, pp. 46–7). The context of this latter account is a discussion of the emotional requirements for the occurrence of abstract thinking, in which the emotion of security is implicated as "essential." The continuity between rationality and abstract thinking requires no further comment.

James identifies two general sources of the feeling of sufficiency, and therefore two types of rationality. These bear some relation to Weber's formal and substantive rationalities (Weber 1921, pp. 85–6). The first, which comes from what James calls "the relief of identification," is the source of theoretic rationality ([1897a] 1956, p. 70). Theoretic rationality is not reducible to means–ends relations as is Weber's formal rationality, but, like the latter, functions through a parsimonious principle of simplicity. It brings a feeling of sufficiency in the present by identifying otherwise disparate elements as part of an essential unity. The limitations of this form of rationality are suggested in James's caution that the world "is a complex affair," and therefore cannot be adequately apprehended by principles of simplicity, rational or otherwise.

Theoretic rationality, the operational principle of which being the identification of one thing with another, offers some intellectual comfort, perhaps. But James derisively summarizes its limitations by suggesting that it offers nothing less than the "tranquility of the boor" ([1897a] 1956, p. 71). This dismissive judgment is supported by the claim that whatever human experience consists of, its contrary can be imagined. James argues, then, that theoretic rationality is simply unattainable at a high level because the relation of unity of identity envisioned by it is subverted by the inclination to relations of variety, by the process of "seeing an *other* beside every item of experience" ([1897a] 1956, p. 71, emphasis

in original). As Weber's narrowly technical formal rationality is likely to undermine a more broadly based rationality, so is James's theoretic rationality ultimately self-destructive. James notes, in his essay "Reflex Action and Theism" ([1897b] 1956, p. 132), for instance, that, if unmediated, the passion for parsimony will "end by blighting the development of the intellect itself quite as much as that of the feelings or the will." It is practical rationality, then, which James regards as having the greater credibility.

Practical rationality, the rationality which allows persons to deal with the diverse elements and particles of their everyday lives, is, in this regard, like Weber's substantive rationality. James says that a feeling of rationality in this vein can be produced by a mere familiarity with things. Practical rationality, then, does not find a pattern of relations between things in their ultimate identity, as with theoretic rationality, but through acquaintance with their antecedents. Indeed, James ([1897a] 1956, pp. 76–7) notes that this is the singular understanding of rationality in the empiricist tradition.

Empiricism regards sense experience to be the basis of knowledge, and it therefore treats knowledge as the effect of past experience. In a like manner, the empiricist account of rationality focusses on the feeling of ease of thought which derives from the explanation of a thing which refers to its antecedents. James accepts that this is a source of the feeling of rationality insofar as it allows for a fluent movement between things ([1897a] 1956, p. 77). But for an understanding of practical rationality "one particular relation is of greater practical importance than all the rest, [i.e.] the relation of a thing to its consequences" (p. 77). So the first practical prerequisite for the sentiment or emotion of rationality is the "banish[ment of] uncertainty from the future" (p. 77).

It is the ambiguity of the future which is the source of philosophical and practical distress, according to James, even though he observes that the ambiguity of the future is unavoidable ([1897a] 1956, pp. 79–81). Although Weber, for instance, does not acknowledge it, this is the ultimate source of the irrationality of experience, which he also notes ([1905a] 1991, p. 233; [1904] 1949, p. 111), for all experience is had in the absence of knowledge concerning its outcome. The unease which accompanies a sense of futurity is settled by a feeling of expectancy, according to James ([1897a] 1956, pp. 77–8). Thus James locates the sentiment of rationality in the affective or emotional displacement of uncertainty concerning the future. The "emotional effect of expectation" is to enable actors to proceed in their practical affairs (pp. 78–9). Thus James characterizes rationality in terms of the particular emotional configuration which enables the actor to engage their practical affairs.

The “feeling of sufficiency in the present moment,” which permits persons to “think with fluency” and to act with purpose, is associated with the feeling of expectation concerning the future. In these ways James characterizes rationality as a property of mind or a quality of action explicable in terms of their emotional qualities. But it is not emotion in general, rather it is particular emotions which constitute the sentiment of rationality. James’s conceptualization of rationality in terms of emotional orientations to the future, and his insistence on emotional salience for rationality, is evident in his treatment of the role of emotion in decision-making, to which we now turn. This is an aspect of the question alluded to in the earlier qualification of Damasio’s treatment of calculation, when the impossibility of knowing the future was mentioned.

In his essay “The Will to Believe,” James ([1897c] 1956, pp. 23–4) notes that in most social situations action is taken in the absence of evidence as to what might be its most appropriate course. The general form of such a circumstance he calls a forced option, a situation in which there is no possibility of not choosing (p. 3). Under these circumstances the absence of evidence regarding a correct course of action means that calculation to aid decision-making is impossible, and an emotional rather than a logical choice or commitment is necessary if action is to occur at all.

In “The Sentiment of Rationality” James ([1897a] 1956, pp. 96–7) develops this point through the case of the “Alpine climber,” in which an actor’s particular emotional commitment leads to a singular material outcome. To escape serious difficulty the Alpine climber must execute a dangerous leap which they have not performed before. If engaged by the emotions of confidence and hope, the climber is likely to perform a feat which would otherwise be impossible. Fear and mistrust, on the other hand, are likely to lead to hesitation, and this will increase the probability of the climber missing their foothold and falling to their death. Whichever emotion is engaged will be commensurate with a particular outcome, but with contrastingly different consequences.

Philosophers who have considered James’s account of forced options typically reject it. One underlying reason for this is that philosophers of a logical disposition tend to regard time as irrelevant (Passmore 1968, p. 271), whereas for James the distinction between the present and the future is essential. Indeed, what James touches on here is identical with the problem of trust, its relationship to time, and the nature of its rationality.

Cooperation with others requires trust, and trust is therefore essential in social relations. But, as Niklas Luhmann (1979, p. 25) says, the decision to trust cannot be based on pertinent knowledge because it is only

possible to determine whether an action based on trust was correct by whether the trust was honored or broken. These are events which necessarily occur after the trust has been given. In this sense trust is not rational. Yet there is a further and more compelling sense in which trust is rational. The rationality of trust, Luhmann (p. 88) goes on to indicate, is not in its decision-making form but in its orientating action to meaningful outcomes which enhance understanding and performance. Luhmann acknowledges the emotional nature of trust (pp. 22, 81), but it is precisely as an emotion which overcomes the uncertainty of the future that trust is rational (see also Gambetta 1990). In a remarkably Jamesian turn Luhmann says that: "To show trust is to anticipate the future. It is to behave as though the future were certain [. . .] This problem of time is bridged by trust, paid ahead of time as an advance on success" (1979, pp. 10, 25). Again, a specific emotion contributes to a specific rationality in the absence of a possible contribution by logic or calculation.

The role of emotion in practical rationality, then, is to permit action which would be inhibited if it were to rely on logic or calculation alone. The emotional contribution to rationality is to provide a feeling of certainty concerning the future, which is necessary if action is to occur and the actor to proceed.

James's account of particular emotions as continuous with rationality derived from a conception of persons as interested, purposive, and active agents in their relations with others, generative of the social reality they experience. This focus on action is one which James shares with Weber. But Weber, of course, defines rationality in terms of the absence, indeed the suppression, of emotion. This latter approach is the very opposite of James's. Yet, if we look at the details of Weber's account of rationality, the very conditions are in fact indicated under which James's practical rationality and its emotional substance can be realized.

In the foregoing discussion it was demonstrated that Weber's account of rationality functions in terms of the exclusion of emotion. On the face of it, then, the suggestion that he and William James, who positively defines rationality as the presence of certain emotions, present converging arguments, seems impossible if not absurd. But it will be shown that their views of rationality are remarkably commensurate, even though Weber entertains a limited and erroneous view of emotion.

Weber is *the* theorist of rationality. He explained characteristic features of Western development and a range of technical, institutional, organizational, and social processes in terms of rationality and rationalization. Perhaps as a result of the wide application of the concepts of reason, rationality, and rationalization in his work, Weber's account of rationality may seem ambiguous, even "irredeemably opaque and shifting," as

Steven Lukes has put it (1977, p. 219). Certainly, Weber regards the particular elements of rationality as multiple. But, as we shall see, these are parts of a whole, and the whole is consistent. Additionally, it is consistent in a manner commensurate with James's understanding of the radical continuity of emotion and reason.

Weber regards rationality not as an absolute category but as one which is context dependent. Indeed, he saw rationalism as an "historical concept which covers a whole world of different things" ([1905a] 1991, p. 78), and there is allowance inherent in the concept itself "for widely differing contents" (1921a, p. 998). This means not only that rationality may be present in different degrees in distinct domains of activity, including politics, economics, religion, music, and science and technology, but also that within a given context the differing purposes of actors will generate different rationalities. "Furthermore," as Weber says in his 1920 ([1920] 1991) "Introduction," "each one of these fields may be rationalized in terms of very different ultimate values and ends, and what is rational from one point of view is irrational from another" ([1905a] 1991, p. 26). It might be noticed that James ([1909] 1932, pp. 112–3) also held that rationality occupied different domains, and that its realization in one may be at the expense of its achievement in another.

It is not surprising, then, that coherence in the concept of rationality has sometimes been difficult to grasp. Yet, while acknowledging again that rationalism "may mean very different things" and therefore that there are different "types of rationalism," Weber ([1915a] 1970, p. 293) immediately adds that "ultimately they belong inseparably together" (p. 293). Before we consider the basis of their coherence or unity, it is essential to discuss the varieties of rationality which Weber identifies.

The most general types of rationality are in the forms of systemic arrangement and also logical coherence or consistency. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, for instance, Weber ([1905a] 1991, p. 117) indicates that a key feature of rationalization in Calvinism is the systematization of life and works. Elsewhere, Weber says that this is a feature of all rationalization processes in religion ([1915a] 1970, p. 280; [1915b] 1970, p. 327) as much as it is in economics ([1921a] 1978, pp. 71, 348). The form and consequences of systematization are very similar to those of "rationality in the sense of logical or teleological 'consistency'" ([1915b] 1970, p. 324). What Weber here calls the "imperative of consistency" and rational deduction give sense to what otherwise might escape the grasp of the thinker or actor. It is in this way that these two forms of rationality are similar. Systematization relates elements to the unit of which they are a part. This enhances the achievement of the purpose of the unit. So it is with logical coherence. An actor's purpose, and how they



might achieve it, becomes clearer to them when logical coherence gives sense to what would otherwise be disparate parts of an unconnected series.

Systematization and logical consistency as forms of rationality are readily understood by William James ([1909] 1932, p. 22) in terms of particular emotions: he refers to the “intellect[ual] . . . passion for generalizing, simplifying and subordinating.” Intellect and emotion are not opposed here, but continuous. Yet this view is not so remote from Weber’s. He insists that rationality in the sense of logical consistency takes the form of an “intellectual-theoretical or practical-ethical attitude [which] has and always has had power over man” ([1915b] 1970, p. 324). Weber’s characterization of the “imperative of consistency” in terms of its attitudinal form and its capacity to constrain indicates that Weber is referring to an emotional force in this rationality. This point deserves emphasis. Although Weber fails to explore the implications of his characterization, the emotional background to consistency as rational is singularly contained in his conceptualization of it.

Rationality as systematization and as logical coherence are rational because they lead to purposiveness of action. Weber also treats purposiveness as a form of rationality in its own right. In his discussion of bureaucracy, for instance, Weber ([1921a] 1978, p. 979) says that: “The only decisive point for us is that in principle a system of rationally debatable ‘reasons’ stands behind every act of bureaucratic administration, namely, either subsumption under norms, or a weighing of ends and means.” The suggestion here is that in the absence of clarity about what reasons there are for acting, in the absence of clarity of purpose, rationality of action becomes entirely problematic. In the passage just quoted Weber refers to both norms and means–ends relations in this context. These can be dealt with in turn.

Purposiveness of action requires the actor’s acquisition of an intention in relation to a goal or end, what Weber calls a norm. Rationality of this type is treated by Weber as one of the four ideal-typical forms of action, namely value-rational action. In Weber’s ([1921a] 1978, pp. 24–6) general account of it, value-rational action sits between instrumentally rational action and affective or emotional action. Value-rational action shares with emotional action the fact that “the meaning of the action does not lie in the achievement of a result ulterior to it, but in carrying out the specific type of action for its own sake” (p. 25). Weber immediately adds that action which satisfies “a need for revenge, sensual gratification, devotion, contemplative bliss, or for working off emotional tensions,” is emotional action, not value-rational action. Value-rational action, being action which is consistent with a principle, shares with emotional action a

disregard for the consequences or costs of an action which expresses a conviction.

Value-rational action is distinct from emotional action. It is akin to instrumentally rational action insofar as the ultimate values governing the action are “self-consciously formulat[ed]” by the actor involved. The implication of this claim is that emotional goals, by contrast, are experienced as compelling external forces. Emotion is in the need for revenge, according to Weber, not so much in the revenge itself. Weber’s distinction, then, between value-rational and emotional action derives from the view that a person’s emotions cannot be subject to the appraisal and deliberation of the person experiencing them, and that choice has no role in emotional experience.

Some emotions are more compelling than others, certainly. But to dismiss the possibility of emotional deliberation and choice suggests prejudice about rather than an adequate understanding of emotion. Indeed, the psychological processes of value attainment and commitment have to be recognized as inextricably complex ones involving judgments, calculations, needs, and affections in such a manner as to make impossible a clear separation of emotional from non-emotional aspects.

That there is a need for purposiveness in rational action, and more than half of Weber’s argument concerning it, shows that it is unnecessary to oppose emotion and rationality. The critical and radical approaches to the relation between emotion and rationality demonstrate the contribution of particular emotions to rational action. In spite of his own intentions, Weber’s argument concerning purposiveness as a form of rationality also encourages that conclusion.

In addition to norms, means–ends relations are implicated in purposiveness as rationality. As already indicated, the other type of rational action identified in Weber’s four ideal types is instrumental or goal rationality. This incorporates the relationship between means and ends, a feature of which is the requirement of calculation, for the efficacy of means to achieve a particular end is always tested in quantifiable efficiencies. Calculation as rationality, Weber ([1905a] 1991, p. 22) says, is “the basis of everything else.” Indeed, the importance of formal rules in rational law and administration, for instance, is that it permits calculation (p. 25). Similarly, money and markets rationalize economies because they facilitate calculation, and this generates the impersonality or universality of rationality ([1915b] 1970, p. 331; [1921a] 1978, p. 636).

Calculation as rationality is parallel to logical coherence as rationality. Where means–ends relations provide “the methodical attainment of a definitely given and practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means,” premise–conclusion relations provide

“an increasing theoretical mastery of reality by means of increasingly precise and abstract concepts” ([1915a] 1970, p. 293). While these are different types of rationality, Weber believes that “ultimately they belong inseparably together” because each gives control: one practical, the other intellectual.

The importance of control to rationality has already been indicated, when Weber was discussed in the context of the conventional approach to the relation between reason and emotion. It has been shown here that all of the modalities of rationality he indicates point in this direction. Rationalization, says Weber ([1919] 1970, p. 139), “means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation” (see also [1915a] 1970, p. 284). The importance of control to rationality is in rationality as systematization, as logical coherence, as purposiveness, as means-ends relations and as calculability. If another example were needed, Weber’s discussion in “Science as a Vocation” of “the rational experiment” could be added, in which it is noted that the “experiment is a means of reliably controlling experience” ([1919] 1970, p. 141). Weber insists that only action which is voluntary and free-willed is rational, because it is action which is not controlled ([1921a] 1978, pp. 23–4). The rational actor is one who controls.

For Weber, the irrational, to which rationality is an oppositional force, is concretely manifest in magic ([1919] 1970, p. 139; [1905a] 1991, pp. 105, 117), eroticism ([1915b] 1970, p. 347), and emotion ([1905a] 1991, p. 136). This is because these are forces which exercise control over persons, and therefore action directed by these forces cannot be rational as it cannot be voluntary and free-willed. The Kantian impetus of Weber’s understanding of these matters is perhaps not better expressed than in a passage in his account of Baptist sects. Between a reference to the overcoming of the “passions and subjective interests of the natural man” ([1905a] 1991, p. 148), on the one hand, and the “elimination of magic from the world” (p. 149), on the other, Weber (p. 149) said: “But in so far as Baptism affected the normal workaday world, the idea that God only speaks when the flesh is silent evidently meant an incentive to the deliberate weighing of courses of action and their careful justification in terms of the individual conscience.” Here is combined the idea that calculation and clear purpose can proceed only “when the flesh is silent.”

Weber’s idea of rationality as control is a statement of the conditions under which James’s sentiment of rationality might arise or emerge. Remember that, for James, what is of particular importance is the relation of a thing to its consequences, and therefore that rationality is the condition in which uncertainty is banished from the future. This is the

emotional end of the mechanical relation described by Weber, of purpose, calculation, and, ultimately, control.

Weber does not have a sense of the emotional dimension of rationality because he regards emotion as undermining of human control. For him, emotion is a singular phenomenon unified by the quality of a force against deliberation. Therefore rationality and emotion are for him opposed. But James recognizes what Weber in fact describes: that there is a human passion for clarity and order, and a need for intellectual frameworks, which he summarizes as the “passion for generalizing, simplifying, and subordinating” (James [1909] 1932, p. 22). In providing the actor with a feeling of control over the future, these passions, emotions, or sentiments engender in the present a feeling of rationality. James does not offer a blanket endorsement of emotion in rationality, as Weber proposes a general rejection of it. James does indicate, though, that particular emotions are implicated in rationality.

### **Bases of the separation of reason and emotion**

Even if they are not to be fully accepted, there is enough in the critical and radical approaches to show that the conventional distinction between reason and emotion is at least blurred, not sharp, and that the supposed opposition between them is at best difficult to keep in clear focus. In spite of this, the conventional approach to reason and emotion is remarkably durable. It is not sufficient therefore to argue that it is mistaken, it has to be asked why it is so widely believed.

In his account of “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” Georg Simmel ([1903] 1971, pp. 328–9) explains that:

Punctuality, calculability, and exactness, which are required by the complications and extensiveness of metropolitan life are not only most intimately connected with its capitalistic and intellectualistic character but also color the content of life and are conducive to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses which originally seek to determine the form of life from within instead of receiving it from the outside in a general, schematically precise form.

Here, Simmel is indicating that the instrumental orientations of urban and market society simply displace emotion as a motivating force. In capitalist society the imperatives of human conduct are outside the individual’s subjective, that is emotional, states, and in the external demands of the market.

Simmel argues that with the rise of a money-based economy, relationships between persons have become impersonal and intellectual, and therefore that within such relationships there is indifference to the

individuality of each and a focus on “something objectively perceivable” ([1903] 1971, p. 326). Thus, “instead of reacting emotionally, the metropolitan type reacts primarily in a rational manner, thus creating a mental predominance through the intensification of consciousness, which in turn is caused by it” (p. 326). This argument is rather like Weber’s in its key features. Market rationality leads to a calculativeness of thought which simply displaces emotion; rationality drives out irrationality. But Simmel makes clear what is sometimes obscure in Weber: it is instrumentalism, born of capitalistic market relations, which separates emotion from reason.

There is a crucial detail in Simmel’s argument, however, which makes it quite unlike Weber’s. For Simmel, the displacement of emotion by rationality is not the end of emotion, and the source of the rational orientation is not simply the market but the emotional pattern the market promotes. Simmel’s claims in this area are by no means fully developed but they are explicit. Simmel says that the “psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli” ([1903] 1971, p. 325). The tempo and diversity of civic and market exchanges proportionately stimulate the emotions. Such a prospect contains not only thrills but dangers. The metropolitan type, as a consequence, “creates a protective organ for itself against the profound disruption with which the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu threaten it” (p. 326).

Simmel’s argument is not simply that rational calculability and exactness form a “protective organ” against the disturbingly intense emotional life which would otherwise ensue. It is also that the protective organ of rationality is itself covered with an emotional cloak, what Simmel calls the “blasé outlook” and the “blasé attitude” ([1903] 1971, p. 329). The emotional dimensions of this are clear in Simmel’s description of it as “a feeling of [one’s] own valuelessness.” This feeling, he says, exists in the form of a “peculiar adaptive phenomenon . . . in which the nerves reveal their final possibility of adjusting themselves to the content and form of metropolitan life by renouncing the response to them” (p. 330). For Simmel, then, rationality arises in the control of emotion. In containing emotion, it is guided by an alienated emotion of distance, remoteness, and indifference to excitement and pleasure, namely the emotions expressed through the blasé feeling.

The explanation of the separation of reason from emotion in Simmel’s account contains three elements. First, an instrumental orientation, through which activity is directed to the realization of some externally given object or end, separates thought and emotion. Second, it does this

through its association with an emotion which is an antidote to all other emotions, experienced as the blasé feeling. Third, the social basis of such an orientation is market society. We shall consider each of these in turn.

The significance of the social institution of the market to the separation of reason and emotion is frequently acknowledged. In such accounts, the ascendance of the market and its association with reason or rationality is taken to lead also to the depreciation, even stigmatization of emotion, if not its elimination. Agnes Heller (1979) develops such an argument in explaining that in the “bourgeois world-epoch” a dual structure emerges in which the “domain of the market is the world of instrumental rationality, [and] the domain of the family is the world of emotional ‘inwardness’” (p. 185). Any given individual may unite these distinct domains in their own life experience, but at the same time there is an institutional basis for one or the other domain to predominate. Such is the social basis for a separation of reason and emotion under the conditions of modern capitalism.

Heller’s account addresses matters raised earlier in discussion, namely that emotions do function in rational processes but are seldom acknowledged to be emotions (we saw them become attitudes); and that the emotions which are acknowledged as such constitute a limited range of emotions (only certain emotions are regarded as emotions). We shall return to the question of instrumental rationality and its suppression of emotion below. At this point the market-sponsored narrowing of the category of emotion will be considered.

The capitalistic conversion of labor-power into a commodity and the consequent separation of the sphere of paid work from the domestic sphere have had a profound impact on the social conventions concerning what constitutes an emotion. The transformation of the pre-capitalistic family, a site of productive activity and collectively relevant symbolic performance, into the family of market society, an exclusive realm of non-instrumental affectivity or “emotional inwardness,” has transformed also what is covered by the category of emotion. Under the latter conditions, the category of emotion includes mainly, although, as we shall see, not exclusively, the nurturing emotions. At the same time, because the activities to which such emotions are attached draw little market value, so emotion itself is regarded as being of little worth.

Heller (1979, p. 211) draws the obvious conclusion that the “contradiction between rational thinking and the inner life of feeling in the bourgeois era also appears in the form of the division of labor between the sexes.” The identification of reason with the male and emotion with the female has drawn enough attention to render its statement commonplace. But there is another aspect to the social basis of the distinction

between reason and emotion which takes us away from the sexual division of labor and turns the gender associations to mere cultural symbols. Heller (p. 209) notes that in market society persons are free to create their own inner life. But the institutional and cultural resources available to them in doing so are shaped by the priorities of the larger social system.

Thus reason narrowed to market rationality is matched by emotions of isolated subjectivity. Heller notes that it “is in the name of reason that polemics have been undertaken against alienated feelings, and in the name of feelings against the alienated reason; only, the alienation of reason and feeling are part of the same process” (p. 209). The forms of alienated emotions found in capitalist society are described by Heller (p. 209) as “the inner life of feeling ‘wrapped in itself’ that turns its back to the tasks of the world . . . the unfettered exercise of egoist passions . . . false sentimentality or sentimental convention.” While the conventional approach to the relations between rationality and emotion typically supposes that emotion is suppressed by reason, Heller’s account indicates instead transformations of what the category of emotion denotes under the force of market conditions.

In capitalist society the cultivation of emotion is entirely possible. Yet the social representation of emotion in this context reflects rather than challenges conventional assumptions. A commitment to develop the emotional side of life typically incorporates a rejection of the determination of intellectual considerations. This may appear to turn the conventional tables, which privilege the ascendance of reason over emotion. But in fact this approach preserves the conventional division between reason and emotion, and the conventional distortion of each. Thus Carl Jung’s commitment to irrationalism (“Nothing disturbs feeling, however, so much as thinking”) is not a rejection of alienated instrumental rationality so much as a retreat to alienated emotionalism. The earlier Romantic surrender to emotion and its rejection of reason similarly maintained the dichotomy between the two (Toulmin 1990, p. 148). The Jungian flavor of a growing current literature, both popular and specialist, understands emotion as covering only nurturing and personal, what Heller calls “inward,” feelings.

Conceptualizations of emotion in non- or early-capitalist literatures indicate a much broader range of types of feeling than those associated with emotion under conditions of market rationality. In Adam Smith ([1759] 1982), for example, the emotions include “moral sentiments,” which were the source of justice and beneficence, the sense of duty, approbation and disapprobation, in fact the full range of conduct, both social and unsocial, sympathetic and selfish. Similarly, Alexis de Tocqueville ([1835] 1945) in the second volume of *Democracy in America*,

Books II and IV, addressed the “intense passions” which animated American public life and preserved liberty. In these early writers, emotion simply does not conform to the narrow range of subjective and personal feelings we associate with the term today.

The referents of the term emotion cover a broader range in “pre-conventional” discussions, because in these the separation of reason and emotion is not fundamental. Rather, reason and emotion are simply different, not opposed. A typical statement is that of Francis Bacon ([1605] 1977, p. 120), who, in distinguishing two faculties of the human mind, says that: “the one respecting his Understanding and Reason, and the other his Will, Appetite, and Affection: whereof the former produceth Position or Decree, and the latter Action or Execution . . . the face towards Reason hath the print of Truth, but the face towards Action hath the print of Good.” The difference between reason and emotion in the “pre-conventional” approach is not between rationality and irrationality, but between what we now call ideas and action.

Yet, while this distinction is readily drawn, it is, to the “pre-conventional” approach, the combination of these distinct faculties which in practice is the basis of what we today understand as rationality. Adam Ferguson ([1767] 1966, p. 29), for example, says that in practical and therefore in social activities:

the understanding appears to borrow very much from the passions; and there is a felicity of conduct in human affairs, in which it is difficult to distinguish the promptitude of the head from the ardor and sensibility of the heart. Where both are united, they constitute that superiority of mind, the frequency of which among men, in particular ages and nations, much more than the progress they have made in speculation, or in the practice of mechanical and liberal arts, should determine the rate of their genius, and assign the palm of distinction and honour.

In this context, the scope of emotion is not merely personal, individual, and introspective or “inner,” but social, political, and moral.

Rationality appears to become fundamentally separated from emotion when the purposes of action are limited to those of pervasive institutions. Pervasive institutions are those which color the operations of all others. Under these circumstances action is entirely instrumental in realizing purposes which will not yield to modification in the conduct of the action itself, but which is fixed by some principle external to the action. An obvious pervasive institution of this type is the market in capitalist society. In Weber’s words, the “market community as such is the most impersonal relationship of practical life into which humans can enter with one another.” He goes on to say that:

The reason for the impersonality of the market is its matter-of-factness, its orientation to the commodity and only to that. Where the market is allowed to



follow its own autonomous tendencies, its participants do not look toward the persons of each other but only toward the commodity; there are no obligations of brotherliness or reverence, and none of those spontaneous human relations that are sustained by personal unions. They all would just obstruct the free development of the bare market relationship, and its specific interests serve, in their turn, to weaken the sentiments on which these obstructions rest. Market behavior is influenced by rational, purposive pursuit of interests. (Weber [1921a] 1978, p. 636)

Under conditions of market rationality, then, any action which functions in terms of goals or purposes extrinsic to a market exchange is non-instrumental and irrational.

This allows us to complete the conceptualization of emotion sponsored by capitalist rationality. In addition to the nurturing and inward emotions already discussed are those strong feelings which introduce orientations toward persons rather than commodities, and therefore turn aside the pursuit of market interests. Love, hate, fear, and anger are typical examples of such emotions. Their salient characteristic is that they introduce purposes extrinsic to the socially pervasive institution. As just indicated, the dominant pervasive institution of capitalist society is the market. But in other systems, other institutions will define the content of instrumental rationality and therefore also the concept of emotion.

It is necessary to regard the correlative conceptualization of emotion in instrumental rationality as incomplete because, while it ostensibly expels emotion in general, instrumentalism always relies on under-conceptualized emotions in particular. The instrumental rationality of market competition, for instance, cannot do without emotions, which are background to the impersonal pursuit of commodities, and as background are simply assumed, taken for granted, and unacknowledged. And if acknowledged, they are regarded not as emotions, the latter being a category already conceptualized as disruptive of instrumental rationality, but as attitudes, components of culture, and so on. Yet the technical enterprise of commodity exchange requires of those human actors involved in it a number of emotions, which include commitment to the purposes at hand, loyalty to the employing organization, joy in success to encourage more success, and dissatisfaction at failure to encourage success, trust in those with whom cooperation is necessary, envy of competitors to spur the pursuit of interests, and greed to encourage aggrandizement.

A failure to acknowledge the presence, let alone the salience, of such particular background emotions in instrumentally rational pursuits is unavoidable in the context of the characterization of emotion under market conditions which has been described here. It was revealed in the earlier discussion of the critical approach to the relation between rationality and emotion that one of the leading functions of emotion is to set goals

or purposes for action, both mental and practical. Thus advocates of the critical approach regard the precondition for (a foregrounded) emotion to be an actor's ambiguity of purpose (see Oatley 1992, pp. 164–5, 175). It follows, then, as Keith Oatley (p. 164), for instance, says, that emotion is likely to be irrational in the service of a technical problem. But this is simply to say that technical tasks have their own purposes: the introduction of an extrinsic purpose will interfere with the execution of a technical task.

Oatley's account leaves out the fact that the human execution of a technical task requires facilitating purposes to achieve the technical intention. This general point was implicit in the earlier description of the background emotions required for the instrumental rationality of commodity exchange in markets. In order to perform instrumental tasks effectively, human actors must not only be committed to the purposes intrinsic to them, but also committed to avoiding extrinsic and distracting purposes. Thus in addition to the particular facilitating emotions which function to motivate instrumental action, such as pride in one's expertise and skill, satisfaction in one's work, distaste for waste of materials and time, and so on, there is also a need for emotional distance from potentially disruptive emotions which a wider involvement with others might bring. That is to say that in instrumental rationality there is a need for what Simmel called the blasé feeling. All of these emotions remain necessary in but background to instrumental rationality, seldom acknowledged as emotions, and, if referred to at all, likely to be labeled as attitudes.

The failure to distinguish between emotion which is foregrounded and emotion which is backgrounded leads to the entirely arbitrary and ultimately absurd view that emotion is only disruptive of rational pursuits, indeed any pursuit. It is especially ironic that Gilbert Ryle, who was devoted to challenging the Cartesian legacy in philosophy, supposes that: "we do not . . . act purposively because we experience feelings; we experience feelings . . . because we are inhibited from acting purposively" (1949, p. 106). This is the view from the perspective of instrumental rationality; only those feelings which introduce purposes extrinsic to technical goals are characterized as emotions. Those feelings continuous with the technical tasks are thus by definition something other than emotion.

While the conventional opposition between rationality and emotion is impossible to defend, its persistence is supported by social representations of both reason and emotion. These representations emerge through the dominance of market instrumentalism, which, in coloring the conventional understanding of rationality, also limits the conventional conception of emotion, as we have seen. To leave unquestioned these conventional understandings or conceptualizations of rationality and

emotion is to leave each of them and the relations between them distorted.

The representation of emotion under conditions of instrumental rationality ignores precisely the backgrounded emotions which are continuous with the operations of pervasive social institutions. Conventional representations of emotion are blind to these emotions. These emotions render especially absurd the idea that reason and emotion are opposed.