

MODERNITY AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-
UNDERSTANDING

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates central issues of self-understanding in modern western society. Given that modernity is defined and grasped in terms of the postulate of human autonomy these issues are central to sociological theory and the historical sociology of modern society.

The development of self-understanding is presented, firstly, through a study of the nature and development modern rational science. The success of the natural sciences since the seventeenth century has provided a particular model of rational investigation which has proved influential for every form of knowledge in modern society. The thesis is concerned primarily with the impact of the scientific world view on human self-understanding in terms of the content of its view of nature rather than its methodological position. The social dimension of scientific knowledge comes into prominence in this perspective as does the relation of science to both pre-modern and novel non-rational forms of human self-understanding.

The continuity of modern and pre-modern conceptions of human being is investigated through a discussion of the historical transformation of religion in western society. As distinct from any view of modernity as a process of secularization, a focus on existential aspects of self-understanding makes clear both the persistence and novel form of religious traditions for modern self-understanding.

These larger historical studies are followed by two detailed monographic works in which issues of modern psychology are treated in detail. The writings of Kierkegaard and Freud are dealt with as rich sources of distinctive psychological insight into modern experience which indicate alternative traditions of modernity. In different ways and from quite different perspectives Kierkegaard and Freud focus on the contradictory and paradoxical character of modern selfhood and personal identity.

The thesis is further illustrated by an outline of an historical sociology of the body-image.

DECLARATION

I certify that the publications submitted in this thesis have not previously been submitted for any higher degree. The research and writing are entirely my own work carried out under my own supervision.

Harvie Ferguson

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS:

- Ferguson, Harvie (1983) *Essays in Experimental Psychology* London, Macmillan.
- (1990) *The Science of Pleasure: Cosmos and Psyche in the Bourgeois World View* London, Routledge.
- (1992) *Religious Transformation in Western Society, The End of Happiness* London, Routledge.
- (1994) *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology* London, Routledge.
- (1996) *The Lure of Dreams: Sigmund Freud and the Construction of Modernity* London, Routledge.
- (1997) *Destino Della Felicità: trasformazione Religiosa Nella Società Occidentale* Genoa, ECIG.

ARTICLES:

- Ferguson, Harvie (1983) 'Reclusione e Infanzia: Aspetti di Un'Utopia', *Rassegna Italiana de Sociologia*, vol. XXIV, no.3.
- (1989) 'Sigmund Freud and the Pursuit of Pleasure', in C. Rojek (ed.) *Leisure for Leisure: Critical Essays*, London, Macmillan.
- (1992) 'Watching the World Go Round: Atrium Culture and the Psychology of Shopping', in R. Shields (ed.) *Lifestyle Shopping*, London, Routledge.
- (1997) 'Me and My Shadows: on the accumulation of body-images in western society Part One - The Image and the Image of the Body in Pre-modern Society', *Body and Society*, vol.3, no.3.
- (1997) 'Me and My Shadows: on the accumulation of body-images in western society Part Two - Corporeal Forms of Modernity', *Body and Society*, vol.4, no.3.
- (1998) 'Sigmund Freud and the Dynamics of Modernity', in Anthony Elliott (ed) *Freud 2000*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

MODERNITY AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-UNDERSTANDING

INTRODUCTION

SCOPE AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE APPROACH

The thesis here submitted consists in a selection of the author's publications (four books and two papers) which illustrate the nature and development of his personal research undertaken over a period of fifteen years in relation to the study of 'the experience of modernity'.

The thesis is best understood in the context of the intellectual and practical problem of self-understanding in modern society. Modernity poses the question of self-understanding in an urgent and peculiar manner; indeed, the problem of self-understanding, it is argued, is not primarily a question of acquiring 'knowledge' but constitutes, rather, the central reality of human life in modern society. It is inherent in the character of modern society that human beings regard themselves as historical and social beings; that is, within broad limits, as collectively and individually *self-defining*. Self-understanding, thus, becomes an integral part of the process of social construction.

Each published work explores a specific aspect of this theme and develops particular lines of argument which, taken together, constitutes a distinctive and coherent perspective on this problem. This perspective, in turn, can be located in relation it to two familiar and well developed sociological conceptions of modernity: That deriving from the work of Emile Durkheim and given its most significant (and different) current forms by Michel Foucault and Hans Blumenberg, and that deriving from the work of Max Weber which finds its most authoritative current formulation in the writings of Jürgen Habermas.

These approaches differ in a number of respects but each is preoccupied with the problem of characterising and sufficiently accounting for the character of modernity as a distinctive 'type' of society and culture. However, whereas the Durkheimian tradition, particularly in its contemporary French 'structuralist' form, seeks to define and understand modernity in terms of a set of synchronic conventional relations, the Weberian tradition advances a specifically historical conception of modernity. The issues of discontinuity versus continuity, diachronic versus synchronic coherence and possible ways of relating these perspectives, are central to the analysis of modernity proposed in the submitted thesis.

The submitted works also form a coherent and extended example of the use of traditions of systematic thought and reflection (central aspects of the natural sciences, psychology and philosophy) within modern society as material for what

might be termed an *ethnography of the present*. The development of modern science and some central aspects of philosophy are consistently treated as revelatory of the most general conditions of modern experience. Thus, as distinct from any reductive explanatory approach, these aspects of modern thought are understood symptomatically, as providing an implicit but systematic and comprehensive account of everyday experience.

A further distinctive feature of these works is provided by their focus on a range of specifically 'subjective' states and feelings. The world-view and interpretive schemata of modernity are approached through existential states such as pleasure, excitement, melancholy, happiness, dreams, etc. rather than in terms of the distancing abstractions of cognitive 'explanatory' structures. Indeed, it is one of the basic contentions of the thesis that the latter are to be grasped in terms of the former. This is not intended as a simple inversion of a more conventional history of ideas approach, or as an appeal to modern 'irrationalism' (which, certainly, is as pervasive and characteristic of the present as is its rational traditions); these existential conditions are understood, rather, as themselves aspects of social relations which inform and found *both* rational and irrational forms of life and constitute the substance, and not merely the context, of all discourses of modernity.

WHAT IS MODERNITY?

Few concepts have so come to dominate the human sciences, in all the variety of their historical, literary and cultural offspring as has that of 'modernity'. We are invited to regard every aspect of contemporary human reality as specific aspects of its distinctive and all-embracing presence. *Modern* society, *modern* life, *modern* times, the *modern* world, *modern* science, *modern* art, *modern* music etc. are all more or less arbitrary differentiations of the defining common term through which each takes form and becomes meaningful. Yet there is little agreement over the meaning and significance of this common term, far less of the presumed reality to which it refers. How can such a promiscuous concept engender the clarity and analytic precision required of a genuine understanding of our experience? Does it not, rather, serve only further to obscure and confuse matters already pregnant with bewildering complexity?

There are, certainly, many competing definitions and conceptualisations of 'modernity', 'modernism' and a host of cognate terms. Significantly, modernity refers *both* to the presumed neutrality of a discourse which seeks to describe all that is characteristic and distinctive in the human experience of the world which has been formed through a continuous process of development and expansion out of western Europe since the Renaissance, *and* to a series of partisan discourses - literary, scientific and spiritual as well as openly political - through which these distinctive characteristics have been defended, criticised and legitimated. Modernity is at once history, concept and ideology. Indeed, the richly polyvalent texture of the term 'modernity' is itself atypical of modernity as a process of social and cultural differentiation, and of the specific discourses which reflect upon this process, all of which tend towards specific, limited and precise meanings. And it is just this overlooked and paradoxically non-modern generality that makes 'modernity' as a term so vital and controversial. Generously accommodating ambiguities and contradictions the most comprehensive notion of 'modernity' has been spared the ruthless clarification of scientific conceptualisation and has, as a result, remained at the centre of contemporary intellectual and political life.

Autonomy

This is not to say that the idea of modernity is wholly arbitrary or incoherent. Running through the at times confusing variety of its uses and references it is nonetheless possible to detect a common insistence on grasping the *novel* aspects of contemporary experience as the key to understanding every form of modern life. Modernity is the culture of modern society (perhaps we should now say specifically of modern western society), and in its broadest sense refers to the unprecedented forms of human self-understanding that have developed along with, and as aspects of, modern society. And modern society is traced through these acts of self-conscious reflection to a decisive rupture (variously identified as the discovery of the New World, the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, Industrialisation, Urbanisation...) in which were born all its unique characteristics. Modernity, that is to say, *defines itself*, and does so by self-consciously detaching itself both from nature and from its own 'pre-history'. The modern world, thus, must be grasped through forms of understanding which are themselves uniquely modern in form (Blumenberg 1983). These quite general characteristic of modernity, which first come to maturity in the writings of Hegel, are expressed in an appropriate way in every discourse which calls itself 'modern' (Habermas 1987).

Dynamics

Motion is central to the experience of modernity. Modern reality, in contrast to pre-modern western conceptions of the world as a changeless essence of things distributed in a fixed spatial order, reveals itself through continuous movement.

The hierarchical structure of pre-modern, and particularly feudal, societies was hypostatized as a cosmological plan in which everything was ideally located 'in its proper place'. Motion, other than the regular circular motion that characterised perfect heavenly bodies, was conceptualised as 'unnatural' or 'forced'. In terms of local displacements of matter it seemed obvious that all such motion was the outcome of some external and continually acting force. Put simply, it seemed evident that nothing moves unless it is pushed (Koyré 1978). In this scheme of things nature and society intertwined in a singular chain of being in which the existence of reality at one level was dependent upon a more perfect reality located at a higher and more inclusive level; a hierarchy terminating in necessary Being

which was the uncaused cause of all movement and the source of all authority (Gilson 1936, Lovejoy 1936). Socially, as well as naturally, the mass of the people were bound to particular communities and moved from them (for example in the conduct of war) only as a consequence of the external action of a superior individual.

Modernity, in the sense of the culture and typical forms of human self-understanding that emerged from the collapse of feudalism and developed along with the establishment of market relations, the general production of commodities, the centralization of the state and the growth of bureaucratic social organizations, may be said to begin with the assertion that the human being ought to possess the freedom and capacity for *self-movement*. This is a central *motif* of The Italian Renaissance revival of Platonism which in many ways anticipated the later development of modernity in its full sense (Burckhardt 1921). Pico della Mirandallo's oration *On the Dignity of Man* viewed motion as immanent in the human condition, directly reflecting a moral and religious status which, while fallen from a state of grace, was neither without hope nor the means of self-improvement (Cassirer 1963, Copenhaver and Schmitt 1992). Made in 'the image and likeness' of God it was inconceivable that the human creature should be so deprived of perfection as to inhabit a motionless world in which all change was confined to the superficial transience of generation and decay (Trinkaus 1970).

The Copernican Revolution was inspired by, and extended, Italian humanism into a more general theory of 'natural' motion which found its expression not only in new dynamical theories of nature but, equally, in dynamical conceptions of the human individual. Montaigne, thus, characterised the human soul in terms of its continuous inner restlessness, a view echoed in different ways in equally pioneering expressions of modernity found in the writings of Descartes and Hobbes (Starobinski 1985, Spragens 1973). The development of modernity, however, was marked not simply by a general acceptance of the natural immanence of motion but by (at least) three novel and distinctive conceptions of motion: These can be characterised briefly as *inertial*, *developmental*, and *oscillatory* dynamics.

Firstly, Copernicanism found its logical outcome in the concept of *inertia* (Koyré 1978; Blumenberg 1987). This development represented a dramatic shift in the perspective and assumptions of pre-modern traditions. The new view held that 'absolute rest' if it is conceivable at all is nothing but a theoretical limit to the natural condition of rectilinear motion. Again, to put it simply, things move and

continue to move until they are acted upon by an external force. It is not movement which is problematical, but interruptions and changes of motion which require explanation. In its turn the concept of inertial motion provided a foundation for two distinctively modern tendencies within psychology. Firstly, as part of the minimal assumptions of a reductionist science for which all reality was conceivable as 'matter in motion', it was directly transferred to psychology as the underlying dynamism of the psychic apparatus. And, secondly, by metaphorical extension inertia played an even larger role as the *intention* of the human agent.

Secondly, a notion of *self-development*, which as 'self-fashioning' was equally central to Renaissance humanism (Greenblatt 1980), also developed within modernity as a description of rather different aspects of its inner dynamism. If human beings were empowered to move themselves then, for a world not wholly liberated from a logic of place, it followed that every movement was simultaneously the expression of a corresponding inner-movement of the soul. This movement, continuous and unavoidable, was self-willed rather than inertial and was immanent to the human in a unique way. It was this form of self-movement which was later given a characteristic ethical direction in the notion of *Bildung* as the realisation in harmonious action of an implicit and unique selfhood. At the same time notions of growth and development, of a general process of unfolding of natural forms and their realisation in mature physiognomic structures, played an important part in the emergence of the Romantic movement in both its literary and scientific aspects (Nyhart 1995). The dynamics of development and self-development played an important part in modern psychology; again directly in the understanding of the growth of psychic forms, and indirectly through the metaphor of *desire*.

Thirdly, emerging at a somewhat later period, but of increasing significance for the understanding of the most advanced aspects of contemporary life as well as the most elemental processes of nature, a conception of what might be termed *oscillatory* motion provided another distinctive perspective on the dynamics of modernity. Oscillatory movements are typically unpredicted changes of state of some elementary body; an abrupt gain or loss of energy. In terms of an underlying rational model of nature they have proved recalcitrant to the mechanization of the world picture which had received its greatest impetus from the success of Newtonian science (Dijksterhuis 1961). Such movements could only be assimilated to the more practical sciences by considering them on a large scale, as statistical

regularities that concealed a bewildered surrender to the mechanism of chance. As a model of human dynamism oscillatory motion again suggests a complex image. The individual psyche, as an elementary body, may be subject to a sudden access of energy or fall into a state of lethargy. Oscillatory movements, however, in relation to human experience are more generally conceived as reversible modalizations of 'normal' consciousness, among which the rhythmic movement between sleeping and waking is the most obvious and perhaps the most important. Such motion in principle does not involve either displacement or self-expression. Additionally, in terms of the immediate content of human experience, oscillatory transitions may be comprehended as *wishes*.

The development of these conceptions of dynamics distinguish and link together the most important social, cultural and psychological aspects of modernity.

Subject and Object

Modernity, that is to say, is the consciousness of the human world as a self-generated, autonomous and dynamic realm of meaningful experience. The immanence of the human world reveals itself primarily in the continuous process of *self-movement*. The human world continually creates itself from itself; it does not 'rest' on some mysterious natural substratum, or 'emanate' from some equally mysterious divine principle. Freed from all earlier forms of subjugation modernity comes to itself in perpetual inner-motion; as a continuous process of restless self-production. Modernity, in short, is conceived to be an endless project of human self-realisation.

General characterisations of modernity as a radical break from the past - implying human autonomy, self-movement and novelty - were immensely influential in shaping every field of human action as well as every aspect of human thought. Such characterisations, however, gain their meaning only in relation to non-modern societies and cultures; so that any understanding of experience in terms of 'modernity' is always liable to provoke a contrary perspective. Does not novelty and autonomy only come into being against a background of continuity with and dependence upon the past and its traditions? The notion of modernity all too easily calls up images of the pre-modern and reinstates (albeit as ideal possibilities) the very reality it was designed to replace. The most decisive attempts to clarify the character of Modernity, therefore, rather than rely upon general

conceptualisations, have sought to define it implicitly through sets of relational terms *each* of which is uniquely modern. The dynamics of modernity can then be analysed 'internally' in terms of the relations among elements which belong exclusively to *its* world.

The boldest attempt to do this is to be found in the philosophy of René Descartes. His method of universal doubt might itself be regarded as a specific form of the self-consciousness of modernity as an immanent principle of movement (Judovitz 1988). Doubt is the radical starting point which will found a wholly modern philosophy. And what is discovered to be certain is simply the persistence of self-awareness upon which the continuous flux of experience is registered, and, given with this certainty, the distinction between subject and object. Subject and object, thus, are categorical novelties and their differentiation has remained central to the elaboration of every subsequent notion of modernity. Indeed, we might well be tempted to *define* modernity as a world view and a related set of social practices for which the distinction between object and subject is fundamental, as compared to the pre-modern or the non-modern which might be conceived as a world view and related social practices for which such a distinction has little or no significance.

PLEASURE

The general framework for, and initial statement of, this project is outlined in *The Science of Pleasure: Cosmos and Psyche in the Bourgeois World View*. Here the rise of rational science is viewed as central to the entire development of modern self-understanding; at the same time, however, science is not itself regarded as immediately comprehensible. The traditions of modern rational science, that is to say, mediate experience and do so in a distinctive manner. Modern understandings of nature (indeed, the modern construction of the category 'Nature') can be understood as a projection, and even as an expression, of specific forms of social relation and experience. What is involved here, is the projection of the autonomy of the human as a metaphorical model for the understanding of nature.

The modern rational comprehension of nature as a systematic unity and as a realm of universality and necessity is, furthermore, reflected back upon the 'inner world' of human subjectivity as an understanding of *its* essential characteristics:

The bourgeois world view, approached in terms of its content rather than its form, is first of all a qualitative division between 'cosmos', as the order of the material world, and 'psyche', as the structure of experience. Neither can fully be understood when considered in isolation. (*Pleasure* p.2)

This understanding is foundational for the entire project. Beginning with that aspect of modernity which seems wholly independent of human experience - a reconstruction made possible through the rigorous practice of 'detachment' - an alternative interpretation is offered in which science is re-assimilated to social life. The detachment of science, it is claimed, is substantively misleading but formally apposite in that it accurately encodes human claims to autonomy. The understanding of nature is, in a different perspective, another form of human self-understanding.

By grasping science as founded on a specifically modern experience of human autonomy and independence from arbitrary authority the Enlightenment ideology of science is given a more secure historical content. What emerges, however, is a new understanding of the intimate relation between experience and the most systematic forms of scientific reflection. Modern science is 'modern' to the extent that it elaborates a world view predicated on the human experience of the world; and, more precisely, where that human experience is immediately grasped in terms of an active 'ego'. The classical modern sciences are 'egoistic' and analyse the world

from the viewpoint (made absolute) of the isolated observing eye and thinking mind of the scientist. However, as the ego is 'felt' in its immediacy as a continuous transition in pleasure and unpleasure, modern rational detached and objective science can be grasped as a 'science of pleasure'.

The intention of this work, therefore, is not to claim (which is contemporary superstition) that because it cannot live up to its claims of detachment and objectivity, science is 'non-rational' or 'irrational'; but, rather, that just because it has succeeded in fulfilling these claims it most fully and accurately represents the real character of modern experience. And, therefore, as opposed to the view that science depends upon the repression of pleasure (in the most general sense in the systematic exclusion of immediate experience and 'feeling' from scientific cognition) it, in fact, depends upon the fullest recognition of human immediacy. It is intimately human because it is detached; and detached because it is genuinely human; a reciprocal relation which is uniquely modern.

This distinctive perspective opens-up fresh ways of relating the rational and the irrational in the development of modern society. In both synchronic and diachronic terms modernity has been allied to a narrow definition of rational science. Rather than understanding the specific character of science as an aspect of the development of modernity, in fact, historians and sociologists (as well as scientists) have tended to identify modernity with science. This has the result of forcing all 'non-rational' elements of modernity into anachronistic survivals of science as the core of the modern world. The approach used here, however, is to recontextualise the scientific tradition and analyse it as part of a much more general movement of modernity itself; one in which a variety of non-scientific and even non-rational aspects are inherent.

As a synchronic structure the notion of modernity was constructed in large part through a process of excluding what is regarded as non-rational and confining it to the 'premodern' as superstition, magic, religion or simple ignorance; this was essentially the tactic of the Enlightenment and its continuation into nineteenth-century rationalism. The non-rational 'Other' was variously construed, but, for example, as the child, the primitive or the lunatic, was deeply ambivalent. What is at issue here, whoever, is the continuous interrelation of the a self-conscious rational tradition with images of the non-rational world which is essentially related to it. The non-rational continually threatens to erupt into normal social life. The permanent possibility of 'falling' into the non-rational (particularly for advanced

modern society) both attracts and repels; an ambiguity captured by the Kierkegaardian term 'dread'. It most commonly appears, however, as the absolutely unconfined character of *Fun*; in a romantic form as the limitless possibilities of human imagination, playfulness and self-conceptualization (if not of action in the world) in principle limit the self-expanding character of modern rationality. Each stage of modernity requires a fresh definition of this boundary and fresh attempts to remove the 'contamination' of the non-rational, from its characteristic mechanisms and procedures.

The diachronic narrative reveals a complex and changing relationship between the rational and the non-rational. The early modern period is concentrated upon the definition of the rational in relation to the transcendental - to *Happiness* - which is vigorously expelled into the pre-modern. The pre-modern world is then conceptualized in terms of what the modern is not; an immediate felt world of symbolic unity, totality and hierarchy. The classical period of modernity is described through the central categories of the science of *Pleasure* - the rational ego. The twentieth century has witnessed a profound shift in perspective; or rather the breakdown of a the classical perspective in favour of a multiplicity of divergent and even conflicting viewpoints. This involves, simultaneously a breaking apart of the ego and the individualistic standpoint. The contemporary period of *Excitement* founded upon an oscillatory dynamics, multi-perspectivism and the transparent conventionalisation of social life.

The central category of the scientific revolution is *Pleasure*, but scientific rationality faces challenges from a number of rooted heterodoxies:

Fun, the most radically 'acosmic' of these heterodox realities thus opposes, by virtue of its absolute inner freedom, all fixed and ordered relations. It challenges the very possibility that reality might be formed into a 'cosmos'... In addition to repressing the dangerous libertinism of fun, the bourgeois world view has overcome a longing for *Happiness*... an anachronistic fascination with transcendence... Scientific rationality faces challenges as it were from the future as well as the past. Modern science and modern psychology are filled with a variety of non-classical aberrations... all the harder to deal with in being episodic and unpredictable *Excitement* (*Pleasure* p.3).

These terms 'constitute inner worlds of meaning... each is associated with a different apparatus of thought (order of signs, hierarchy of symbols, system of causes, network of images), and different intellectual preoccupations (description, exposition, explanation, interpretation) and each is expressive of a different social relation (dependence, subordination, market freedom, leisure) (*Pleasure* p. 263).

Each, additionally, is characteristic of a particular period in the development of modernity; a particular combination of psychical, social and ideological elements which can be readily grasped in terms of these general states of consciousness or orientation to the world.

HAPPINESS

The self-understanding of modernity as autonomy and novelty - as a radical break with the past - is complemented by a larger view of (however transformed) specifically ancient and premodern elements in modern experience. This issue is approached in the thesis in terms of a consideration of the central place of secularization in sociological accounts of the origin and development of modern society, which constitutes the fundamental subject matter of *Religious Transformation in Western Society: the End of Happiness*.

In a variety of ways classical sociology remained close to the Enlightenment project in its rejection and interpretation of religion. Indeed, sociological theory to a large extent emerged as an extension of the Enlightenment critique of religion. But, whereas, eighteenth-century *philosophes* had identified organised religion as the institutional source of the ignorance and error which was the major obstacle to the unimpeded self-expansion of reason in society, the sociological approach was concerned, additionally, to account for the ideological and practical effectiveness of this institutional complex. Above all, in the sustained and wide-ranging studies of Max Weber, a view of the religious character and religious development of western society emerged in a magisterial fashion.

For Weber western society was characterized, among other things, by *both* a distinctive religious tradition and by a process of immanent rationalization.. The Enlightenment opposition between reason and religion is the background to his sustained analysis in which, in terms of the large-scale development of the west, religion and religiously inspired groups are viewed as the carriers of religion *and* of a general process of rationalization which characterises the cultural development of pre-modern as well as of modern society.

This background of continuity is vital to Weber and is firmly located in his conception of western religion as a coherent structure of belief and practice developing around minimal religious assumptions: monotheism, the transcendental character of God and salvation of the individual soul as the religious aim. In this context the difficult issue is to account for the distinctiveness of modern society; does it develop simply through the negation of all religious forms and the establishment of a self-sustaining secular world, or, is this secular world itself in some way sustained by the continuity of religious traditions?

Weber's response to this problem appears ambivalent. Religious traditions - in a deep sense of a search for ultimate 'meaning' in the world of human action - remain, but are transformed in such a way that, in fact, they become self-undermining and self-negating. The Reformation re-emphasised the primitive religious assumptions of western religion in a decisive way; but in the context of renewed demands for rational theological systematization of religious belief and practice in relation to these assumptions. The result was a wholly 'meaningless' religion in the sense of breaking every possible bond between human action and divine will. All 'magical' elements were rigorously rejected, leaving the believer in a state of 'unprecedented inner loneliness'.

Weber's much discussed thesis, it should be remembered, is a specific aspect of his more general view of the nature of rationalization processes in which modernity is understood as a development which culminates in the freeing of these processes from the protective shell of religious belief and practice.

This sophisticated restatement and analysis of the Enlightenment view leaves no place for religion in the modern world other than as a matter of private, interior, belief or feeling. It is, of course, just in this form that religion not only persists, but takes on new significance and importance, so that what appears to be a critique of religion is, at the same time, a subtle analysis of its real possibility in modern society.

Religion is interiorised and thus becomes (apparently) insignificant in terms of any direct impact on the larger-scale social process shaping the modern world. In taking on the role of an ever-present consolation and therapeutic inner consciousness, however, the western religious tradition is insinuated into the most compelling struggles of modernity as the restless search for selfhood and personal identity. Weber's views, in fact, are developed from a conception of religion which is decisively modern. He approaches religion through a theory of meaning. It is religion which provides the ultimate grounding and the context for any understanding of social action. But modernity seems to be an erosion of ultimate meaning in favour of a mechanical system of means-ends relations in which the 'ends' of action have become inherently meaningless.

The tension between a religious world view and the totally disenchanting conception of modernity is unresolved in Weber's work. Some of the ambivalence inherent in his approach may be relieved, however, by regarding religion from a

non-rational and 'acosmic' perspective - as the continuous presence of elements of life which cannot fully be assimilated to any means-ends schema, or to any system of meaning. In this perspective religion might be viewed (again adopting a modern sense - we cannot do otherwise) as the demand and wish for *happiness*. Now, while happiness in modern society has a distinctive social and cultural meaning (it is individuated, privatised etc.) it continues 'to bear the incorruptible value of reality itself' (*Happiness* p.1) and continues to play a fundamental role in the operation of social life in a way in which more specific systems of religious 'belief' or 'morality' does not.

This is the basic theme of *The End of Happiness* which seeks to provide a study of the general features of modernity complementary to that of *The Science of Pleasure*. The focus is on the significance of acosmic elements in modern society, and their relation to the long-term development of the west. Here the continuous development of rationalizing forces is viewed as antithetical to religious developments, rather than as a mutually reinforcing tradition. It is not, however, a restatement of the Enlightenment critique. The 'senseless happiness' of religion is not founded on the revelation of 'ultimate meaning', but upon the seizing of a groundless faith or trust in reality. St Augustine's formulation 'Happiness consists in the enjoyment of a good than which there is nothing better, which we call the chief good... God is the essence of Happiness' defines an existential position peculiar and fundamental to western society throughout its development:

Happiness is a term used exclusively in relation to the experience of a transcending reality, and ought not to be confused with any limited, or conditional, or relative enjoyments of whatever sort (*Happiness* p.x)

In this sense the institutional development of religion, in theology, in the church and in the state, operates to obscure and deaden the original spiritual impulse of the west.

The religious history of the west can then be viewed, in quasi-Hegelian terms, as a succession of particular forms of institutionalization in which spirit is 'officially' embodied but, in fact, denied. In this way the specific character of religion is not subsumed under a shifting and reductive framework of non-religious relations.

In this context the revolutionary character of western religion is emphasised. Early Christianity is appears first as *Faith*, as a freely dispensed and groundless trust in God. As Ernst Troeltsch made plain for sociologists, Christianity must first be

understood 'as a religious and not a social phenomenon... with its own inner dialectic'. The transformation of primitive faith into a sophisticated theological and practical imperatives, it must be recognised, already constituted a profound shift in the 'meaning' of religion. As a set of specific *Beliefs* about the nature of the world the rationalisation of western religious ideas constituted the most profound rupture with its own spiritual origins (Harnack 1899). The later emergence of a characteristically *Moral* orientation towards everyday life, equally, represented the accretion of a further layer of social and political meaning. These transitions and transformations are traced through an orthodox narrative structure of the development of western society.

Modernity, then, emerges through the destruction of such institutional supports as the recovery in a new way of the primitive hope of early Christianity. Modernity is marked, above all, by an access of *Passion*. Western religion (again to speak in Hegelian language) empties itself into the form of the modern ego, animates and directs its ceaseless struggle for self-identity and authentication. It is just the secular character of modern society which provides the supporting cultural context for such a religious transformation. Religion becomes inward and individualised. This, as Weber pointed out, is the crucial aspect of the Reformation, and affected modern culture in every aspect. The religious character of modernity as passion is illustrated, particularly, through the writings of Pascal, Rousseau and Kierkegaard.

In freeing itself from the institutional context of pre-modern religion the demand for happiness in fact fixes itself firstly upon the absolute freedom of an interior self. The anxiety which this provokes (and which Kierkegaard above all others seized as the fundamental reality of the present) was relieved not only through the development of puritan ethics - Weber's thesis is specific to the early period of modernity and he himself points to the problem of the 'iron cage' of modern bureaucratic rationality - in the longer term anxiety was relieved by recourse to material acquisition and consumption. 'Value' - crystallised in the commodity - was consumed, not as a secular good, but as the spiritual form of the age. It is just the 'material' character of modern life which provides, paradoxically, the only route to salvation. The commodity becomes sublime - an epiphany which exercises an irresistible fascination over the apparently secularised psyche.

The contemporary transformation of religion turns the notion of the 'spiritual' inside out. Rather than being a non-material and 'higher' value; it becomes identified with everything material and *Sensuous*.

The modern religious disposition no longer exerts itself in the search for a hidden and obscure reality. It longs neither for the mystical simplicity of preconceptual being, nor for the dogmatic clarity of an individuated inner-self. It gives way, rather, to the overflowing abundance of things, and rediscovers a primitive trust in their immediacy as the source of an endlessly replenished store of value (*Happiness* p.203)

This insight (due to Nietzsche), it is claimed, provides a significant point of contact between Weber's and Durkheim's otherwise divergent sociologies of religion.

MODERN PSYCHOLOGIES

The development of human self-understanding in modern society is given a sharper focus through a detailed study of the foundational figures of modern 'psychology' in its broadest sense; that is through the contrasting figures of Kierkegaard and Freud. The first grasping the contradictory and paradoxical character of modern selfhood in terms of melancholy, the latter articulating novel features of experience in the most advanced societies in terms of its dreamlike character.

Melancholy

Søren Kierkegaard's writings are a rich source of insight into the psychological implications of modernity and is the central focus of *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology*.

Modernity denotes a cultural and institutional actualisation of the world in terms of the 'ego' and its 'experience'. In one sense this seems to be the logical consequence of the initial postulate of human self-autonomy. The orthodox tendency (in terms both of an enlightenment materialism and romanticism of the 'interiority' of the human subject) has been to understand human reality in terms of an isolated ego; an interpretation which is the psychic counterpart to the development of market relations (Macpherson 1962, Unger 1975). This has, for the most part, been given an optimistic and positive interpretation; an insistence on the free, creative, and self-fulfilling character of human being as individual self-identity. At the same time, however, and from the beginning of modernity, the obligation of self-identity and self-development has struck some observers as logically paradoxical and, if taken seriously, existentially burdensome. A critical tradition of modern psychology having its origins in Montaigne, Erasmus and Burton, finds its fullest development in Kierkegaard's exploration of melancholy as the inherent character of personal experience in modern society.

For this tradition every aspect of modernity is coloured by 'sorrow without cause' (Burton). The undertow of melancholy, however, 'is more than a pervasive mood' and has 'become the defining tone of its every experience'. Kierkegaard, indeed, recognises something melancholic 'in the very possibility of experience' (*Melancholy* p.xvi). The modern individual, however active and superficially optimistic, becomes introverted, morose and despairing. The ascendancy of

melancholy is a kind of psychological accompaniment to the general process of secularisation and disenchantment. The more secular, the more melancholic. The assumption (evident, for example, in the writings of Pascal) seems to be that as individuals are isolated and atomised in the infinite and formless 'space' of modernity they lose their bearings, feel 'lost', estranged from the world and directionless. Kierkegaard, however, introduces quite another dimension into the analysis of modern experience as melancholy. Far from being an index of secularisation; it is the very core of every genuinely human - and therefore transcending - sense of self. It is just in being 'without cause' that melancholy reveals itself as authentically human and ultimately irreducible to any conceptual or systematic content. Melancholy, paradoxically, is the form of disillusionment which obstructs the complete triumph of disillusionment.

Kierkegaard develops this insight into melancholy into a comprehensive but non-systematic account of the possibilities inherent in what he terms the Present Age. More than that he understands modernity in terms both of its immanent tendency towards despair and the self-movement of despair; and in relation to transcending possibilities of non-despairing self-affirmation. His psychology of modernity, thus, is inherently a religious psychology; one, that is to say, which is conditioned by a recognition of the continuing demand for *Happiness*.

Kierkegaard's writings, in their aesthetic variety and philosophical penetration, provide a series of possible 'life-views' for each of which a certain existential validity in the Present Age might be claimed. There emerges throughout the authorship a particular focus on the discontinuities and conflicts within and among such possibilities, giving rise to a vivid impression of the experience of modernity as one of continuous fragmentation and pervasive personal unease. The writings as a whole (if indeed they might be said to constitute a whole) provide the most incisive account of the difficulties of modern selfhood. They reveal the extent to which the demand for human self-autonomy simultaneously imposes upon the human subject an onerous and ultimately insupportable obligation of self-understanding; an unending process of self-discovery and self-development.

The inner-character of modernity, for Kierkegaard, might be expressed in the context of this thesis as the 'paradox of selfhood'. Modernity is established in the view of human beings as both autonomous and individuated. These, however, are the very conditions (though not the efficient causes) of melancholy. Melancholy, when seized upon as the real content of human experience, is deepened into

despair and becomes the Archimedean point through which the psyche is transformed. This transformation has the potential both to 'deepen' despair (in the formation of an ever more concrete self-identity) and to overcome despair in a recognition of the self as authentic only in relation to transcending and absolute constraints. Human immanence, fully realised, results in human transcendence.

These themes are explored through a detailed examination of the full range of Kierkegaard's writings in an attempt to clarify both the central structural features of the classical modern 'ego' and to understand the process of its own inner-dissolution. Kierkegaard's writings, it is claimed, define the limits of bourgeois self-development and, therefore, the limits of one of the central traditions of human self-understanding in modern society.

Fin-de-Siècle Culture

The Newtonian cosmos was conceived as an infinite extension of formally empty space and time within which appeared a vast collection of things; bodies, each one of which was fundamentally identical to every other. Body is simply a quantity of self-adhering matter whose motion is governed by immanent and universal laws. Such bodies interact according to simple immanent laws of nature. The 'body-in-space' which Newton describes at the beginning of his *Principia* can be understood as an imaginative projection of the human body; that 'claustral' body (Elias 1978) fundamental to the development of modern society and culture. A body is an identifiable 'thing' known through its 'primary qualities', above all through its possession of mass, or what in social terms might be referred to as its 'dignity'.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, physical reality was coming to be described in terms of non-localised fields of force. Bodies, in this view, were qualitatively indistinguishable from space; local deformations or concentrations of space which gave rise to the phenomenal properties hitherto interpreted as the inherent qualities of substantially present matter. By the end of the century it was clear that, in the full understanding of the pioneering work of James Clerk Maxwell, a completely new foundation for the physical sciences had become imperative. What is significant here is less the specific character of this transition in the physical sciences than the observation that a similar 'dematerialisation' of nature was also apparent from other perspectives and that the new developments

which occurred in almost all fields of culture during the same period reveal complementary aspects of a new body-image and a new form of human embodiment which was to come into its own during the twentieth century.

The 'physical world', that is to say, was no longer conceived as made up of interacting bodies precisely located in space. And what imprecisely located bodies did exist displayed unpredictable changes of state. The unbroken continuity essential to a purely quantitative science, on closer examination, and in conformity with both the new statistical laws of thermodynamics and the Maxwell field-equations, proved to be something of a mirage. Elementary particles of matter could be assigned an energy level, depending for example on their temperature and state of motion, but, while for everyday observation such energy levels are assumed to be arbitrary points on an infinitely divisible scale, in reality such states were discrete multiples of absolutely invariant *quanta* of energy. An elementary body, it seemed, could be in a limited number of states, and might spontaneously change from one to another without any evident intervening mechanical 'cause'.

This non-localised and dematerialised conception of matter, as clearly as classical mechanics had mirrored the previously 'closed' bourgeois form of the ego, reflected its new 'open' and dissociated forms.

The implication was that, as no observable body could finally be 'pinned down' in space, neither could an observing ego. The relational mechanics of Mach, expressed one half of this equation quite clearly. All bodies were relatively unfixed in relation to all others; but somehow amidst them all a classical ego kept watch upon the kaleidoscope, arbitrarily changing its point of view, but retaining, from each position, the momentary integrity of a first-hand observer. Rather than imagine a body in space, we were obliged to imagine a series of bodies in relative motion to each other. But fully to take account of the psychological as well as the dynamical revolution required that we abandon even a temporary claim to omniscience. Einstein, thus, dissolving the observing ego as effectively as the 'matter' being observed, asks us, rather, to imagine two observer in relative motion to each other, and scientific explanation took the form of accounting for their differing observations, rather than in establishing an authoritative and objective statement of the 'facts'. A singular viewpoint was no longer realistic. The aim of science, therefore, was not to construct a theoretical model of a simple reality thought of as standing behind such observational variations - a true 'system of the world' in which all observational contradictions would be transcended - but

consisted in the normalisation of such differences themselves. This approach challenged not only the methodological naïveté of the positive sciences, it also subverted the romantic dream of reawakening nature's depths within us. 'Depth', the most alluring artifact of a singular point of view, proved to be as unfounded as 'location' or 'substance'.

Classical physics was founded on laws of conservation; quantity was preserved through all the transformations possible to matter in motion. For classical mechanics, thus, time had no meaning. Newton's equations, for example, were reversible relations of identity for which time is irrelevant. This gave to classical physics its sense of eternity; it treated the cosmos as a vast perpetual motion machine (Meyerson 1930). But the new physics, one branch of which (thermodynamics) came into existence in an attempt to apply classical models of nature to actual machinery, disclosed an unavoidable arrow of time in every physical change and saw in the continual interchange of physical quantities the shadow of cosmological decay. Energy is continually lost, every interaction exacts a price; entropy increases.

Similarly for social experience which is dislocated and fragmented beyond hope of recombination under the fictive unity of the ego, time has more significance than space. The elements of experience have nothing in common but duration. And the more intense the experience the more certainly does it confront the subject which is its momentary coeval with the certainty of once again passing into oblivion. Time, concentrated, so to speak, in the intensity of the moment, itself dissolves into insignificance.

And just as nature became dematerialised and its underlying continuity was sundered, so psychologists began to discover the strange and compelling phenomena of hysterical amnesia, double-consciousness and multiple personality. The fundamental problems of advanced modernity, thus, became problems of memory and the representation of time, rather than those of epistemology and the representation of space.

Dreams

Kierkegaard's writings are the culmination of a particular tradition of modern critical psychology and, through that tradition, define the immanent crisis of modernity itself. Fifty years after his literary/psychological analysis of modernity, and in the context of a new multi-perspectivism, Freud provided an alternative account of modernity which pointed beyond this crisis to a new valuation of 'non-egological' forms of experience. In this Freud grasped the novel features of the most advanced urban and cosmopolitan of European societies but, rather than understand them uniquely in terms of equally novel concepts, he turned for inspiration and insight to the roots of western civilization in ancient classical cultures. Thus, like Nietzsche, he sought to illuminate what are now frequently referred to as the origins of *post*-modernity through ancient examples (McCarthy 1994).

Interestingly, while Kierkegaard (by far the most radical of modern religious writers), developed an understanding of the present in terms of the present, Freud (the most innovative of twentieth-century secular psychologists) understood the present in terms of the past. His is essentially an historical psychology. Freud's work, indeed, though so widely commented upon has generally not been read in an historical context. An attempt at such a reading, and an effort to show the relevance of Freud's work to an understanding of the most developed features of 'postmodern' society, is given in *The Lure of Dreams: Sigmund Freud and the Construction of Modernity*.

Freud's psychology is part of the transformation in *fin-de-siècle* culture. Developing out of the positive sciences which had dominated nineteenth-century intellectual life, he provided an approach to self-understanding which, in common with literary and artistic as well as with scientific movements of the period, focused directly on the paradoxical and non-rational elements of experience. And in addition to modifying both classical bourgeois rationality and its Romantic counter-image he simultaneously articulated a novel psychology which more adequately reflected upon the most 'advanced' features of social life in late imperial Vienna.

Temperamentally and by conviction a classical modernist Freud, nonetheless, was sensitive to novel characteristics of his own times; characteristics which

undermined the classical 'ego' and redefined the central aspects of human experience and self-knowledge:

Freud's psychoanalytic writing provides a sensitive description of the central features of the experience of life in advanced modern societies. Though his own understanding of 'civilisation', his career and his private life were modelled on the unquestioned assumptions of classical bourgeois liberalism... Freud brought to life, in illness and in dreams, all those deformations of the ego which were symptomatic of 'styles of life' which had left those certainties behind. In his work, and in spite of the strenuous rearguard action he mounted in its defence, the ego dissolves into a series of loosely related processes from which it cannot be recovered other than by an arbitrary act of 'secondary revision' on the part of the analyst. (*Dreams* p.222).

The dream is central to modern self-understanding because it is the most common and familiar of 'non-egological' experiences of the world. And, increasingly, contemporary society induces and is predicated upon such 'dreamy' experiences of the world. In dreaming, as more spectacularly in hysteria, the ego can no longer stand apart from the continual flux and dynamic interaction of life.

Freud's originality lay in *interpreting* hysteria in the context of the 'deformations' of this local force-field. Bodily symptoms - anesthesia, hypersensitivity, paralysis, choking fits etc. - were not the mechanical outcome of a physical or psychic shock. Trauma, rather, was the occasion and not the efficient cause of the symptom which was formed in such a way as to *represent* the originating situation. The symptom was a bodily memory of an event which had been consciously forgotten. The hysteric, Freud suggested in an influential formulation, 'suffers from reminiscences'.

In an immediately meaningful way the new discontinuous and labile character of psychic connectedness (which was characteristic also of new scientific understanding of the inter-relatedness of nature) was expressed as *wishes*. Indeed, Freud's entire psychology of dreams is often (wrongly) reduced to a theory of wish-fulfillment, while, at the same time, this most distinctive feature of his approach has all too frequently been assimilated to the fundamentally different dynamical concepts of desire or intention. The wish is neither an intention (in the sense of being a rationally deliberative and self-interested act), nor is it a desire (in the sense of a dialectical relation of self-development and self-actualisation); it is, rather, an essentially *playful* form of subjectivity. Wishes are insincere and mobile, not because the wishing individual cannot 'make up her or his mind' (the typically

adult response to children's continually changing requests) but because the wish is not directly related to the ego, and, therefore, cannot express selfhood in either its intentional or passionate form. The wish, equally, is inconsequential; there is nothing of the 'self' at stake in its fulfillment. Wishing does not involve commitment or effort and does not require or establish any sense of direction or directedness in psychic life.

In the advanced modern societies dreaming (wishing/hysteria) ceases to be an 'abnormal' state and increasingly is assimilated to everyday experience. The continuing expansion of the market comes to depend on this 'normalization' of dreaming as an important mechanism for stimulating demand and consumption. The 'dreamy' state induced by over-stimulation reduces the psychic 'distance' between the individual and any particular 'object' charged with a transitory 'cathexis'. Contemporary consumerism is fueled less by wants, needs or desires than by mobile and superficial wishes (Williams 1982)

Of course the emergence of new psychic relations and forms did not imply the disappearance of the classical ego. Freud's psychology recognises the coexistence of 'classical' and 'postmodern' forms of self-understanding - egological and non-egological forms of experience - and resists the temptation of providing a theoretical synthesis which could only result in abstract unreality. No such 'higher' synthesis could do justice to the continuous movement, varied dynamical interrelations and qualitative modalizations which is the real character of experience in advanced modern societies.

The Body

The thesis is further applied and made specific in relation to a sociological history of the body-image; which reveals the continuously transforming character of modernity in terms of the immediate experience of the self in its bodily form - and the relation of these modern transformations to the long-term development of western culture and society.

To this end a schematic conceptual history of the western body-image is defined which seeks to establish fundamental periods and forms. Modernity is here characterised in terms both of specific and novel features, on the one hand, and through the accumulation of pre-modern forms, on the other.

The modern body-image emerges in the Renaissance with the transformation of the correspondence between *microcosm* and *macrocosm* from a symbolic to a metaphorical order. The human body was viewed as modeled in some way on the structure of the world, but stood apart from it, mirroring rather than participating directly in its harmonic relations. Modernity, in terms of the developing body-image, can then be understood as the development of an individuated and closed structure; an 'atom' of civil society (Elias 1978).

The body in the twentieth century, however, as an aspect of the transition to 'late-modernity or 'post-modernity', once again opened itself to the world, and became relationally defined through its participation in the extended 'force-fields' of contemporary social life. The body-image, particularly as described in the eclectic psychology of Paul Schilder and the encyclopedic psychopathology of Karl Jaspers was no longer identical with the material form of the body but, rather, continually dissolved and extended into the space surrounding it, or withdrew inwardly into an unknown interiority. The classical modern body-image might be thought of as 'shrink-wrapped' to the surface of the material body, while the contemporary body-image is much more loosely related to its purely corporeal form. This is now a quite familiar feature of everyday life. We frequently refer to our 'personal space' which is both more extended and variable than the severely localised space of bodily experience established during the classical period of modernity. The motor car, for example, further extended this space, while the telephone and new electronic media of communication do so with at present incalculable effects (Kern 1983). Developments which, it should be noted, resolve at a practical level long

running theoretical difficulties over the simultaneous necessity and impossibility within a Newtonian framework for a conception of 'action at a distance'.

Again it is important to recognize that not all contemporary experience takes on the characteristics of 'postmodernity'. Indeed, it is one of the important features of contemporary society that it makes available the entire history of the western body-image.

Thus while we gaze heavenward in silent contemplation of a striking comet we fall wholly within the world of the microcosmic body, when we fall in love we are completely in the grasp of an ancient body form and when we enter the market-place we do so as a closed 'body-in-space'. Our everyday experience is a continuous switching among such body-images each of which has its origin and draws its meaning and significance from particular and widely divergent historical periods. We respond in a quite thoughtless way to all these forms; the Ancient body-image, for example, becomes available as a language of the 'heart'. We have 'gut-feelings', 'heart stopping moments' and describe dramas as 'breath-taking'. At other times medieval body-images become uppermost. We are 'touched' by some monumental work of art or 'impressed' by some natural scene to the extent of becoming small and insignificant; helpless and impotent in the face of some great disaster, suddenly transfixed, unmoving, 'rooted the spot' for a moment we contemplate the world in a new way and, more than that, feel its presence in us as a strange and disconcerting intruder. We become light headed and directionless, disorientated - and suddenly we respond with our bodies and to our bodies as symbols rather than as signs. But the moment passes, an interior life opens up once again establishing the spontaneous flow of its own images as if from an independent and inexhaustible reservoir of experience. We recover ourselves as self-moving intentional objects, as bodies in space going about their daily business with weight, dignity, directionality; bodies into which all the inertial forces of modernity are gathered and upon which they are focused. Then we go shopping, or fall asleep and dream, and the body-image unfurls itself on to a new world. The antinomies of object and subject collapse on to the surface of the body, which becomes the fundamental reality for modern culture and gives rise to a body-image adapted to an age of consumption; fashionable, excitable, irritable, a moment within a dematerialised flux of experience. (*Body: Part Two* pp.27-8).

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

The understanding of modernity presented in the thesis is essentially historical. That is, firstly, it seeks to illuminate novel features of modern society and culture in terms of the transformation of pre-modern social forms, ideologies, cultures and, most significantly, modes of feeling. And, secondly, it suggests a conception of modernity as itself a process of immanent development. This gives rise, in fact, to a descriptive account of modernity in terms of three basic 'stages' each distinguished by a characteristic pattern of institutionalisation, cultural dynamics and form of self-understanding; the early modern (baroque), classical (bourgeois) modernity and contemporary society (postmodernity).

The early modern, or Baroque, can now be seen, after a long period of neglect, to have been as fundamental to the formation of modernity as was the Enlightenment from which, more generally, cultural historians have taken their point of departure.

Developing first and most completely in Spain the baroque is a culture incubated outside the main lines of historical development which, since the writings of Max Weber, have provided the basic points of reference for sociological investigations of the emergence of modern society. Spain during the first half of the seventeenth-century was remote from those forces which, in northern and western Europe, were bringing capitalism and its bourgeois sobriety into prominence by sweeping aside the surviving forms of feudalism. The Baroque was formed within a decaying empire; it reflected upon a society responsible for the discovery and naming of a new world, but one whose period of growth and world domination had been over for some time. Its aristocratic ruling class was no longer insulated from criticism, and the prevention of popular insurrection becomes the major preoccupation of the state. Indeed, 'Everything that belongs to the baroque emerges from the necessities of manipulating opinion and feelings on a broad public scale' (Maravall 1986).

The growth of a rootless population, together with the marked decline in Spain's political and cultural pre-eminence, gave a new urgency to the control of public opinion. But, while for northern and western Europe new mechanisms of self-control were institutionalised through religious and educational reforms (a culture within which science and humanism were identified as progressive elements), baroque culture established direct techniques of mass control.

The presence of authority was everywhere made manifest, particularly in military establishments, public buildings and palaces. The grandeur of baroque building was designed to intimidate; it was part of the violence which constituted the 'baroque pedagogy of the sentiments'. It was, above all, a society of the spectacle: its 'aesthetic of exaggeration and surprise' was 'invented to evoke wonder in the public'. And its most significant and characteristic cultural form was the theatre. The reversible identity of theatrical and public order, of art and life, became the 'major vehicle for expressing the radical baroque conviction that the phenomenal world is illusion' (Warnke 1972).

For the baroque, that is to say, social world, body-image and nature are 'open' and open to one another rather than 'closed' homological structures. The baroque anticipates all those characteristics of the modern age which we take to be most decisively post-modern; perspectivism, sensuousness, the interpenetration of soul and body, the merging of spatial and temporal categories, the superficiality and theatricality of social life, the 'feminisation' of philosophy, art and religion with all that it entails for the reorientation of the subject towards reality in terms of immediacy rather than of reflection and, above all, in the pre-eminence of the human body in every experience of life. The interrupted tradition of modernity, linking the culture of the baroque with contemporary fashion, not only contextualises the otherwise incomprehensible fragmentation of the present, it redefines the rationality of the classical bourgeois world as a deviation from *its* normative pluralism.

Classical modernity, as distinct from the baroque, is conceived as self-regulating system; founded upon a market principle and the internalisation of self-control. The creation of a closed and individuated ego implied a separation of subject from object and encouraged an understanding of both in terms of immanent and universal laws. In relation to this well known classicism contemporary society may be characterised in terms of 'deformations' of this classical model; deviations which resemble various aspects of early modern society and culture. The institutionalisation of self-regulatory manners and the establishment of a rational scientific means of control of nature, including human nature, may now be viewed as just one phase in the more complete development of modernity. Contemporary disillusionment with the many aspects of the scientific world view and its implications, indeed, encourages the reinvestigation of an age rich in anticipations

of cultural discoveries we thought peculiarly our own. The baroque, that is to say, might be viewed as simultaneously both 'pre-modern' and 'post-modern'.

Contemporary society, however, is not simply a resurgence of the baroque. The Baroque festival of the body was a demonstration of the absolute superiority of the state over each of its (inherently rebellious) subjects; contemporary sensuousness, however, is possible just because it is inconsequential. To parody Max Weber it might be said that while the Baroque masses were forced to be distracted, the modern public want to be. The difference lies essentially in the triumph of a distinctively bourgeois principle of self-regulation; a principle which became so well established that it was viewed simple as the 'natural' predisposition of the body. For the baroque era, however, it was not yet clear that modern society *would* become self-regulating. The liberation from feudal forms of constraint, and the consequential mobility of the populace on a hitherto unknown scale, posed a genuine threat to social stability. It was only gradually that the inefficiency of baroque techniques of constraint gave way to the institutionalisation of the market and to powerful new means of social control through rational self-regulation. Once deprived of all means of self-preservation other than through the exchange of commodities the populace could gradually be released from external forms of mass constraint, and progressively integrated into modern society through the contract of work. Free to act as they willed, reason dictated that everyone willed to work. This fundamental, and ingeniously concealed, mode of domination rendered obsolete the baroque's more spectacular techniques of coercion and the manipulation of public opinion. Thus, whereas the public magnificence and spectacle of the Baroque era was a state policy predicated on fear and distrust of the masses, the contemporary 'culture of excess' is predicated on the dynamic (and presumed beneficial), consequences of private consumption.

PUBLICATIONS SUBMITTED

- Publication (a) *The Science of Pleasure: Cosmos and Psyche in the Bourgeois World View*
- Publication (b) *Religious Transformation in Western Society: the End of Happiness*
- Publication (c) *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology*
- Publication (d) *The Lure of Dreams Sigmund Freud and the Construction of Modernity*
- Publication (e) 'Me and My Shadows: On the Accumulation of Body-Images in Western Society Part One'
- Publication (f) 'Me and My Shadows: On the Accumulation of Body-Images in Western Society Part Two'

CONCLUSION

BEYOND SUBJECT AND OBJECT

Debates over the character of modernity (and the defence or critique of modernity) have generally been internal to the distinction between subject and object. Modernity, that is to say, has been viewed primarily in Cartesian terms; through categories which are themselves uniquely modern and the product of modern forces.

The works submitted here challenge this major assumption in a number of ways:

Firstly, by pointing to elements of continuity with premodern society and culture, aspects of modernity which are not readily defined within the subject-object framework have been highlighted.

Secondly, by grasping its historical character the subject-object relation is contextualised as one (central) phase in the development of modernity rather than its defining feature.

Thirdly, by focusing on the existential as well as intellectual difficulties of self-understanding, the fundamental tension in the development of modernity is grasped as the continuing and unresolved dialectic between immanent and transcendent characterisations of human experience and action.

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