

NEITHER SCYLLA NOR CHARYBDIS: Transcending the Criminological Dualism Between Rationality and the Emotions

By Majid Yar¹

Abstract

Recent criminological theory has featured a division between rationality and the emotions as ways of constructing and understanding the actions of the criminological subject. This dualistic opposition renders it difficult to integrate reasons and emotions within a single theory of action or explanatory framework. This article proposed to overcome this dualism by re-theorising the relationship between rationality and emotions. Drawing on the theoretical and philosophical work of Margaret Archer and Martha Nussbaum, it makes a case for understanding emotions as reasonable (and hence rational) subjective judgements about objective experiential worlds. In this way, we can proceed by understanding actions as based in 'emotional reasons' and 'reasonable emotions', rather than confining emotions to the realm of the irrational or arational. In doing so, we overcome the dualism that threatens to undermine the explanatory or interpretive possibilities of criminological theory.

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‘Could I not somehow steer clear of the deadly Charybdis,
yet ward off Scylla when she attacks my crew?’
‘Obstinate fool’ the beautiful goddess replied...
Homer, *Odyssey*, Book XII

Introduction

In Homer’s *Odyssey*, its eponymous hero is confronted with an unenviable choice, finding himself trapped between *Scylla* and *Charybdis*, two monsters that guard the narrow sea passage between Italy and Sicily. To sail too close to either risks ruin, yet there is not sufficient space to navigate a safe route between their joint reach. In this article I wish to suggest that recent criminology has found itself in a similar dilemma, forced to choose between two explanatory alternatives: reasons and emotions. A debate has evolved, most recently at the instigation of ‘cultural criminology’, as to whether or to what extent explaining criminal conduct in terms of ‘rational action’ affords adequate or appropriate resources for uncovering the aetiology of offending. Cultural criminologists (cf. Ferrell 1999; Presdee 2000, 2004; De Haan and Vos 2003; Young 2004; Lyng 2004; Hayward 2007) have critiqued what they see as a disembodied and bloodless calculating machine at the heart of ‘rational choice’ and ‘situational’ criminologies, and sought instead to draw attention to the sensuous, embodied, and passionate texture of offending experience (Ferrell 1999). Their critique certainly has merit, and criminologists need to take seriously their challenge to a subject too often reduced to a variant of *homo economicus*, carefully weighing costs and benefits in some sort of utilitarian calculus. However, the juxtaposition of reason against emotion leaves us, like Odysseus, facing a number of equally unpalatable choices. Firstly, we can choose to centre our inquiries in *either* a ‘rational’ *or* an ‘emotional’ construction of the subject of (criminal and deviant) action, thereby foreclosing the explanatory or interpretive possibilities allowed by the other. Secondly, we might divide the world of offences into rationally motivated (acquisitive) and emotionally motivated (expressive) crimes, and examine each separately using different conceptual repertoires. Thirdly, we could disaggregate each individual offence (or type of offence) into its constituent rational and emotional elements, and again subject them to discordant forms of criminological analysis. None of these choices offers a promising path for an integrated mode of criminological theorising, interpretation or explanation. In this article, I will argue that there *is* a viable path between our two criminological ‘monsters’, one that does not necessitate an analytical or explanatory bifurcation. This possibility turns upon reassessing the division that supposedly exists between rationality and emotionality as forms of human experience. Drawing on the work of Margaret Archer and Martha Nussbaum, I will suggest that criminologists may have misunderstood the nature of emotions, and argue that they can in fact be seen as *reasonable* (and hence rational) subjective responses to objective experiences. If such a view can be sustained, then it promises to furnish a conceptual framework for analysing criminal aetiology and social action in a unified way, saving us from the jaws of our twin explanatory monsters.

The Unbearable Rationality of Criminology

De Haan and Loader (2002: 243) begin an overview of emotions and crime by noting that

‘Many established and thriving models of criminological reflection and research continue to proceed in ways that ignore entirely, or at best gesture towards, the impact of human emotions on their subject matter’

However, they go on to suggest that this refusal to address the motivations of offenders, in terms other than that of a narrow economically calculative rationality, amounts to a new ‘aetiological crisis’ for the discipline (Ibid: 244). Without addressing the affective dimensions of experience, we have little hope of understanding the dynamics of crime, punishment or social control strategies. As De Haan and Loader note, emotions can and should be seen as playing an important role not only in the genesis of offending behaviour, but also of the responses to it (amongst victims, the public, legislators, the media and so on). Given that punitiveness (Hallsworth 2002; King and Maruna 2005) and vindictiveness (Young 1999) seem to increasingly characterise societal responses to offenders and offending, the need for such a reorientation would appear not only criminologically obvious, but also urgent.

As a central moment of this critique, particular opprobrium is reserved for variants of ‘official’ or ‘administrative’ criminology (Young 1986; also Hirschi 1993).

Unsurprisingly, it is the causative idealisations of ‘rational choice’, ‘routine activity’ and ‘situational crime prevention’ perspectives that come in for the greatest share of critical examination, given that they take largely as given a utilitarian, cost-benefit, instrumental calculator of an agent. Thus for example Cornish and Clarke (1986: 1) set out their explanatory stall by departing from:

‘the assumption that offenders seek to benefit themselves by their criminal behaviour; that this involves the making of decisions and of choices, however rudimentary on occasion these processes might be; and that these processes exhibit a measure of rationality, albeit constrained by limits of time and ability and the availability of relevant information.’

To highlight the explanatory inadequacy of the ‘over-rationalized conception of man [sic]’, De Haan and Vos (2003) test the heuristic model of such rational choice theories against the realities of ‘street crime’. Examining over 5000 police statements given in cases of street robbery in Amsterdam, they ‘began to doubt whether the spontaneous or moral aspects of criminal behaviour can be understood if we assume that the crimes were committed as a result of a rational and deliberate choice’ (Ibid: 29). They conclude that

‘By disregarding the role of norms, values and moral emotions...and leaving aside these normative and emotional elements of decision making, the rational choice perspective seems to misrepresent the nature of the action it explains in terms of rational choice’ (Ibid: 33).

An analogous critique of rational choice theory is offered by Hayward (2007), albeit directed more specifically against the Situational Crime Prevention strategies that it has inspired (see, for example, Pease 1997; Clarke 1997). However, where De Haan and Vos seek to undermine the rationalistic construction of supposedly instrumental

offences such as street robberies, Hayward concedes ground to rational choice and situation perspectives, acknowledging that they serve 'useful as a means of reducing property or acquisitive crimes', since they manage to capture the motivational logic of such offences (Hayward 2007: 232). Instead, he draws a distinction between such acquisitive crimes and what he dubs 'expressive crimes', those laden with emotion, desire, excitement, and heightened sensation. These he sees as embedded in an increasingly pervasive consumer culture that orients actors to the 'now' of immediate sensuous and sensual gratification, in which individuals act without calculation or due consideration of consequences (Ibid: 239-41). In this 'culture of now', criminal or transgressive actions do not necessarily conform to the logic of anticipatory evaluation of costs-benefits, and so cannot be adequately grasped according to the rationalistic model of human behaviour. He concludes that:

'The simple truth here is that, unless the 'normalness' of crime argument is able to comprehend (indeed, even acknowledge) our contemporary world of risks and extremes, of excess and insecurity, how will administrative criminologists ever be in a position to fully appreciate how certain targets and criminal propensities circulate within society?' (Ibid: 245)

One More Time, With Emotion

The aforementioned critiques directed at the 'over-rationalized' conception of the criminal, deviant or transgressive subject have paved the way for a research agenda that stresses the role of emotions in the understanding of human conduct. Criminology has drawn considerable inspiration from broader developments in the 'sociology of the emotions' which furnishes a range of concepts and theories which can be adapted for criminological purposes (for a useful overview of the development of this sociological sub-field see, for example, Shilling 1997; also Turner and Stets 2005). While the emotional dimensions of social experience were an integral element in the classical sociologies of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, the dominance of Parsonian functionalism and 'scientific sociology' through much of the twentieth century served to relegate emotions to the margins of the discipline. It is only in recent decades that a concerted effort has been made to develop a fully-fledged sociology of emotional experience and its social significance.

For expository purposes, it is useful to divide criminological considerations of the emotions between those dealing respectively with experientially 'negative' (disagreeable) and 'positive' (pleasurable) feelings. Criminological studies of negative or disagreeable emotional states have drawn particularly upon sociological investigations of shame and humiliation (see, for example, Scheff and Retzinger 1991; Katz 1990: 26-9; Katz 1999: 142-74). Both Garland (1991) and Braithwaite (1989) mobilise Durkheim's insights into the emotional dynamics of social and moral censure to analyse contemporary developments and possibilities in punishment. Ray et al's (2004) study of racist offenders utilises Scheff and Retzinger's model to explore the ways in which unacknowledged experiences of shame can turn outwards into rage directed at those perceived to lie at its source. Taking a somewhat different tack, David Gadd mediates an understanding of shame and rage through a psychosocial lens furnished by the relational psychoanalysis of D.W. Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin, uncovering how experiences of childhood trauma and humiliation drive the behaviour of racist offenders and violent domestic abusers (Gadd 2000, 2003, 2006). In this way, the study of 'negative' emotions has become an integral part of contemporary criminological inquiry, drawing upon a diverse range of conceptual, theoretical and analytical resources from outside the field.

The study of 'positive' or pleasurable emotions has, in contrast, been somewhat monopolised to date by the movement of 'cultural criminology'. From the mid-1990s, an ever-greater number of criminologists have rallied to its banner, heeding Ferrell's (1999: 413) call for a 'criminology of the skin', 'a criminology that can account for crime and crime control in terms of pleasure, fear, and excitement'. The theoretical models for understanding such emotions are various. For example, significant influence has been exercised by Katz's (1990: 312-3) exploration of what he calls the 'seductions' of crime, the 'delight in deviance', 'awesome fascination', 'pride', 'transcendent significance', and 'exciting reverberations' experienced by those who 'do evil'. Katz argues that sociology and criminology have been reduced to a lamentable state of quantified and supposedly 'scientific' and 'rigorous' inquiry, in which they cannot see the 'living mysticism and magic in the foreground of criminal experience' (Ibid: 311-2). This Katzian reorientation to uncovering the subjectively experienced delights and excitements of crime and transgression can be seen in cultural criminology's explorations of illicit risk-taking activities (viewed as a

'criminal erotics' - Lyng 2004; also Lyng 1990), such as base-jumping, drag racing, skateboarding, graffiti writing and so on (Ferrell 1996, 2003). From a somewhat different perspective, Presdee (2000, 2004) turns to Bataille's critique of modern rationality in order to recover a sense of the repressed experience of the irrational, excessive and abject. Such an appreciation, for Presdee, offer a way to understand the motivations and meanings of acts such as arson or 'fire-setting', which he argues cannot be understood according to any rational or calculative model of behaviour (Presdee 2005). For authors such as Ferrell and Presdee, the 'positive' quality of these emotional states is twofold. Firstly, they are positive insofar as the subjects of action find them pleasurable, and actively seek out experiences that will enable them to enjoy such sensations. Secondly, they view such emotionally driven transgressions as positive in a *normative* sense, in that they embody forms of resistance in the face of marginalisation, ever-tightening webs of social control in urban environments, the symbolic vilification of non-conformity and poverty, and the relentless pursuit of self-interest by powerful social groups and their representatives. This duality, in which the emotions are championed in both analytical and normative terms, can be seen to constitute the 'high water mark' of contemporary criminology's rebellion against the predominance of rational action perspectives in the discipline's 'official' guises.

What are we to make, then, of this situation? It would be hard to mount a convincing defense of a model of social action based upon the narrowly calculative criteria furnished by the utilitarian tradition. Indeed, as both De Haan and Vos (2004), and Hayward (2007) point out, 'the cracks are beginning to show' even amongst rational choice, routine activity and situational theorists, as they assemble an ever-lengthening list of caveats and qualifications about their 'ideal typical' heuristic (see for example Bennett 1987; Miethe and Meier 1990; Exum 2002); these exemptions (akin to the infamous *ceteris paribus* clauses beloved of orthodox economists) have accrued to such an extent the 'rational actor' finds him or herself with an ever narrowing space within which to manoeuvre. Advocates of the model nevertheless persist in utilizing it, perhaps in the (increasingly vain) hope that it will manage to sufficiently approximate at least some criminogenic situations as to give it a reasonable degree of explanatory or predictive power. From the other side, most especially from cultural criminology's normative critique of rationality-fixated official discourses, the turn to the emotions would appear to be the only way to proceed. Some few such writers, such as Hayward (2007: 241-3), have tentatively suggested that there may be space for some kind of rapprochement between economic rationalism and the kind of emotional hermeneutics developed by cultural criminology. Yet this is easier said than done, especially within the terms in which the debate is generally conducted. There is a strong tendency to think in terms of a dualistic opposition between economically calculative reason and irrational and expressive emotion, making it difficult to find a path through which they could be reconciled within a single interpretive or explanatory framework. In the remainder of this article, I will outline one possible such route, by rethinking the tendency to view emotion as the 'other' of reason. In doing so, I will suggest that there is a tendency in this debate not only misunderstand the emotions, but also the nature and bounds of rationality. By 'emotionalising reason' and 'rationalising emotion' we can better come to grasp their commonality within a single theory of action.

On Emotional Reasons and Reasonable Emotions

Criminology's dominant conception of rationality is based (correctly) on the implicit view that it is intentionally² related to the world or external environment. Rational actors evaluate states of affairs or situations in that environment, and from this make inferences about how they should best respond to it. While such inferences may lead to mistaken beliefs and undesirable outcomes (for example by proceeding in the basis of untrue assumptions), they are nevertheless *reasonable*, insofar as they are based upon logically *valid* inferences that are based upon premises that the actor *believes* to be true (Boudon 1989). Thus for example, the thief who is apprehended while shoplifting an item because he erroneously believes himself to be unobserved, is nevertheless acting rationally because he has evaluated (however imprecisely or poorly) the costs and benefits entailed in the act of theft and acted accordingly. Emotionally motivated actions, in contrast, are generally viewed as *non-intentional* in character. That is to say, they are reduced to internal states of affect unrelated to any reasonable representation of the world in which the action takes place. All too often, emotions are seen as either arising from some intra-psychic domain of erotic or thanatic drives (as in the case of Freudian psychoanalysis), as the somatic effects of biological processes, or spontaneously emerging affective states unrelated to any objective state of affairs. As such, they must of necessity be denied any basis in reasonable inference, since there is no process of evaluation or judgement involved in their genesis, and the actions that they inspire are consequently devoid of rationality. Emotions are thus juxtaposed against reason, such that a 'zero-sum game' is played out in which any encroachment of emotions upon our actions necessarily renders them less rational. The emotions are viewed in sum as 'uncontrollable forces, not themselves subject to our deliberations, yet capable of subverting our...determinations' (Archer 2000: 80-1).

However, in opposition to the above view, we can suggest that emotions are in fact intentional in character. That is to say, they are subjectively experienced and felt judgements or evaluations about (real or perceived) states of affairs in the subject's environment. Archer (2000) argues that emotions are based in intentional relations to the three domains of reality that all subjects necessarily inhabit, namely the *natural*, the *practical* and the *social*. Across each of these domains, emotions mediate subjective responses to objective realities with which we find ourselves ineluctably confronted. In other words, emotions are *about things* 'out there' not just about things 'in here'. Emotions 'have a cognitive element, providing an embodied, usually unarticulated commentary on the world and our situation within it, often providing highly perceptive discriminations among situations' (Sayer 2004). They are inherently evaluative in character, ways of weighing-up the world we inhabit. We respond to situations emotionally because those situations have different imports for our (material and social) existence, and stand in varying relations to the normative and practical commitments that define our ongoing life endeavours. A similar account of the emotions has been developed by philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who argues that:

'Emotions...involve judgements about important things, judgements in which, appraising an external object as salient for our own well-being, we acknowledge our own neediness

² 'Intentionally' and 'intentionality' refer here *not* to 'deliberate forethought' (e.g. 'it was my intention to get this article completed within the month') but the phenomenological property of consciousness as having a *relational* orientation to some object or other – see Husserl 1999, chapter 6.

and incompleteness before parts of the world we do not fully control' (Nussbaum, 2003: 19)

Thus emotions are an integral element of our confrontations with an objective external environment, which we must rationally assess and respond to in order to assert our agency, satisfy our needs and realise our practical and normative ends. In other words, emotions (no less than cognitive inferences based upon use of the formal symbolic resources of language and its associated concepts) are discriminating commentaries on the situations we experience in the world and the import these situations have for us. They may be different in *form* from those processes of inference and judgement that find an explicit articulation in linguistic symbolisation, but are the same in *kind*.

The foregoing discussion is meant to suggest that emotions are in fact *reasonable*, and not a-rational or irrational as is often presupposed in criminological discussion. This reasonableness can be illustrated by considering some examples of emotional states that have a direct bearing upon crime. Firstly, let us consider *fear*. Fear is an emotion, and also has an eminently rational basis. Fear is a judgement that a situation (a state of affairs in the world) is inimical to our own well-being, or to others whose well-being is integral to our own (for example our loved ones). When confronted with situations that threaten this well-being, it is entirely reasonable and rational to feel fear. We may variously fear for our physical integrity (when faced with the threat of assault), for our economic integrity and capacity to furnish our needs (when faced with the threat of theft), or for our dignity or self-respect (when faced with the threat of humiliation and denigration). The criminological literature has long made much of 'irrational' or 'unreasonable' fears about crime, such as 'moral panics' about exaggerated crime risks or the burgeoning 'fear of crime' that seemingly drives people to beat a defensive retreat behind walls, bars, and gates. Insofar as such responses are 'disproportionate' to an objectively agreed risk of victimization, they are often treated as irrational and a social problem that needs to be tackled. Yet such emotional responses should not, I suggest, be seen as irrational. An emotional response, as an evaluation of a state of affairs in the world, can be admittedly based upon mistaken assumptions or exaggerated expectations, and yet remain nonetheless rational i.e. it is based upon what is, for the subject of experience, a reasonable inference about the potentially negative import that the state of affairs will have in terms of their own well being. Indeed, those formal ratiocinations normally associated with reasonable inference (such as *ex ante* anticipatory calculation of possible or likely outcomes of action) are just as capable of being *wrong* (starting from false premises, leading to false conclusions) as are emotionally mediated judgements, yet we do not dismiss them as irrational, but merely mistaken. To put the point in a more philosophical parlance, inferential processes can be *valid* (and hence *rational*) while simultaneously being *false* (starting from untrue premises that lead to untrue conclusions); and this holds equally for both formally articulated cogitations and unarticulated emotional judgements.

Moving from judgements about, or responses to, crime let us consider the role played by emotions in the aetiology of offending. As already noted, emotional states such as shame, anger or rage are often adduced as explanatory alternatives to rational inference when it comes to crime causation, especially where they are seen as the roots of violence. A clear example of such an approach is that taken by Ray et al

(2004: 354) in their aforementioned study of racist offenders: 'We suggest that the nature of this racism needs to be understood in terms of emotion rather than rational cognitive processes'. They repeatedly juxtapose the 'cognitive and rational' against the 'emotional' and insist of racist beliefs that 'we [are not] in the least interested in...suggesting that they have any 'objective' foundation' (Ibid). Thus the authors would deny any 'cognitive, rational' basis or 'objective foundation' for the racist who accounts for his violence towards Black and Asian individuals by reference to factors such as the 'special treatment they receive' or the 'threat' that immigration poses to either an 'English way of life' or their own chances of finding employment or accessing public services. The problem here is that Ray et al firstly confuse the 'rational and cognitive' with the 'objective' – that is to say, they conflate an *inferential process* (reason, rationality) with *epistemic status* (truth, objectivity). Consequently, if a belief is demonstrably false (as are the racists' views that minorities enjoy exceptional privileges at the expense of 'whites') then they cannot be 'cognitive and rational'. Therefore, the roots of such views, and the violence they inspire or justify, must be sought in the domain of the emotions. Secondly, the emotions are seen as internal affective states that do not arise as 'discriminations' about real world situations. For these authors, their subjects beliefs do not correspond to experience of the objects to which they refer, but are seen as the outcome of other 'hidden' internal emotional states e.g. rage is a displaced manifestation of another internal affective state, shame. As an alternative I would suggest that we view such beliefs (and the emotions of shame, inadequacy and rage that correspond to them) as the outcome of reasonable (i.e. rational) inferences about the subjects' experiential worlds, albeit ones that are *false* in that they depart from untrue premises and lead to untrue conclusions. What is at stake here is whether we must necessarily exile incorrect beliefs or evaluations to an emotional realm that stands as the 'other' of reason. I argue that we can better proceed not by dividing the realm of experience into 'rational' and 'emotional', but by viewing both cognitively and emotionally derived dispositions as part of the same processes of judgment and inference. The racists examined in this study can and should be viewed as rational, emotional *and* reasonable, despite the fact that their beliefs are based on *empirically* incorrect foundations and their actions are *morally* unjustified and unjustifiable. It is only in this way that we can make sense of *both* the cognitive content of their beliefs *and* the destructive emotions that orient their relations to others.

Toward a New Criminological View of the Emotions

In the foregoing discussion I have attempted to make an argument for reorganising our understanding in terms of ‘emotional reasons’ and ‘reasonable emotions’; that is to say, viewing emotions not as the other of reason and rationality, but one of its forms. This has significant implications not only for how we view the emotions, but also for how we view rationality. We have already established that criminology has been locked into a construction of rationality that views it solely in terms of calculative and instrumental cogitations, as *ex ante* anticipatory inferences that organise instrumental behaviour. This view, as Archer (2000: 53-4) argues, is consistent with ‘Modernity’s Man [sic]’, the Enlightenment construction of the rational individual as devoid of passion and sensation. This ‘bloodless’ idealisation can be traced back at least to Kant (if not Descartes), in whose philosophies originate the architectonic of modernity’s dualisms (not only that of reason against emotion, but also those of mind against body, thought against feeling, objectivity against subjectivity, *noumena* against *phenomena*, and so on). By readmitting the emotions to the realm of reasonable judgement, we move toward reclaiming a more capacious concept of rationality (one that was not unknown to both the Aristotelians and the Stoics, with their synthesis of *pathos* and *logos*). Taking such a view, the human sciences need no longer divide their subject between diametrical poles of comprehensibility (reason) and incomprehensibility (emotion). It is only in this way that the social sciences (including criminology) can proceed to develop a theory of experience and action that is adequate to the interpretive and explanatory challenges they set themselves.

Readmitting rationality to the ‘realm of the senses’, and emotions to the realm of reason, also offers other advantages. Most especially, it enhances the explanatory power of criminology and cognate disciplines. One of the major drawbacks of the *homo economicus* model of rational action is that it cannot ground any true explanatory social science. It surrenders causation to classicist assumptions about ‘free choice’ and therefore cannot get ‘behind’ actions to their causes; it can only enumerate situational formulae that describe scenarios in which one or other ‘free choice’ is likely to be made by a voluntaristic subject. Similarly, thinking in terms of ‘irrational’ emotions renders causative explanation impossible as such, for the ability to construct an account of why things happen presupposes that they are comprehensible, which the irrational by definition is not. However, by thinking in terms of the reasons and reasonableness of actions (grounded in cognition *and* emotion) we can better understand their genesis – not least by following critical realists like Archers in thinking of reasons *as* the causes of actions (Ibid: 310-11; also Sayer 1999: 18, 95-6).

As a final reflection, I wish to return to the kinds of emotionally oriented accounts of criminal transgression that have been developed of late by cultural criminologists, in an explicit rejection of the rational action paradigm. However, I suggest that such authors in fact misunderstand the nature of their own accounts, and far from treating emotions as the other of rationality, *they in fact offer eminently rational explanations of offending behaviour based upon a view of offenders as rational actors*. Cultural criminologists may well at this point take considerable umbrage, suspecting me of subjecting them to the calumny of rationalism. Therefore, I will offer a couple of examples to justify my rather provocative claim. Ferrell (2004) offers a typically

elegant and provocative analysis of one of crime's emotions, namely boredom. 'Modern boredom' is explored as an experience inextricably linked to modernity's rationalising juggernaut, a world that has come to feel the suffocating and deadening weight of bureaucracy, regulation, calculation and control. The 'machinery of modern criminology' is itself indicted as 'a vast collectivity of boredom buttressed by rationalized methodologies' (Ferrell 2004: 287). Against this boredom of the rational, both crime and criminology respond; the former with 'moments of illicit excitement...ephemeral crimes committed against boredom itself' (Ibid) and the latter by turning (or returning) to a criminology of excitement that makes recourse to 'disorganized transgression' (Ibid: 297). In Ferrell's account, both crime and cultural criminology are seen as the reactive 'others' of rationality (societal and intellectual respectively). However, when we take a closer look, we begin to see that such a characterization cannot be sustained. Firstly, the offender's recourse to 'ephemeral crimes against boredom' is nothing if not rational. The experience of modern institutionalized boredom is nothing other than a 'rational emotion', an entirely reasonable judgment or evaluation of the world and its ever more limited experiential possibilities, rendered in the form of affect. The cultural criminologist's project is no less rational; by proposing a cause-effect explanation (modern society rationalizes-rationalization causes boredom-boredom activates resistance) Ferrell is offering a conclusion derived from a process of rational inference. What is different in Ferrell's account from any offered by the 'machinery of modern criminology' is not that the former understands the importance of emotions for its subjects, while the latter sees only rational action. Rather, it is that Ferrell views rationality in a more capacious way, and emotions as reasonable evaluations and discriminations about the environment in which criminological subjects (as well as cultural criminologists!) find themselves immured.

This point can be further elaboration by considering Presdee's (2000, 2004) account of contemporary crime and transgression, which he views as a form of 'carnavalesque' subversion and inversion of society's dominant order and symbolic codes. As already noted, his ontology of action is based in a reading of Bataille's critique of modern rationality. Bataille (1985; Richardson 1988) argues that the emergence of capitalist modernity has entailed the incremental dominance of a 'restricted' economy characterised by rational and action and balanced exchange, suppressing a 'general economy' characterised by the irrational pleasure in excess, spectacle and destruction, of 'violence' and 'wild impulses' (Bataille in Richardson 1998: 90-1). In contemporary 'carnavalesque' practices (such as 'body modification, S&M, raving, recreational drug-taking, hotting and rodeo, gang rituals, the Internet, festivals and extreme sports' – Presdee 2000: 47) Presdee sees the resurgence of 'irrational' excess which cannot be captured by 'administrative' criminology's rationalistic constructions of the calculative criminal subject. However, as with Ferrell's work on boredom, Presdee's thesis warrants closer examination. Crucially in Presdee's account, the return of excess is a reaction incited by the rationalized and rationalizing onslaught of modern life, by the ways in which power tightens its nets around anyone who would transgress the bounds of normalcy and orderliness. Thus the 'human emotional...experience' of Presdee's subjects, and the 'human emotional texture' (Ibid: 162-3) of their lives, can and ought to be seen (on his own account) as *reasonable* responses to the repressive, joyless, undignified and meaningless existence to which they find themselves condemned by modern life. Proceeding logically, actions cannot simultaneously be both *irrational* (as Presdee who have use

believe of ‘carnivaleque’ eruptions) and entirely reasonable and understandable (and hence *rational*) responses. My point here is that Presdee, like Ferrell, misunderstands the import and nature of his own analysis. He views the actions of his subjects as ‘irrational’ because they do not conform to criminology’s dominant and restrictive conception of rationality. However, they are in fact rendered rational by understanding emotion as a form of rationality, and these acts as motivated by ‘reasonable emotions’ and ‘emotional reasons’. It is confinement within criminology dualistic thinking (rationality *or* emotion) that leads such writers to misidentify their own explanations and interpretations in ‘irrationalist’ or ‘anti-rationalist’ terms, where in fact they are offering accounts that view emotions as eminently rational after all.

By Way of a Conclusion: Cutting the Gordian Knot

I started this article by likening criminology's conceptual and explanatory dilemma (rationality *or* emotions) to that of Odysseus, confronted with the twin monsters of *Scylla* and *Charybdis*. Readers familiar with Homer's epic will recall that Odysseus (following the advice of Circe) in the end opts for the lesser of two evils, and sails his ship within the reach of *Scylla*, supposedly the less fearsome of the monsters. While his ship survives the encounter, it does so at considerable cost, with six of the crewmen devoured alive by *Scylla*. Keeping with our Homeric simile, it would appear that criminology offers us two unpalatable options: either adopt a narrowly calculative and instrumental conceptual of rationality and forego any engagement with the emotions, or look to actions as emotional and so forsake any chance to understand them in rational terms. Neither alone can satisfy the requirements of a criminology that has adequate explanatory or interpretive power. Shifting mythological reference points somewhat, in this article I have refused to take the position of Odysseus, and instead taken up that of Oedipus. I have attempted to resolve criminology's dilemma by 'cutting the Gordian knot', refusing the opposition between rationality and the emotions in the realm of human action. Rather, I have proposed an understanding of the emotions which views them as affective renditions of judgments and evaluations about experiences, and thus reasonable and rational. In this way, we can see that emotions have reasons (they are reasonable) and that reason contains within its ambit emotional responses. Thus criminology's question becomes not 'ought we to see these actions as rational or emotional?' but 'which kinds and forms of rationality (cognitive, affective, articulated, unarticulated) are at play in the genesis of these transgressions?' We ought choose neither *Scylla* nor *Charybdis*.

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