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Emotional Intelligence: Elias, Foucault, and the Reflexive Emotional Self

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ABSTRACT: Over the last decade and a half there has emerged growing interest in the concept of “emotional intelligence” (henceforth EI), particularly within literature relating to occupational psychology, leadership, human resource management, and training. This paper considers the rise of EI as a managerial discourse and seeks to make sense of it, first in relation to existing accounts of emotion at work, and subsequently through utilising the analytical possibilities presented by the work of Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault. The case of EI is employed here as a concrete empirical site within which to explore potential complementarities between the analyses of Elias and Foucault, in particular around Elias’s arguments concerning the changing character of the *social constraint towards self restraint*, and Foucault’s discussion of power/knowledge and governmentality. EI is found to enshrine a more general move towards greater emotional possibility and discretion both within the workplace and beyond – an ostensible emancipation of emotions from corporate attempts to script the management and display of employee feelings. However, it is argued that rather than offering a simple liberation of our emotional selves, EI presents demands for a heightened *emotional reflexivity* concerning what is emotionally appropriate at work and beyond. As such, EI involves both greater emotional “freedom” plus a proliferation of new modalities of emotional control, albeit based now on the expression of feelings as much as their repression. Ultimately, these seemingly paradoxical aspects of EI serve to highlight an important point of intersection in the work of Elias and Foucault around their conceptualisations of power, selfhood, and the shifting character of social control.

Keywords: Foucault, Elias, Emotion Management, Emotional Labour, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Reflexivity.

Emotions at Work: The “Rules” are Changing

Over the last two decades there has been something of a sea change in understandings of, and arguably prevailing orientations towards, emotion in the workplace. Writing in 1993, Putnam and Mumby observed that:

People regard emotion as a value-laden concept which is often treated as ‘inappropriate’ for organizational life. In particular, emotional reactions are often seen as ‘disruptive’, ‘illogical’, ‘biased’ and ‘weak’. Emotion, then, becomes a deviation from what is seen to be sensible or intelligent... linked to the expressive arenas of life, not to the instrumental goal orientation that drives organizations.¹

Putnam and Mumby were here describing the prevailing business culture of the post-industrial West during the mid-1980s/early-1990s: a culture that, as they observed it, was premised upon the understanding of an axiomatic, antithetical division between emotionality and rationality. Emotions within the ethos they portray were characteristically regarded as a pollutant to clear-headed decision-making: something that needed to be “checked” on entry to the workplace, linked only to the expressive arenas of life: to leisure, to pleasure, to personal life. Most importantly, emotions were seen to be a deviation from intelligence.

At the time of their writing, Putnam and Mumby’s analysis arguably had a degree of accuracy as a depiction of many, but by no means all, sectors of the neo-liberalist workplace that had been successively fostered by the market-driven policies of Reaganomics in the United States, and Thatcherism within Great Britain. The zeitgeist of this era was perhaps most famously encapsulated in the words of Gordon Gecko, the character played by Michael Douglas in the 1987 film *Wall Street*: “Greed is good.” The phrase became something of a corporate mantra meaning, variously, “Don’t be ashamed of your desire for wealth”; “The market above everything else”; “Don’t let feelings get in the way, think only of profit and accumulation”; “Don’t get *emotional*”; or that other oft-cited justification, “This is not personal, it’s business.”

Of course, to consider the workplace, indeed to consider any area of social life, any human exchange, as somehow entirely devoid of emotion is highly problematic. Greed, after all, is no less an emotional phenomenon than, say, philanthropy. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of “emotional intelligence” (henceforth EI²) as a set of ideas is that it takes as its starting point this very recognition of the emotional

¹ L. L. Putnam and D. K. Mumby, “Organizations, emotion and the myth of rationality,” in S. Fineman (ed.), *Emotion in Organizations*, First Edition (London: Sage, 1993), 36.

² Throughout this paper I shall use the abbreviation “EI” to refer simultaneously to a set of ideas and to a set of practices informed by these ideas.

level in all human exchange, including that which is characteristic of the workplace. Even by name, EI challenges the perception that emotions are a deviation from intelligence. For many of its advocates, EI embodies the understanding that the degree and pattern of control exercised over emotions is something that is learned, developed, enhanced, and can be harnessed for (predominantly commercial) competitive advantage. The notion of EI seemingly dissolves the traditional opposition between emotionality and rationality, cognition and affect, thinking and feeling. It stylistically renders *all* business as profoundly personal. It potentially offers an emancipation of the emotions within the workplace and beyond — a corrective to the myth of the rational organisation, and to traditional models of intelligence which stress only cognitive functioning and abstract reasoning ability.

As a managerial discourse, the rise of emotional intelligence over the past decade and a half has been exceptional. Outside of academic circles, the concept was largely unknown before the publication of Daniel Goleman's enormously successful *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than IQ*, first published in 1995. Subsequently, there has been something of an explosion of interest in the topic. The Internet retailer Amazon now lists thousands of books devoted to EI. Titles range from the developmental — *Building Healthy Minds* (2000); to the more applied — *Linking Emotional Intelligence and Performance at Work* (2005), *Emotional Capitalists: The New Leaders* (2008); and the perhaps inevitable — *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* (2009). Accompanying this proliferation of literature has been an exponential growth in the EI consultancy industry. EI consultants offer organisations "employee feeling inventories;"³ "EQ Coaching;"⁴ and other manifold opportunities to "...engage the power of emotional intelligence to create positive change — everywhere."⁵ A range of existing measures of aptitude, personality traits, and psychological ability have been extended or repackaged to incorporate some of the key principles of EI — as a no-table example, the key practitioner journal *Competence* has renamed itself *Competence and Emotional Intelligence*.

Such titles would appear to suggest that the sort of attitudes towards emotions described by Putnam and Mumby in the early 1990s have all but disappeared. Indeed, the spread of the ideas and practices involved with EI is by no means confined to the academic and practitioner literatures. They are increasingly being utilised in lay analyses of almost all arenas of social life. At the time of this writing, in Great Britain,

³ Simmons Management Systems, "Hire and develop top employees," 2009, accessed December 2009 at <http://www.eqhelp.com>.

⁴ S. Dunn, "Personal life coaching, executive coaching with Susan Dunn," 2009, accessed December 2009 at <http://www.susandunn.cc/>.

⁵ J. Wright, "Jenni Wright: emotional intelligence consultant speaker and coach," 2009, accessed December 2009 at <http://www.emotionalintelligenceaus.com/>.

the concept is being drawn upon in analyses of soccer managers and players;⁶ the Machiavellian strategies of different contestants on the television show *The Apprentice*;⁷ and the contrast in leadership styles of the Conservative leader David Cameron and the current Prime Minister Gordon Brown.⁸ Within the workplace, demands for emotionally intelligent employees are on the rise. In the recruitment pages today are the details of a job vacancy for a “Director of training and development” at a London-based consultancy firm. The Director will need to have “High levels of emotional intelligence” such that she or he can “...rapidly build rapport and trust with clients and colleagues alike.”⁹ Similarly, EI is listed as an essential skill for an administrator, so that the successful candidate must be able to “communicate sensitively and effectively.”¹⁰ And a “Trainee Headhunter” is required to have high levels of EI so that he or she can “read situations” and “connect with the needs of different clients.”¹¹ A recent large-scale recruitment survey under-taken by GRADdirect of the Reed group (Reed Consulting 2008) found that 42% of British employers surveyed ranked EI characteristics as among the most important for new recruits, as compared to only 27% prioritising a candidate’s academic abilities.¹² It would seem, as Goleman has claimed, that “The rules for work are changing” — the chief criterion for employee recruitment, promotion, retention, is no longer simply “how smart we are,” but “how well we handle ourselves and each other.”¹³

To the degree that writers like Goleman and others who have popularised the concept of EI have influenced ground-level changes in employee recruitment and assessment practices, the EI consultancy movement is indeed involved in more than simply *documenting* important shifts in “the rules of work.” However, as I have argued elsewhere, such shifts relate to considerably more than the rise of EI as a discursive invention.¹⁴ As such, EI is best understood not so much as a set of ideas that, through their application, are *in themselves* engendering a social transformation, but

⁶ *The Guardian*, October 8, 2009: accessed online December 2009 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/blog/2009/oct/08/sir-alex-ferguson-alan-wiley>.

⁷ *The Guardian*, April 29, 2009, accessed online December 2009 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/organgrinder/2009/apr/29/apprentice-reality-tv>.

⁸ *The Guardian*, October 8, 2009, accessed online December 2009 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/oct/08/jonathan-freedland-david-cameron-speech>.

⁹ “Reed.co.uk — jobs, careers, employment and recruitment”, 2009, accessed December 2009 at <http://www.reed.co.uk/>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See Reed Consulting, “GRADdirect study reveals that graduate recruiters want soft skills above academic qualifications,” 2008, accessed December 2009 at <http://www.reedpressoffice.co.uk>.

¹³ D. Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 3.

¹⁴ J. Hughes, “Bringing emotion to work: emotional intelligence, employee resistance, and the reinvention of character,” *Work Employment and Society*, 19 (3) (2005).

rather as an exemplar of more general changes in how emotions are understood, articulated, and deployed within the institutional networks that comprise “the workplace”, and, indeed, beyond such relational nexuses. Following the analytic approaches of both Elias and Foucault (in which, as we shall see, there is a degree of common ground), EI will be considered here as a *sociogenetic field of discursive affordances, conditions, and possibilities* — a discourse enshrining ways of seeing, saying, and doing that in and of itself constitutes a legitimate empirical object for investigation and analysis. Accordingly, the first objective of this paper is to explore how “we” might make sense of the rise of EI, as at once a new managerial discourse and, to continue the analysis presented above, a signal of changing orientations towards the management and display of emotions at work. The implied “we” in this question also provides the basis for the paper’s second and principal objective. Following the theme of this Special Issue of *Foucault Studies*, the “we” implies scholars who are interested in the work of Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault, and in particular, the potential for a dialogue between the work of these two authors. Thus, the discourse of EI is here used as both a substantive topic for investigation in its own right, and as an empirical vehicle for an analysis of complementary themes in the work of Elias and Foucault. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a comprehensive analysis of points of overlap and contrast in these authors’ work, it is against the backdrop of what might be called the Foucault–Elias debate that its key arguments are developed.¹⁵ To date, comparative analyses of the work of Foucault and Elias have characteristically been undertaken by means of textual exegesis and formal conceptual reconstruction. In contrast, this paper seeks to offer a contribution to the field by providing an empirically applied comparison of the two authors, considering competing understandings of, and orientations towards, emotional control in institutional settings.

¹⁵ For a full account of this debate see, inter alii, R. van Krieken, “The organisation of the soul: Elias and Foucault on discipline and the self,” *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 31(2) (1990); R. van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*. Key Sociologist Series (London: Routledge, 1998); I. Burkitt, “Overcoming metaphysics: Elias and Foucault on power and freedom,” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 23 (1) (1993); D. Smith, “‘The Civilizing Process’ and ‘The History of Sexuality’: comparing Elias and Foucault,” *Theory and Society*, 28 (1999); G. Sewell & J. Barker, “Neither good, nor bad, but dangerous: surveillance as an ethical paradox,” *Ethics and Information Technology*, 3 (3) (2001); D. Smith & T. Newton, “Introduction,” in A. van Iterson, W. Mastenbroek; T. Newton & D. Smith (eds.), *The Civilized Organization: Norbert Elias and the Future of Organization Studies*. (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002); P. Spierenburg, “Punishment, power, and history: Foucault and Elias,” *Social Science History*, 28 (4) (2004); R. Kilminster, *The Sociological Revolution: From Enlightenment to the Global Age* (London: Routledge, 1998); R. Kilminster, *Post-Philosophical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2007); E. Dunning and J. Hughes, *Norbert Elias, Sociology, and the Human Crisis: Interdependence, Power, and Process* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010); plus other papers in this Special Section.

To clarify the central line of argument developed in this paper as a whole it is first worth quoting one of the most frequently cited (and misconstrued) of Foucault's statements from an interview entitled "On the genealogy of ethics": "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do."¹⁶ Foucault's proposal here is arguably more polemical than ontological, it invokes a disposition that leads "...not to apathy, but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism."¹⁷ But it is also a statement about power/knowledge, one that has particular utility as a starting point for considering EI. When viewed through the lens of dominant sociological accounts of emotion at work, notably Arlie Hochschild's concept of "emotional labour," the ascendancy of the ideas and practices related to EI does indeed appear to be "bad." In short, the discourse of EI seems to mark a continuation and intensification of well-documented processes that are said to involve the increasing corporate "colonisation" of employee affects and subjectivities.¹⁸ However, the case of EI also demonstrates some of the limitations of such accounts of the control strategies pursued in the contemporary workplace. In particular, EI serves to highlight that management cannot simply script the emotions of employees, cannot simply manufacture a desired subjectivity — employees inevitably resist such attempts, and, moreover, the model of power that is implied in such notions itself needs to be revisited.¹⁹ Indeed, as a consultancy discourse, EI centrally involves the notion that the kinds of control practices involved in the corporate scripting of emotions, the commercial engineering of feeling, are profoundly unintelligent. A key theme of the EI practitioner movement is that, within the workplace, employees should be afforded considerable personal and professional *discretion* concerning how they display, manage, and monitor their feelings. In this way, then, the discourse of

¹⁶ M. Foucault, "On the genealogy of ethics," in H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 231-232.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁸ A. R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (California: University of California Press, 1983); G. Kunda, *Engineering Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); S. Fineman, "Organisations as emotional arenas" in S. Fineman (ed.), *Emotion in Organizations*, First Edition (London: Sage, 1993); Putnam & Mumby; C. Casey, *Work, Self and Society: After Industrialism* (London: Sage, 1995); C. Grey, "Towards a critique of managerialism: the contribution of Simone Weil," *Journal of Management Studies*, 33 (5) (1996): 592-611; T. Strangleman, & I. Roberts, "Looking through the window of opportunity: the cultural cleansing of workplace identity," *Sociology*, 29 (4) (1999); F. Wilson, "Cultural control within the virtual organization," *Sociological Review*, 47 (4) (1999); I. Grugulis, T. Dundon & A. Wilkinson, "Cultural control and the 'culture manager': employment practices in a consultancy," *Work Employment and Society*, 14 (1) (2000); P. Fleming & A. Spicer, "Working at a cynical distance: implications for power, subjectivity and resistance," *Organization*, 10 (1) (2003).

¹⁹ See Hughes for a full discussion of these concerns.

EI ostensibly offers the conditions for a liberation of emotional expression. Hence, it shall be argued that EI is not simply “bad”: however, it remains, nonetheless, to be “dangerous” to the extent that in place of scripting it promotes the development of a heightened *emotional reflexivity* concerning what is emotionally appropriate at work and beyond. Put simply, EI involves a discursive shift towards implicit, unstated, and motile standards of what is emotionally “fitting,” “apposite,” “appropriate,” or “intelligent.” And these shifting and flexible standards of behaviour are in many ways more demanding, more difficult to negotiate than scripts or clearly delineated formal rules regarding what is permitted and “correct” and what is not. Thus, rather than offering a simple and unequivocal “free play” of emotions at work, EI presents the discursive conditions for a proliferation of new modalities of emotional control, albeit based now on the expression of feelings as much as their repression. As such, it is argued, EI serves empirically to demonstrate a key point of intersection between the respective theses developed by Elias and Foucault regarding long-term changes in the character of social/self control: where freedom and constraint are conceived not so much as opposites, but as two sides of the same coin.

In pursuing these arguments, the discussion below commences with an exposition of the EI concept. Following this, the discourse of EI discourse is analysed in relation to the para-Marxian concept of emotional labour, which, as suggested above, has come to dominate existing sociological accounts of emotion at work. This initial review is intended to form an empirical basis for the more general exploration of analytical complementarities in the work of Elias and Foucault that is advanced by the paper. A conceptual dialogue is then generated between an Eliasian analytic — in which the rise of EI is considered as part of processes of “civilisation” and “informatisation” — and a Foucauldian reading of EI as marking shifting modalities of power: from “control via repression” to “control via stimulation.” Finally, the consideration of complementarities in Elias’s and Foucault’s analytical frames is followed by an exploration of important incompatibilities, tensions, and contrasts between these authors’ work, particularly in terms of their respective relationships to the enterprises of science and philosophy.

Emotional Intelligence

Within the academic literature, the concept of EI has its origins in the rapidly changing field of neuroscience as expressed in the writings of such authors as Joseph LeDoux and Antonio Damasio.²⁰ But it is writers from the discipline of applied

²⁰ J. LeDoux, “Sensory systems and emotion,” *Integrative Psychiatry*, 4 (1986); J. LeDoux, “Emotion and the Limbic System Concept,” *Concepts in Neuroscience*, 2 (1992); A. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (London: Vintage, 2000); A. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza* (London: Vintage, 2004); A. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (London: Vintage, 2006).

psychology who have paid most attention to EI, particularly in assessing the concept's validity.²¹ To date, there is no coherent theoretical centre to the concept of EI. There remains considerable debate over the very "competencies" that could be said to constitute emotional intelligence;²² and indeed, over the possibility and practice of measuring these.²³ More recent research has explored the concept through its application at the organisation level, particularly in relation to themes such as leadership and group emotional state or organisational climate.²⁴ However, while the term is widely recognised to have been coined by Salovey and Mayer, it is the journalist and author Daniel Goleman who has played a central role in popularising the ideas involved, and in bringing them to a practitioner audience.²⁵

For present purposes, the focus here is upon the model of EI developed by Goleman.²⁶ The principal reasons for this selection are as follows: 1) As suggested above, Goleman is by far the leading advocate of EI, having written what are deemed to be the paradigmatic texts within the field, and having also established himself as the leading authority on the topic in the popular mind, though his status as an authority is more disputed in academic circles.²⁷ 2) Goleman, more than any other figure, has

²¹ See, for example, R. J. Sternberg & J. C. Kaufman, "Human abilities," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49 (1998); M. Davies, L. Stankov & R. Roberts, "Emotional intelligence: in search of an illusive construct," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75 (1998); N. S. Schutte, J. M. Malouff, L. E. Hall, D. J. Haggerty, J. T. Cooper, C. J. Golden & L. Dornheim, "Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 25 (1998); R. Abraham, "Emotional intelligence in organisations: a conceptualization," *Genetic Social and General Psychology Monographs*, 125 (2) (1999); Q. Huy, "Emotional capability, emotional intelligence, and radical change" *Academy of Management Review*, 24 (2) (1999).

²² M. Davies, L. Stankov & R. Roberts; J. Mayer, D. Caruso & P. Salovey, "Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence," *Intelligence*, 27 (1999); J. Ciarrochi, J. Forgas & J. Mayer (eds.), *Emotional Intelligence in Everyday Life: A Scientific Enquiry* (Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2000); N. Ashkanasy, W. Zerbe & C. Härtel (eds.), *Managing Emotions in the Workplace* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2002).

²³ M. Davies, L. Stankov & R. Roberts; N. Ashkanasy, W. Zerbe & C. Härtel.

²⁴ N. Ashkanasy, C. Härtel & W. Zerbe (eds.), *The Effect of Affect in Organizational Settings* (London: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2005); N. Ashkanasy & C. Cooper, *Research Companion to Emotion in Organizations* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2008).

²⁵ P. Salovey & J. D. Mayer, "Emotional intelligence," *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9 (1990); D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996); D. Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*; D. Goleman, R. Boyatzis & A. McKee, *The New Leaders: Transforming the Art of Leadership* (New York: Sphere, 2003); D. Goleman, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (London: Arrow Books, 2007).

²⁶ In his more recent publications, Goleman also refers to "social intelligence," but the core of his work has remained remarkably consistent over time.

²⁷ See, for example, the key points of contention discussed by S. Hein, "Critical review of Daniel Goleman," (2009), accessed December 2009 at <http://eqi.org/gole.htm>.

developed a model of EI that establishes it firmly as a *managerial* discourse. This is particularly the case for his 1998 text, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*; here Goleman adopts the style and format of a long tradition of popular management literature, making explicit prescriptions for how EI should be translated into institutional practices. 3) Goleman is the most widely cited author on the topic, particularly in practitioner journals in the fields of HRM, executive coaching, leadership, general management, and training and development. Indeed, he has been identified using LexisNexis citation indices as one of the top ten most influential “management gurus” alive today.²⁸ It is precisely because his work constitutes the version of emotional intelligence that is most likely to be drawn upon by workplace consultants and management practitioners that it receives central attention in this paper.

Along with authors such as Bar-On, Cooper, Sawaf, and Boyatzis, Goleman belongs, loosely speaking, to a school of writers who champion EI in terms of the results it can bring, particularly in the workplace.²⁹ For Goleman, such results can best be understood when contrasted with more conventional understandings of intelligence, in particular the “IQ” model. This is evident from the very title of his text, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*. Here Goleman proposes that IQ might, at best, contribute: “...about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 percent to other forces.”³⁰ It is within this other eighty percent of factors that Goleman locates EI.

For Goleman, EI can essentially be defined as “how well you handle yourself.” It refers to the extent of our emotional literacy, our ability to recognise our own emotions and those of others. It relates to a person’s capacity both to manage their emotions and to draw upon these as a resource. As Aristotle writes: “Anyone can become angry — that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way — that is not easy.”³¹ Goleman argues that it is precisely these kinds of capacities that are not detected by conventional models of intelligence, and yet, he proposes, they matter fundamentally

²⁸ Accenture, “Accenture study yields top 50 ‘business intellectuals,’” (2003), accessed December 2009 at <http://www.accenture.com>, 4.

²⁹ R. Bar-On, *Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory: A Measure of Emotional Intelligence* (Toronto: Multi-Health Systems, 1997); R. Cooper & A. Sawaf, *Executive EQ: Emotional Intelligence in Business* (London: Orion Business, 1997); A. McKee, R. Boyatzis & F. Johnston, *Becoming a Resonant Leader: Develop Your Emotional Intelligence, Renew Your Relationships, Sustain Your Effectiveness* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2008); N. Ashkanasy, W. Zerbe & C. Härtel (eds.), *Managing Emotions in the Workplace*, 13.

³⁰ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*, 34.

³¹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* referenced in Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*, ix.

for success in commercial life and beyond. Unlike IQ, which is seen to be fixed and immutable from birth, Goleman's interpretation of EI as a set of social skills means that, crucially, it involves capacities that can be developed. In this connection, Goleman proposes a five-part domain model to explain "how we can bring intelligence to our emotions."³² The model is made up of three intra-personal "competencies" — *knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating one-self*; and two interpersonal competencies — *recognising emotions in others and handling relationships*.

Goleman illustrates his conception of well-developed emotional competencies by drawing upon psychologist Jack Block's descriptions of the "IQ pure type" and the "EI pure type."³³ These ideal types are further divided according to gender, such that we are presented with a four section classificatory model consisting of the *IQ pure type, male*; the *EI pure type, male*; the *IQ pure type, female*; and the *EI pure type, female*. The male IQ pure type is a caricature of the academic. He excels in thought and endeavours of the mind, but is impoverished in understanding feelings and his personal life. He has a wide range of intellectual interests and abilities. He is productive and ambitious, but is often "...critical and condescending, fastidious and inhibited, uneasy with sexuality and sensual experience, unexpressive and detached, and emotionally bland and cold."³⁴ The male EI pure type, by contrast, is usually cheerful. He is not prone to worry. He is ethical, sympathetic, and caring. His emotional life is rich, but "appropriate": he is comfortable with himself.

The female IQ pure type is articulate, confident and intellectual. She has a wide range of interests, but is introspective; she is hesitant to express her anger openly (though she often does so indirectly). By contrast, the female EI pure type is assertive, good at expressing feelings directly, positive, outgoing and gregarious. She does not express feelings through outbursts. She is open to new experiences. High EI women also enjoy a qualitatively different emotional life from those of their IQ counterparts: "[Unlike] women purely high in IQ, they rarely feel anxious or guilty, or sink into rumination."³⁵ Goleman notes that these ideal types should be taken very much as constructions to serve didactic purposes. He is not, of course, suggesting that there are simply four types of people. Instead he argues that all of us are mixes of IQ and EI. However, according to Goleman, "...emotional intelligence adds far more of the qualities that make us more fully human."³⁶

³² Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*, 42.

³³ *Ibid.*, 44-45; J. Block, *IQ vs. Emotional Intelligence*. Unpublished manuscript (University of California at Berkeley, California, 1995).

³⁴ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*, 45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

From this somewhat truncated exposition of EI, it is already apparent that Goleman is classifying as “intelligent” the more open, rounded and stable management and presentation of emotions. However, his prescriptions go beyond mere “display rules.” He encourages us to manage what we feel more than simply what we feign such that through developing our EI we learn actually to *become* more empathetic, sympathetic, positive, gregarious, etc. since these are the traits of “winners and stars.”³⁷ Here one can also observe the significance of emotional authenticity to the discourse of EI. Goleman understands the feigning of emotions as, under many circumstances, emotionally unintelligent. He advocates that we should learn to be emotionally direct, open and honest, *at the right times*. This honesty in human exchanges is, he suggests, in turn premised upon the ideal of “self-awareness” — greater understanding of our own emotions; learning to recognise our “true” feelings; learning to classify and monitor these; and so forth. In this sense, the discourse of EI evidently constitutes more than a set of emotional scripts to be per-formed irrespective of our “true” feelings. However, despite its rhetorical emphasis on emotional liberation and authenticity, the discourse of EI — particularly in relation to its emphasis on harnessing emotions for personal and professional success — equally appears to mark a continuation of processes that have involved an increasing “commercialisation of feeling.” The term “emotional labour”³⁸ has come to gain considerable intellectual currency as a referent to such processes, and more specifically as a conceptualisation of increasingly sophisticated managerialist attempts to engineer corporate emotional landscapes through the exploitation of employees’ emotion management in the service of commercial ends. It is worth briefly examining the concept of emotional labour, and in particular, the extent to which EI can be understood to constitute a continuation of, or a break from, the processes invoked by this term since, ultimately, this model of conceiving “emotions at work” (in both senses of the phrase) serves as a point of departure for the subsequent discussion of the EI discourse in relation to Eliasian and Foucauldian analytics.

Emotional Intelligence as Emotional Labour?

Over the past few decades, organisational research into emotional labour has come to figure centrally in sociological accounts of emotion at work. The principal progenitor of this research is Arlie Hochschild, particularly in her 1983 study *The Managed Heart*. Hochschild defines emotional labour, as opposed to “emotion work” (“private” emotion management), as the management of feeling undertaken in exchange for wages. In emotional labour, Hochschild argues, our private ways of using emotion are “transmuted” to serve commercial ends. Our smiles, moods, feelings and relationships become products that belong more to the employer and

³⁷ Hochschild, 90.

³⁸ Hochschild.

less to the self.³⁹ In relation to an empirical study of flight attendants, Hochschild observed the management of outward emotional display, and inner-directed emotional labour, to maintain among passengers: "...the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place."⁴⁰ In this way, Hochschild states, "...the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself."⁴¹ From their training and through feedback from supervisors, Hochschild's flight attendants learned to comply with corporate "feeling rules." On one level — the level of *surface acting* — these rules are scripts to direct the expression of feeling. However, on another level — that of *deep acting* — the rules are much more pervasive: they relate to how workers are obliged/constrained actually to feel and to experience their feelings. In this way, flight attendants were compelled not just to appear to love their job, but to *actually try to love it*, to learn to enjoy their exchanges with customers, empathise with unruly passengers, and so forth.

Given this brief overview, it would appear, at least in terms of a preliminary analysis, that EI has all the hallmarks of constituting demands for emotional labour. EI involves as a central principle the idea that emotions can be utilised for competitive commercial advantage, they can, to refer to Hochschild's definition, have an *exchange value*. As we have seen, however, an individual seen to be high in EI, does not simply manipulate the outward expression of emotion, it is not just a question of *surface acting*. EI also involves *intrapersonal* "mastery" — in Hochschild's language, *deep acting* — particularly in relation to the idea that we should actually come to experience ourselves as more sympathetic, caring, empathetic, etc. through developing our emotional competencies. Moreover, in EI, the commercialisation of feeling is effectively taken one stage further by stylistically collapsing the distinction between emotionality and rationality. In the neologistic packaging of EI, emotion, even unchecked feeling, is presented not as an environmental concern, as an opposing consideration to the instrumental goals of an organisation, but as crucial to commercial and personal success. This means that, even purely in terms of a profit motive — and not from an appeal to moral, ethical, or philanthropic concerns — it makes good business sense to take notice of the emotions operating in a workplace. Even if *greed is good*, advocates of EI suggest that we must recognise the commercial importance of emotions in helping us to satiate greed. In this way, "emotion" itself is discursively "transmuted" into a corporate resource that can be allocated and enhanced.

³⁹ Hochschild 198. It is in this respect that the para-Marxian underpinnings of the concept are most readily apparent.

⁴⁰ Hochschild, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 7.

To return once again to Foucault's earlier cited "not bad, but dangerous" statement, the "bad" of emotional labour is that, for Hochschild, it further increases the span of managerial control, facilitating an increasing pervasion into the "inner reaches" of emotional subjectivity. On the face of it, EI extends this capacity further still. After all, EI is understood to be a measure not simply of our performance at work, but of *who we are*. The scope, then, for employees to develop protective self-distancing strategies, to maintain a clear distinction between their selves at work and their "true" selves beyond is severely curtailed.⁴² The rhetorical appeal of EI — that it is based upon neuroscience, not an arbitrary managerial standard — might indeed compound the tendency, under the rubric of EI, for dissent or a breakdown in emotional performance to be pathologised as an individual failing, as indicative of a person who lacks requisite levels of emotional competence, as something that is wrong with *me*.⁴³ Yet advocates of EI encourage the capacity to maintain a "healthy" distance between the personal and professional "self." Goleman, for example, states quite explicitly, that "...a blurring of the distinction between work and private life... itself signifies poor emotional competence."⁴⁴

In this respect, then, Hochschild and Goleman appear to share common concerns. Each is advocating a separation between "private" and "public" life so as to protect the "true" emotional self. For Hochschild, "navigation of the emotional waters"⁴⁵ in our private lives serves the purposes of welfare and pleasure, whereas in the public domain "a profit motive slips in."⁴⁶ Our "private" uses of feeling are thus deemed to require protection from the interests of capitalist enterprises. Similarly, Goleman's emphasis is upon elucidating our *true* feelings. Indeed, he identifies the competence of emotional self-awareness as central to EI. However, his intention, he states, is definitely not: "...to argue for making organizations places where people simply bare their feelings or souls to each other, in some nightmarish vision of the office as a kind of emotional salon or ongoing sensitivity group...."⁴⁷

But while both Goleman and Hochschild warn against the blurring of the boundaries between private and working lives, this very conception of an absolute split between the "private" and "public," "authentic" and "acted," "real" and "false"

⁴² J. Cullinane & M. Pye, "Winning and losing in the workplace — the use of emotions in the valorisation and alienation of labour," paper presented to *Work Employment Society* annual conference, University of Nottingham, 11th–13th September, 2001.

⁴³ P. Fleming & G. Sewell, "Looking for the good soldier, Svejik: alternative modalities of resistance in the contemporary workplace," *Sociology*, 36 (4) (2000); Hughes.

⁴⁴ Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, 287.

⁴⁵ Hochschild, 119.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁷ Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, 287.

selves, is itself problematic, as is the more general conceptualisation of power and selfhood that is common to Hochschild and other dominant sociological accounts of emotions at work. It is in this connection in particular that, in different ways, the work of both Elias and Foucault each offers considerable utility in rethinking the expansion of emotional labour and, more particularly, the rise of EI as a managerial discourse. Indeed, the notional stratified “self” which both Hochschild and Goleman consider axiomatic for their respective analyses, marks for both Elias and Foucault at once a point of departure, and through a shared focus on the sociogenesis of “modern” selfhood, a concrete analytical focus. It is in their departure from conventional accounts of “the self,” plus their more general rejection of the model of power that is contained in such notions as emotional labour, that we can observe some considerable complementarities in the work of both Elias and Foucault. Thus, in what follows, we reconsider emotional labour, EI, and “emotions at work” through Eliasian and Foucauldian analytical lenses, both as a means to reconceptualise the key issues discussed thus far, and to explore key intersections, and ultimately incompatibilities, between Elias’s and Foucault’s work.

Informalisation, Civilisation, and Emotional Reflexivity

As Wouters has argued, a key problem with Hochschild’s account of emotional labour is in her positing of a real, pre-social emotional self residing exclusively in the private sphere that, through the process of transmutation, becomes appropriated by such commercial enterprises.⁴⁸ Hochschild’s analytical division between private and public, real and false, authenticity and acting can be understood as expressive of a socially-instilled reification based upon an image of human beings that Norbert Elias has called *Homo clausus*: “a human self-image according to which the true self of a person is hidden deep inside — one cannot be quite sure inside of what.”⁴⁹ *Homo clausus* loosely means “closed personalities,” it refers to a dominant present-day experience of a dividing line between “the real me in here” and “society out there.”⁵⁰ There is not room here for a full-blown exposition of Elias’s ideas in this connection, nonetheless one of the central undertakings in his work on civilising processes was to elucidate how *Homo clausus* self-experiences, indeed, how “private” emotional subjectivities, are historically as well as biographically constituted. Elias traces long-term shifts in the structure and character of the emotional lives of specific groups of people, notably members of the secular upper classes, with a focus in particular on transitions from the late Middle Ages to the Early Modern period. From this ana-

⁴⁸ C. Wouters, “The sociology of emotions and flight attendants: Hochschild’s *Managed Heart*,” *Theory Culture & Society*, 6 (1) (1989).

⁴⁹ N. Elias, “On human beings and their emotions: a process sociological essay,” *Theory Culture & Society*, 4 (1987), 356.

⁵⁰ N. Elias, *What is Sociology?* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), 119. [Translated from the original German publication in 1970].

lysis, he elucidates a shift involving an *advancing threshold of shame and repugnance* in relation to bodily functions, both of the self and of others, and an increasing *social restraint towards self-restraint*. If we were to contrast, say, the table manners of people eating together in the manner customary of the Middle Ages, we might observe behaviours that to present day sensibilities would be regarded as distasteful, vulgar, perhaps embarrassing — eating from a common dish, with unwashed hands, belching and farting at the table, etc. In this previous era, people's emotions were conditioned in a different way. What had not yet been developed to the extent that it is now — and what may be at play in our reactions to their behaviours — is an “invisible wall of affects” that seemingly rises at the approach of something that has entered the mouth of another person, at the sight or even mention of certain bodily functions, or as a feeling of shame or embarrassment when our own functions are exposed to others.⁵¹

This “invisible wall” that seems to interject itself between one body and another, repelling and separating, is central to the self-experience of *Homo clausus*. Put simply, the *conception* of a split between the private and public domains of life is itself something that develops over time (both biographically and historically). Thus, growing demands for emotion management cannot simply be reduced to the actions of capitalist enterprises; these are rooted in much broader and longer-term processes of social change. Even from the few examples provided above — and Elias provides many more — we can also observe how seemingly private, individual, and personal experiences of ourselves, plus our feelings and approaches toward others, are part of our historically emergent social *habitus*. One can also observe how the search for authenticity may in turn be related to the connected experience of a deeply hidden *true, essential me* and the longing to uncover it.

While Hochschild laments the rise of an era in which the previously “private” negotiation of emotion has come to be replaced by corporate standards and scripts, what she points towards arguably involves considerably more complex and longer-term processes than the shift in practices adopted by capitalist enterprises.⁵² Indeed, the loss of the authentic emotional self, and the *Homo clausus* self-experience to which it relates, have emerged as enduring themes in Western thought since the Renaissance.⁵³ Moreover, the management and production of emotion has never been

⁵¹ N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. Revised edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 60. [Originally published 1938].

⁵² Hochschild, 186.

⁵³ Indeed, Foucault discerns a similar theme as a *cornerstone* of modern thought: “Identity separated from itself by a distance which, in one sense is interior to it, but, in another, constitutes it...” (M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Science*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002) [1966], 370) For a discussion of the links between this notion and Elias's concept

exclusively “private” in the sense that Hochschild employs this term.⁵⁴ In fact, as Wouters observes, we could posit a counter-trend in the longer term to that which Hochschild observes, one in which models of emotional exchange have become less rigid and more differentiated: *a controlled de-controlling of emotional controls*.⁵⁵

Elias’s argument is that as processes of civilisation have developed, so social demands for affect management have become increasingly “second nature,” “internalised.” In relation to this, explicit social rules and sanctions on behaviour have come to lose significance, and there has emerged a seemingly more relaxed, playful, and informal approach to codes of etiquette and emotional conduct. In short, there has been a shift in the character of social constraints towards self-restraint whereby social demands for affect-management have come to move away from the formalised treatises of etiquette manuals, manners texts, and defined emotional scripts to take on a different form — a move towards “informal” and often more implicit standards of socially sanctioned emotional behaviour. The theme in Elias’s work, while elucidated in his original *The Civilising Process* (2000) [first published 1938 as *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*], and centrally explored in his later works, notably *The Court Society* (2006) [1969],⁵⁶ and, together with Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement* (2009) [1986], has been given further articulation and development by Cas Wouters, who refers to the process as “informalisation.”⁵⁷ Such processes are most

of *Homo clausus*, plus a more general comparison of Foucault and Elias, see Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias, Sociology, and the Human Crisis: Interdependence, Power, and Process*.

⁵⁴ Wouters, “The sociology of emotions and flight attendants: Hochschild’s *Managed Heart*,” 104.

⁵⁵ N. Elias & E. Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2009) [Revised Edition, 1986 original]; C. Wouters, “Informalization and the civilizing process,” in P. R. Gleichmann, J. Goudsblom & H. Korte, *Human Figurations* (Amsterdam, 1977).

⁵⁶ *The Court Society* was first published in German under the title *Die Höfische Gesellschaft* in 1969, more than thirty years after it was originally presented in 1933 as Elias’s *Habilitationsschrift* — a thesis that is required in German academia to qualify for teaching at an advanced academic level — under Karl Mannheim’s supervision in Frankfurt. The book is both a prequel and sequel to his *Magnum opus*, *The Civilising Process*: foregrounding many of the themes developed in the latter (1939 original) text, and also substantially developing these themes, particularly since Elias subsequently reworked the piece for publication in 1969. See S. Mennell, “Editor’s preface” to N. Elias, *The Court Society* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2006), xiii.

⁵⁷ See C. Wouters, “Informalization and the civilizing process”; C. Wouters, “Formalization and informalisation: changing tension balances in civilizing processes,” *Theory Culture & Society*, 3 (2) (1986); Wouters, “The sociology of emotions and flight attendants: Hochschild’s *Managed Heart*”; C. Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions Since 1890* (London: Sage, 2007). While, as suggested, the concept of informalisation was already implicit in Elias’s section “diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties” in the third part of his book on *The Civilising Process*, he focused on “diminishing contrasts,” and did not elaborate the “increasing varieties.” It was Wouters who coined the term informalisation and substantially developed the ideas involved. It is important to note, however, that the concept of informalisation is not considered to mark a break from

clearly manifested in the rise of the “permissive society” and “expressive revolution.”⁵⁸ In processes of informalisation “...dominant modes of conduct symbolizing institutionalized power relationships, came to be more and more ignored and attacked, leading to growing negotiability and leniency in the ways people oppose and cooperate with each other.”⁵⁹ Within the workplace, informalisation can be seen in the move towards “flatter” organisational structures; decentralisation of decision making; the growing complexity and “flexibility” of work roles; the dissipation of organisational boundaries; and the less formal relations between superiors and subordinates.⁶⁰ Processes of informalisation relate to “...the use of first names and colloquial speech... confessing private feelings and expressing emotions, engaging in intimate relations on the work floor, and in general the blurring of the boundaries between “work life” and “private life.”⁶¹ But this apparent “relaxing” of controls, this opening of emotional exchange to greater variety, individual nuance, and the growth of emotional alternatives, also involves at one level an *intensification* of demands on affect economy central to processes of civilisation.⁶² In the relative absence of explicit and formal rules governing behaviour we are compelled to develop more reflexive means of self-regulation in order to negotiate loosely-defined, ever-changing networks of social relationships characteristic of more flexible organisations.⁶³

An example to help clarify processes of informalisation, both as a feature of these processes, and as model for informalisation more generally, is that of the increasing popularity of “mufti” days within large corporations in Great Britain and the United States. These are days, usually once per week, when employees can ostensibly *dress as they wish*, they do not need to wear the corporate uniform, or dress in line with formal company policy. There are, of course, considerable variations in mufti days. Some organisations may specify, very loosely, that even on these days, employees must be smart-casual. Others may have no explicitly stated specifications at all. However, rather than their constituting a simple relaxation of pressures on how to dress, we are immediately presented with another set of demands, and these might be even more intensely felt than those arising from company dress code. We must

previous “phases” of civilising processes, but rather, to mark a continuation of these. It is particularly important to view the previously discussed search for emotional authenticity as located in longer-term civilising processes, not simply processes of informalisation.

⁵⁸ Wouters, “The sociology of emotions and flight attendants: Hochschild’s *Managed Heart*,” 98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 98–99.

⁶⁰ A. van Iterson, W. Mastenbroek & J. Soeters, “Civilizing and informalizing: organizations in an Eliasian context,” *Organization*, 8 (3) (2001), 507.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Wouters, “The sociology of emotions and flight attendants: Hochschild’s *Managed Heart*,” 99.

⁶³ van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 114.

still dress appropriately. But what is “appropriate”? We are compelled to ask a series of questions of our clothes: “is this fashionable?” “Is this the right label?” (and this refers as much to labels on the inside of our clothes as it does to those emblazoned on the outside). The questions are expressive of more than just commercial concerns. “Is this too tarty?” “Does my butt look big in this?” “Is this too nerdy?” “Is this too formal?” “Too casual?” “Too stiff?” “Too power-dressy?” “Too loud?” “Too dull?” “Is this really *me*?” We are compelled to dress “correctly,” not so much according to the formally defined “external” standard of the corporation, but now according to a blend and balance of unstated “internalised” and explicit “external” standards and concerns. We must express both our individuality and our sense of belonging through our particular way of dressing. On the face of it, we are *free* to wear tracksuits to work, but would we be “comfortable?” And what might “they” think of “me” if I did? Likewise, what would “we” think of those who did?

By similar extension, the concept of informalisation is also useful in understanding the rise of EI. As I have argued, rather than constituting a proliferation of simple emotional scripts — of “emotional uniforms” — EI asks us to develop our emotion management “skills” or “competencies” such that we are emotionally adept: we are comfortable, we are angry *at the right times*, with the *right people*, and so forth. We are asked to develop a *playful, flexible* approach to expressing and managing emotions.⁶⁴ It is precisely these central features of EI — demands for more playful flexibility, and, in relation to this, the growing awareness of using emotions and the management of emotions for competitive advantage — that are defining features of processes of informalisation.

Viewed within the context of informalisation, it is also perhaps easier to make sense of the seemingly contradictory aspects of the discourse of EI: it promotes an emancipation of emotions from explicit “external” standards, while simultaneously constituting an elaboration of such standards under the guise of competencies not scripts; it presents demands for emotional honesty and authenticity while simultaneously rendering emotions as projects to be developed and managed; it involves calls for a liberation of emotions from formalised controls whilst simultaneously leaving its subjects to negotiate informal and implicit behavioural and emotional standards as expressions of themselves. EI thus calls not for a scripting of emotion, as posited by the concept of emotional labour, but instead a reflexive negotiation of our emotional lives at work and beyond. This *emotional reflexivity* involves *both* a relaxation and an intensification of emotional controls: we might well “screw the rules,” but we must do so in a manner that stays true to ourselves — in ways that are *appropriate* and *intelligent*.

⁶⁴ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*, 45.

From Repression to Stimulation: EI as Governmentality

The observation of these ambivalent and seemingly paradoxical aspects of processes of informalisation presents a source of potential common ground between the work of Elias and Foucault. In an interview with the editorial collective of *Quel Corps?* Foucault observes that with relations of power, one is always "...faced with complex phenomena which don't obey the Hegelian form of the dialectic."⁶⁵ Foucault provides the example of bodily regimens such as exercise, diet, body-building and so forth which, he proposes, first serve to produce the effects of power — the "healthy" bodies of children, soldiers, etc. — but then are used *against* power: "Suddenly, what had made power strong becomes used to attack it."⁶⁶ But power, he proposes, invariably retreats, reorganises, re-invests itself in new forms, new modalities. Power, thus, is characterised by a continual and recursive struggle involving moves and adversarial counter-moves. However, such struggles occur not in the manner of salvos from opposite ends of a battlefield, but *within* the same sites and relays.

To clarify, Foucault's more specific example is that of auto-eroticism and the revolt against this in eighteenth-century Europe. In this context, masturbation came to be viewed as a sickness, and a system of monitoring and control was instituted, in particular over the bodies of children. Foucault writes, "But sexuality, through thus becoming an object of analysis and concern, surveillance and control, engenders as the same time an intensification of each individual's desire for, in, an over his body."⁶⁷ The sexual revolt against such repression can be seen as the counterpoint to this incursion. The response from power is not to "quell the rebellion," but rather to embrace it through an economic and ideological exploitation of eroticism and sexual "liberation," from sun-screen to pornographic films.⁶⁸ As such, Foucault argues, "...we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation. 'Get undressed — but be slim, good-looking, tanned.'"⁶⁹

In the case of EI, the "repression" of the emotional uniform is replaced by the "stimulation" of emotional mufti. Emotional expression replaces feeling rules and scripts. But the *intelligent* management of feeling remains a lifelong project, one involving the continual and uncertain negotiation of how and when it is right to be angry, happy, enthusiastic, indifferent, and so forth: one to be undertaken against

⁶⁵ M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 56.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the transient, shifting and indefinite standard of what is *appropriate* in the ebb and flow of life within and beyond the workplace. In this manner, the emancipation from the emotional uniform and the resistance of emotional scripts that is offered by EI is simultaneously a new form of governmentality: resistance becomes discipline, and equally, as I have argued elsewhere, this self-same discipline offers opportunities for resistance — perhaps in the very name of emotional honesty and authenticity that has been solicited.⁷⁰ The case of EI, then, would appear to exemplify Foucault's arguments that power is exercised as much through what is permitted as what is forbidden, through both collusion and opposition; indeed, it consists in the generation of such fields of discursive possibility. As Foucault, here citing Servan, argues: "A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more with the chain of their own ideas [which is] all the stronger if we do not know of what it is made and we believe it to be our own work."⁷¹

To employ a Foucauldian distinction, while emotional labour might best be understood as a *technology of domination*, EI appears to constitute a *technology of the self*.⁷² Where technologies of domination are deployed to "...determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination;"⁷³ technologies of the self involve new techniques of self-revelation, new ways of knowing oneself, and a proliferation of new forms of expertise: techniques that "...permit individuals to effect, by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality."⁷⁴

These technologies, Foucault argues, are historically variant but have centrally involved changing conceptions of *care of the self*, *knowledge of the self*, *truth-telling*, and *self-disclosure*.⁷⁵ The guiding practice that characterises such processes of self-forma-

⁷⁰ See Hughes.

⁷¹ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1982), 102-103.

⁷² M. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in L. Martin, H. Gutman & P. Hutton (eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988), 18.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ It is my express intention not to conflate "technologies of the self" with "care of the self." Particularly in his later work, Foucault presented "care of the self" as an *ethical position* developed in classical philosophy that he employed to make sense of a range of *practices* and *technologies* of modern selfhood. "Care of oneself" escaped its first philosophical meanings before gradually becoming more general in scope, acquiring "...the dimensions and forms of a veritable "cultivation of the self"" that "...became instilled in ways of living... procedures, practices, and

tion — one which stands at the juncture between technologies of domination and technologies of the self — is the confessional. Confessional narratives range from Christian confession to autobiography, and (most significantly in the context of the present discussion) different forms of *therapy*. Confession involves a particular set of discursive practices in which the self's "self-relation" is constituted — whereby subjects are effectively both "producers" and "produced." The production of confessional narratives draws centrally upon the techniques of self-knowledge, truth-telling, revelation, exposure, in which the self is rendered visible and made amenable to change, and ultimately transformation — motifs that are once again repackaged under such guises as *knowing and managing one's emotions*, and *managing and motivating oneself*, and the more general quest to find one's *true self* that is enshrined in Goleman's model of EI. Like other similar therapeutic discourses, a particularly attractive aspect of EI its capacity to offer a potential resolution to the seemingly irreconcilable ideals associated with different arenas of social life, such as those which relate to the striving for corporate success, on the one hand, and personal fulfilment on the other; or, in a similar manner, the seemingly incompatible goals of interpersonal dynamism and emotional authenticity.⁷⁶ In other words, such notions offer a means to reconcile our "private" and "public" emotional lives.

For Foucault, technologies of the self are perpetuated by expertise claims, which, in the current era, are typically drawn from scientific or scientific discourse. In the case of EI, as mentioned above, developments in neuroscience are often cited as of central importance. In a section of his *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ* entitled "Why this exploration now?" Goleman accounts for the genesis of his work on EI as residing in recent "bursts" of scientific studies on emotion and brain functioning. He writes:

Most dramatic are the glimpses of the brain at work, made possible by innovative methods such as new brain-imaging technologies. They have made visible for the first time in human history what has always been a source of deep mystery: exactly how this intricate mass of cells operates while we think and feel, imagine and dream. The flood of neuro-biological data lets us understand more clearly than ever how the brain's centers for emotion move us to rage or to tears, and how more ancient parts of the brain, which stir us to make war as well as love, are channelled for better or worse. This unprecedented clarity on the workings of emotions and their failings brings into focus some fresh remedies for our collective emotional crisis.⁷⁷

formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught." See M. Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality Volume 3* (London: Penguin, 1986), 44-45.

⁷⁶ M. McDonald & J. O'Callaghan, "Positive psychology: a Foucauldian critique," *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 36: (2008), 4.

⁷⁷ Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ*, xi.

The re-ordering of the limits of the visible and invisible, the development of new diagnostic techniques, the extension of the clinical gaze and associated new modes of surveillance (here via functional neuro-imaging) are all redolent of central themes explored by Foucault in *The Birth of The Clinic*, which I can only deal with briefly here. Nonetheless, we can observe that EI also involves a discursive corollary of these diagnostic techniques — *to make the emotional self visible* — in various aspects of its institutional–therapeutic practice. A key example is provided in the passage below where Goleman describes the process by which, through building on the competency of *emotional self awareness*, consultants working within the Lincoln motor company instituted a programme of “unlearning defensive habits of conversation.”⁷⁸

The method is simple: Instead of arguing, the parties agree to mutually explore the assumptions that undergird their points of view. A classic example of how people jump to conclusions is when you see someone yawn in a meeting, leap to the assumption that he is bored, and then skip to the more damaging over-generalization that he doesn’t care about the meeting, anyone else’s thoughts, or the entire project... Once these hidden assumptions surface, they can be tested against reality by talking about them. For instance, we may discover the yawn was not from boredom but rather exhaustion due to getting up in the night with a cranky infant.⁷⁹

The practices described above would appear to embody a collective variant of the technology of self-writing, self-decipherment, and autopoiesis: Foucault’s *hermeneutic of the self*. The technique involves a reworked confessional. We are asked to contrast what we show to the world, what we express, with what we actually feel, as a means of accessing the hidden emotional *truth*, both about ourselves, and about our relations with others. We must expose our emotional selves to the gaze of expertise, to be corrected, reconciled, normalised. Here we can be truly, genuinely, honest — but not without bounds. “If I tell the truth, what will that say about me?” “What might be the implications?” “How secure is my job?” “Will I be deemed to be emotionally stupid?” In this way, dissent is openly permitted, it is in fact solicited, but simultaneously, it is subsumed within the conditions that make it possible. Ultimately, it is stylistically transformed into source of “group emotional conflict” and “interpersonal incompatibility”: a project that needs further work, both by “us” and by “you” (but not without “our” help). Both managers and employees are positioned simultaneously as subjects and objects, all face the scrutiny of all, and while an employee’s lack of commitment and self-motivation might be exposed for correction, so might a manager’s lack of empathy or emotional honesty. All, at least

⁷⁸ Goleman, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, 292.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 292-293.

potentially, is resolvable, but an EI consultant's first step is to scan the emotional landscape, to elucidate the cracks, tensions, fault lines, and ultimately seek to correct these.

Foucault and Elias: Critical Differences

While, for the purposes of the analysis presented above, I have focused on the common ground of Foucault and Elias, principally to develop some of my key arguments about EI, it is also important to acknowledge the considerable incompatibilities and tensions which separate the work of these authors. It is thus worth briefly considering a few significant points of departure and disagreement.

As the above comparison of the authors in relation to the case of EI serves to demonstrate, a key difference between Elias and Foucault resides in the way these authors discuss power. From an Eliasian "figurational" standpoint, Foucault's language has the tendency to reify power as an "agent" which variously "invests itself," "retreats and re-organises," and otherwise presents a "side" to be "resisted."⁸⁰ In his earlier cited *Quel Corps?* interview on the topic, he appears to use the word "power" to refer to a "thing-like" entity which can be "attacked," "made strong," or used "against" "itself." For Elias, terms like "resistance" and "discipline" refer to *aspects* of power, not "its" opposites. Furthermore, Elias's focus is invariably upon power *relations*: power balances, ratios, asymmetries, etc. Elias was fastidiously concerned with the precision and clarity of his concepts and language — opting always for formulations that facilitated an engagement with processes and relationships. And yet, despite these differences in formulation, Foucault's more general understanding of power is ultimately also a relational one: that power is not monolithic, cannot be equated with notions such as "authority," or "the state" — that it is multiple, diffuse, and without essence.

Part of this issue relates to important differences in the intellectual lineages of Elias and Foucault. Elias's work can be seen to have arisen out of a sociological tradition which stretches back to the work of authors such as Comte, one in which sociology is held to be an entirely separate discipline from philosophy, and in which philosophical concepts, language, and modes of theorising are consciously rejected. The work of Foucault, by contrast, can be located within a primarily philosophical, "epistemological break" tradition exemplified by writers like Gaston Bachelard and his pupil, Georges Canguilhem — both of whom wrote in direct response to Comte and the tradition his work exemplified. Indeed, partly in relation to these differences in intellectual lineage, there are marked contrasts between Foucault and Elias

⁸⁰ See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*; see also Kilminster's critique in *The Sociological Revolution: From Enlightenment to the Global Age*.

with regard to their respective sensitivity to historical continuity and discontinuity. And, again in relation to this heritage, Foucault was considerably more concerned with the power effects of knowledge than was Elias. Just as Elias might take issue with certain philosophical residues in Foucault's language and theorising, so might Foucault object to the scientific lexicon adopted by Elias. From a Foucauldian perspective, Elias's writing takes on all the rhetorical force of a science — its tight, precise, detached formulations at times seem to betray an underpinning Freudianism. Indeed, while Elias might have challenged Foucault to place the discourse of philosophy itself on the analytical operating table, Foucault might well have asked Elias to undertake a sociogenesis of the Freudian repressive hypothesis that is consistently used as a touchstone for Elias's work, and to consider the power effects of this notion in the constitution of the fabled modern subject.

Given these substantial differences, then, it is perhaps all the more remarkable that we find some notable agreement between these authors on such matters as shifting formations of selfhood, including the ascendancy of particular forms of self-relationship under specific figurational/discursive conditions; long-term shifts in behavioural standards, particularly those which pertain to sexual/bodily functioning; and indeed — as have been centrally explored in this paper — social transitions in the management, display, and articulation of emotions both in "public" and "private" life, including the historical emergence, and subsequently increasing dissolution and collapse, of the private/public distinction itself.

Conclusion

Taken together then, the analytical possibilities presented by the work of Elias and Foucault offer potentially complementary insights into EI and the changing emotional *rules for work*. When viewed through the lens of existing sociological accounts of emotion at work, EI has all the appearances of a set of managerial scripts (packaged as competencies) for workers' emotional behaviour that can be understood to constitute demands for emotional labour. However, it has been argued, a key component of such "scripts" themselves is that of the need for emotional honesty *at the right times*, which in and of itself involves a rejection of simple emotional scripting. Advocates of EI ask us to go beyond "deep acting," they ask us *not to be acting at all*. But rather than this constituting a sudden call for an emancipation of emotional controls, the free play of emotions in the workplace, advocates of EI demand instead a more individually-nuanced navigation of feelings: a reflexive emotional self that increasingly has to take account of a far more complex array of considerations. The ideas relating to EI may well involve a call for us to scrap the emotional uniform, but in its place we must implicitly know how to manage and "dress" our affects in a manner that is appropriate to any given context, and which simultaneously sits comfortably with *the real me*. Such tendencies serve to

demonstrate the ambivalent character of power and control, both within the workplace and beyond whereby relations of power can be understood to consist as much in what is permitted as what is proscribed.

The seemingly contradictory aspects of EI have been considered via both an Eliasian and a Foucauldian analytic. They have been used empirically to highlight some of the key complementarities between Elias's ideas about the shifting character of the social restraint towards self-restraint — particularly the move towards informalisation — and Foucault's arguments about governmentality and power/knowledge. However, it has been argued, such analytical complementarities are set against considerable incompatibilities in the work of the two authors. Principal among these are the philosophical underpinnings of the work of Foucault and the explicit "social scientific" grounding of Elias's approach. I have proposed that such differences are manifest in the very language and concepts of either author — in, for example, Foucault's treatment of power and Elias's orientation towards scientific knowledge. Such differences in lexicon and lineage present considerable obstacles to those who wish to compare the work of Elias and Foucault.⁸¹ Nonetheless, in the spirit of openness of this Special Edition, it is very much hoped that such obstacles are not insurmountable, and that subsequent comparisons will yield further dialogue, cross-fertilization and, perhaps, synthesis, of the research and theorisation of scholars from the Foucauldian and figurational communities.

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⁸¹ For a fuller discussion of such concerns, see, in particular, van Krieken, "The organisation of the soul: Elias and Foucault on discipline and the self;" van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*; Burkitt; Smith, "The Civilizing Process' and 'The History of Sexuality': comparing Elias and Foucault"; Kilminster, *The Sociological Revolution: From Enlightenment to the Global Age*; Kilminster, *Post-Philosophical Sociology*; Dunning & Hughes.