

# Defilement and disgust: Theorizing the other

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**Abstract** In the last few decades, a sociology and politics of difference has altered the landscape of scholarship and politics. The analytic of difference challenged universalistic notions of the subject, identity, society, inequality and knowledge. The critical category of the Other emerges within this discourse of difference; the former has steadily gained prominence as a powerful resource for analysis and critique. Unfortunately, this concept is often embraced for its rhetorical and political force without careful consideration of its conceptual meaning. In this article, I argue that the concept of the Other must be analytically distinguished from that of 'difference'. If the latter speaks to patterns of social disadvantage, Otherness is fundamentally about cultural denigration and exclusion. Approaching the notion of the Other as embedded in a world-ordering moral-symbolic division between a state of civil purity and defilement, I outline the rudiments of a theory of the Other.

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## Introduction

Classical and contemporary Euro-American social theory took shape in no small measure as a theoretical reckoning with industrial capitalism. Whether we consider Marx's critique of political economy, Durkheim's analysis of the social division of labor or Weber's thesis of the Protestant origins of the disciplining of capital and labor, these thinkers aimed to explain the development of industrial capitalism – its political economy, class system, patterns of solidarity, and link to bureaucratization and state formation. A century later, 'capitalism', now understood as an information-based global economy, remains a central focus of social theory and politics.

That said, the theoretical terrain of contemporary Euro-American academic culture has experienced a sea change. The claim that the analysis of capitalism should be the foundation for comprehending contemporary societies has been challenged by the view, roughly speaking, that differences of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, religion, nationality and so on structure our social worlds in ways that cannot be explained exclusively or chiefly by the dynamics of capitalism. Across the social sciences and humanities, scholars and researchers maintain that the analysis of the multiplicity of social differences and their intersection across national and global spaces should be at the core of social analysis (for example West, 1990; Young, 1990). Today, the political economy of capitalism coexists, often uneasily, with a sociology and politics of difference (for example Harvey, 1989; Castells, 1996–1998; Fraser, 1997).

In this article, I take for granted this postwar Euro-American culture of social theory. My aim is to critically examine the scope and analytical borders that mark out the sociology and politics of difference. If we consider the scholarship associated with feminism, postcolonial studies, queer studies or cultural studies, which have been the chief sites for the elaboration of a politics of difference, we repeatedly encounter the concept of the Other. This notion is, however, often used in loose and confusing ways.<sup>1</sup> Typically, the Other refers to a non-normative status. For example, women are cited as the Other to men; in ‘Western’ contexts, the Arab Muslim is the Other to the European Christian. Women and Muslims are assumed to occupy a different and subordinate social position (for example possessing fewer rights and social opportunities) in relation to men and Euro-American Christians; the latter serve as the implicit, sometimes explicit, normative standard. Alternatively, the concept of the Other frequently references a unique cultural status: the Other as an outsider and as a social threat (for example Todorov, 1982; Stallybrass and White, 1986). I argue that these two senses of the Other should be *analytically* distinguished as they suggest distinct lines of social analysis. The former, the Other as a non-normative, socially subordinate status, is best approached as part of a sociology

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<sup>1</sup> Philosophically, the question of the Other is thematized by Hegel and Sartre in terms of the meaning and possibility of freedom in human communities. Recognizing that we share the world with other selves, who also claim agency, how do we recognize their autonomy without denying our own? Or, how is freedom possible in a world in which others, all others, also claim freedom (Habermas, 1973; Benjamin, 1995). In social discourses of cosmopolitanism, the theme of the Other is at times framed in terms of sharing a world with strangers. How do native or local populations negotiate a shared world with selves who circulate among us but are not only different but about whom little is known? Unfortunately, the question of the stranger is often posed in terms of encountering Otherness without asking: under what conditions is the stranger approached as a ‘status difference’ or an Other (Seidman, 2012)? There is also a thread in critical-cultural studies that conflates the Other with a romanticized notion of the stranger, outsider and subaltern as an agent of transformation. A guiding aim of this article is to clarify the social, historical and political resonance of these categories – stranger, outsider, subaltern, difference and Other.

of difference. The latter notion, the Other as dangerous outsider, points to a psycho-social and cultural analysis of otherness.<sup>2</sup>

How does the sociology of difference and otherness diverge? The former refers to the social making of a spectrum of social identities or statuses marked by a hierarchical division between those that are socially privileged and normative and those that are socially disadvantaged and culturally inferior. Not all non-normative statuses should be understood in the analytical language of difference. Only those that exhibit a pattern of social disadvantage are relevant to a politics of difference. For example, gender is an analytically significant axis of difference to the extent that gender norms and practices produce social patterns of divergence and inequality between persons designated as male or female. By contrast, being left-handed in a normatively right-handed society, or a vegetarian in a meat eating nation, would lack analytical significance for a politics of difference in so far as these irregularities do not entail patterned sociopolitical disadvantage. In short, a sociology and politics of difference considers analytically significant only non-normative statuses that evidence an empirical pattern of social and cultural structural disadvantage.

However, and this is crucial for understanding the sociology of difference, a disadvantaged status in one or more social spheres (for example family, work, military) does not necessarily mean subordination across all spheres. And, despite suffering cultural deflation, status differences retain moral legitimacy, or effectively claim inclusion in civil life. For example, American working class men suffer class subordination in the workplace and social disadvantages in terms of access to educational opportunities and institutionalized offices of political power. Yet, if blue-collar men are also white and heterosexual they would retain gender, racial and sexual privileges. And, despite structural disadvantages, this class of men, barring other non-normative statuses, would also be enfranchised and respected as American. Furthermore, even a status difference that reproduces subordination across multiple social spheres may still command respect and citizenship status. For example, many native born white American women before the 1950s lacked equal rights and economic opportunities, as well as suffered status deflation owing to the tight link between femininity and the roles of wife and mother. Nevertheless, if these women were otherwise gender conventional, their status difference (in relation

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<sup>2</sup> Although I underscore the analytical distinctiveness of 'otherness' in relation to 'difference', the line dividing the two concepts is in actuality often less clear and sharp. Stigmatizing and hateful representations and practices may combine features of otherness and difference. Similarly, social identities may be disadvantaged in ways that combine features of these two concepts. Perhaps the metaphor of a continuum is useful. At one end would be uneven subordination and exclusion (difference); at the other extreme would be systemic social subordination and exclusion (otherness). Just as the category of difference took shape in the 1980s and 1990s by challenging the assumption of a universal self, the notion of the Other contests the view that all patterns of sociopolitical disadvantage are instances of the general category of difference.

to a masculine norm) would not position them as Other. To the extent that these women were able to marry and participate in routine familial and civil affairs they occupied a respected social status. The social making of patterned status differences and hierarchies, and their contestation, is the focus of a sociology and politics of difference (Young, 1990).

By contrast, a sociology of otherness aims to understand how non-normative statuses and identities are positioned outside of a normative civil order. Otherness signals a condition of systemic symbolic exclusion. Further, because the Other is also represented as a grave social threat, symbolic exclusion is typically accompanied by systemic patterns of social exclusion (for example ethnic and racial apartheid, Jewish, black, and gay ghettos, or refugee camps).

What is it about the Other that warrants this outsider status? I will argue that figures of difference become Other if they are symbolically associated with a condition of excess and ungovernability. The Other is represented not merely as deficient or eccentric, but as defiled or fundamentally debased and grotesque. The Other inhabits an existential space between the human and non-human. Moreover, this defiled state trades on more than the anxiety of disorder; it is linked to disgust. As a moral sentiment, disgust represents a performative judgment, but as an affective state, it also suggests an unconscious process. I conjecture that the link between defilement and disgust might be partially explained by the former's association with largely unconscious memories of forbidden desires and bodily pleasures. To the extent that the Other is imagined as powerful and threatening chaos and calamity, political mobilization may be considered warranted to defend civil life.

An elaborated account of otherness assumes a social world that is symbolically divided into two antagonistic orders: a symbolic-moral order conferring full personhood and a respected civil status and its antithesis, a defiled order. Othering is a process in which certain persons and the spaces they occupy are excluded from what is considered to be the morally sanctified civil life of a community. To inhabit a defiled status is to be denied a range of rights associated with personhood, the dignity of occupying an honorable civil status and decisional autonomy. The civil/defilement symbolic divide assumes a politics of managing the fluid borderlands separating these orders. Border politics are at the heart of the sociology of the Other.

### **The Defiled Self**

Stigmatized, racially inferior or abnormal selves do not necessarily occupy a status as Other. These figures may experience social subordination and marginalization, but still be recognized as fully human and enfranchised as citizens. By contrast, the Other experiences a withdrawal of the status of full personhood; she surrenders basic rights and respect, forfeits a sense of civic

belonging, and is assumed to lack decisional autonomy. And lacking essential human sensibilities and capacities, the Other occupies a symbolic border region between the human and the non-or-sub-human. As a figure threatening chaos and ruin, the Other may be subject to forms of governance that suspend routine customary and juridical conventions.

What is it about the defiled condition of the Other that warrants symbolic and social exclusion? Although defilement indicates a state of moral debasement, the Other is not necessarily bereft of all moral qualities. Stereotypically, the homosexual in homophobic discourses is reviled but may also be thought of as intelligent and socially skilled; a Jew-hating discourse may envy the Jew for his frugality or ethnic loyalty. Defilement speaks to more than a flawed self; she is rotten at her core (Kolnai, 2004, p. 84).

What then is the source of this defiled status? Drawing from studies of polluting representations of the homosexual, the colonized and indigenous native, the immigrant and refugee, the slave and the Jew, my conjecture is that in many cases the defiled self is imagined as deficient in those key human traits that make a moral life possible (conscience, compassion, altruism). Defiled selves are driven by an excess of otherwise ordinary human traits, for example aggression, self aggrandizement or grandiosity. Deficit and excess are two sides of the same coin. A self lacking in moral and behavioral control engages in excessive boundary-crossing, unruly conduct. This deficit/excess disequilibrium is imagined as the governing disposition of the Other. Lurching between a state of incoherence and uncontrollable self-aggrandizement, the defiled threatens to unleash a wave of chaos and ruin in civil life. Ultimately, the Other's extreme sociopathic and sadistic profile risks the collapse of a human world into a de-humanized object world.

Consider fat-phobic discourses. In American popular culture, fatness is often understood as reflecting a deficit of self-control. Exposed to a glut of food temptations, fat selves succumb to consumptive excess. An excessively fleshy body exposes an uncontrollable, narcissistic self; a life driven by sensual culinary indulgence ignores rational concerns such as personal and social well-being (Braziel and LeBesco, 2001). In popular representations, fat is dead weight, threatening the self with annihilation and society with a weak, flabby, regressed citizenry.

Interestingly, fatness stands in a relation of exteriority to the true self (Huff, 2001). Being fat is not only an unnecessary and undesirable imposition on the healthy, normal body but it is an inessential appendage to the self. Fatness projects the body outward but this enlargement hides and submerges the true self. The latter is literally weighed down, squeezed into a smaller and smaller space by the layers of excess flesh. To put it otherwise, there may be fat bodies but not fat selves (Kent, 2001). And the irony of fatness in fat-phobic discourses is that while the body claims more and more space, the self encased in the corpulent body grows ever thinner and indistinct. The true self is compressed,

literally swallowed up by the narcissistically driven voracious, insatiable desire to ingest and expand.

The fat body exposes a desperate self. This is a self whose presence is literally buried beneath the layers and folds of fleshy fat. Moreover, her primary connection to life has been reduced to an archaic desire to ingest and consume. As such, the fat body betrays a regressed wish to return to an infantile existence before language and before Oedipus. It is the triumph of this insatiable desire that defiles fat bodies and renders them dangerous. Ultimately, fatness is a form destroying, order-dissolving condition whose underlying (unconscious) drive is to annihilate the self and others.

Defilement assumes a fundamentally unstable and ungovernable self; she is driven by extreme dispositions and impulses. But why call this self defiled? In part, defilement speaks to a self whose state of deficit/excess renders her uncivil (Alexander, 2007). Alienation from familial-civic life marks the defiled as not quite human; she occupies a border zone between the human and sub-human.<sup>3</sup> The defiled inhabits the symbolic space of the ‘grotesque’ and the monsterish (Cassuto, 1996). Melodrama is the rhetorical genre best suited to narrating otherness. Indeed, the defiled self is often imagined as possessing and being possessed by extraordinary, supernatural powers (Foucault, 1965). In part, then, defilement speaks to the extraordinary power and menacing quality of the Other. But this is no ordinary threat. Positioned at the moral border of humanity, the defiled self is ungovernable; she is relentlessly driven to rule violating and uncivil behavior. While transgressivity might render this figure a potential site of the sublime (Bataille, 1985), the defiled is menacing precisely because she threatens to unleash waves of disorder and destruction. This is a figure to be feared and reviled, a personage who may come to represent evil (Kolnai, 2004, p. 85).

The defiled then is incapable of self-governance. She challenges the capacity of humankind to be an order-and-meaning-making species. Moreover, the defiled threatens an ever-widening circle of contamination, moral ruin and civic disorder.

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<sup>3</sup> Consider Puritan views of the American Indian. ‘To the Puritans, Indians lacked self-control and therefore occupied a lower category in the hierarchy of being ... . As a result, such “savages” were “potential human beings” only ...’ (Cassuto, 1996, p. 36). To be a savage was to be deficient in their capacities for self-control and for a spiritual-ethical life. Many Puritans interpreted the absence of European cultural traits among Indians as evidence that they lacked the essential human faculties of reason and industry. It was not unusual for Puritans to ‘cast Indians as monsters’ (Cassuto, 1996, p. 45). Or, consider a reform discourse of the urban poor in late nineteenth-century England. Reformers such as Mayhew and Chadwick isolated a category of urban poor – slum-dwellers, rag-gatherers, collectors of dog shit, sewer hunters – what Marx called the lumpenproletariat. These urban nomads occupied a subhuman status. As Mayhew wrote: they exhibit a ‘greater development of the animal than of the intellectual or moral nature of man’ (quoted in Stallybrass and White, 1986, pp. 131–132). Their defining traits, ‘improvident’ ... ‘not domestic’ ... ‘indifferent to marriage’ ... ‘opposed to [all] constituted authority’ ... ‘ignorant of religion’ and ‘love of libidinous dances’ excluded them from the circle of full personhood and civil life (Stallybrass and White, 1986, pp. 128–133).

In what sense, and by what means, is defilement transmissible? Contamination may occur through mere bodily proximity or random bodily contact. The body is the container of defilement. In the medical idiom, the body and especially its fluids – blood, saliva, sweat, sperm, urine, feces – are potential carriers of disease and states of degeneracy. Contagion may take place by means of spontaneous, everyday bodily contact (touching, brushing against, coughing, sneezing, drinking or eating from ‘unclean’ utensils) or through the intimate exchange of fluids, for example, during sex or blood transfusions.

The contaminated body is not only a conduit of pathogens but may be a carrier of a ‘wrong’ genetic code. As such, the act of sexual reproduction may risk unleashing a widening spiral of decline and degeneracy as contamination infects successive generations.<sup>4</sup> Bodily fluids, the lifeblood of humanity and civilization, may then be imagined as transmitting degenerative dispositional and behavioral states, infecting an ever-expanding circle of humanity with the passage of fluids and time.

Contagion is also possible by means of seduction. Children, youth, women, the confused, the weak and the innocent are especially vulnerable. The defiled is often considered a predatory figure engendering a trail of suffering and ruin. The lesbian in American pop culture through the 1970s or the pedophile today are iconic figures of defilement and contagion. They endanger the pure and the innocent less through coercion and violence than seduction and the manipulative betrayal of the good will and the trusting sincerity of the victim.

In principle, the logic of defilement and contagion is unrelenting and respects few boundaries. Pathogens can be transmitted indiscriminately and unknowingly; contamination through bodily contact or proximity can spread exponentially. Seduction can fuel panic precisely because its motivating desires, the dark and excessive impulses buried deep in the recesses of the psyche, are unrelenting. Only by limiting bodily contact, by covering bodily surfaces, by repeatedly cleansing bodies, or by isolating, exiling and eliminating defiled bodies can contagion be contained.

The defiled self mocks what is considered normal, healthy and civil. She reminds us of the thin line separating order and disorder, artifice and flux, the living and dead. Against systems, rules and norms that stipulate borders and boundaries, and that produce order and coherence, the defiled calls attention to the liminal, the fluid and the opaque. She threatens to subvert our world-making, meaning-producing efforts by evoking the brute randomness, the unruliness and the sheer obtuseness of life. She reminds us of the wasteland just ahead, the chaos and decay on the other side. It is perhaps the very flamboyance

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<sup>4</sup> Late Victorian purity campaigns in the United States triggered moral panics by appealing to the behavioral and biological transmission of diseased and impure bodies and psyches. Relaxing bodily controls would lead not only to personal ruin in the present but these diseased, degenerate bodies would corrupt subsequent generations through procreation (Pivar, 1973; Barker-Benfield, 1976; D’Emilio and Freedman, 1998).

of its mockery that elicits a sense of revulsion and dread, but also fury and rage towards the figure of the defiled.

For the defiled, embodiment is fateful. Debasement is inscribed on the surface of the body. It may be subtle, a shade darker skin, the texture of the hair, or perhaps the size and shape of the eyes or nose.<sup>5</sup> In a word, the Other has the wrong body – perhaps a scrambled genetic code, pathological impulses, or an abnormal, deformed, or diseased body. The body of the defiled is then a site of power but also danger.

### Disgust and the Impure Body of the Other

Defilement evokes not just anxiety and fear, but disgust. The latter underscores a moral standpoint, the invoking of law and normativity. But disgust involves something more than contempt; it is typically associated with nausea or a retching reflex. Disgust suggests a cognitive-affective state that seizes and unsettles the body, eliciting a sensation of revulsion. Referring to food loathing, Kristeva offers a raw description of this condition. ‘When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk ... . I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and the all organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream ...’ (1982, pp. 2–3; cf. Sartre, 1959, pp. 765–784).

The link between transgression and disgust is especially salient in representations of otherness. In phobic discourses, the homosexual and the fat self are not just figures of contempt but of revulsion. As such, they warrant neither empathy nor affirmative identification; instead, these figures trigger an almost primitive sense of repulsion and abjection. I have already conjectured that an association with excess, ungovernability and danger explains something of their status as Other. But, what is it about such figures that elicit disgust?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Consider two compelling examples of how otherness is imagined as lodged in the body. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Fanon argued that European colonial discourse represented the black man as a hyper-bodily figure – as compulsively driven to bodily excess (sex, sleep, violence) and possessing beast-like strength and endurance. In a different way, Gilman (1991) argues that in German anti-Semitic discourses of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Jewish body was racially marked as inferior to the Aryan. This difference was not always obvious to the lay person but experts were obsessed with identifying the bodily markers of the Jew. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Jews were represented as swarthy, which placed them in the same category as Africans and other ‘primitive, inferior’ human types (pp. 171–173). ‘Skin color marked the Jew as both different and diseased’ (p. 176). By the end of that century, it was the Jewish nose – long, sharp, thin and bent – that exposed this despised and dangerous figure (pp. 38–39, 64, 179). ‘In popular and medical imagery, the nose came to be the sign of the pathological Jewish character for Western Jews, replacing the pathogenic sin of the skin ...’ (p. 181).

<sup>6</sup> In some analyses of the Other (for example Bhahba, 1994 and Said, 1978), this figure is understood as a focus of repulsion and attraction. The very traits that make the self into an Other are desired

In Sartre's *Nausea* (1959), Antoine Roquentin recoils in disgust in response to life's excess and purposelessness. 'Existence everywhere, infinitely, in excess, for ever and everywhere; existence – which is limited only by existence. I sank down on the bench, stupefied, stunned by this profusion of beings without origin: everywhere blossoming, hatching out, my ears buzzed with existence, my very flesh throbbed and opened, abandoned itself to the universal burgeoning. *It was repugnant*' (178–179). Anticipating Sartre, the phenomenologist Kolnai (2004) also coupled excess and disgust but explained the latter by linking excess to a process of decay and death. 'Through the surplus of life ... we are ... caught, as it were, in a short-circuit towards death, as if this intensified and concentrated life should have arisen out of an impatient longing for death, a desire to waste away, to over-spend the energy of life, a macabre debauchery of matter ... . In its full intention it is death and not life that announces itself to us in the phenomenon of disgust' (74, cf. Miller, 1997, p. 18).

These perspectives claim that figures of otherness elicit disgust because they are symbolically associated with a condition of degeneration, decline and death. Such views seem to capture something of the way phobic, racist discourses deploy these tropes. Yet, it is not only the decaying or dying body, but also *the leaky, unruly and unclean body* that may trigger disgust, especially in contemporary Euro-American representations of the Other.

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because they are forbidden and transgressive. Rendering selves into Others allows us to both repudiate but also stay attached to these figures. Hence, some theorists conclude that the Other is a figure of ambivalence, not just defilement and danger (Stallybrass and White, 1986, pp. 4–5; Bhabha, 1994). There is some truth to this view. For example, the homophobe creates the polluted homosexual arguably in order to expel his own same-sex feelings that may trigger shame and fear; yet, homo-hatred sustains an attachment (safely, if abstractly) to this desire. Or, misogynist discourses might be said to be produced by men whose own feminine identifications and dispositions are unacceptable in a culture in which gender privilege demands a seamless masculinity. Yet, through heterosexuality the masculine self remains deeply connected to femininity. The thread of credibility in such views is at times misleadingly taken for the whole truth. For example, as much as men or women in Euro-American societies may be uncomfortable with strong affectional ties to the same gender, it is reductive to assume that such discomfit alone fuels homophobic productions – reductive because there are a wide range of same-gender intimacies that are culturally valued, reductive because women's same-gendered intimacies do not seem to produce homophobic practices in any way comparable to men, and reductive because there is no *a priori* reason to assume that such bonds necessarily evoke homosexual suspicion or homophobic performances. Moreover, the homophobic construction of the homosexual Other as a defiled, grotesque caricature of humankind is hardly a focus of desire. Similarly, the view that men repudiate internal identifications of femininity in order to achieve respectable masculinity, and that this disavowal ambivalently underpins misogyny, has been seriously challenged by psychoanalytical perspectives, which emphasize men's multiple gender identifications and view masculinity as accomplished chiefly through affirmative masculine identifications (for example Diamond, 2009). My sense is that ambivalent attachment towards the Other is much less important than bad object projections fueled by primitive sadistic impulses, hatred, resentment and envy (Klein, 1957). An attachment to the Other pivots on its role in serving as a boundary marker, or as signaling the parameters and scope of the normal, the healthy, the tasteful, the virtuous or the good citizen.

How to explain the repetitive, almost compulsory, association of disgust with such bodily dynamics? Why do bodily orifices and discharges so frequently provide the symbolism of disgust in contemporary Euro-American societies?

For the purposes of this article, I offer the outlines of one possible account. Arguably, contemporary Euro-American societies, at least from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, have placed a premium on sharply differentiated selves with clear, bounded ego borders between selves and between an inner subjective and outer objective world; there was, as well, a heightened emphasis on psychic-and-bodily control as a sign of self-mastery. Notwithstanding patterns of gender (and perhaps class, race and sexual) difference, the 'contemporary Western self', if one can provisionally and for heuristic purposes only speak in this loose way, was imagined as exercising a level of internal control, subjective boundedness and autonomy that was perhaps historically and comparatively unique (Freud, 1964; Elias, 1969; Taylor, 1989; Laporte, 1993).<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, if we grant Mary Douglas's argument that we experience society in part through our relation to our bodies, we might reasonably speculate that the dynamic, conflict-ridden social condition of Euro-American societies might *unconsciously* evoke bodily and psychic unease.<sup>8</sup> As borders and

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in *The Civilizing Process* (1969 [1939]), Elias traces a transformation in the ethical culture of West Europe pertaining to bodily practices such as eating, bathing, defecating and nudity. Late medieval and early modern European cultures exhibited a relaxed relation to bodily practices, for example using bare hands to eat, public urinating and defecating, and public nudity were commonplace. Rules governing bodies were organized chiefly around maintaining class or social rank differences. 'The social commands and prohibitions surrounding this area of life [bodily functions] are relatively few ... . Neither the functions themselves nor speaking about them ... are so intimate and private, so invested with feelings of shame and embarrassment, as they later become ...' (p. 134). In particular, Elias underscores the absence of the medicalization of the body and its ethic of normality and hygiene.

In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social controls targeted the body. It was sequestered, its sounds and talk about bodies were censored, and behaviors involving bodies privatized or hidden from public view. For example, in early modern times the entire dead animal was often carved at the table. 'Then [in the civilizing process] the spectacle is felt more and more to be distasteful. Carving itself does not disappear ... but is removed behind the scenes of social life. Specialists take care of it in the shop or the kitchen ... . What we call civilization is this movement of segregation, this hiding ... of what has become distasteful' (p. 121).

Today, 'the circle of precepts and regulations is drawn so tightly about people ... that young people have only two alternatives ... . To submit ... or to be excluded from life in 'decent society.' And, for selves who resist or do 'not attain the level of control of emotions demanded by society, [they are] are regarded ... as ill, 'abnormal' criminal (p. 140). Although there has been considerable relaxation of social controls at the personal level, across institutions disciplinary controls over the body has expanded (cf. Corbin, 1986; Laporte, 1993; Inglis, 2001; Barnes, 2005; Pike, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Douglas (1966) posits a structural parallel: Just as societies have borders and lines of demarcation, division and hierarchy that establish order, there is no bodily integrity without borders and an imagined boundary separating an inside and outside. Border crossing and boundary blurring are as much a dynamical part of the body as they are of the social world. Things routinely enter and exit our bodies. Blood, snot, tears, sweat, shit, urine and semen spill out of our orifices almost uncontrollably; food, utensils, hands, tongues, fingers, and perhaps hair and genitals routinely enter our bodies

lines of social division and hierarchy are blurred and rendered porous, as pockets of liminality and anomie expand in a changing social world, the fragile ground of psychic and bodily integrity might also be disturbed. Bodily borders (for example orifices), materials (fluids and by-products) and processes (ingesting and expelling) might become a focus of anxiety. And, while specific selves cannot always if ever control social structural disorder, especially as 'society' is increasingly managed by impersonal bureaucracies and agents, we can impose discipline and order on our inner world of emotions, and especially bodily and erotic processes. Disgust might form around these unruly bodily dynamics; bodily and self-regulation framed in a vocabulary of hygiene, health, normality, and beauty, target subjective, bodily processes. As thinkers as diverse as Freud, Elias, Goffman and Foucault have argued, at the same time that contemporary Euro-American selves are recognized as moral agents exercising expanded decisional autonomy, the body has become a principal focus of social control. In particular, a cluster of discourses and rituals emphasizing hygiene, health, taste and etiquette have coalesced around bodily and intimate life. As much as these bodily regimes can be read in the language of biopolitics or identity and class politics, they may also be understood as part of a politics that marks bodies as civil and defiled, and enforces their separation and hierarchical ordering.

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through various orifices. A condition of heightened social disorder, especially threats by internal or foreign enemies, would heighten anxieties around bodily orifices and the things (fluids, organs, objects) that pass in and out of them. Micro-pollution dramas focused on securing bodily borders and regulating discharges are one possible response to these social anxieties. Such dramas might eventuate in a wave of new regiments of bodily control. Similarly, a macro-pollution drama aimed at fortifying social borders and hierarchies against enemies may initiate new social rules and regimes of social control, creating new conditions for negotiating inside and outside.

Douglas's structuralism suggests that disgust might be a response to unruly social and bodily processes. Imagine a circular dynamic. To simplify, social chaos elicits feelings of bodily disorder; the latter activates anxieties of an uncontrollable, leaky body, perhaps eliciting memory traces of bodily fluids involuntarily spilling out of our orifices and undermining a sense of self-integrity. Feelings of disgust are elicited, which mobilize the self to fortify its borders and reassert its internal coherence by repudiating this foreign material. Through a process of externalization, some of this expelled material may get attached to specific human types providing the symbolic ground for producing figures of Otherness.

Douglas assumes that social processes are always experienced and symbolized at the level of the body. Her account ultimately appeals to the homologous structure between society and the body. However, even if we allow for the parallel between the social and bodily, Douglas does not explain why the social is *necessarily* lived through the body, why the social necessarily gets enacted as a bodily practice, and why the circulation of things in and out of the body is necessarily experienced by the self as disorder, prompting anxiety and perhaps disgust. Douglas fails to consider that whether bodily dynamics are experienced as disorder, elicit anxiety or instigate a pollution drama will depend on their *meanings* for agents. This semiotic process is not accessible by means of an exclusively structural account but requires a historically based hermeneutic. Furthermore, even if bodily transgressions are disturbing, whether they will also be a site of pollution will depend on the self that is doing the meaning-making. Douglas's structuralism has no place for this *agentic* moment. In her account there are no psyches or subjectivities mediating between the social and bodily, making sense of bodily dynamics.

As an affect, disgust is quite specific in its defining features but decidedly free floating with regard to its targeted object. It may be easily transferred from bodily-subjective boundary anxieties to social sites and to specific figures whose ambiguous and unsettling status may become a focus of dread and revulsion. In other words, the focus of disgust may be ‘upgraded’ from bodily to social processes. Selves whose social positioning confound borders, or seem in-transition, or present a blended, hybrid self, especially as cultural traditions already infuse such figures with a logic of excess and ungovernability, may come to symbolize a condition of disorder. And, as we’ve seen, these figures may also be imagined as having the power to unleash a tsunami of chaos and calamity. Disgust mobilizes agents – individuals and collectivities – to defend specific normative orders and identities, perhaps introducing new regimes of governance.

Disgust is then a key dimension of defilement. By invoking normativity and recoiling from specific transgressions, disgust fuels a process of Othering. Disgust facilitates a transfer of subjective, bodily and social boundary anxieties to figures of ambiguity or transgression. In the face of threats of disorder and anticipated calamity, our fears and rage may be displaced onto such personages. To say it otherwise, the Other is often born in the midst of panic politics.

The Other may come to bear the burden of shouldering public anxieties of disorder and dissolution. He may gather together diffuse collective anxieties and insecurities. At the same time, collective insecurities and fears are lessened by being given a concrete human form. At a personal level, Othering allows selves to reclaim a sense of existential security and coherence by externalizing and controlling unsettling psychological or bodily processes. Sociologically speaking, disgust might incite public anxiety and trigger a moral panic. Such events may result in a wave of new legislation or renewed campaigns to enforce existing laws, social classifications and hierarchies. In short, a cultural politics of defilement and disgust may prove effective in mobilizing groups to protect specific world ordering arrangements.

### **Borderlands and the Politics of Purification**

Defiled selves may come to be recognizable by some real or imagined bodily marker, for example skin pigmentation, the texture of the hair, or the shape of the eyes or nose. Although these figures may also go unnoticed, perhaps passing, their association with power and danger means that the Other becomes a site of energetic discursive and representational production. In this way, the defiled is rendered an identifiable public figure. But also, ordinary citizens become hermeneutically skilled; they learn to read this sign system in order to avoid the defiled and to enact a respectable, civil self.

An archive of defiled types may be produced, each with their own bodily-psychological-social profile. Such archives mix science with popular images.

Often representations of the Other are little more than fantastic projections of anxiety-ridden, enraged imaginations, creating a gallery of exotic, abject human types. In order for these archives to impact on ordinary citizens, they must circulate among the key institutions of the nation-state – the state, media, medical institutions, courts, prisons, welfare agencies, churches, families and schools. In short, a political-administrative-cultural apparatus takes shape that aims to identify and regulate defiled types for the purpose of protecting civil selves and orders.

The defiled are not only fantastical figures of the imagination or exoticized aliens. They also participate in the routine orders of civil life, and, as such, present an immediate threat and challenge: How to manage a civil order in a world populated by Others?

If we follow Foucault (2008 [1973]), societies that feature disciplinary modes of social organization also create specialized institutions that aim to normalize 'irregular' selves. In clinics, hospitals, prisons, asylums, special schools and reformatories, and by means of varied therapies and psychotropic drugs, defiled selves undergo a process of psycho-social rehabilitation. As an ordeal of purification, normalization subjects the body and psyche to regiments of discipline and reformation. Of course, normalization sometimes fails; outsider populations will then be managed as an interned population (penal or asylum inmates), or migrate into a shadowy underworld (homosexuals), or suffer apartheid-like social conditions (ethnonational and racial minorities).

If the danger represented by the defiled is determined to be too great to tolerate, or if the risks of contagion and social ruin are deemed unacceptable, managing the Other may give way to extreme measures such as forced exile (for example, the Palestinians or Kosovars) or extermination (for example, the Jewish, Tutsi or Armenian genocides). More typically, governance regimes rely on strategies of containment and sequestration, for example prisons, asylums, refugee camps, closets, ghettos and banlieues. These are spaces in which routine laws, rights, social conventions and governmentalities are suspended, leaving these populations in an indeterminate, insecure, and inferior legal and civil status (Agamben, 2005; Ophir *et al*, 2009).

Containment and sequestration strategies create a borderland. These spaces provide a buffer between the civil and the defiled. These 'gray zones' (Levi, 1989) may acquire an aura of risk and danger as they serve as sites of exchange or flow between these two symbolic orders. In this regard, those who inhabit the borderland, whether as security personnel or enterprising providers of goods and services, may occupy an in-between, morally suspect status. Although they may serve as guardians of the civil order, these mediating agents may also suffer moral contamination owing to their sustained exposure to the defiled.

The intermediary social positioning of those occupying the borderlands renders them vulnerable to seduction and betrayal. Primo Levi recounts that Russian soldiers returning from a period of Nazi imprisonment were often

shunned, even murdered, because their internment made them morally suspect. 'For the repatriated Soviet prisoner of war there was neither healing nor redemption. If he managed to escape and rejoin the fighting army he was considered irremediably guilty; he should have died instead of surrendering and besides, having been ... in the hands of the enemy, he was automatically suspected of collusion. On their incautious return home, [they] ... were deported to Siberia or even killed' (Levi, 1989, pp. 151–152).

In order to maintain a respectable civil status, borderland personnel may resort to purification rituals. For example, prison or asylum guards may wear uniforms, use gloves if contact with the defiled is anticipated, or return to civilian codes of dress and comportment at the end of the workday; they may engage in public acts of vilifying the interned population, even resorting to harassment and violence to publicly mark their pure status.

The borderland is also a generative space. It is not only where the defiled/civil divide is publicly staged, but it is productive of new hybrid selves (Eyal, 2006). Selves who do not neatly fall into the binary, perhaps blending traits or rendering the binary unintelligible, occupy an unsettled status. For example, the Arab-Israeli combines polarizing, dissonant statuses in the 'Jewish state'. Is the (Muslim) Arab a respected citizen of the Jewish state or an internal enemy? The transgendered self is legible only in a culture that enforces the binary coding of gender. And yet, this figure potentially disturbs the very binary that makes this figure possible. This ambiguous positioning may render such figures vulnerable to acquiring a defiled status.

The borderland is generative in yet another sense: it produces defectors, traitors and collaborators who occupy a morally suspect status. For example, according to Levi (1989), Nazi concentration camps relied on layers of inmate collaboration; inmates served as sweepers, messengers and interpreters but also some extracted gold from the teeth of corpses. Levi estimated that between 700 and 1000 (mostly Jewish) inmates in Auschwitz oversaw the operation of the crematoria. Among the most despised and feared was the 'Kapo', low-level collaborators (usually non-Jews) authorized to control the labor squads; they were notoriously cruel towards unruly inmates. These collaborators occupied an ambiguous moral status in the camps – inmates, but despised by the Nazi's and the other inmates.

We should not assume that borderlands are of one type; they are not all zones of exchange between a contained population and a custodial, security staff. Borderlands can be free floating or lack an institutional footing. At the edge of classifications, divisions and rankings, in the space of the 'line' separating order and chaos, is another kind of borderland. As an ambiguous, fluid terrain, as a space of liminality and potential transgression, borderlands are zones of intense social anxiety. And, in so far as they also lack formal regulation, some borderlands will attract pollution beliefs and become sites for the politics of purification.

To the extent that the defiled circulate among us, and are recognizable, there will be a reliance on a macropolitics of social segregation and sequestration. Such strategies may involve state enforced apartheid regimes such as existed in Postbellum America, the Third Reich, pre-1990s South Africa, and arguably in contemporary Israel – with regard to Palestinians in the West Bank and the Bedouins in the Negev.<sup>9</sup> To the extent that such regimes lose legitimacy or simply become impractical, non-state driven patterns of residential (gated communities, Bantustans, refugee camps, ghettos), school (private versus public, sectarian or ethnic-based), work (occupational segmentation), and leisure-recreational segmentation may enforce this moral-symbolic-social divide.

In dynamic and socially heterogeneous societies, strategies that enforce spatially based exclusions and divisions by relying on buffer zones and on a policing and custodial staff have limited effectiveness. In Euro-American societies, defiled selves circulate, often unimpeded and unnoticed, across social spaces and moral-symbolic borders. Contamination cannot be easily if at all avoided by means of maintaining rigid spatial boundaries or sequestering Others. Even the rich and the powerful find themselves, from time to time, knowingly or not, sharing social spaces (for example sidewalks, streets, markets, airports, restaurants) with the defiled. The latter may be handling the dishes we eat off in a restaurant or may use the same toilet in the airport or have opened the door we use to enter a bank. Civil status is daily threatened by the invisible, indirect and unknowing contact with the defiled.

In such social environments, maintaining a civil status relies on a micropolitics of self-purification. Moral-symbolic boundaries are marked and sustained by a combination of hygienic, health, aesthetic and etiquette practices. Although each of these strategies of self-practice have their own conventions and hierarchies, it's possible to identify some common features. First, maintaining a civil status involves the monitoring, disciplining, stylizing and normalizing of the body and the psyche. The body must be kept clean, fit, healthy, normal, well groomed and behaved. The psyche must have the right behavioral motivations and orientations, engage in healthy practices and establish normal relationships. Second, bodies are to be governed by rules that can be stipulated by experts. For example, rules govern 'proper' dining, entertainment and etiquette, which confer normality, respect, taste and honor.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Peter Fritzsche (2007) details the Nazi ambition to establish a racial state, one that pivots around the Aryanization of Germanness. To be German was to be an Aryan, which was determined by the racial identity of parents and grandparents. Non-Aryans could not be German. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 launched the German racial state by excluding Jews from the German nation. Henceforth, they lived, to use Agamben's term, in a 'state of exception'. Jews lacked basic rights, were subject to arbitrary house searches, and property confiscation; they were residentially segregated, prohibited from attending German schools and universities or joining the German military and government; Jews were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with Germans. Eventually, their status as 'enemies of the state', and as immanent threats to the purity of the Aryan race and to Germany's progress, sealed their fate (cf. Friedlander, 1997).

Fashion rules governing the public draping of the body also signal taste, attractiveness, health and respectability. Third, rituals of civil self-making engender specific patterns of consumption. For example, however 'rational' the trend towards eating local and organic, it is also about public rituals that project the purity of body and psyche. To summarize, a culture thick with self purification rituals has the effect of securing a protected civil sphere within a fluid, mobile, pollution infested social world.

Intended to guard against indirect, unknowing contamination, rituals of self purification may become a compulsory and obsessive, even if unconscious, part of daily life. We may not recognize these as such, but in the guise of cleanliness, health, proper conduct and good taste, we engage in practices that enforce a binary order of defiled Others and civil selves. And, therefore, while the Other experiences the disrespect and degradation of being ritually defiled as unclean, diseased, perverted, ugly and fat, the civil self is compelled to repeatedly display his purity by vigilant self-monitoring and disciplining purification rituals. This is especially true in social environments in which anonymous bodies collide, taste worlds mingle and where pathogens are imagined as uncontrollably coursing through populations.

In order to avoid contamination, especially in a dynamic and mobile world and one increasingly embedded in a culture of rights and tolerance requires considerable symbolic work. As we've seen, the civil order is not sustained by relying exclusively on formal agencies such as the state, the church or medical institutions nor, at least in Euro-American nations, on a macropolitics of segregation and sequestration. In such social contexts, a micropolitics of self-purification practices produce embodied selves who are compulsively civil or clean, neat, proper, healthy, fit and tasteful. The effect of this personal and social politics of purity is a hierarchical ordering of bodies and selves – some to be avoided, others to be incarcerated or expelled.

A politics of otherness will often project the division between the defiled and the civil as impersonal, as non-arbitrary and unchanging. For example, God or natural law may be invoked to explain a hetero-normative or white-supremacist or Christian-European hegemonic order that renders non-heterosexuals, non-whites and non-Christians into potential Others. The social process of the making of otherness, its historical formation and contingent future, is masked and denied by this impersonalization. Imagining a fixed moral-symbolic binary order has the effect of minimizing the role of agency in the making of otherness. But this impersonalizing logic has its limits. The practices creating and managing otherness are often stunningly intimate. Producing the Other is in part the accomplishment of ordinary selves engaged in the performative rituals that confer a civil status. How do civil selves avoid and expel others from a world that also demands civility and respect?

There is, if you will, a psychology of othering. It involves the largely unconscious emotional work of transforming an ordinary self, someone who

might claim a civil status into a despised Other. I sketch the outlines of such a psychology.

A change in status from a civil to a defiled self entails, in the first instance, an emotional disengagement on the part of the public. De-cathexis makes possible an attitude of indifference, an initial distancing from other selves as potential objects of affirmative identification and attachment. Defilement is not, however, about indifference but, psychologically speaking, *hate*. And hatred suggests an extreme form of de-cathexis – disidentification. There is an emptying of all emotional attachment and a withdrawal of any empathic connection to the hated self.

Hatred though involves more than disidentification. The Other is morally debased. She reveals a deficit of essential human attributes. In particular, the presumption of reasonableness and ‘love-ability’, and hence the grounds of a minimal level of dignity, respect and compassion are absent (Kernberg, 1991). The hated Other is dehumanized or rendered ‘thing-like’ (Grand, 2002).

At the same time, the Other is reconfigured as the ‘bad object’ (Klein, 1946, 1957) That is, the Other collects all manner of rejecting, persecutory and sadistic identifications. All that is impure and uncivil, the darkest contents of the unconscious, are transferred to the Other. A splitting occurs: the pure, civil self is cleansed of all destructive and sadistic impulses while the Other is rendered into the *uber* bad self – world rejecting, perhaps monsterish, and evil (Bollas, 1989; Grand, 2002, p. 131). Danger radiates from every pore of her body and psyche.

The vile sadistic Other is imagined as powerful and as an imminent, catastrophic threat. She victimizes the innocent, leaving a bloody trail of wounded bodies and souls. As an object of such loathsome power, the defiled self must be destroyed – exiled or exterminated. If such extreme measures are impossible, he must be isolated and contained by a network of taboos and prohibitions, and controlled by the appropriate governance regime. This process of repelling the Other and enforcing his sequestration or exile is, as we’ve seen, at the heart of a purification civil drama.

The psychology of Othering leans towards a politics of paranoia. As a menacing, sadistic figure, the very essence of the Other reveals a logic of destruction and ruin. And, as we’ve seen, this malicious, hated Other is imagined as unrelenting and powerful. Sustaining order and purpose seems to require eliminating, exiling, sequestering or purging the Other. This psychology points to a simplifying ruthlessness – a Manichean battle of good and evil.

The psychological transformation of an ordinary self into a defiled personage is paralleled by a re-narrativizing of his biography. A life that had been scripted in an ordinary, civil register would have to be retold. The earlier script would perhaps be redescribed as a malicious disguise, an act of cunning and deceit masking horrifying, vile truths. The new biography would be a gothic tale of deceit, dread and horror, of the making of otherness and its terrifying destiny.

There is then a politics of otherness, part of which involves stipulating and managing its discursive or categorical status. There are powerful psychological and social forces aligned to fix and manage the category of the Other and the actual population of hated selves. The aim is to protect the symbolic and social division between the defiled and the civil, along with divisions and rankings internal to this binary. As we know, the making of populations of Others sustains normative statuses and social hierarchies. For example, the other side to the defiling of homosexuality and blackness has been the purification and civil empowering of heterosexuality and whiteness. Hierarchies of status, wealth and power pivot around a politics of exclusion and the making of otherness. This is the dark side of social life. And yet, as we know from the recent politics of identity, the category of the Other is unstable and contestable.

By way of concluding this section, I cite two general sources of such instability. First, the category of the Other, as it is deployed in discourses, representations, laws, and medical and folk practices, contributes to creating the very selves it imaginatively projects. Paradoxically, though, this discursive generativity helps form actual embodied subjects who may protest their abject status. These new subjects may aim to expand the category of the pure to include themselves, or challenge the very terms of the moral-symbolic division, for example the queering of the hetero/homo-sexual binary or the feminist deconstruction of the male/female divide. This is the story in a nutshell of the histories of the Jew, the Black, the homosexual, the mentally ill and the fat person in the past century or so.

There is a second source of categorical instability. There is an elasticity to the category of the Other that is revealed by the fuzziness and porousness of its borders. Once a status is established as Other, a creeping categorical expansion might invade the space of the normal or the respectable. For example, as a loose, imprecise and shifting category, fatness can expand beyond the 'obese' to include 'large' or oddly shaped bodies. To the extent that fatness is strategically deployed by the medical, health and fitness industries in order to inflate their status or expand their market, these powerful, institutional forces promote the enlargement of categories of defilement. If fatness includes not just bodies that are (say) 50 pounds in excess of a 'normal, healthy' weight, but bodies that are 25 pounds above the norm, and indeed bodies that have excessive 'bad fat', the population of fat, dangerous bodies would increase considerably, now including previously normal bodies.

### **Summing Up: Outlines of a Theory**

The sociological significance of the concept of the Other is that it aims to capture a process by which certain categories of a population are morally debased and defiled. This moral-ontological status warrants their symbolic and

social exclusion from civil life. Moreover, to the extent that the figure of the Other threatens to unleash disorder and ruin, societies may justify deploying extreme strategies of defense and securitization. Defilement may prompt ordinary acts of aversion and disrespect (Young, 1990); it may also sanction internment, apartheid, exile, and even extermination.

The sociology and politics of othering is intelligible then only in relation to a normative order that stipulates a division between a civil and a defiled order. This moral-symbolic division suggests a parallel with the sacred/profane binary. According to Eliade (1959), the sacred infuses ordinary objects and behaviors with a sense of awe and reverence by linking the quotidian to a transcendent reality or to some notion of the divine. To be in the space of the sacred is to be part of a cosmos, to participate in a meaning-infused moral order. In a cosmos, mundane life is suffused with a sense of the holy and the social is bathed in the warm glow of *communitas*; taboos, and rituals of avoidance and purification enforce the sacred. By contrast, in the profane realm, things and behaviors acquire significance exclusively by virtue of their ordinary, utilitarian purposes. From the vantage point of the sacred, the profane is an order of illusion. Profane things pass in and out of existence without any transcendent telos. The profane is an order of radical immanence, lacking any purpose or meaning apart from agents' intentions or projections.

In an analogous way, the world may be imaginatively lived as divided into two separate and antagonistic symbolic-moral orders of the civil and the defiled. The former confers full personhood. Selves are embedded in a network of respect and rights; there is a presumption of subjective complexity and rationality, and a recognition of decisional autonomy. By contrast, to be defiled entails the withdrawal of full personhood. The defiled self commands at best diminished rights and respect, lacks subjective complexity. She is driven by non-rational forces that undermine her decisional autonomy. Selves who inhabit the civil order fashion purposeful and rational lives and make possible the forward movement of history. By contrast, defiled selves threaten social disorder and ruin. And whereas civil life exhibits a heterogeneity of being, time and space, a defiled order obeys a logic of flatness, sameness and eternal repetition. Othering is a process in which certain persons and the spaces they occupy are part of a defiled moral-symbolic order; their defiled status threatens chaos and calamity.

Dramas of defilement may occur at a micro- or macro-social level. Macro-social dramas will be accompanied by a dense production of narrative, representational and imagistic meanings that transforms the quotidian into an extraordinary site of defilement and danger. In current Euro-American societies, the politics of civility and defilement are often expressed in the idioms of disease and filth, in tropes of degeneracy and bodily decline, and in allegories of moral and social breakdown. Defilement dramas may fuel moral panics, which sometimes trigger a wave of legislation and new forms of governmentality.

Defilement dramas are less about restoring order in general than about enforcing specific normative orders. This is accomplished by infusing the outer edge of normative arrangements, and the space (physical and/or symbolic) beyond, with an aura of danger. To say it differently, normativities are enforced in part by infusing non-normative desires, practices, spaces and arrangements with resonances of moral debasement and disorder, and then enveloping this contaminated realm in a network of rituals of aversion and containment. If the risks of contamination are considered far-reaching, and if fears of contact spark moral panic, extreme measures such as internment, exile and extermination may be enacted.

Borderlands form in the space between the civil and the defiled. This space will be morally unsettled and vigilantly policed by professional personnel (specialists, entrepreneurs, collaborators) tasked to secure borders and regulate transactions across borders. Inevitably, hybrids are produced; that is, selves and spaces that mix civil and defiled traits. Hybrids may be infused with resonances of the sublime but also the grotesque.

Where the bodies of the defiled cannot be confined, sequestered, exiled or exterminated, they will be subject to practices of bodily and symbolic aversion and separation. For example, minimizing contact and potential contamination might involve apartheid regimes or patterned residential, workplace and cultural segregation. And in dynamic, multicultural societies in which indirect, unknowing contamination cannot be ruled out (public toilets, trying on clothes, eating out using common silverware, plates, inadvertent bodily contact in streets, subways or buses), where bodies collide, and where pathogens and other polluting agents coarse through the body politic, protective surfaces (clothing, gloves) and a cluster of purification rituals may become a compulsory part of daily life. We may not recognize the significance of these practices, but in the guise of hygiene, health and good taste we are marking divisions between the civil and the defiled. It is through these daily repetitive practices involving self-monitoring and patterned rituals demonstrating good hygiene, etiquette, health and taste that the civil self is produced and recognized.

Defilement/civil dramas may no longer have a unifying cosmological significance, as anthropologists say they did among 'primitives', but they are infused into our daily behaviors, public cultures and institutions. And while the defiled suffers the indignities and deprivations accompanying social exclusion and cultural inferiorization, civil selves are compelled to enact a network of private and public rituals that produce its own anxieties, fixations and panics.

To the extent that the focus of Douglas and other anthropologists have been on the defilement practices of 'primitive' or 'developing' societies, defilement has almost uniformly been linked to rituals of avoidance and separation. However, many contemporary societies also wish to reintegrate defiled selves by means of purification ordeals. If we follow Foucault (2008 [1973]), recovery systems, from psychiatry to half-way houses and 12-step programmes, can be

understood as agencies aimed at restoring civil status by means of therapeutic ordeals of psycho-social normalization. Likewise, schools and churches have been important purifying agencies for immigrants. And some social movements engage in symbolic struggles by contesting othering representations while claiming a civil status. The post-WWII lesbian and gay movement in the United States sought to reverse the meaning of the homosexual from a polluted Other to a normal citizen. This struggle occurred on a symbolic terrain; it was a contest over the meaning of this personage that continues today. If the case of the homosexual or the Black or the immigrant is any indication, struggles for rights and justice are also moral dramas – efforts to redraw the boundary between the civil and the defiled.

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