Zidane in Tartarus:

A Neoaristotelian Inquiry into the
Emotional Dimension of Kathartic Recognition ©

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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Stephanie Alice Baker
# Table of Contents

*List of Figures*  vi  
*Synopsis*  vii  

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Conceptualising Katharsis  
- Katharsis: The Modern Problem 10  
- An Aristotelian Paradigm of Katharsis 33  
- *Myth’s* as a mode of Emotional Intelligence 46  
- Classical Conceptions of Myth: From Myth to *Myth’s* 48  
- The Relevance of Katharsis to a Theory of Emotions 61  

Chapter 3: Configuring the Body Politic around Social Myths 65  
- Tragic Praxis 65  
- The Conceptual Apparatus of *Myth’s* 68  
- Collective Fusion 71  
- Framing ‘the Social Tragedy of Zizou’ around Social Myths 77  
- Muslim Fanaticism 80  
- The Civilising Process: Taming the ‘Oriental Other’ 82  
- The ‘Race Ambassador’ 90  

Chapter 4: From Myth to *Mythos*: The Emergence of a Critical Community 110  
- Sacred Stature 112  
- National Pride 117  
- National Pride or Fallen Hero? 123  
- Celebrity Sporting Scandals: Humanising ‘Zizou’ 130  
- The Birth of the Anti-Hero 139  
- The Media Event: From *Myth’s* to *Myth’s* 144  

Chapter 5: EQ: Zidane’s Social Tragedy as a Mode of Kathartic Pedagogy 153  
- The Rational Configuration of Emotional Consciousness 154  
- *Myth’s* as a Form of Emotional Education 165  
- Sporting Performances as *Myth’s*: Play, Self-Realisation & Collective Fusion 169  
- Moral Sentiments of Rationality 181  
- Zidane: Hero or Villain? 183  
- Kathartic Instruction or Violent Aggression? 187  

Chapter 6: Virtue Ethics in Cultural Constellations 193  
- Pluralism, Globalisation and the Democratic Hero 195  
- Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait 201  
- Embodied Affects in Cultural Constellations 216  
- The Progressive Hero 219  
- Universal Morals or Moral Emotivism? 229  

Chapter 7: Conclusion 240  
- The ‘Fall’ of Public Man? 241  
- Reasons to Revive Katharsis: A Neoaristotelian Perspective 246  
- Re-cognising the Future of Katharsis 255  

*References* 261  
*Glossary* 295  
*Methodological Appendix* 297  
*Notes* 300
Figures

1.1 Image of Zinédine Zidane headbutting Marco Materazzi at the World Cup Final in 2006 64
1.2 Image of Zinédine Zidane felling his opponent, Marco Materazzi 64
Synopsis

Katharsis occupies an important place in the social imagination as a mode of emotional clarification. It was the term used by Aristotle in the *Poetics*, where he argued that through observing tragedy audiences could experience kathartic recognition by affectively rationalising the events constituting mythos (the tragic plot) in a process synonymous with feeling-realisation. Research on katharsis has generally fallen into disrepute following various interdisciplinary interpretations, cultural changes and the term’s common conflation with Freud’s hydraulic theory of emotional repression. While Attic tragedy has lost the prominence it formerly held in ancient Greece, it has been replaced to a large extent by manifestations of ‘the tragic’ in contemporary scandals which are played out in popular culture and mediated for public consumption. It is in this context that Zinédine Zidane’s World Cup sporting scandal will be explored, not merely as a personal tragedy for the French footballer or confined to the domain of sport, but rather from a sociological perspective with regard to the civic implications that his ‘tragic’ c’up de tête afforded - a social tragedy with consequences for those members of society with symbolic investments in his-story. This thesis will draw upon Zidane’s transgression as a case study through which sociological accounts of emotions, namely pragmatic and Durkheimian contributions, are employed as means of amplifying Aristotle’s account of katharsis and the broader social significance of tragic mythos in contemporary life.

An analysis of katharsis requires a reconsideration of tragedy’s primary component - mythos. Corresponding to Enlightenment principles, the emotional foundation of mythos has engendered much scrutiny in the climate of rationalism permeating the modern Western world. This thesis proposes a novel way of understanding mythos. Applying Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm to Zidane’s scandal, it is suggested that this contemporary manifestation of ‘the tragic’ presents a lens through which to examine mythos as a form of rational inquiry. Despite the fact that tragic instruction was inexorably politicised in antiquity and, therefore, susceptible to operating as a mechanism of social control, it would be an oversimplification to reduce mythos to rhetorical modes of persuasion. The tendency to conflate mythos with political ideology points to an important distinction between what is referred to in this thesis as a social myth and mythos – the former operating as a common referent and ideological framework through which the c’nsicence c’lective is solidified around Durkheimian feelings of c’lective effervescence, while the latter is conceptualised as a heterogeneous, metaphorical construction through which the very foundation of social myths may be examined, challenged and revised. Such an understanding moves beyond the popular conflation of mythos with fabrication; emphasising the significance of the ways in which this social phenomenon is communicated, symbolically contested and affectively rationalised in the public domain.

A re-evaluation of katharsis has implications for the way in which emotions are more generally conceptualised. The problem with conventional theories of emotion are that they maintain a misleading dichotomy between thought and emotion, derived from a limited understanding of rationality that couples cognition with reason over emotion as appetite, polarising mythos and l’g’s. Contrary to such Neoplatonic views, which consider emotions to be impediments to ‘critical’ faculties and the objectivity demanded of scientific thought, the emotional foundation of mythos is understood as not only susceptible to reason but intrinsically rational. Moreover, the orthodox notion that emotions are essential to well-being emerges from an established tradition of Aristotelian ethics. Despite significant differences between Aristotelian and contemporary notions of ‘emotional intelligence,’ corresponding to a series of broader historical developments from the Greek’s moral concern with ‘being good’ to modern psychology’s quest to ‘feel good,’ both emphasise the instrumental role that emotions play in sustaining well-being. It is suggested that, by excavating the mythic heritage of katharsis, mythos may be restored as a valuable apparatus of critical inquiry which recognises the broader social implications of the ways in which ‘the tragic’ is represented in the public domain.
All the w’rld’s a stage,
And all the men and w’men merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And ’ne man in his time plays many parts
– William Shakespeare.
Chapter 1

Introduction

“When passion boils, reason evaporates” ([1677] 1998: 28) laments Hippolytus during the tragic climax of Racine’s, Phèdre, an appropriation of the Greek myth of Hippolytus and Phaedra. But what precisely does this statement entail? Is the protagonist suggesting what many Enlightenment philosophers belonging to the scientific revolution held true that the cognitive faculties of reason supersede impulsive passions? Are passions merely negative capacities divorced from rational thought, synonymous more generally with appetites or emotions? These are some of the primary questions that this thesis proposes to examine sociologically: assessing the affective dimension of society through a study of what is referred to as ‘social tragedy.’ While each tragedy is constructed and received according to the particularities of time and space, the recurrent appropriation of universal tropes indicates that tragedy resonates with something elemental to society. By exploring the universal component of the human condition that tragedy speaks to, including how tragic drama has evolved over time, this thesis endeavours to elucidate the social implications afforded by the aesthetic apparatus of the tragic genre.

In the Poetics (2005: 53), a manual for constructing poetry, the fourth century Macedonian philosopher, Aristotle, outlined the components required to achieve “poetic excellence” in tragedy. As a ‘lover of wisdom,’ the philosopher’s appraisal evidently exceeds that of a basic instruction manual for writing poems, illuminating the ways in which the aesthetic experience of observing tragedy refines the realisation of essential social values through a process of emotional clarification referred to as katharsis. Aristotle proposed that through observing tragedy, spectators affected by the plot’s sequence of events (myth’s) could rec’gnise (meaning rationalise) the logic motivating their emotional responses, “accomplishing the katharsis” of pity (ele’s) and fear (ph’b’s) in a process synonymous with feeling-realisation. Mimesis praxe’s (the representation of
(action) was paramount to katharsis, for it was precisely through identifying with the tragic hero that one feared for oneself, wherein the self-interested fear evoked from observing the unjust plight of another facilitated trans-subjective sentiments of pity and “fellow-feeling” considered vital for the fusion of the p’lis community. By integrating his system of virtue ethics with a theory of aesthetics, Aristotle defended the social significance of tragedy as a conduit for practical wisdom (phr’nesis). In cultivating the practically wise citizen (phr’nim’s) as an intersubjective component of the body politic, katharsis was thought to contribute to civic well-being (eudaim’nia). Indeed, ‘defend’ is the preoperative word essential to understanding the P’etics, with Aristotle’s text contextualised as a critique of Plato’s assertion in the Republic ([1930] 2003) that mimetic poetry should be banned for nourishing the passions responsible for corrupting the rational minds comprising his ideal Republic.

By comparing the respective arguments presented by Plato and Aristotle, it becomes apparent that their distinct points of view resonate with contemporary debates concerning the composition and effects of emotions. Accordingly, this thesis will draw upon Aristotle’s theory of emotions as implied by his conceptualisation of katharsis to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the affects of social tragedy relevant to a series of historical developments characterising modern, liberal democracies. In contrast to Neoplatonic views, which for the most part dismiss emotions as negative capacities divorced from the faculties of the mind responsible for evaluative thought, this thesis recognises the positive contributions of affective processes as energies not only to be reflexively managed but critically refined to inform, illuminate and motivate contemplative action.

While Aristotle was concerned with the sociopolitical repercussions of tragedy as a civic spectacle performed for the Greek p’lis (city-state), this thesis focuses on the social phenomenon of ‘the tragic’ as a dramatic performance mediated for public consumption in various aspects of popular culture. For Milton ([1645] 1971) tragedy was not a common experience but an idea that attached itself to a specific theatrical form performed on notable occasions. Drama is no longer coextensive with theatre, permeating
a range of media dedicated to representing the *theatrum mundi* (theatre of the world) in the everyday rhythms of social life. Whereas the performance of Greek tragedy at the Festival of the Great Dionysia was originally occasional, tragic drama is now habitual, with audiences experiencing a qualitative change through regular and constant access to the media (Williams, [1983] 1991: 11-12). Moreover, corresponding to the impact of communication media technologies in modern life, tragedy is no longer restricted to the spatial or temporal locale in which tragic *praxis* originally occurred but made increasingly visible and accessible for public consumption in the global domain. In this modern age of mediated visibility, contemporary audiences have become accustomed to being inundated by the media with numerous examples of ‘the tragic’: September 11, the Virginia Tech massacre, the tragedy of Afghanistan, Algeria and Kashmir, the genocide in Rwanda, the Holocaust, the assassination of Ghandi, Benazir Bhutto and JFK, the abduction of Madeleine McCann, the OJ Simpson Trial, the doping scandal of Canadian Olympian Ben Johnson, and the 2006 World Cup sporting scandal of French football captain, Zinédine Zidane, just to name a few. Indeed, these examples demonstrate that tragedy emerges in many forms from the more striking to the mundane, yet what unites all of these events under the rubric of ‘the tragic’ is the extent to which the personal decline of particular individuals and collectives transpire into the social phenomenon of tragedy in general. In making the tragic transgression of one resonate with the everyday struggles of many, the emotional undercurrents of tragedy have the capacity to reverberate and refine the values of those with symbolic investments in their story through establishing a safe aesthetic distance in which audiences may deliberate upon the social significance that these experiences afford.

It is this concern with the social phenomenon of the tragic that is the central theme of this thesis, namely the social conditions which shape tragedy’s emergence, dissemination and public deliberation in time and space. From an Aristotelian point of view, the importance of tragedy derives from its capacity to affect the larger body politic sympathetic to the hero’s transgression in a process of feeling-realisation referred to as *katharsis*. Conceptualised as a mode of emotional clarification, *katharsis* was the term employed by Aristotle (2005: 47-9) to indicate the manner in which audiences could
affectively reconcile tragedy - through rationalising the events constituting the tragic plot (myth’s). To rationalise is not a factual endeavour, to renounce, nor to redeem. iii Rather, to affectively rationalise myth’s is to make the plot’s tragic sequence of events comprehensible, to contemplate and to clarify “through pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” (2005: 47-9). Elaborating the paradigm of tragedy espoused by Aristotle, accordingly, assists in developing a model of kathartic recognition through which to elucidate a theory of emotions compatible with rational modes of communication.

Written over two and a half thousand years ago, Aristotle’s insights have important implications for contemporary research. iv Not only does the ancient philosopher offer a sophisticated theory of emotions which resolves many of the debates between reason and irrationality that continue to pervade research in the field of emotional inquiry, his notion of katharsis presents a valuable apparatus through which collective suffering may be affectively reconciled. In light of the pervasive proliferation of ‘the tragic’ permeating contemporary life, such a model has obvious relevance for the numerous publics that continue to be affected by trauma. Furthermore, in presenting a conceptual apparatus through which audiences may affectively rationalise the significance of tragic praxis, the safe aesthetic distance implied in Aristotle’s kathartic framework provides an arena that values the importance of democratic pluralism in contemporary life, and the need for reflexive deliberation and civic communication regarding the mediation of emotionally pertinent issues, themselves integral to the integration of the public sphere.

Despite the social pertinence of Aristotle’s tragic paradigm, research on katharsis has generally fallen into disrepute in contemporary scholarship following various interdisciplinary interpretations, cultural changes and the term’s common conflation with Freud’s hydraulic theory of emotional repression. While Attic tragedy has lost the prominence that it formerly held in ancient Greece, it has been replaced to a large extent by manifestations of ‘the tragic’ in contemporary scandals, which are played out in popular culture and mediated for public consumption. It is in this context that Zinédine
Zidane’s World Cup sporting scandal will be explored, not merely as a personal tragedy for the French footballer or confined to the domain of sport, but rather from a sociological perspective with regard to the repercussions that his ‘tragic’ c’up de tête afforded - a social tragedy with consequences for those with symbolic investments in history. This thesis will draw upon Zidane’s transgression as a case study through which sociological accounts of emotions, namely pragmatic and Durkheimian contributions, are employed as means of amplifying Aristotle’s account of katharsis and the broader social significance of tragic myth’s in contemporary life.

Of course, in excavating ancient paradigms to understand social phenomena one must recognise the limitations of applying an Aristotelian model of katharsis as a conceptual apparatus to comprehend modern life. These concerns become particularly evident in light of a series of recent political and historical developments distinguishing the ancient Greek polis (city-state) from the attitudes characterising modern liberal societies, including the impact of media technologies and globalising processes. The representation of tragedy in ancient Greece assumed a shared public arena for civic communication in a common spatial locale, which bears little resemblance to the practical realities of the mediation of the tragic in the twenty-first century’s global domain. In this sense it would be misleading to suggest that an Aristotelian conception of katharsis could be transposed and enlisted to understand modern social phenomena without substantial modification, namely recognising the impact of media communication, globalisation, secularism and the emergence of the nation structured around democratic principles promoting cultural pluralism, rather than the exclusionary dichotomies characteristic of premodern civilisations (Thompson, 1995). Despite these differences, emotions remain integral to social cohesion and human flourishing (eudaimonia), and it is in this sense that an aesthetic appreciation of katharsis reveals the capacity for tragedy to affect, intervene and influence contemplative action. Tragedy is a necessarily contextualised event, yet by acknowledging how katharsis is affected by the particularities of time and space, the historical-comparative approach employed in this thesis promotes not a reductive allegory, nor or grand narrative, but a case study that remains aware of the limitations and contingencies of comparing the social phenomenon.
of tragedy in disparate historical and cultural contexts.

Chapter 2 of this thesis contextualises katharsis in Aristotle’s broader system of social ethics, rhetoric and politics. In so doing, it indicates that contemporary notions of ‘catharsis’ popularised by Freud’s hydraulic theory of emotional repression, themselves responsible for the term’s present state of disrepute, have little in common with the moral framework underpinning the ancient philosopher’s model of emotional clarification.

After excavating Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm, Chapter 3 establishes the significance attributed to myth’s (the tragic plot) as the “first principle” and “soul of tragedy.” This chapter draws upon Zinédine Zidane’s World Cup transgression as a case study through which sociological accounts of emotions, namely pragmatic and Durkheimian contributions, are employed as means of amplifying Aristotle’s account of katharsis and the broader social significance of tragic myth’s in contemporary life. Communicated through evocative symbols that equated Zidane’s revered emblem with French supremacy and postcolonial unity, this ‘social tragedy’ is drawn upon to examine how the political logic of the sacred and profane transformed an historical episode into a tragic event that hindered public contestation of the French footballer’s scandalous transgression. Social myths solidifying France’s moral order around such ‘logic’ framed Zidane’s headbutt as an ‘honourable’ contest of colonialist ‘pollution’ and defence of Republican values - the insult towards the footballer offending the moral sentiments of the social collectivity with his personal transgression emblematic of a social tragedy in postcolonial France.

While Chapter 3 demonstrates that social myths may be seen to prevent critical inquiry by operating as social facts which exercise control over the conscience collective and the individual’s capacity for critical thought, Chapter 4 emphasises that it is precisely the elusive form of tragic symbols that provides the possibility for spectators to transform their emotional experiences into a critical community and, in so doing, alter the very values that extant social myths reflect. By interrogating French media’s tendency to glorify Zidane’s sacred stature and to humanise his revered image through patriotic social
myths of the ‘race ambassador,’ it is emphasised that by contending these social myths, the critical community necessarily negotiated myths according to culturally specific circumstances, embodied experiences and the distinct emotional climate in which ‘Zizou’s tragedy’ was represented.

Chapter 5 contextualises these Aristotelian insights within conventional pragmatic theories of rationality and subjective responses to Zidane’s transgression to emphasise that theories of rationality require broader scope into the field of emotional inquiry. In recognising that an emotion is itself a form of consciousness, Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm demonstrates the need to revitalise the significance of emotional education as a practical component of civic development. Katharsis implies that emotions are required not only to inspire and navigate intelligent action; the statement is considerably greater - emotions constitute reflective intelligence. This chapter concludes by considering whether Zidane’s transgression is reconcilable with conventional pedagogical modes of tragic instruction and the kathartic cultivation of what is commonly referred to as ‘emotional intelligence.’

Chapter 6 juxtaposes Zidane’s scandalous transgression with Aristotle’s ethical paradigm, contextualising the differences between the construction and reception of these tragic vignettes within a series of broader historical and social developments. In noting the propensity for media communication technologies to dislocate contemporary manifestations of the tragic from the temporal and spatial confines in which the initial transgression occurred, this thesis questions the congruence between conventional tragic models of moral instruction and the cultural constellations in which tragedy is increasingly received. Moreover, given that the rights and freedom granted to autonomous citizens in modern liberal democracies inexorably diversifies kathartic responses to tragedy, this chapter interrogates the value of heroic emblems, such as Zidane, if their intangible symbolic content communicates diverse meanings contingent upon those who “resemble them.” Finally, from an Aristotelian perspective, this chapter evaluates whether Zidane can be considered to be a progressive hero in light of his World Cup misdemeanour, and what the ethical implications are if kathartic recognition is
reduced to ‘moral emotivism,’ exceeding any sense of what Aristotle referred to as the “Supreme Good” ([1926] 2003).

It is fitting that a pragmatic theory of emotions may be utilised to develop Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm given that the mimetic representation of action pertaining to myth’s (the tragic plot) is not confined to tragedy’s narrative, but the manner in which meaning is affectively apprehended. Translating Racine’s appropriation of Phèdre ([1677] 1998), Ted Hughes echoed Aristotle’s emphasis on tragic praxis: The real power of a play is never in the language, but always in the action. Estranged from society and internally divided, the hero’s transgression is suggestive of deeper social significance: personal misfortune represents social tragedy as audiences affectively rec’gnise through their common vulnerability that prevailing civic beliefs and values are themselves in flux.

In the evolution from ritualised classical Greek tragedy to the ascendance of Attic drama and manifestations of the tragic in modern life, mimetic contemplation emerges as vital to the cultivation of a new moral order. Novel values replace prevailing beliefs as the cohesive affect of ritual is supplanted by the dramatic performance, which through its dialogical structure invites spectators to negotiate and revise the meaning of tragic action: “a moving beyond myth to dramatic versi’ns of myth and history” (Williams, [1983] 1991: 15 [emphasis original]). For this reason, while tragedy is an elementary feature of life, the social phenomenon of ‘the tragic’ assumes eminence in periods of crisis and change. Tragedy signifies s’ciality, a period of transition that George Herbert Mead ([1932] 2002: 47) referred to as “the stage betwixt the old system and the new,” when the established order is still present but when emergent experiences are challenging extant traditions as spectators actively endeavour to cultivate a new sense of collective identity.

Returning to the ancient myth of Hippolytus and Phaedra, one may locate the myth’s enduring significance within elementary human emotional experiences that invite audiences to reflect on the tragic consequences of desire and incestuous passion. It is an archetypal mono-myth demonstrated by the tragedy’s sustained relevance to succeeding generations in appropriations ranging from Euripides’ Hipp’lytus (Athens 5th century
BCE), Seneca’s Phaedra (Rome 1st century CE), and Racine’s Phèdre premiering in Paris in 1677, which Ted Hughes translated in 1998 shortly before his death. Writing in a different social order, shaped by distinct cultural beliefs, Racine anticipated the conjecture surrounding the universal significance of tragedy when he recalled that Phèdre was produced from the tragedy of Euripides, yet one which followed “a slightly different route for the conduct of the action” (Williams, [1983] 1991: 23). In this sense, perhaps, the French dramatist could be more aptly thought of as articulating an elementary paradox between the universal significance of tragedy and the particular ways in which these cultural scripts are necessarily received. This paradox propels one to inquire how it is that, despite the disparate historical and cultural contexts from which tragedies are appropriated and emotionally apprehended, the universal myth’s of Hippolytus and Phaedra may continue to evoke ph’b’s kai ele’s, the affective responses of fear and pity that Aristotle considered so essential to katharsis.

Reflecting on the initial statement: “When passion boils, reason evaporates,” one may question what is illuminated by Hippolytus’ recollection given that his insights correspond to the Queen of Athens’ climactic recognition that her feelings of incestuous desire for her stepson lay at the genesis of her tragic decline. Does this realisation - what Euripides (2007: 21) referred to as a “lesson in wisdom” - entail a universal warning that love engenders only negative consequences and that all passion ends in tragedy, or is the kathartic recognition implied in this statement itself encumbered by the moral order in which it was produced? Moreover, does Phaedra’s lustful misdemeanor indicate that humans’ capacity for intelligent thought necessarily dissolves when “passion boils,” or is this statement cautioning more generally about the dangers in succumbing to excessive desires, themselves facilitated by cognitive thoughts? The theory of emotions elucidated in Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm contemplates the significance of this tragic maxim within the field of affective inquiry; the social phenomenon of tragedy sustaining its relevance as a poignant apparatus integral to clarifying the perpetual tragedies endured in modern life.
Chapter 2

Conceptualising Katharsis

Katharsis: The Modern Problem

Tragedy, then, is *mimesis* of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the *katharsis* of such emotions (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9).

Aristotle’s claim in the *Poetics* that the function of tragedy is to accomplish *katharsis* has become one of the most contested passages in philosophy. For over two thousand years the controversy confounding katharsis has been perpetuated by various interdisciplinary interpretations, cultural changes and the fact that modern audiences receive the *Poetics* as a fragmentary text with many of Aristotle’s additional writings lost or damaged. As a result, katharsis is commonly overlooked in contemporary literature or confined to the domain of psychology. The problem with such a reduction is that experiments operating within psychological paradigms have a tendency to conflate katharsis with Freud’s hydraulic theory of emotional repression, neglecting the pedagogical origins of the term and the extent to which it was “accomplished” through enactment as a civic mode of moral instruction.

The contemporary state of academic scholarship on katharsis reflects not only specific disciplinary interests configured within the term’s interdisciplinary scope but may be contextualised in relation to a series of broader historical developments that have had an enduring impact on modern social life. Foremost are evolving conceptions of *eudaimònia* (well-being) from the Greek’s moral concern with ‘being good’ to modern
therapeutic endeavours to ‘feel good.’ Where pleasurable feelings were considered important for the Greeks only insofar as they disposed one to virtuous activity, they have become the primary object of psychological analysis. In addition to abstracting the instructional role of katharsis to a mode of subjective well-being, the term’s moral foundation has been challenged by modern media technologies that problematise the dissemination and reception of tragedy amid relative systems of virtue ethics in an increasingly global world.

While the current climate of cultural pluralism encumbers Aristotle’s ethical paradigm, this thesis resituates katharsis in its traditional, instructional context as a mechanism of civic eudaimonia by analysing the term from a sociological, rather than purely introspective standpoint of repressed emotional energy. Relocating katharsis in conventional Greek understandings, which appreciate the symbiotic relationship between self and society, rather than prioritising the individual psyche, may circumvent the term’s present state of disrepute by applying it as a mode of critical pedagogy that is realised through aesthetic emotional experiences. This chapter commences by analysing central interpretations of katharsis, locating these debates within Aristotle’s system of virtue ethics and concludes by contextualising the term as an ancient mode of affective intelligence, thereby reviving its utility for present research in the field of emotional inquiry.

The word katharsis (κάθαιρείν) is derived from the ancient Greek term kathairein meaning to clean, purify or purge. While Aristotle was not the first to refer to katharsis, his predecessors employed vague and inconsistent variations of the term. Aristotle’s reference to katharsis in the Poetics is recognised as a critique of the Republic in which Plato denounced poetic forms, namely Homeric myth and Attic tragedy, for stimulating unruly passions and threatening to “destroy” rational thought. Plato had condemned mimetic poesies for propagating “false stories” of “inferior men,” which he argued nourished the passions of impressionable audiences, shaping “their souls by these stories”: “for the falsehood in w’rds is a copy of the affection in the soul” ([1930] 2003: 177, 195). Unable to discern reality from the deception of allegory, Plato cautioned that spectators
were susceptible to imitating these false representations, with the broader implication being that mimetic poetry threatened to pollute the “healthy state” of his ideal Republic ([1930] 2003: 161, 179).

Plato’s appraisal of tragedy was indicative of his conception of emotions more generally, which he considered for the most part to be irrational, requiring subservience to reason. Corresponding to the orthodox view held by the Greek academy, Plato’s ([1930] 2003: 403-7) tripartite paradigm, which hierarchically positioned reason and emotion as distinct “factions of the soul,” was rejected by Aristotle, who transcended his predecessor’s conventional appraisal of emotions as impediments to reason. While Aristotle’s endeavour in the *Poetics* is certainly not a complete reversal of the *Republic* — heralding poetry as a quintessentially moral form — his dialogue with Plato is motivated by a defence of mimetic poetry, which he argued was not the false representation of injustice, as Plato had suggested, but rather, when constructed with “poetic excellence,” cultivated moral sensibility through evoking appropriate affective responses. For although emotions are susceptible to excess and deficiency, Aristotle insisted that unruly conduct was not a necessary corollary of emotions: even calm, calculated thought and activity required emotions to move them.

From this premise, Aristotle’s manual for “poetic excellence” rejects conflating mimetic poetry and its accompanying affects with moral corruption, as Plato had. Not all plots promote injustice and, while audiences may be affected by “vulgar” and “base” representations, Aristotle proposed that the values comprising emotions enable spectators to discern depraved conduct from moral virtue, only arousing pity and fear for the reversal of undeserved misfortune that demonstrates a causal connection between tragedy’s initial “uncaused cause;” the hero’s actions and consequent decline:

Neither should decent men be shown changing from prosperity to adversity, as this is not fearful nor yet pitiable but repugnant, nor the depraved changing from adversity to prosperity because this is the least tragic of all, possessing none of the necessary qualities, since it arouses
neither fellow-feeling nor pity nor fear. Nor, again, should tragedy show
the very wicked person falling from prosperity to adversity: such a pattern
might arouse fellow-feeling, but not pity or fear since one is felt for the
undeserving victim of adversity, the other for the one like ourselves (pity
for the undeserving, fear for the one like ourselves); so the outcome will

Resisting conventional conceptions of passions as irrational, Aristotle presented a
complex theory in which emotions and cognition are presented as functional differences
within an integrated disposition to act. As judgments derived from belief, emotions
require cognitive capacities, with Aristotle’s premise challenging Plato’s assertion that
affects evoked from tragedy necessarily impede rational thought. The originality of
Aristotle’s theoretical contributions is exemplified by his insistence that emotions are not
only inherent to, but the foundation of, moral virtue (arête). His thesis entailed that the
pursuit of a morally sound life required a clear understanding of the emotions motivating
virtuous action and practical wisdom (phr‘nessis). Accordingly, while modern audiences
inherit the P’etics as a fragmentary text, Aristotle’s theory of emotions as processes
compatible with reason was sophisticated for his time, remaining pertinent to
contemporary debates in the field of affective inquiry.

Aristotle only referred to katharsis in several parts of his surviving manuscripts,
and unfortunately the sections in the P’etics where he intended to clarify its meaning
remain misplaced. The absence of a precise definition has facilitated numerous
interpretations as each researcher frames the term through their own disciplinary lens,
with a particular hypothesis in mind. Philosophy, psychology, sociology, and aesthetic
criticism provide diverse and incongruous explanations of katharsis, with the controversy
perpetuated by its interdisciplinary scope leading George Steiner (1961) to reject a
“legislative” definition of the term, while prompting Kenneth Bennett (1981) to declare
that present discussions have “thinned to bloodless intellectual water.” The main dispute
centres on what kathartic cleansing denotes: Is it literally the purging of emotions, or
merely a metaphor? Moreover, does katharsis refer to religious purification, medical and
psychological purgation, or moral education? Cynthia Freeland (1992: 122) considers two interpretations: the cognitive approach, involving intellectual judgments that rationalise praxis as the essence of tragedy; and emotive accounts, which emphasise recognition through feeling. Debates generally fall into four categories, however, and it appears, just as they were for Aristotle, such binary distinctions between emotion and cognition are inadequate to account for his paradigm. Understood essentially as therapeutic purgation (psycho-medical), spiritual or ethical purification, definitions of katharsis often combine cognitive and emotional capacities rather than prioritising one at the expense of the other.

The first three views discussed: religious, medical and psychological interpretations, define ‘catharsis’ as a process of emotional purgation. Metaphors of purgation have been recognised since antiquity, permeating fields of religion, aesthetics, medicine and science. Historically, political, religious, philosophical and medical authorities have attempted to control the passions, guiding individuals and society into a state of civic well-being, referred to by the Greeks as eudaimonia. The orthodox notion that expressing emotion is instrumental to well-being traverses diverse historical and cultural contexts, with contemporary media perpetuating the significance of affective purgation through promoting the belief that maintaining well-being requires releasing ‘toxic’ emotions according to the normative standards of health professionals. The profusion of reality television programs in contemporary societies, the increasing publication of autobiographies, self-help literature and talkback radio commentary are indicative of the prevalence of ‘catharsis’ in the current therapeutic climate. Mediated for public consumption in popular culture, these texts signify the perceived need in contemporary society, even for celebrities, to self-disclose. Moreover, the extent to which principles of ‘cathartic’ purgation permeate contemporary western culture is further exemplified by the common use of Freudian vocabulary, as well as the introduction of art therapies into schools, hospitals, prisons and work places in the form of human resource management.

Until the renaissance it was the religious interpretation of ‘catharsis’ that
prevailed. Operating through the symbolic logic of the sacred and profane, this view considers ‘catharsis’ to be a spiritual process of moral purification, which cleanses the soul by purging polluted sentiments and bodily waste. Parallels between religious rituals and metaphors of purgation are abundant, with Christianity and Catholicism maintaining a Neoplatonic division between the pure soul and the impure body: what Eric Dodds (1951: 35) describes as “the universal fear of pollution (miasma), and its correlate, the universal craving for ritual purification (katharsis).” The Christian ideal that following death the soul may transcend its corporeal existence to the realm of absolute truth is expressed in biblical scriptures: “ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” where the soul was given “sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life” (Episcopal Church, 1979: 485, 501). The New Testament maintained ‘cathartic’ practices of purification in the form of baptism, while other theologies employed washing, bathing, confession and exorcism to ‘cleanse’ those contaminated by the sensual passions attributed to ‘original sin’ and the ‘fall of man’ from Christian grace. More recently religious interpretations have been associated with ‘new age’ practices of meditation, transcendental ecstatic experiences and the methods of human potential practitioners (Hall, 1969; Heider, 1974; Knox, 1961; Laski, 1970; Peterson, 1971). John Heider describes the spiritually purified “postcathartic radiant state” as leaving one with an: “…open energised body without needing to impose unconscious…somatic tensions” (1974: 43), thereby maintaining the orthodox association between ‘catharsis’ and affective release.

Confession corresponds to these hydraulic theories of emotion by encouraging individuals to purge their sins to religious authorities. The significance of confession is the extent to which souls perceived to be contaminated by unbridled appetites may be ‘cathartically’ purified according to biblical doctrines through methods of self-disclosure. Symbolising the boundary maintenance of the sacred and profane, a culturally specific logic that Mary Douglas (1966) understood to reflect a more general fear of contamination of “matter considered out of place,” Szasz (1988: 104) reiterates that “in most early religions, the central image of misfortune and malady of every kind is pollution; and the corresponding image of recovery from misfortune and malady is purification – a religious and ritual activity called catharsis.” The C’nfessi’ns of the
fourth century theologian, Saint Augustine of Hippo, epitomise such logic by situating sinful passions as profane ‘dirt’ that threaten to undermine the sacred, purity of God:

Tears and agonies, therefore, are objects of love…but, my soul, be on your guard against *uncleanness*, under the protection of my God ([397CE] 1998: 36 [emphasis added]).

Maintaining Neoplatonic scepticism towards emotions as impediments to ‘pure’ morality, Augustine employed confession as a ‘cathartic’ procedure “to cleanse” his ‘polluted’ sins of appetite and lust to the ‘ultimate source’ of God:

See this, as I remember it, my hope; for you to *cleanse* me from these *flawed emo’tions* ([397AD] 1998: 59 [emphasis added]).

Religion played an integral role in the ascendance of therapeutic practices in modern life. Michel Foucault (1977) traced the evolution of religious confessional techniques into secular societies with the orthodox equation of self-disclosure with well-being – the prominence of which is attested through the conventional emphasis on confessing addiction as the principal step to recovery in environments of rehabilitation. Drawing upon Jeremy Bentham’s model of the panopticon prison, Foucault employed the metaphor of the ‘panopticon’ to highlight how the increasing reflexivity characteristic of modernity engendered a "sentiment of an invisible omniscience" where individuals feeling monitored through modes of external force internalised this behaviour through self-observation. The memoirs of the Catholic writer, Tertullian (2nd century CE), further depict confession as an affective disciplinary apparatus of priestly surveillance:

Circumcision, set forth to us Penitence, that, if we cleanse our heart, i.e. if confessing our sin, we make amends to God, we may obtain pardon (1842: 382-383).

Or, to encapsulate more explicitly the logic of the sacred and profane:

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16
Confession and Penitence, which healthfully cure all the sins and wounds
to which the frailty of the flesh is subject (1842: 383).

In 1215 the edict of the Fourth Lateran Council obliged all Christians to make annual
confession to religious authorities with the intention to evoke repentance, penance and
absolution through the ‘cathartic’ purgation of sins – emotional impulses thought to
contaminate the soul through the transgressing of sacred religious beliefs. Religious
paradigms indicate that emotions have a strong connection to morality, with the corollary
being that attitudes towards emotions depend upon whether they are considered to be
impulses impeding judgment or experiences connected with cognition and belief.
Advocating the former, through the release of sinful passions, confession traverses
metaphors of affective purgation and purification, revealing the propensity for ‘catharsis’
to be employed by religious authorities as a mechanism of social control through the
institutionalisation of emotional management.

It is proposed that a purely religious interpretation is too limited for what the
*Poetics* indicate katharsis to be. Whereas Aristotle refers to katharsis as a dramatic mode
of public pedagogy, confession describes the introspective release of repressed emotional
energy: purging sins to a religious authority or in the private office of a therapeutic
professional. Equating confession with katharsis raises questions about whether modern
therapeutic institutions of ‘psy’ - psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis and
psychotherapy - may also be considered kathartic mechanisms. While both refer to
affective purgation, religious interpretations were shaped by the historical significance of
Christian faith and continue to decline with the development of secularism in modern
democracies.

While the democratic imagination permeates contemporary western climates, it is
important to note that classical Greek tragedy originally emerged from religious rituals,
and it is probable that katharsis was not completely secularised. Eric Dodds (1951)
suggests that the incorporation of mystery cults prior to tragic performances highlights
the religious dimension of katharsis, where heightened dancing, music and manifestations of collective hysteria were evoked in a ritualised environment. Accordingly, while modern, western societies have become accustomed to demarcating theological and therapeutic practices, in antiquity religion and medicine for the most part operated as integrated fields.

Medical models persist as another popular interpretation of the term. Resembling religious appraisals, ‘cathartic’ purgation is considered to be an elementary practice required to ensure ‘purity’ and well-being. Despite experiencing a renaissance in medieval Europe, medical paradigms may be contextualised within the ancient Asclepion tradition. Aristotle's father, Nicomachus, was an Asclepion physician, a medical and religious occupation common to classical Greece. Established as “a useful organ of social hygiene” (Dodds, 1951: 79), symbolic logic maintained that sick individuals could be cleansed by participating in ‘cathartic’ therapies at Asclepions (temples of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine). Consisting of a temple, theatre, stadium, gymnasium and library where “every pilgrim could purify and regenerate himself” (Szasz 1988: 26), treatment in these healing sanctuaries involved ‘cathartic’ cleansing from a series baths, diets and corporeal excretions, followed by participation in religious rites.

Corresponding to the Greek’s preoccupation with ‘purging’ impure excrement from the body, scholars have proposed that ‘catharsis’ refers to the ‘discharge’ of what are commonly perceived to be negative or excessive emotions (Butcher, 1895; Bywater, 1909; Bernays, 1880; des Bouvrie, 1988; Lear, 1992; Nuttall, 1996). Orthodox definitions of ‘catharsis’ as the discharge of emotional excess reflect the medical practices of Aristotle’s predecessor, Hippocrates (5-4th century BCE). Referred to as ‘the father of medicine’ for divorcing therapeutic practices from their association with the supernatural, Hippocrates presented a doctrine of the four humours, arguing that temperament could be explained rationally by the balance of the four humours: cold, hot, wet and dry. An excess of any humour was indicative of disease, and consequently health lay in the equilibrium of the four elements in equal proportion (pepsis): “what would, in later centuries, be called personality and psychological dispositions” (Porter, 2002: 40). From
this premise, ‘catharsis’ was associated with metaphors of excretion requiring that excessive humours be purged: where a surplus of yellow bile signified mania black bile, being cold and dry, was connected to melancholy. Reflecting medical concerns, Hippocratic practices of excretion promoted ‘cathartic’ techniques of purgation as subjective modes of sanitation required to cleanse the body politic.

Emerging from medical models, it is the psychological interpretation that popularised ‘catharsis’ in western vocabularies. Renowned for Josef Breuer’s treatment of Anna O (a pseudonym for Bertha Pappenheim), the method of ‘catharsis’ indicated that revoking traumatic memories through hypnosis encouraged patients to ‘discharge’ repressed emotions, ‘purging’ them of their disease. In May 1889 Freud employed what he referred to as “Breuer’s cathartic method” to treat Emmy von N., maintaining that inadequately expressed emotions were repressed in the psyche manifesting in the form of neuroses and psychoses: “the psychic trauma or the memory of the same acts like a foreign body which even long after its penetration must continue to influence like a new causative factor” (Freud, 1912: 3-4). Hypnosis was consequently used to recollect the repressed event by immersing the patient into that “hypnoid” state during which a traumatic episode became embedded, following which: “painful emotions were drained off as if a psychic abscess had been opened and the purulent matter within evacuated” (Brown, 1972: 18).

Freud’s ‘cathartic’ method resembled Jean-Martin Charcot’s belief that hysterics ‘suffer from reminiscences,’ non-abreacted ideas, symptoms which would disappear if patients were able to recollect prior trauma: “The psychic process originally rebuffed must be reproduced as vividly as possible so as to bring it back into the statum nascendi and then be thoroughly talked over” (Freud, 1912: 4). Abreaction is subsequently frequently used as a synonym for ‘catharsis’: the ‘emotional release’ of repressed emotions consequent to the live remembering of traumatic experience (Jackson, 1994). Corresponding to hydraulic metaphors, the premise driving Freud’s ‘cathartic’ method was that analogous to bursting water pressure, repressed emotions accumulating below the threshold of experience escalate as a threat to well-being:
We found, at first to our greatest surprise, that the individual hysterical symptoms immediately disappeared without returning if we succeeded in thoroughly awakening the memories of the causal process with its accompanying affect, and if the patient circumstantially discussed the process giving free play to the affect. Affectless memories are almost utterly useless (Freud, 1912: 4 [emphasis original]).

While hydraulic models transmute Aristotle’s paradigm, Freud’s decision to label his method ‘catharsis’ reflects Breuer’s term for hypnotic purgation, itself derived from the ancient Greek word for ‘cleansing.’ Moreover, katharsis was the medical concept employed by Freud’s uncle-in-law, Jacob Bernays (1880: 158), who had speculated: “katharsis...must mean one of two things: either the absolving from guilt by way of certain priestly ceremonies – a lustration; or the removing or alleviating of sickness by some medical method of relief” (Belfiore, 1992: 259; Jackson, 1994; Sifakis, 2001: 74). Not only is Aristotle’s rational understanding of katharsis, and emphasis on the positive implications of pity and fear, incongruous with psychological theories of purgation, there are considerable differences between Aristotelian and Freudian models, with tragedy’s 

*mimesis* of an action referring to dramatic “modes of enactment” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-49),

rather than the subjective recollection of trauma (Belfiore, 1992; Borch-Jacobson, 1989; West, 1999). Psychological models, as will be further discussed, have had significant repercussions for research on katharsis by replacing the moral framework of Aristotle’s dramatic mode of civic contemplation with the subjective desire to attain mental health and happiness.

Freud subsequently dispensed with methods of ‘catharsis,’ convinced that their hypnotic cures were temporary, with many patients’ neurotic symptoms re-emerging. In addition to producing transient results, other reasons contributing to the demise of ‘catharsis’ was that the hypnotic techniques employed in this process required laborious procedures, their applicability appeared limited, and Freud’s research shifted from his original concern with neurosis to an increasing interest in sexual repression (Brown, 1972;
Freud, 1920: 289; Marcuse, 1959: 121; van Baal, 1977). Dispensing with hypnotism in 1895, ‘catharsis’ is considered to be a precursor to the psychoanalytic method known as ‘free association’ where, rather than purge affective phenomena, the patient was encouraged to process their emotions through narrative techniques of verbalisation - commonly referred to as the ‘talking cure.’

Following the impact of psychoanalysis on academic thought, Freud’s rejection of ‘catharsis’ for the ‘talking cure’ inevitably contributed to the disregard of Aristotelian katharsis from modern scholarship. It appears that katharsis has fallen into disuse subsequent to evolving trends in experimental psychology, with the majority of psychoanalysts and medical professionals uncritically accepting Freud’s dismissal of the term (Scheff, 2007), despite his careful documentation of its effectiveness in the assessments that comprise Studies on Hysteria (Freud & Breuer, [1895] 1966). Albert Bandura (1973) challenges the Freudian notion that emotions may be “cathartically purged,” suggesting that the origins of aggression are symptomatic of social learning, rather than repressed emotional energy. The inadequacy of ‘catharsis’ remains debated and, while Freudian techniques eclipse the term’s present significance, numerous clinical reports highlight its effectiveness as a therapeutic apparatus (Borgquist, 1906; Crepeau, 1980; Cromer, 1978; Nichols & Zax, 1977; Sadoff, 1966; Scheff, 1979, 2007). The emphasis on affective purgation in these studies indicates that, while psychological models prevail as templates for future research on the topic, studies must be contextualised within Freud’s psychoanalytic paradigm which corresponded more to his theory of repression rather than Aristotle’s ethical model of emotional clarification.

Reflecting Freud’s impact on western culture, the incorporation of ‘catharsis’ in popular lexicons and modern scholarship maintains psychological paradigms as the locus of empirical research on the topic. Corresponding to Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of repression, studies of ‘hostility catharsis’ have emphasised that the instigation of aggression is reduced by sublimating hostile actions through acceptable methods (Patterson, 1974). Studies examining the emotional repercussions of violent video games, sport spectatorship, music festivals and religious movements commonly employ
‘catharsis’ in these contexts as a synonym for affective release (Berkowitz, 1970; Bushman et al., 1999, 2002; Cromer, 1978).

More recently, ‘re-grief therapy’ has been utilised to demonstrate the value of ‘catharsis’ in curing unresolved grief by indicating that expressive emotional behaviour is a necessary procedure required for the closure of trauma (Parkes, 1980; Volkan, 1975). Randolph Cornelius’ (2001) content analysis of articles on weeping from 1850 to 1985 observed that a major theme promoted in the press was the importance of crying as a means of releasing physiological tensions. Over 94 per cent of articles suggested that if emotions were not adequately released, repressed sentiments would seek alternative somatic outlets with studies typically proposing, for example, that “crying seems to have the function of washing away pain and painful affects from the body” (Sadoff, 1966: 493). Operating within hydraulic paradigms, such research maintains the Freudian view that surplus emotions accumulate below the threshold of consciousness until they are actualised, so requiring regular ‘venting’ to maintain the healthy equilibrium of the psyche (Lorenz, 1966; Reich, 1968; Scheff, 2007). The problem with these ‘popular’ understandings, as Cornelius argues, is that they perpetuate the simple equation between the release of affective behaviour and accomplishing ‘catharsis’ of the emotion that is deeply embedded in Western folk psychology. That an emotion is a process involving the configuration of cognitive, cultural and subjectively embodied physiological experiences renders attempts to reduce emotion to a psychological state or tension highly problematic.

The basic assumption underlying psychological models of ‘catharsis’ indicate that, by ‘draining off’ what are perceived to be ‘negative’ emotions from the psyche, one will be left in a more positive frame of mind. The American Psychological Association encapsulates this orthodox position defining ‘catharsis’ as "the discharge of affects connected to traumatic events that had previously been repressed by bringing these events back into consciousness and re-experiencing them" (Vandenbos, 2007: 153). Not only do such studies have a tendency to ignore the capacity for ‘negative’ emotions to operate as useful indicators of problems that may motivate or resist change, psychological literature on ‘catharsis’ is plagued by incongruous results. While Freud’s psychoanalytic model
suggests that repressed emotions accumulating below the threshold of conscious experience emerge as detrimental to mental well-being, more recently these findings have been undermined by a series of studies supporting a Platonic critique of mimetic behaviour as further enticing the very affects that ‘cathartic’ methods seek to eradicate.

The incongruous results confounding psychological research have contributed to the disrepute of katharsis from academic scholarship as a topic of affective inquiry. Experimental psychology has produced contradictory results concerning the ‘cathartic’ release of emotions, particularly generated through the popular expression of violent activity. Brad J. Bushman’s (2002) clinical study of ‘catharsis’ examined angry participants hitting a punching bag, while thinking about someone who had angered them, to assess whether emotional purgation alleviates aggression. His findings suggest that while ‘catharsis’ predicts that rumination diffuses anger, in fact, rumination accentuates aggression. Additional studies conducted by Leonard Berkowitz (1970), Brad J. Bushman, Angela Stack and Roy Baumeister (1999) similarly propose that witnessing aggression and engaging in violence heightens the probability that the observer will proceed to act aggressively. The hypothesis that ‘catharsis’ is ineffective in reducing hostility is further supported by Arthur Patterson’s (1974) study of footballer players, who he argued sustained a significant increase in measured hostility from engaging in aggressive acts over the course of the season. Conversely, Gerald Cromer’s (1978) analysis of the affects of community drama workshops in Israel summarised ‘catharsis’ as a process of affective “struggle” responsible for engendering social awareness and preventing social delinquency. Similarly, after studying the crying habits of two hundred college students, Wendy Ellen Davis (1990) found that women who cried more than men reported positive benefits from emotional release. These results were undermined, however, by her subsequent studies that used standard stress and health questionnaires to confirm that tears were ineffective in mitigating stress.

The problem with studies such as these is that, by operating within Neoplatonic paradigms that consider emotions impediments to well-being, researchers conflate emotions with negative behaviour, regressing from Aristotle’s more comprehensive
understanding of emotions as cognitive judgments operating on a spectrum of excess and deficiency, themselves susceptible to reason. This common tendency in modern scholarship signifies the need to contextualise katharsis in Aristotle’s theory of emotion and extant texts. For it is apparent that such disparate findings exacerbate the present controversy surrounding katharsis, further undermining the term’s validity as a legitimate therapeutic technique.

Discrepancies between studies conducted on the effect of katharsis appear to be more indicative of the testing paradigms employed by modern researchers than the underlying theories explained. One of the reasons that experimental findings vary to such an extent is that studies often refer to different phenomena. Religious, ethical and therapeutic interpretations employ distinct variables when analysing katharsis. These problems are perpetuated, as there is often semantic confusion within disciplines between mental and physical forms of purgation. Thomas Scheff (2007), for example, is critical of reducing ‘catharsis’ to aggression given that aggression denotes a behavioural response rather than an emotion. He interrogates these studies, as they make no attempt to name or describe the complex couplings of physical and cognitive systems involved in emotive behaviour, such as, laughter or crying.

A more significant problem confounding present research on katharsis is the general absence of any reference to Aristotle, despite his cognitive appraisal anticipating the insights afforded by many contemporary theories on emotion (Solomon, 2009). Moreover, while it would simplify debates if researchers were to agree on single variables by which to test katharsis, the fragmentary nature of the Poetics means that consensus is unlikely to be achieved. Gerald Else (1955) has declared that, given the impossible task of discovering an exact interpretation, research on katharsis should be “declared officially closed or debarred.” Just as disagreement regarding the composition of emotions has not prevented the topic from becoming a fruitful field of inquiry, rather than hinder the term, it is proposed that contrasting interpretations may maintain its interdisciplinary scope for future research. ix
While historicity and the fragmentary state of the *Poetics* renders it impossible to reinstate the meaning of katharsis conclusively, psycho-medical paradigms are undermined by Aristotle’s texts that promote not a literal removal of emotions but rather a *clarificatio* of them (Else, 1955; Golden, 1968; Halliwell; 1992a, 1992b; Kosman, 1992; Lutz; 1999; McCumber, 1988; Nussbaum, [1986] 2001, 1992, 2001; Rorty, 1992; Shields, 2007). Kathartic clarification left the unimpeded soul in a purified state prepared for the ethical instruction afforded by Greek tragedy. While this process could include the purgation of emotional *behaviur*, such as laughing and crying, the cognitive affect of kathartic *recognition* attained during tragedy’s climax (itself contingent on pity and fear) assumed preeminence, with Aristotle (2005: 37-9) depicting contemplative learning as a pleasurable experience:

> And since learning and admiring are pleasant, all things connected with them must also be pleasant; for instance, a work of imitation, such as painting, sculpture, poetry, and all that is well imitated, even if the object of imitation is not pleasant; for it is not this that causes pleasure or the reverse, but the inference that the imitation and the object imitated are identical, so the result is that we learn something ([1926] 2006: 126).

Psycho-medical interpretations are maintained by two isolated passages from Aristotle’s altogether different text, the *Politics*, of which only one and a half lines refer to purgation and, moreover, relate to the function of music not tragedy:

> …we say that music ought to be employed not for the purpose of one benefit that it confers but on account of several (for it serves the purpose both of education and of *purgatio*…and thirdly it serves for amusement, serving to relax our tension and to give rest from it) ([1932] 2005: 669-71 [emphasis added]).

Aristotle continues:
…for some persons are very liable to this form of emotion, and under the influence of sacred music we see these people, when they use tunes that violently arouse the soul, being thrown into a state as if they had received medicinal treatment and taken a purge ([1932] 2005: 671 [emphasis added]).

In referring to the treatment of ‘abnormal’ individuals, who feel emotions more strongly than most, xi these medical analogies differ from the Poetics’ concern with the aesthetic experience of ordinary Greek citizens. Religious, medical and psychological interpretations are further undermined by the fact that the hydraulic theories that they promote are incongruous with Aristotle’s comprehensive conception of emotions as comprising physical, cognitive and ethical components. Moreover, where Greek and Hellenistic philosophers stressed the well-being of the individual only insofar as it contributed to the eudaimonia of the p’lis community, psychological interpretations characteristically focus on the mental condition of the isolated psyche as the foundation of their research. Studies of vicarious aggression related to the emotional effects of viewing television violence, and experiments that attempt to elicit a ‘cathartic’ affect through isolated behaviours, such as crying, illustrate the limitations of conventional empirical studies on the subject. Such experiments are based on introspective or behavioural methods of observable patterns of stimulus and response, neglecting the civic conditions of enactment necessary to generate the dramatic context integral to katharsis.

A further problem with therapeutic analogies is that, whereas medicine is only required for the sick, classical Greek tragedy was scheduled during the ‘Great Dionysia’ as an annual event indicative of its pedagogical role in the p’lis community (McCumber, 1988; Sifakis, 2001: 74). Corresponding to the Greek’s notion of eudaimonia as an active process inextricably connected to emotional well-being, tragedy was considered to be a preventative measure of immoral conduct, rather than a cure for the ‘dis-eased’ soul. Katharsis may, accordingly, be viewed as an extension of ancient strategies of health maintenance with the ‘theoric fund’ analogous to modern national health schemes. xii
Interpretations of katharsis are emblematic of evolving conceptions of *eudaim’nia* from a civic virtue to an individual state of mind. Since the eighteenth century notions of happiness and well-being have shifted from the moral concern with ‘being good’ to the increasing desire to ‘feel good,’ changes themselves indicative of a series of social developments from the moral prescriptions governing premodern societies to an emphasis on individual rights and freedom in modern liberal democracies. Etymologically derived from the Greek words *eu*: good and *daim’n*: spirit, a *eudaim’n*, was an individual disposed to ‘good spirits’ (also referred to as ‘happy,’ although present understandings of happiness do not encapsulate the moral dimension of the term). A *eudaim’n* was happy precisely insofar as they assumed a virtuous *eth’s* (character) through acting ‘well.’ Thus, while classical conceptions of *eudaim’nia* were thought to facilitate subjective pleasure, these feelings were considered merely a corollary of virtuous activity, rather than the ‘Supreme Good,’ with Greek and modern understandings of ‘happiness’ motivated by distinct ends. It follows that while historical distance and the fragmentary nature of Aristotle’s texts renders it difficult to establish a precise definition of katharsis, the *Poetics* indicate the term’s civic function extending beyond the subjective pleasure and well-being attained through emotional release.

It is apparent, as Scheff (2007) posits, that if emotions are initiated but fail to find resolution, then collective repression may engender violence. Yet equating ‘catharsis’ with the discharge of one or more distressful emotions: grief, fear, embarrassment or anger, Scheff’s (1979: 485) psychological interpretation overlooks significant components of Aristotle’s paradigm. Given Scheff’s aim to measure precise variables within an Aristotelian framework, research on katharsis should be limited to the evocation of *ele`s* (pity) and *ph`b`s* (fear). For Aristotle elucidates:

Those who use spectacle to create an effect not of the fearful but only of the sensational have nothing in common with tragedy, as it is not every pleasure that one should seek from tragedy, but the *appr`priate* kind. And since the poet should create the pleasure which comes from *pity* and *fear* through *mimesis*, obviously this should be built into the events (Aristotle,
While it remains unclear whether Aristotle excludes other emotions from the “appropriate kind” comprising katharsis, the *P’etica* denotes that pity and fear are instrumental to its outcome. It follows that just as Scheff conceives of the contemporary preoccupation with aggression as a distortion of Aristotle’s theory, so, too, is his decision to restrict the measurement of ‘catharsis’ to negative emotions (Daniels, 1977: 491; Fuchs, 1977: 493; van Beek, 1977: 499). Arlene Kaplan Daniels (1977: 491) rejects Scheff’s definition of ‘catharsis,’ suggesting that there is no justification for reducing the term to the discharge of four distressful emotions. By restricting analysis to the purgation of ‘negative’ emotions, one may overlook how emotions, such as pity and fear, which Aristotle (2005: 95) considered integral to katharsis, contribute to “fellow-feeling” and reasoned instruction.

Scheff (1979: 503) defends his psychological interpretation, arguing that ‘catharsis’ entails the affective release of repressed emotions, among which the discharge of tension and negative emotions are fundamental. He explains that dramatic and psychotherapeutic approaches both require re-experiencing past emotional crises and releasing physical states of tension in a context of complete security: the safety of the theatre or the therapist’s office. While Scheff promotes a more comprehensive notion of the term than those limiting their study to ‘hostility catharsis’ and the behavioural effects of vicarious aggression, his equation of ‘catharsis’ with the discharge of repressed tension has more in common with Freud and Breuer’s hydraulic theory of emotional repression than Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm of dramatic *mimesis praxe’s* (the representation of action) in the context of tragic drama.

Dynamic interpretations of katharsis correspond to debates concerning the composition of emotions in general. Echoing Freud’s ([1930] 2002) theory of repression, Scheff (1979) suggests that the significance of ‘catharsis’ (understood as the release of repressed emotional tension) reflects the propensity for distress to accumulate in the most stable lives, while often being prevented from seeking expression due to the regulating
impact of social norms and punitive measures. It is in this context of socialised repression that Scheff considers ‘catharsis’ integral to subjective well-being. If emotions are conceptualised as states, it is conceivable that an emotion may accumulate and require release. There is, however, significant contemporary research challenging such a hydraulic theory of emotions. Arlie Hochschild (1977: 494), is critical of Scheff’s reduction of ‘catharsis’ to hydraulic metaphors that equate emotions with ‘blocked’ or ‘accumulated’ states to be purged, rather than a developmental procedure – a point subsequently revised in Scheff’s (2007) appraisal of the “emotion process.” Moreover, Hochschild accuses Scheff of confusing emotions with tension when he describes “emotions as physical states of tension in the body which are produced by stress” - a view reiterated in Scheff’s (2007: n.p.) anecdote regarding the ‘cathartic’ effect of crying: “when I stopped, I felt all tension had drained away.” Disparate conceptions of ‘catharsis’ reflect distinct theories on emotion with Hochschild’s critique grounded in the constructionist paradigm that considers emotions not merely as “stored muscular tension” or states, but as subjective processes that are heavily dependent on cultural context and subjective experience.

Since the 1970s there has been an increasing body of research that acknowledges the socially constructed nature of emotions. Responding to positivist ideologies characteristic of nineteenth-century research, social constructionism prioritises cultural factors in shaping the interpretation and classification of subjective, emotional experiences. Culture can be broadly understood as the configuration of beliefs, norms, values and ideals defining membership in a community. Constructionist theories prioritise culture in the production and reception of emotions, considering emotion to ensue from appraisal, highlighting the extent to which an individual’s biography, cultural beliefs and knowledge contribute to their affective evaluation of a situation (Finkelstein, 1984; Griffiths, 1997; Hochschild, 1985; Jaggar, 1989; Lazarus, 1966; McCarthy, 1994). In so doing, constructionist epistemologies account for the diverse ways in which emotions are experienced, labelled and understood in distinct historical and cultural contexts. In their extreme form, through prioritising cognition, constructionist approaches appear to oppose biological and structural paradigms (Barbalet, 1998; Kemper, 1978),
given that their concern with culture and voluntarily managed emotions commonly neglects the physiological and impulsive nature of emotion characterised by involuntary drives and sensations of pleasure or pain (Barbalet, 2007b: 1374-5). Aristotle’s ([1926] 2003; [1926] 2006) comprehensive account positioned emotions as the result of an orchestration of cognitive and physiological phenomena, cultural and biological processes as well as unreflective and self-conscious experience.

That emotions are shaped by the cultural context in which they are experienced, does not denote that emotions escaping cultural labeling are without individual or social consequence (Barbalet, 2007b: 1375). The ‘unacknowledged’ impact of unreflective emotions is one of the strengths of Freud’s psychoanalytic model of ‘catharsis’ that reveals the ramifications of emotions repressed below the threshold of conscious experience. While one would be a mistaken to accuse Scheff (1979) of physiological reductionism, given that his definition of emotions recognises both appraisal and physiological trajectories, his conception of ‘catharsis’ as the purgation of accumulated states of repressed, emotional tension contrasts with constructionist theories of emotions, which consider affective pr`cesses as perceptions of bodily happenings that are culturally dynamic and variable.

The opposition implicit in these approaches - between cognition as reason and emotion as appetite - reflects Plato’s ([1930] 2003: 403) tripartite “factions of the soul,” which considered emotions “distinct” from reasoning capacities. Resembling the Stoics’ indifference towards emotions as uncontrollable attachments, frequently derived from false beliefs, Plato endeavoured to “constrain” emotions from the “good life” because of their propensity to undermine “self-sufficiency,” impede reason and nourish immorality. The notion of katharsis, conversely, signifies Aristotle’s cognitive perspective where, as judgments derived from belief, emotions were considered to be rational (though not necessarily reflective) expressions of value. Given that ethics are comprised of value judgments and values reflect feelings toward things, Aristotle proposed that emotions do not only nourish depravity, as Plato had suggested, but as coordinates to reasoned deliberation and action simultaneously constrain immorality and, therefore, must be
recognised as integral to the ‘good life.’ In short, whereas Plato and the Stoics perceived emotions to be ‘false judgments’ and impediments to *eudaimonia* (well-being), for Aristotle, emotions inform moral virtue and, thus, constitute *eudaimonia*. The association between katharsis and emotions is an important one, for contingent on how emotions are defined determines whether katharsis is considered essential to morality, wisdom and conducive to the ‘good life.’

Aristotle’s insights emphasise that emotions are irreducible to crude categories of ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ Rather, emotions are judged so according to how they dispose individuals to act: whether emotions occupy the intermediate ‘mean’ between excess and deficiency or digress ‘off the mark,’ as tragic texts convey. Corresponding to his notion of the ‘golden mean’ as the intermediate state of virtue between excess and deficiency, Aristotle suggested that, analogous to warped wood, the soul “warped by vice” required “straightening” by adjusting one’s affective disposition through an allopathic process referred to as “the combat of opposites” (Belfiore, 1992: 328, 343-6). The philosopher’s emphasis on moderation explains the numerous references in the *Nichomachean Ethics* ([1926] 2003), *Rhetoric* ([1926] 2006) and *Politics* ([1932] 2005) to fear as an intrinsic component of moral virtue and antidote to hubris, aggression, injustice and licentious conduct, all of which were considered vices endemic to the Greek’s competitive ethos.

Phèdre’s ([1677] 1998: 82) *kathartic recognition* occurring during the tragedy’s climax illuminates how her “shameless lust” and “incestuous passion” for her stepson, Hippolytus, facilitated her tragic decline – corresponding to Aristotle’s conviction that disgraceful conduct should evoke shame as a corrective device for *appr`priate* moral action ([1926] 2006: 213). With tragic transgressions reflecting the moral sentiments of the social collectivity, such as “fear of wrongdoing” being intimately connected with shame, it is difficult to comprehend how what Aristotle (2005: 49) described as the “katharsis of such emotions” could be synonymous with ‘purging’ oneself of pity and fear (Belfiore, 1992: 273; Maggi, 1550: 97-8).xv Katharsis requires not the removal of emotions but rather their clarification, as the hero and audience mutually experience a *reversal* from ignorance to recognition (*anagn`risis*). By reconciling the distinction of
either acting from emotion ‘r reason, Aristotle’s conception of katharsis, as an affectively embodied process of reasoned re-c’gniti’n, treats cognition and emotion as integrated components of action without which individuals would be apathetic to pertinent issues concerning civic philia (kinship), ethics and injustice for which pity and fear are vital.

In addition to presenting affective attachments as essential to social life, Aristotle’s theory of emotions avoids succumbing to reductive constructionism or physiological epistemologies that continue to segregate the field (de Sousa, 2007; Schmitter, 2006). With action necessarily m`ved by emotions, Aristotle recognised that the eudaaim`nia of the p`lis community corresponded to the ‘emotional intelligence’ of the individuals comprising it. The connection between emotions and contemplative action situates Aristotle’s emphasis on emotional management in tragic modes of reasoned deliberation as means to ensure the cultivation of ethical citizens.

The notion of ‘emotional intelligence’ leads to the final interpretation of katharsis as an ethical paradigm focusing on the pedagogical implications of tragedy. Learning to live well means learning to feel emotions appropriately, how to deliberate and choose. Tragedy, through many of its functions that seem opaque to modern society, facilitated this process of emotional clarification. At a very general level, clarification was achieved through the mimetic representation of action, evoking emotional responses that connected the audience at a safe aesthetic distance to the tragic performance. Civil society requires the capacity to sympathise with another, and katharsis “accomplished” this intersubjective process by inducing fellow-feeling through pity and fear where it was generally believed that the aesthetic emotions evoked from tragic drama permeated broader interactions in social life. It is probable that Aristotle expected katharsis to generate both the purgation of affective behaviour and emotional education, operating distinctly according to the function (demarcated by education and class) one assumed in the p`lis community. While, for some, katharsis may be restricted to emotional purgation, the Poetics prioritises the educational capacity of mimetic poetry as an aesthetic apparatus of emotional clarification: an exercise in moderation that resonated with the orthodox concern in Greek philosophy to ‘know thyself.’
Contextualised in this manner katharsis operates within a paradigm of social ethics, clarifying emotions through tragic modes of enactment. It is important to note that psychology and philosophy were not distinct for the Greeks and, accordingly, it is likely that katharsis was considered as a process of psychological and spiritual purification. Yet, far from being an introspective experience, aesthetic emotions were deliberative, contributing to the civic formation of institutions and social structures. The remainder of this chapter will reconstruct an Aristotelian notion of katharsis by situating the *Poetics* in the philosopher’s system of virtue ethics and demonstrating the significance of the term for present research in the field of emotional pedagogy.

**An Aristotelian Paradigm of Katharsis**

The controversy and abundance of interpretations confounding katharsis exemplifies the difficulty in excavating historical concepts from a distant context. Any reconstruction of the past reflects the context in which material is studied, with historiography highlighting that the researcher’s purpose and perspective inexorably shapes their selection, omission and organisation of facts (Carr, [1961] 1990). For historiography corresponds to the orthodox view that texts are considered meaningful only in relation to the context in which they are constructed and received. Aristotle was himself susceptible to such limitations as a fourth century, Macedonian philosopher critiquing Attic plays written a century before his birth (Halliwell, 2005; Vernant, 1992). Devoid of a precise definition, studies on katharsis are inclined to reflect theories on emotion more generally as researchers appropriate the term with the endeavour to examine a particular problem, for a particular purpose, from a particular point of view. The limitations of perception do not warrant a rejection of history: for “to eliminate such materials – the record of all that man has done and become – from our studies would be like pretending to study the process of birth but ignoring motherhood” (Mills, 1959: 163). Reviewing academic scholarship reveals that katharsis is commonly portrayed as a modern term concerned with the well-being of the isolated psyche. Katharsis is not a new concept, and to reduce its relevance to a therapeutic precursor of Freudian psychoanalysis without noting its application in
antiquity has a more serious implication of disregarding the term’s social significance as an affective mode of virtue ethics and civic solidarity. Despite the problems associated with such an inquiry, historical sensitivity is integral to a sociological appreciation of katharsis, providing insights into the affective formation of social relations, how they have evolved and why certain elementary characteristics have been sustained over time.

Aristotle’s analysis of katharsis commences as a critique of Plato’s *Republic* in which Plato denounced mimetic poetry for stimulating unruly passions and impeding rational thought. Plato condemned tragedy for employing “false” narratives depicting “the wailings and lamentations of men of repute,” such as Achilles, and the “vice” of “inferior men,” which he believed impressionable audiences were susceptible to imitating, thereby contaminating “the healthy state” of his ideal Republic ([1930] 2003: 161, 207). Plato’s critique reflects the conventional Greek view of emotions as irrational movements and involuntary afflictions, which, impeding judgment, were necessarily adverse to reason. The Academy had promoted Plato’s tripartite division of the soul comprised of reason, spirit and appetite, which corresponded to his hierarchical structure of the ideal Republic: ruled by philosopher kings, followed by auxiliaries then merchants. Employing the metaphor of the charioteer who, symbolic of reasoned deliberation, governed the “lower” horses (attributes of spirit and appetite), Plato suggested that the charioteer commands the soul, with the implicit corollary being reason’s authority over emotion. By elevating reason as cognition above emotions as spirited drives, emotions were not only positioned as the antithesis of reason but considered “distinct” from the component of the soul responsible for evaluative thought (Annas, 2003; Nussbaum, 2007b). xviii

Aristotle rejected Plato’s conventional appraisal, instead presenting a complex theory in which emotions and cognition were presented as functional differences within an integrated course of action. Reason requires emotional capacities to motivate and maintain deliberative *praxis*, with Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm enabling him to challenge Plato’s assertion that tragedy hindered rational thought. The symbiotic relationship between reason and emotion is encapsulated by *myth’s* - what Aristotle (2005: 53) prioritised as the “first principle” and “soul of tragedy.” Comprised of three
elements: *pathos* (emotions), *peripeteia* (reversal) and *anagnórisis* (recognition), *mythos* synthesised the “causal sequence of events” constituting the tragic plot. The narrative coherence achieved from *mythos* elevated tragedy above other poetic forms, for, as a ‘complex’ plot imbued with reversal and recognition, the *ergon* (function) of the genre was to accomplish emotional clarification (katharsis).

From this premise, Aristotle distinguished tragic fear as an intelligent response from horror genres that merely stimulate adverse reactions, such as repulsion and disgust. For in depicting the “awesome,” the awe or wonder aroused by tragedy is suggestive of deeper significance – the pleasure of contemplating images: “because in contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means” (Aristotle, 2005: 37, 63). In proposing, albeit arguably, that audiences will only sympathise with *mythos* - that is “complete, whole and of magnitude” - in which action coheres into a unity structured around a “beginning, middle and end” - Aristotle's (2005: 55) defence of tragedy rests on his cognitive view of emotions as judgments grounded in belief. This cognitive appraisal frames his premise that for tragedy to “accomplish the katharsis of such emotions,” pity and fear must correspond to an intelligible plot. In short, katharsis will *only* occur where audiences are able to *rationalise* *mythos*, where the activation of sympathy is *recognisable* by reason.

The originality of Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm is exemplified by his insistence that emotions are not only inherent to, but the foundation of moral virtue (*arête*). Despite being susceptible to reason, Aristotle ([1926] 2003: 87) emphasised that emotions are not in themselves virtues: “because we are not pronounced good or bad according to our emotions.” Emotions, nevertheless, occupy a significant role in establishing and maintaining deliberative action and ethical quests for practical wisdom (*phrónesis*). In this sense, emotions resemble *hexis* (habits) in their ability to violate and conform to reason through their connection with action. Conceiving of emotions as intelligent dispositions to act entails that if one eliminated their capacity to feel, for example anger and pity, they would not only be more susceptible to hubris and shamelessness, which the Greeks considered vices, they would be uninspired to “show good character” by acting
with righteous indignation against perceived discrimination or endorse social reform.\textsuperscript{xxi}

These are situations where apathy is symptomatic of injustice: “Justice [being] that moral disposition which renders men apt to do just things, and which \textit{causes} them to act justly and to wish what is just” (Aristotle, [1926] 2003: 253 [emphasis added]). Moreover:

\begin{quote}
\ldots of these actions those that promote licentiousness are disgraceful, whether voluntary or involuntary (the latter being those that are done under compulsion), since meek endurance and the absence of resistance are the result of unmanliness or cowardice (Aristotle, [1926] 2006: 215).
\end{quote}

Moral sensibility requires emotional capacities to \textit{energise} just activity and as coordinates in constraining immoral conduct. It is precisely by motivating action that emotions correspond to virtue: “the dispositions are the formed states of character in virtue of which we are well or ill disposed in respect of the emotions” (Aristotle, [1926] 2003: 87). Thus, while not in themselves virtues or vices, emotions play a crucial role in disposing one to virtuous activity. In Aristotle’s ([1926] 2003: 199-201) treatment of anger, for example, despite criticising excessive wrath and deficient indignation, individuals are not blamed for “being angry,” given that emotions are not necessarily subject to choice; whereas virtue and vice were considered voluntary dispositions concerning “being angry in a certain way,” where emotions are judged according to the given situation – the mean “relative to us.”

Essentially, Aristotle ([1926] 2003: 13) conceives of virtues as “good” habits acquired through emotional education. Arguing “to principles” commencing with “what is known,” emotions were positioned as the “starting point” responsible for \textit{m’tivating} agency “in the right way.” In considering emotions as evaluative responses open to reasoned modification, Aristotle not only broke from conventional Platonic conceptions of emotions as involuntary impediments to reason, he initiated research into emotional management as the foundation of what would later be referred to as “emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 1995). According to this view, emotions play a pivotal role in
cultivating virtue and practical wisdom by directing individuals towards the intermediate “golden mean” responsible for sustaining ethical activity.

Aristotle’s notion of the “golden mean” illuminates the utility of emotions when felt at appr’ priate levels and circumstances. Given that emotions are integral to being human, Aristotle recognised that any analysis of the ‘good life’ must take into consideration how these processes affect the eudaim’nia of both the individual and broader civic community. Contrary to popular endeavours to eliminate what are commonly considered to be ‘negative emotions,’ such as fear, from ‘healthy’ individuals, Aristotle highlights the positive consequences these emotions afford. Courage, for example, requires fear, namely that the courageous individual pursues their course of action despite the fearful situation. While emotions may be felt in excess or deficiency, virtues ‘mark’ the ‘golden mean,’ the intermediate state between excess and deficiency, where “the observance of the mean in fear and confidence is courage” (Aristotle, [1926] 2003: 99). Acknowledging the virtue in righteous indignation, accordingly, is not a justification for all forms of anger since an emotional ‘mean’ is not universally consistent but judged appr’ priate (meaning relative) to the particular situation at hand. By conceptualising emotions as processes experienced on a spectrum between excess and deficiency, Aristotle progressed beyond prosaic understandings of emotions as inherently ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ instead evaluating affective processes as deficient or excessive according to how they disposed one to act. It is Aristotle’s nuanced understanding of emotions, which is why katharsis represents a significant development in the field of affective inquiry.

Conceiving of emotions as judgments derived from beliefs, Aristotle incorporated affective intelligence into his pedagogical system of virtue ethics, which he proposed could be refined through habituation. Conceptualising emotions as intrinsic to arète (moral virtue), required a clear understanding of how to affectively achieve excellence (Aristotle, [1926] 2003: 97). Individuals were habituated in youth to delay “rash” impulses and appr’ priately seek noble ends, thereby affectively responding in the “right” manner to emergent circumstances:
Moral virtue…is concerned with emotions and actions, in which one can have excess or deficiency or a due mean. For example, one can be frightened or bold, feel desire or anger or pity, and experience pleasure and pain in general, either too much or too little, and in both cases wrongly; whereas to feel these feelings at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the purpose and in the right manner, is to feel the best amount of them, which is the mean amount – and the best amount is of course the mark of virtue (Aristotle, [1926] 2003: 93).

Courage involves knowledge of which occasions warrant fear and, thus, while it may be foolish to fear goldfish swimming in a fish bowl, the fear that wild bears evoke in most humans when exploring Canadian forests is appr’ priate and in an evolutionary sense crucial for survival. To be fearless in situations such as these would reflect poor judgment and threaten mortality, such as the myth of Icarus who fearlessly flew too close to the sun. Moreover, some vices are noble to fear, such as disgrace where honour is associated with shame. For these reasons, Aristotle ([1926] 2003: 155) contends that it is not necessarily virtuous to act courageously when courage becomes excessive or synonymous with being “rash” and “insolent.” Rather, courage actively assumes virtue when applied “at the right time,” “on the right occasion,” “towards the right people” and “in the right manner.” Aristotle’s system of virtue ethics makes significant contributions to the field of emotional inquiry, not only in refuting the conventional Platonic view of emotions as afflictions to reason, but in positioning emotions as integral to practical wisdom (phr’ nesis) and eudaim’ nia (well-being). It was no longer “nourishing” emotions that were the problem, as Plato had suggested, but rather nourishing them “in the right way,” appr’ priate to particular contexts.

The notion of katharsis is emblematic of a shift in conceptions of emotion. Once affective processes were conceived of as cognitive phenomena derived from belief, katharsis was infused into Aristotle’s political and ethical writings to form an integrated theory of emotions (Fortenbaugh, [1975] 2002). Aristotle ([1926] 2003) defines hexis as a
habituated disposition to act where one becomes virtuous or vicious in relation to their feelings. Moral virtue is actively expressed in judgments and choices, positioning practical wisdom and eudaimonia as voluntary affective processes. It was only through Aristotle’s treatment of aesthetic forms and system of virtue ethics that emotions were developed into a coherent object of study. Aristotle’s understanding of courage, for example, exemplifies that emotions, such as fear, are judgments grounded in belief and subsequently intelligent forms of behaviour open to reasoned instruction. Aristotle makes these arguments in the Rhetoric ([1926] 2006: 173), instructing orators through the ‘art of persuasion’ how to manipulate political deliberations through affecting beliefs: “The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgments.” Divided under “three heads,” Aristotle elucidates the genesis of emotions in the mind’s disposition, the person by whom one is affected and the occasions giving rise to these feelings. While emphasising that emotions are not entirely subject to choice, Aristotle’s contribution to the field of emotional inquiry was to demonstrate through a relatively cognitive point of view that affective processes are intelligent responses derived from belief. The significance of katharsis is that the concept implies a theory of emotions compatible with reason and, in so doing, contrasts with conventional portrayals of emotions as diseases and afflictions to reason. While Plato asserted that emotions were disruptive forces which threatened the ‘good life,’ the notion of katharsis enabled Aristotle to challenge these criticisms by conveying emotions as intelligent forms of behaviour, integral to sound moral judgment and consequently, when educated appropriately, the ‘good life’ in general.

Katharsis encourages audiences to embrace aesthetic experiences as opportunities for self-reflection focusing on the educating capacity that emotions may afford. If feelings of anger or fear are caused by beliefs, Aristotle suggested that instructing beliefs through reasoned argumentation would in turn modify emotions. As previously discussed, this thesis was the foundation of the Rhetoric ([1926] 2006), in which Aristotle examined emotions in the context of persuasion. Moreover, this integrated view of emotions as experiences comprising cognition, feeling and action was explored in the Nichomachean Ethics ([1926] 2003), reflecting Aristotle’s system of virtue ethics by focussing on the
economy of acting virtuously in accordance with reasoned emotions. Evidently, these texts are motivated by distinct intentions, yet when synthesised they present a comprehensive account of Aristotle’s theory of emotions which, in spite of their different orientations, emphasise an overarching concern with emotional management. This key contribution is, likewise, an important factor in Aristotle’s conception of katharsis as a pedagogical apparatus responsible for cultivating civic eudaimonia.

The pedagogical implications of katharsis correspond to the affective process of rec’ gniti’n (anagn’risis) cultivated towards tragedy’s closure. Integral to the structure of Greek tragedy is the hero’s endeavour to resolve their unjust predicament by choosing between alternative courses of action. Their unfortunate situation confronts them with a moral dilemma in which the protagonist reveals their eth’s (character) through their actions and choices. Hamartia is the essence of the hero’s tragic decline. Commonly mistranslated as a tragic flaw, hamartia refers to an ‘error of judgment,’ with the original Greek etymology tracing back to hamartanein: a sporting term that refers to an archer missing their target (Sherman, 1992: 178) - from which the religious notion of ‘sin’ (literally meaning ‘off the mark’) was subsequently derived. For Aristotle ([1926] 2003: 131) emotions play a decisive role in establishing the target for future action and motivating thought and action towards these ends: “we wish rather for ends than for means, but choose the means to our end; for example, we wish to be healthy, but choose things to make us healthy.” Just as Aristotle considered emotions to dispose individuals to moral virtue (arête) and responsible for establishing the target guiding their subsequent thoughts and actions, hamartia extends this metaphor with the hero’s tragic decline presented as the result of an inadequately judged target, ‘off the mark,’ and therefore partly accountable for directing their tragic praxis and ultimate decline.

The concept of hamartia provides important insights into Aristotle’s theory of emotion. Despite misjudging their ‘moral dilemma,’ for Aristotle (2005: 65, 71), the hero’s adversity is engendered from acting ignorantly rather than from innate “evil” or “depravity.” In this sense, the hero’s propensity to ‘miss the mark’ is considered involuntary, often leading to unintended consequences, such as Oedipus blindly marrying
his mother and killing his father.\textsuperscript{xxiv} The involuntary dimension of affective experience is indicative of Aristotle’s comprehensive treatment of emotions as comprising both unreflective and reflective forms of consciousness. While the former could be compared to notions of the unconscious, Aristotle never referred explicitly to the term. Moreover, rather than entailing repressed trauma, as Freudian or Jungian models of the unconscious denote, while also experienced below the threshold of conscious awareness, for Aristotle, pre-reflective emotional consciousness of the world was better conceived of as \textit{hexis} (habituated dispositions to act) or \textit{pathe} (passive states), stimulated by external objects that ‘happen to’ the individual without these emotional modes of consciousness necessarily translating into consciousness of the emotion (Barbalet, 2004a; Sartre, [1939] 2002; Schmitter, 2006).

Given that emotions encompass unreflective experience, Aristotle’s point was that while susceptible to reasoned argumentation and voluntary action, affective processes are not necessarily subject to choice. Rather, emotions resemble perceptions, capacities for action, which for the most part are not in themselves reducible to prosaic notions of good or bad, but are considered ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ according to the \textit{particular} situation in which they are experienced. \textsuperscript{xxv} This point may be clarified through the concept of katharsis, where it is suggested that, in light of the hero’s ‘error of judgment,’ for their tragic misfortune “through pity and fear to accomplish the katharsis of such emotions,” the hero must be perceived as “the undeserving victim of adversity” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9, 71) – with pity defined as “a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, who befalls one who does not deserve it” ([1926] 2006: 225). In demonstrating that tragedy befalls the hero through a combination of ignorance and “bad luck,” Aristotle made a broader statement about the unreflective dimension of emotional experience.

Kathartic recognition is affectively achieved through sympathetic identification with \textit{myth}'s. As “the first principle” and “soul of tragedy,” \textit{myth}'s must be structured around what is perceived to be a “necessary” sequence of events that enable spectators to \textit{re-e'gnise} the significance of the plot: where “recognition” indicates “a change from ignorance to knowledge” (Aristotle, 2005: 65). This notion of recognition by reasoning
itself relies on pity and fear to “accomplish” what Aristotle (2005: 47-9, 87) referred to as the “katharsis of such emotions.” Together, tragedy’s two mutually conditioning components (myth’s and emotions) may engender in audiences what is referred to as collective fusion and a critical community, facilitating temporary sentiments of “fellow-feeling” and heterogeneous modes of critical inquiry as alternative movements along a continuum of the “social performance” that range from “fused” to “de-fused” (Alexander & Smith, 2005).

While the telos of tragic rec’gniti’n typically identifies cognition as the foundation of knowledge, the essential emotional components of pity and fear indicate that, despite being largely overlooked in academic scholarship, affective capacities remain integral to reflective thought. Aristotle’s contribution to the field of emotional inquiry was to demonstrate that emotions are susceptible to reason and, although not directly subject to choice, could be ‘mastered’ in youth through techniques designed to cultivate affective intelligence. His thesis, that kathartic quests for practical wisdom are motivated and guided by affective dispositions referred to as moral virtue, demonstrates the need to revitalise the significance of emotional education. Emotions are required not only to inspire and navigate intelligent action, emotions constitute the foundation of reflective intelligence. The preceding point suggests that a comprehensive account of ‘kathartic intelligence’ must take into account both emotional and cognitive processes.

Katharsis positions emotions as fundamental to spectators’ final state of rec’gniti’n. As intelligent forms of behaviour, emotions “accomplish” the ‘feeling-realisation’ derived from myth’s: “recognition ensuing from the events themselves, where the emotional impact comes from a probable sequence” (Aristotle, 2005: 87). Elizabeth Belfiore (1992: 58) emphasises the “essential connection” between emotions and myth’s as mutually conditioning processes in the evocation of katharsis: their role as parts of the organised plot structure that contributes to its function (the production of pleasure and kathartic clarification from pity and fear). For if tragedy occurred from mere chance or through no recognisable ‘error,’ the pedagogical dimension of katharsis would be undermined. Vickers (1973) reiterates that kathartic re-cognition is contingent on “a
deep arousal of emotion,” while Georg Lukács (1971: 126) echoes the Aristotelian conception of wisdom as a derivative of path’s:

By a strange and melancholy paradox the moment of failure is the moment of value; the comprehending and experiencing of life's refusals is the source from which the fullness of life seems to flow.

Intelligence is conceived of as the practical wisdom (phr’nessis) attained from rec’gnising why events occurred, where rec’gniti’n requires sympathetic deliberation with the tragic performance. Affective intelligence drives Aristotle's conviction for plot coherence, prioritising myth’s above eth’s (character) as "the first principle" and "soul of tragedy," with emotions considered instrumental to the pleasures accompanying audiences’ rec’gniti’n of why the plot’s sequence of events materialised in tragedy. Integral to katharsis, pity and fear are positioned as intelligent responses grounded in belief, which is why Aristotle cautions in the Rhet’ric of the propensity for collective action to mobilise when audiences feel persuaded to act by compelling rationales (ramifications evident in the social impact of successful orators, such as Hitler or those belonging to the Maoist regime). Emotions, accordingly, while susceptible to reason, may conversely impair judgment, prompting Aristotle’s principal concern with emotional pedagogy as an instrumental component of mastering the ‘good life.’

The notion of katharsis emphasises that emotions occupy a significant role not only in self-realisation, but in c’llectively fusing society. The representation of tragedy arouses pity and fear as audiences recognise the hero’s undeserved suffering “and because the suffering is before our eyes” (Aristotle, [1926] 2006: 231). The capacity to image oneself susceptible to the hero’s unfortunate predicament – those “like ourselves” (Aristotle, 2005: 71) - elicits fear as audiences “feel the same as if they themselves were likely to suffer” (Aristotle, [1926] 2006: 229-31).xxvi It is precisely through pitying the hero’s reversal of fortune and fearing for those “like ourselves” that audiences’ rec’gniti’n of their common human vulnerability cultivates “fellow-feeling” with the
broader body politic through the awareness that all are susceptible to the mercy of chance and acting ignorantly in unknown futures.

Experienced at a safe aesthetic distance, tragedy’s representation of universal suffering evokes altruistic feelings of pity for the hero while enabling audiences to ‘safely’ distinguish their reality from the tragic performance. Audiences’ intersubjective process of simultaneously occupying the role of both actor and spectator may facilitate social cohesion. It is precisely the ability of myth’s to integrate subjective and objective experiences in a process that Michael Taussig (1992: 176-8; 1993: 237) refers to as “mimetic vertigo” - the recognition that the object you are representing is also representing you - that allows spectators to simultaneously emotionally engage, while remaining distant from the tragic plot. Moreover, the phenomenon of distancing positions emotions as integral to the capacity for tragic contemplation and, thus, for katharsis to fuse the p’lis community.

As a social phenomenon, tragedy reveals that the hero’s fate has broader repercussions for the body politic. Sympathy enables audiences to ‘take the attitude of the other’ once thought to be foreign to themselves, and in so doing contributes to the cohesion of the public sphere. Pity and fear in this context were not something to be ‘purged,’ but considered virtuous emotions that engender phr`nesis (practical wisdom) through audiences’ recognition of why tragic events unfold. Fear was a poignant reminder of humans’ common social ontology of vulnerability and the unknown consequences of future action, given that it is precisely by fearing for oneself that one is able to sympathise with the plight of another. In this sense, Aristotle made a direct correlation between self-interested fear and altruistic feelings of pity for other members of society. Rather than distinguishing self-interest from pity, the two are seen as inextricably connected to the trans-subjective emotions elicited from Greek tragedy, so enabling playwrights to address social issues with an ethical overtone of the consequences of succumbing to impulsive desires over public responsibilities. The hero’s ‘error of judgment’ and tragic decline affects their family and community, illuminating the relation between praxis (action) and the p’lis (city-state), the public political space
that conditions civic action. By observing tragedy, Aristotle suggested that katharsis enabled spectators to both unconsciously and reflexively habituate virtue, experiencing subjective and civic *eudaimônia* by discerning appropriate means of action. Synonymous with ethical purification, the kathartic evocation of pity and fear signals not the release of pathological emotions, but affectively cultivates *apprî priate* moral sentiments of mutual respect and recognition with the other.

Katharsis denotes that an ethical life requires feeling emotions appropriately rather than seeking their removal. That emotions may impair judgment, appearing incongruous with reason, does not annul the capacity for these intelligent “states of consciousness,” to educate audiences. Corresponding to this Aristotelian view of emotions, katharsis indicates that affective responses to tragic drama require reasoned instruction rather than elimination:

A room that has been cleaned has not been emptied, but brought to its proper order; a body that has been purged is not an empty sack, but one brought to its healthy functioning order, one that absorbs what is nourishing and eliminates what is not (Rorty, 1992: 14).

Contrasting with contemporary therapeutic professionals, who commonly seek to purge ‘negative emotions’ from ‘healthy’ individuals, katharsis required these very emotions to elicit civic well-being. As antidotes to what the Greek’s perceived to be vices of hubris, shamelessness and the competitive ethos endemic to *p’lîs* life, pity and fear were considered essential for cultivating civic *philîa* (kinship) where emotional identification with the tragic hero allowed audiences to *rec’gnîse* their common vulnerability with the broader body politic. Illuminating the interdependence of the actor and the broader social collectivity, Euripides’ tragedy, *Hipp’lytus* (2007: 37), closes with the chorus of Troezen women lamenting: “on all our citizens hath come this universal sorrow, unforeseen.” It is through such collective feelings of pity and fear that traditional ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomies stratifying society may be replaced by an all encompassing ‘we’ - a ‘we’ that fuses the universal human condition in all its vulnerability and diversity (Belfiore, 1992;
Rorty, 1992). This collective ‘we’ has the capacity to traverse genders, ‘races’ and ethnicities usually perceived to be a threat, insignificant or different from one’s own cultural orientation. It is precisely through sympathising with other social beings that audiences may feel pity for the welfare of others and fear their tragic reversals, affectively transcending their limited domestic sphere through feelings of solidarity. In what follows, this Aristotelian emphasis on affective education will be analysed with respect to contemporary notions of emotional intelligence, emphasising the value of a renaissance of katharsis to fields of social inquiry.

**Mythos as a mode of Emotional Intelligence**

The orthodox notion that ‘emotional intelligence’ is intrinsic to well-being reflects an established tradition of Aristotelian virtue ethics. The belief that emotional management maintains ‘health’ has solidified in popular consciousness, emerging as a prevalent theme in academic scholarship, with books such as Daniel Goleman’s *Em’ti’nal Intelligence: Why It Can Matter M’re then IQ* (1995) having a significant impact on academic scholarship. Just as Aristotle demonstrated the utility of appropriate emotional conduct, neurologists reveal the instrumental role that emotions play in survival by highlighting the dangers that patients with damage to their amygdala, the emotional compartment of the brain, encounter as a result of their inability to stimulate fight-flight fear responses (Bechara, 1997; Damasio, 1994, 2003). Unable to elicit fear correctly, patients are frequently shown to act inappropriately or risk mortality. Greek myths are similarly immersed with warnings about the tragic ramifications of disproportionate emotional responses: ranging from the megalomania of Midas, the wrath of Achilles or the fate befalling Icarus as he hubristically disregarded warnings by flying too close to the sun. Emotional intelligence is exemplified in these instances as central to survival and, while excessive emotions experienced at pathological levels may impair judgment, when felt appropriately emotions are considered intrinsic to human survival and well-being.

These insights are indebted to Aristotle’s theory of emotion, which demonstrates that emotions are not only subject to reason but vital for *m´tivating* intelligent thought.
and action. To recognise that emotions are congruous with reason is not to say that kathartic sentiments of pity and fear should dominate all social relations, or that individuals should incessantly seek grief and tragedy in life. Rather, acknowledging the rational configuration of affective experience is to consider emotions intelligible, \textit{moved} by an object, certain circumstance, particular physiological disposition and frame of mind. Conceptualising emotion as a form of consciousness counters the notion that there is thinking free from emotions (Barbalet, 2004a: 7). In so doing, the positive ramifications of what are commonly considered ‘negative emotions’ may be observed. Analogous to the hero’s enhanced reflective state, “accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” presents tragedy as an \textit{opportunity} for contemplation where spectators may emerge transformed through a process of feeling-realisation in which emotion and cognition are considered integrated faculties. To conceptualise emotions as intelligent dispositions illuminates the relevance of katharsis, and its primary component of \textit{eudaimonia} (well-being).

Before indicating the significance of Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm for present research on emotions, it must be noted that the frequent incorporation of ‘emotional intelligence’ in western lexica does not correspond exactly to Aristotle’s view. While Goleman (1995) maintains a similar interest in emotional management, contemporary theories of emotional intelligence have for the most part deviated from Aristotle’s system of virtue ethics. Kristjan Kirstjansson (2007: 86-7) emphasises that whereas Aristotle’s theory of emotion reflected a moral objective concerned with truth and \textit{eudaimonia}, contemporary studies into emotional intelligence have a tendency to focus on psychological states, indicative of the discipline’s subjective orientation towards promoting conflict resolution and methods to maximise personal success. These different disciplinary \textit{telos} reflect broader social developments, from Greek philosophy’s communitarian concern with the ‘good life’ to modern psychology’s emphasis on the individual as the locus of analysis in liberal democracies: “For even though it be the case that the Good is the same for the individual and the state,” Aristotle’s ([1926] 2003: 7) conception of \textit{eudaimonia} emphasised that “the good of the state is manifestly a greater and more perfect good, both to attain and to preserve.” This shift from the Greek’s civic
concentration on *eudaimonia* as the moral endeavour towards ‘being good,’ to modern psychology’s objective of maximising subjective well-being and ‘feeling good,’ is reflected in contemporary research on katharsis, which obscures the term within the domain of psychology. It is suggested that, by excavating the mythic heritage of katharsis, Aristotle’s conception of *myth’s* may be restored as a valuable apparatus engendering contemplative reasoning through emotional processes.

**Classical Conceptions of Myth: From Myth to *Mythos***

Greek tragedy illuminates the primacy of myth in ancient strategies of instruction, operating as a vehicle through which to affectively comprehend the mysteries of human experience and acquire ethical standards of living (Cartledge, 2007; Rorty, 1992). Tragedy’s mythical foundations were considered culturally pertinent components of civic pedagogy - the ancient Greek historian, Thucydides (4-3rd century BCE), referring to theatre as ‘an education for all Hellas’ (1972). Staged by Athenian governments on dates of religious observance, the pedagogical significance of tragedy was conveyed by the ‘theoric fund’: a state welfare system protected by law that enabled underprivileged Greek citizens on the deme-roll to obtain complimentary theatre admissions (Cartledge, 2007: 18). Designed to cultivate civic values through public modes of enactment, tragedy reflected the moral order of Greece: “unwritten and unshakable laws” of the Gods, including taboos concerning incest, violation of oaths, killing kin and exile from the *polis* (Hall, 2007: 95).

For these reasons, *myth’s* could operate as a persuasive apparatus that had the capacity to affect belief. While the propensity for mimetic poetry to nourish the passions encouraged Plato to condemn Homeric myth and Attic tragedy on ethical grounds from his ideal Republic, Aristotle assumed a more affirmative approach towards these aesthetic media indicative of his conceptualisation of emotions as intelligent responses compatible with reason. Emphasising that emotions were both essential to, and potential impediments of, sound judgment, Aristotle recognised that any account of the ‘good life’ must consider mechanisms for emotionally managing the *polis*. Of course, emotions are not entirely
subject to choice rendering emotional management a difficult task to achieve. That emotions reflect values, and values are open to modification, however, was the central tenet governing Aristotle’s thesis that emotions are susceptible to reasoned argumentation. It is in this context of emotional education that Aristotle (2005: 65) perceived the kathartic recognition of myth – “a change from ignorance to knowledge” - as a means to refine emotional judgment and cultivate civic eudaimonia. Conversely, to frame myth as rhetoric amplifies the form’s potential to manipulate belief and propagate ideology, so pointing to paradoxical conceptions of myth: on the one hand, as elusive metaphors operating as symbolic modes of clarification, while conversely regulating emotions in relation to established moral orders and the authoritative voices dictating their significance.

Despite the fact that tragic modes of instruction were inexorably politicised and therefore susceptible to operating as mechanisms of social control, it would be an oversimplification to reduce myth to a rhetorical mode of persuasion. The conflation of myth with ideology points to an important distinction between what will be referred to in this thesis as a social myth and myth: the former encapsulating collective representations that become reified as social facts through shared cultural beliefs, the latter clarifying meaning through elusive symbols on both subjective and collective levels of experience. Given that all myths refer to social phenomena, the term ‘social myth’ appears somewhat superfluous. A distinction must be made, however, between myth as fact and myth as clarification. It is proposed that the Greek word myth (μῦθος), the kathartic element that Aristotle (2005: 53) prioritised as the “first principle” and “soul of tragedy,” from which the English word myth is derived, is more appropriate for the present discussion of katharsis, particularly since the term remains unencumbered by the conventional denigration of myth as a concept synonymous with erroneous belief or fabrication.

Since the nineteenth century it has become orthodox to present myth as a false counterpart to science (Segal, 2004). For the early Greeks, myth referred to a ‘word’ or ‘story’ synonymous with l’g’s – mythologos was a ‘storyteller’ (Graf, 1996: 1-2). Gradually myth came to be recognised as serving a different function to deductive l’g’s based reasoning, yet, employed for distinct purposes, the terms were for the most part
considered compatible. xxix It was Plato’s ideal of ‘pure reason’ that rejected myth’s as fabrication undermining the realm of truth, a view acquiring currency during the sophistic Enlightenment where historians, such as Herodotus (1998: 306) and Thucydides (1972), distinguished the “implausible story” of myth’s from the veracity of history. Yet, as Eric Dodds points out in *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), while identified with the triumph of rationalism, Greek culture did not correspond to modern conceptions of rationality, with the Greeks maintaining what many succeeding generations would consider primitive or irrational modes of thought. Changing social attitudes towards myth’s reveal an important point, to be further elaborated: that the concept of rationality is itself shaped by culture.

Orthodox conceptions of myth’s as a widely believed false narrative may be traced to Plato. Despite influencing subsequent scholarship through the conflation of myth’s with irrationality, modern attitudes must themselves be contextualised within a series of broader social developments. Foremost was the Enlightenment’s elevation of reason over religion and the irrational, in which myth’s and emotions were for the most part considered (Burian, 2007: 206, 208). For this reason, Robert Segal (2004: 13) considers myth’s a “victim” of the process of secularisation, where the shift from studying the soul (psuche) in antiquity to modern scientific analyses of the psyche, subsumed myth’s with religion, so rendered incompatible with modernity’s quest for truth: “a psychology which no longer has anything to do with the soul” (Tylor, 1871: 85). Moreover, with Biblical truths and creationism (as a literal rendition of the Bible) promoting incongruous mythologies to Darwin’s scientific discoveries of natural selection, nineteenth-century theorists have characteristically considered mythical subject matter to rival and, therefore, remain irreconcilable with, scientific logic. By reading the term literally and committing its content to deductive reasoning, myth’s was not only considered a ‘primitive’ counterpart to science, but incompatible with the veracity of rational scientific thought.

In recognising that theories reflect the context in which they are studied, it is apparent that attitudes toward myth’s are themselves encumbered by the method in which they are defined. Considering that there is no established specialism dedicated to myth’s,
theories inescapably convey specific disciplinary concerns and the particular questions asked of them. Appreciating the limitations of perception entails that, while a literal reading is bound to dismiss myth’s as a regressive counterpart to scientific truth, those who consider myth’s an allegory or metaphor may appreciate its symbolic content as an indispensable means to apprehend social life. Epitomising nineteenth-century scientific scholarship, Edward Tylor (1871) and J. G. Frazer’s (1890) subordination of myth’s to logos reflects the Enlightenment rejection of emotions as ‘primitive’ stages of development incongruous with reason, while it became characteristic in the twentieth century to reconcile science and myth’s as serving different functions. This latter view of myth’s as an elementary social phenomenon of enduring relevance in secular life is reflected in the theories of Aristotle ([1926] 2003: 7), Adolf Bastian (1860), Hans Blumberg (1985), Emile Durkheim ([1912] 2001), Mircea Eliade ([1959] 1968; 1963), Carl Jung ([1959] 1968), Joseph Campbell ([1949] 1993) and Stephen Jay Gould ([1999] 2002) all of whom considered evolutionary scientific developments compatible with religion, given that both were oriented towards different concerns. Science was thought to seek precision through deductive logical ‘discoveries’ of the natural world, while myth’s (rationalised around value and belief) communicated matters of morality, opinion and uncertainty.

It is apparent that the broad interdisciplinary scope of myth’s has confounded the term’s meaning and diluted its significance in academic scholarship. Joseph Campbell (1996: n.p.) defines the concept according to four main functions: mystical, cosmological, sociological, and pedagogical. While the sociological function of a social myth purports to verify society’s moral order through the explanatory framework implied in collective representations (Durkheim, [1912] 2001), mystical and cosmological aspects ascribe the significance of myth’s to its metaphorical form, and so are readily subject to interpretation. If myth’s is to remain distinct from a social myth, its symbolic content must remain elusive rejecting explanatory attempts to concretise meaning – for where a social myth supersedes myth’s, mythology transforms into ideology.

The malleable significance of myth’s corresponds to its symbolic form, which as a
metaphorical mode of communication is necessarily subject to interpretation. Symbols, as Ernst Cassirer (1955) points out, are transcendental conditions of the human mind through which the multiplicity of experience can be grasped and communicated. Distinct from the logical strictures of science, myth’s may be more aptly understood as an allegory. Nevertheless, while the Greek term myth’s originally referred to a narrative, the symbolic form of myth’s is not reducible to a story. Moreover, it is erroneous to conflate myth’s with false legends, for while both draw upon a repertoire of renowned tales, the metaphorical mode of myth’s embodies the subject’s reality and, thus, while open to critique, remains irrefutable. Echoing Plato’s ([1930] 2003) distinction between “greater” and “lesser” myth’ i (pl. to myth’s), Northrop Frye (1957) suggests that myth’s operates on two levels: in their “lowest” form representing narratives, while, as “higher” modes of communication, myth’s may be considered a purifying verbal structure. As such there are numerous stories that are not mythical. Synthesised through a series of unrelated episodes, a story is transformed into what Aristotle referred to as myth’s by structuring a selection of episodes into a causal sequence of necessary or pr’ bable events. To achieve poetic unity from tragedy requires the rational configuration of emotions through myth’s to make the performance comprehensible. It was precisely the rational dimension of emotional experience, as exemplified in the construction of the tragic plot (myth’s), for Aristotle (2005: 63-5), that demarcated universal poetic forms from the particularities of history, underpinning the philosopher’s defence of tragedy as an affective means to accomplish katharsis.

Myth’s, as Aristotle described it, referred to a “complex” plot that was rec’ gnisable precisely insofar as tragedy was affectively rationalised around a pr` bable or necessary sequence of events. Asserting that “there should be nothing irrational in the events,” the ‘logic’ underpinning Aristotelian (2005: 81) myth’s deviated from tragedy’s original Dionysian concern with the irrational dimension of social life and meaninglessness of existence. It was Aristotle’s rejection of these Dionysian “truths” for the appearance of Apollonian rationality that prompted Frederic Nietzsche ([1872] 1995) to align tragedy’s “death” with the “poison of Socratic reason.” For, whereas Greek tragedy conventionally made Dionysian frenzy more palatable through incorporating an
Apollonian ‘veil of illusion,’ Nietzsche denounced Aristotle for subordinating ‘the Dionysian’ to the rec’gnisable “form” of “Apollonian beauty”: “beauty,” which according to Aristotle (2005: 55), “consists in magnitude and order.” While Aristotle could be criticised for underplaying the irrational components of myth’s, the P’etic’s emphasis on rationality must itself be contextualised within an objective to defend Homeric myth and Attic tragedy from Plato’s charge of corruption against reason. Beliefs may be erroneous and appear unreasonable, yet, Aristotle’s point is that, as intelligent modes of experience, the emotions responsible for rationalising myth’s are themselves susceptible to discernment through aesthetic education (Fortenbaugh, [1975] 2002: 17). It is this latter emphasis on Apollonian form and moderation over Dionysian chaos and excess that distinguishes Aristotle from Nietzsche, rather than a crude binary of tragedy as either representing emotive or cognitive realms of experience.

The notion of myth’s emphasises that a purely cognitive model of consciousness devoid of emotions is inconceivable. Drawing on Jack Barbalet’s definition of emotions as an “experience of involvement,” katharsis reflects spectators’ “immediate contact with the world the self has through involvement” (2002b: 1). Emotions permeate every aspect of human experience and, while affective processes may be positioned at the locus of civic unrest, “emotions are the glue binding people together” (Turner & Stets, 2005: 1). This notion of affective communion as the foundation of social solidarity is epitomised by Emile Durkheim’s ([1912] 2001) notion of c’llective effervescence. The emotional dimension of myth’s demonstrates the term’s enduring relevance as a mode of affective communication in secular life. In “countering the notion that there is thinking free from emotion,” it appears erroneous to dismiss the affective foundation of myth’s as irrational (Barbalet, 2004a: 251). Whether unreflective or reflective, all emotions, signify “consciousness of the world,” emerging as intelligent responses, despite being irreducible to verifiable criteria. Conceiving of myth’s as subject to affective and cultural variance entails that if social conditions change, mediated by culture, myth’s must evolve with them. For if mythological forms fail to encapsulate emotional experience, they cease to operate as myth’s (Blumberg, 1985; Bottici, 2007). In short, myth’s symbolically communicates value judgments about the world, society and human relations, and, as such,
must be recognised as rationally configured around emotional experience.

The “crisis” of myth’s emerged when the form’s “cultural relevance” was challenged by “the critical advocates of the new rationalism” (Graf, 1996: 4). Distinct from the validity of a philosophical proposition and the strictures of logic, one cannot prove the veracity of myth’s through deductive measures. Rather, myth’s acquires coherence inductively, through a series of relational signifiers that bear cultural relevance in the tradition from which myth’s emerges – temporally and spatially specific to the social context in which myth’s is composed and received. The distinct endeavours of l’g’s and myth’s are articulated by Karl Popper’s theory of falsifiability in which he argues that scientific hypotheses can only be verified if proven or disproven by testable measures. For, as Wittgenstein (1979) reiterates, mythical forms do not attempt to provide a scientific hypothesis about the world and, accordingly, cannot be criticised as being untrue. Contrary to Plato, who assessed all content according to standards of truth, thereby rejecting poetic forms as mere appearances, the ‘logic’ of myth’s corresponds to Aristotle’s theory of emotions which, although grounded in belief, could not be affirmed or denied with certainty. This is not to say that myth’s are false; rather the affective dimension of mythical content reflect values, rendering the rational configuration of myth’s arbitrary and partial to particular embodied and cultural points of view.

Enlightenment principles of rationality challenge the emotional foundation of myth’s. While Plato rejected Homeric myth and tragedy on moral grounds as undermining the ‘good judgment’ of impressionable audiences, the chief modern challenge to myth’s is not ethical but scientific, where myth’s is disputed for irrationally explaining the world (Burian, 2007; Gould, [1999] 2002; Segal, 2004). This latter view of myth’s is evident in modern scholarship purporting progressively to liberate science from irrational, emotive accounts through secularising belief. Observing how the media has become a site of hegemonic struggle in relation to cultural changes occurring in Turkey, Yagcioglu and Cem-Deger (2001) argue that, l’g’s and myth’s have transpired respectively in debates between proponents of modernity and political Islam. Maintaining
a Neoplatonic polarisation between *l’g’s* as reason and *myth’s* as emotion, these authors consider religious *myth’s* to be subordinate to the *l’g’s* of science and secularism:

By prioritising emotions, or *path’s*, as modes of proof, writers construct the discursive space of the *myth’s* code as devoid of argumentation. This absence of the internalisation of rational action orientations together with the tautological character of the definitions create the effect of ‘empty words’ for the autonomous subject of the Republic (2001: 850).

Secularism has evidently flourished in modern, liberal democracies by excluding religious *myth’i* from public life. It would be an oversimplification, however, to situate anticlericalism in a dichotomy that considers *l’gic* and cognition the hallmark of critical judgment, superseding emotive accounts of *myth’s*. Not only does such a view neglect the argumentative ethos inherent to numerous religious traditions (Sen, 2005), crude binary oppositions position the affective foundation of *myth’s* as an irrational “mode of proof” by prioritising cognitive capacities and “eliminating” emotion:

Emotionalisation common sense and rational argument are more or less eliminated…The mythical language relieves the author of the responsibility for his own thinking; it serves as an emotional crutch which one can lean on without exerting one’s effort (Menz, 1989: 237).

This Neoplatonic view is reminiscent of the thesis of Henri and H. A. Frankfort (1946), who considered the emotional dimensions of *myth’s* (what they refer to as “mythopoeic”) impediments to the “critical” faculties and detached objectivity demanded of modern scientific thought. The problem with such accounts is that they maintain a misleading dichotomy between thought and emotion, derived from a limited understanding of rationality, which couples cognition with reason, while prioritising abstract cognitive capacities over concrete emotional orientations. The intelligence of emotional experience will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, yet it will suffice to note that to proclaim that the course of things proceeded from religion to secularism (Joas, 2008), or *myth’s* to
is a “dangerous misconception” given that such propositions erode the emotional dimension of conscious experience and critical thought (Pippin, 1993: 39). This is precisely the view of Karl Popper ([1962] 1974: 127), who suggests that science emerges out of myth’s not by sustaining or rejecting it, but by “critically” assessing it: “My thesis is that what we call ‘science’ is differentiated from the older myths not by being something distinct from a myth, but by being accompanied by a second-order tradition – that of critically discussing the myth.” Even this is too simple a reduction of myth’s for, while myth’s and l’g’s serve different purposes, Popper maintains the popular conception of myth’s as a ‘primitive’ mode of social myth and, as such, erodes the possibility for affective experience to undergo a commitment to evaluation, dialogue, revision and reasoned argumentation.xxxiii

The notion of katharsis emphasises that emotions constitute rational experience. Aristotle (2005: 65) considered tragic contemplation to accomplish anagn’risis (recognition) – “a change from ignorance to knowledge” - in a kathartic process of emotional clarification that produces what has been referred to as the emergence of the critical c’mmunity. Myth’i emerge as ‘critical’ precisely through emotional engagement with tragedy, the cognitive component of kathartic re-c’gniti’n itself signifying an emotional apprehension of the world: “through pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9). The very ability for myth’s to critique a social myth requires emotional capacities to m’tivate and sustain deliberative thought. For while structured around universal themes, myth’s reflects not merely the expression of orthodox beliefs, but the interactive formation of values through dialogical reasoning. Moreover, that katharsis sought to cultivate critical inquiry does not denote that myth’s is an innate progression of a social myth, nor that the affective dimension of myth’s necessarily engenders emancipation from cultural categories of experience. Rather, tragic performances present the critical c’mmunity as an emergent moment within the constant mediation of these forms wherein myth’s is necessarily negotiated through prevailing social myths. Situated in tragedy’s dialectical tradition, myth’s is energised as an emotional incentive for intelligent inquiry that may critique the normative principles informing social myths.
Corresponding to the heterodoxy of social life, *myth’s* reflects the nexus of cultural and emotional orientations. It follows that despite the archetypal structure of Aristotelian tragedy, *myth’s* will be distinctly apprehended through affectively embodied experiences. Given that emotions reflect values, and values are not perennial components of an eternal moral order, the ontological status of *myth’s* cannot achieve definitive truth. Rhetoric and philosophy are arts not sciences; they are concerned with dialogue and probability, the former with *appropriate* moral action as well as practical debate, the latter with philosophical deliberation. As such, it is essential to locate the kathartic affect of tragic drama in its functional capacity, namely to *clarify* emotional capacities for contemplative action, distinct from positivist endeavours to discover certainty by means of objective ‘proof.’ To require *logos* and precision from *myth’s* would be to apply the deterministic laws of logical positivism, conventionally reserved for the ‘natural’ sciences, to the contingency and deliberation which Aristotle himself assigned to rhetorical and philosophical disciplines dealing with social concerns:

The same exactness must not be expected in all departments of philosophy alike, anymore than in all products of the arts and crafts. The subjects studied by political science are Moral Nobility and Justice; but these conceptions involve much difference of opinion and uncertainty, so that they are sometimes believed to be mere conventions and to have no real existence in the nature of things. And a similar uncertainty surrounds the conception of the Good, because it frequently occurs that good things have harmful consequences…We must therefore be content if, in dealing with subjects and starting from premises thus uncertain, we succeed in presenting a broad outline of the truth: when our subjects and our premises are merely generalities, it is enough if we arrive at generally valid conclusions (Aristotle, [1926] 2003: 7-9).

With *myth’s* necessarily informed by emotions, themselves apprehended distinctly in time and space, kathartic recognition corresponds to what Paul Redding (1999) refers to
as a “logic of affect.” As such, the pedagogical ramifications of myth’s reflect a dialectical endeavour: for while the symbolic construction of myth’s cannot be reduced to verifiable criteria, the affective configuration of the tragic plot may be critiqued and revised through public reasoning.

The social significance of tragic drama reflects the capacity for myth’s to explore creative alternatives to emergent civic concerns. Rather than merely reflecting conventional moral codes or advocating rigid solutions to civic problems, the utility of tragedy was manifest in the heterodox perspectives of the audience: “By depicting it [the city] rent and divided against itself, it turns it into a problem” (Vernant, 1992: 36). Contrary to Roland Barthes’ Neomarxist notion of Mythologies ([1957] 2000) as ‘cultural artefacts’ employed by the bourgeoisie to impose their ideologies through naturalising social myths, the mythical dimensions of tragic drama did not merely function to reduce spectators to passive recipients of dogma. Bronislaw Malinowski (1926), Georges Sorel ([1950] 1961) and Barthes have observed that myth’s is susceptible to legitimising social myths by validating the phenomena that they seek to explain: “The myth comes into play when rite, ceremony, or a social or moral rule demands justification” (Malinowski, 1926: 107); a view echoed by Adorno and Horheimer (1997: xiv), who suggest “false clarity” as another name for “myth.” Of course, as will be demonstrated, myth’s is not immune from regurgitating doctrines or comprising uncritical beliefs. Yet, the symbolic dimension of myth’s is not reducible to prescribing ideology or concretising meaning, as is a social myth. Structured around moral dilemmas, that invoked dynamic perspectives and civic dialogue, it was tragedy’s capacity to contemplate orthodox beliefs through myth’s that reflected the social value of the poetic form.

Aristotle’s concern with emotional management should not be confused with indoctrination. In an endeavor to construct ethical citizens, tragedy’s primary component, myth’s, cultivated the affective capacity for alternative modes of thought where critical deliberation was considered the hallmark of thinking. The Greek’s were encouraged to pursue a dialectical approach to tragedy with the amphitheatre establishing a safe aesthetic distance in which audiences could affectively identify with the hero’s unjust predicament
while remaining separate from their tragic misfortune (duBois, 2004; Nussbaum, 1992; Vernant, 1992; Williams, [1983] 1991). The phenomenon of distancing enabled civic conflicts, considered too proximate for ordinary discourse, to be ‘safely’ disseminated in the public domain, as audiences objectively reconciled subjective concerns in a process referred to as “mimetic vertigo” (Taussig, 1992: 176-8; 1993: 237) – a sympathetic procedure of role-play that objectified the hero in a process comparable to what George Herbert Mead (1934) referred to as “taking the attitude of the other.” The kathartic experience of identifying with both subject and object intended to cultivate a critical community from contemplating aesthetic media: ‘critical’ insofar as tragedy presented the opportunity for audiences to collectively interrogate prevailing mythologies (sets of ideas), rather than uncritically accepting social myths at face value. For these reasons, myth’s is considered to be constituent of a kathartic process that had the potential both to collectively fuse the audience in a ritualised environment, or to engender a critical community through which spectators could evaluate pertinent civic issues affecting society.

As a medium facilitating critical inquiry, myth’s assumed a pedagogical function that exceeded indoctrination. Tragic vignettes of human experience served as templates for ethical action relevant to present civic conflicts, simultaneously illuminating citizens’ public responsibility to contribute to polis life by noting the ramifications of individual actions on “the whole city,” “all Greece” (Goldhill, 2007: 58). Constructing moral citizens simultaneous to expressing the voices of the demos (common people), including a public debarred from their ‘democratic’ right to free speech, tragedies democratically expressed themes in a more comprehensive sense of the term: extending the demos beyond the limited sphere of the kratos (state rulers). Recognising the importance of the Greek’s argumentative tradition through deliberative communication in the public sphere, tragedy’s dialogical approach reflects the ethos of democracy. xxxiv It is in this context of democracy as commitment to public reasoning that Amartya Sen (2005) observed the democratic tenets of the Indian argumentative tradition as expressed in the ancient Indian epics: the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The corresponding concern for critical inquiry in Indian epic poetry and Greek tragedy is epitomised by the inclusion of the dialectic in both traditions. Nowhere is the Greek’s dedication to the dialectic more apparent in
tragedy than in the chorus. As critical counterparts to hegemonic voices, the chorus functioned in Athenian drama as a physical and psychic extension of the hero and audience (Hall, 2007). Possessing the capacity to sympathise with alternative characters, each expressing reasonable concerns, the chorus’ ultimate state of emotional clarification conventionally paralleled with the audience’s synthesis of myth’s and subsequent experience of kathartic recognition.

Oscillating between solidarity and contempt for the hero, the chorus reconciled emergent conflicts by mediating alternative points of view. In this sense, the pragmatic foundation of katharsis conveys parallels to Mead's (1934) notion of the ‘I’ and the ‘me,’ Piaget (1962) and D. W. Winnicott’s (1971) model of ‘play,’ as well as Freud's (1920) psychoanalytic model of the ego, in which identity is configured around subjective desires and moral constraints. The experience of “mimetic vertigo” experienced during tragedy exceeds fantasy, signifying the intersubjective formation of consciousness, a process of emotional clarification, where myth’s imbues “reality with personal meaning” (Segal, 2004: 138). Contextualised in this manner, emotions are no longer perceived as impediments to sound judgment or subservient to the Enlightenment dictates of reason. Rather, emotions become integral to ‘illuminating’ intelligent dispositions to act. With myth’s itself considered to be a mode of emotional intelligence, affective capacities are presented as compatible with reason and intrinsic to eudaimonia: human flourishing and civic well-being.

It has been proposed that although myth’s does not conform to fixed principles of deductive reasoning, the construction of the tragic plot ensues from a ‘logic of affect.’ Myth’s, as outlined in the P’etics, describes an intelligent process of reasoned communication designed to evoke spectators’ pity and fear through mimetic representations of action. While tragic rec’gniti’n relies on making rational connections between choice, action and character, the term rational here refers to pr’bable causal chains “arriving at generally valid conclusions,” impervious to the verifiable criterion of log’s (Aristotle, [1986] 2003: 9, 2005). It follows that although not susceptible to falsification, as a mode of emotional consciousness, myth’s is itself inscribed with
cognitive thought. Communicated in symbolic form and emotionally apprehended, the rationale motivating myth’s will differ according to how spectators negotiate social myths with their embodied viewing experiences. Yet, with emotions configured around value judgments derived from belief, myth’s is itself subject to critique and reasoned argumentation. The rational configuration of myth’s, thus, positions katharsis as an intrinsically dialectical experience, where audiences may affectively re-cognition the significance of tragedy through a contemplative process of emotional clarification.

**The Relevance of Katharsis to a Theory of Emotions**

Reviewing academic scholarship on katharsis demonstrates the utility of Aristotle’s pedagogical paradigm to present research in the field of emotions. Disparity about what constitutes katharsis has contributed to the term’s absence in academic scholarship. Disregard has been shown to reflect two distinct convictions: First, that the emotional procedures of ele’s (pity) and ph’b’s (fear) evoked by tragedy are confined to the structural specificities of the ancient Greek polis (city-state); and, second, the nineteenth-century conflation of katharsis and Freudian psychoanalytic techniques that misappropriates the centrality of emotions in the Greek’s pursuit of eudaimonia (civic well-being) with the ‘purgation’ of affective behaviour to achieve psychic well-being. Moreover, the present state of research on katharsis may be contextualised within a series of attitudes towards emotions, namely Platonic and Enlightenment pursuits of ‘pure’ reason that relegate the affective dimension of myth’s to ‘erroneous belief,’ regarded as irreconcilable with the progressive developments of rationality posited by the logical positivist tradition. By rendering the emotional foundation of myth’s incompatible with the ‘rational’ orientation governing scientific modes of thought, nineteenth-century theorists could themselves be considered to be encumbered by culture.

It is apparent that research on katharsis corresponds more generally to theories on emotion. Attitudes towards the role of emotions in moral theories depend on whether affective processes are conceived of as impulses without thought and intention, or as involving some sort of cognitive content (Nussbaum, 2007b). Plato’s condemnation of
Homeric myth and tragedy reflected his belief that emotions comprise a component of the soul that is incompatible with rational thought. Aristotle’s contribution to the field of emotional inquiry was to break from a long tradition that reduced reason to cognition, and emotions with irrationality, by demonstrating that emotions are not only compatible with reason, but that rational deliberation and ethical action require affective processes. The notion of katharsis highlights that, since emotions are derived from belief, the cultivation of sound moral judgment and a virtuous *ethos* (character) necessitated emotional education. It has been emphasised that, while the development from the ancient Greek’s moral endeavour towards collectively ‘being good’ has been supplanted by modern psychology’s orientation towards subjectively ‘feeling good,’ Aristotle’s insights have contributed to an overarching concern with emotional intelligence as essential to well-being.

Given that there is no established theory of katharsis, research on the topic inescapably requires analysing the term according to the specific theoretical orientation in which it is studied. Rather than erode the validity of katharsis and *mythos*, recognising the imposition of purpose and perspective onto the interpretation of the past and appreciating the term’s interdisciplinary scope may sustain the value of katharsis for future research. Religious, ethical, and psycho-medical interpretations each retain value for present research; yet it has been proposed that the sociological foundation of katharsis has been largely overlooked. By situating Aristotle’s *Poetics* in a sociological framework one may recognise not only the psychological, but sociocultural ramifications of katharsis. Conceiving of katharsis as a civic mode of enactment requires counterbalancing conventional psychological interpretations centred on emotional purgation with a comprehensive theory of social ethics.

Contemporary researchers commonly dismiss katharsis as a redundant method, yet an Aristotelian framework highlights that the term is compatible with contemporary theories on emotion. It is too little realised that rationality incorporates affective processes, which may lead to both moderate and excessive outcomes. Aristotle’s ethical system is not about being emotive or unemotional, rather through contemplating tragedy
he emphasised that one may pragmatically clarify their emotions *appropriate* to the “mean relative to us.” Understood in this pedagogical context, pity and fear do not merely refine the intellect, they enable the spectator to recognise themselves in the other through the evocation of trans-subjective emotions. Emotional clarification is achieved metaphorically through rationalising the events constituting *myth’s*. In short, an Aristotelian understanding of katharsis indicates that emotions are not merely energies to be controlled, but intelligent elements of the personality that may render positive social consequences that inform and illuminate, as well as motivate, subsequent courses of thought and action.

While Attic tragedy has been replaced to a large extent by manifestations of ‘the tragic’ in modern media scandals, the mediation of *myth’s* for public consumption in classical and contemporary aesthetic performances corresponds to similar social concerns. In presenting the personal misfortune of one as emblematic of a social tragedy pertaining to many, representations of ‘the tragic’ present the opportunity for audiences to contest the transgression considered to offend the moral sentiments of the social collective, while recognising the interdependent foundation of the body politic in which they reside. In the subsequent chapter, the media’s propensity to mythologise scandals through templates of tragedy will be examined in relation to the case of Zinédine Zidane’s 2006 World Cup headbutt – a tragic vignette that affected the moral order of contemporary France.
The purpose of myths is to interpret existing rites rather than to commemorate past events; they are more an explanation of the present than a history (Durkheim, [1912] 2001).

Chapter 3
Configuring the Body Politic around Social Myths

Tragic Praxis

On the evening of July 9 2006, the world watched as France and Italy competed for football’s most prestigious prize – the World Cup. In what was established to be his final match before retirement, Zinédine Zidane captained the national team in an attempt to repeat France’s 1998 World Cup victory, but it was not to be. At the 110th minute Italy and France stood at one-all, with goals from Italy’s Marco Materazzi and France’s Zinédine Zidane. In an ironic ‘twist of fate,’ an altercation between these two players resulted in Zidane headbutting Materazzi in response to constant physical provocation (Materazzi repeatedly pulling at Zidane’s jersey) and an alleged racial slur. The French captain was consequently penalised with a red card and dismissed during the decisive final minutes of the game in extra time. The game ended with no additional scoring and moved to a penalty ‘shoot-out’ as Italy won 5-3, depriving France of their captain and arguably most valuable player and goal scorer. Despite scoring France’s only goal and being awarded the Golden Ball for the most outstanding player of the tournament by half time, Zidane’s climactic reversal of fortune was encapsulated by the final minutes of the game: the French captain watching from the sidelines in disgrace as Italy secured its victory and, in doing so, sealed the ‘tragic fate’ of France’s iconic hero.

This vignette of Zinédine Zidane being expelled during the 2006 World Cup after reacting against an alleged racial insult represents a contemporary ‘social tragedy’ in the domain of sport. Zidane’s headbutt emerged as an Event ‘writ-large,’ with the capital ‘E’ referring in Aristotelian terms to how the historical episode was interpreted and scripted
as a tragic enactment, typified by a set of background signifiers, established social myths and discourses. Resembling what Dayan and Katz (1992) referred to as a ‘media event,’ the notion of ‘social tragedy’ pertains to a specific genre that may be used to frame historical episodes as affective ‘events’ of public significance. Selected, edited, replayed and amplified in photographs and by means of slow-motion footage, media coverage of social tragedies reflect the agenda of those controlling the means of production, while being governed by their allegiance to state and commercial interests.

Media speculation concerning precisely what provoked the footballer’s action was exacerbated as Zidane (2006a) refused to disclose the specific phrasing of the insult, revealing only in an interview with the French broadcasting network, Canal Plus, that Materazzi had repeated “very hard words,” which he regarded as “very serious things, very personal things,” disclosed shortly after by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA, 2006) to be defamatory, although not of a racist nature. Following Zidane’s disclosure, the press altered their orientation from framing Materazzi’s racist provocation to a sexist slur made towards Zidane’s mother or sister. When it emerged that Zidane’s mother had been hospitalised during the World Cup Final, Materazzi publicly denied insulting his mother:

I didn't say anything to him about racism, religion or politics…I didn't talk about his mother either. I lost my mother when I was 15 and even now I still get emotional talking about her (Materazzi, 2006: n.p.).

Debates concerning the exact wording of the insult ranged from initial assumptions discriminating against Zidane’s Algerian heritage, ironically towards his religious orientation, despite being a self-confessed “non-practicing Muslim” (Hussey, 2004: n.p.), finally to a sexist insult made towards Zidane’s mother or, depending on the veracity of Materazzi’s account, his sister – Materazzi disclosing to Italian magazine, Sorrisi e Canzoni, that in response to repeatedly pulling at Zidane’s jersey, the French captain offered to give it to his Italian opponent after the match in jest, to which Materazzi replied, "I'd prefer your whore of a sister" (using the Italian word ‘puttana,’ meaning
whore or tart) (Owen, 2007: n.p.).

The significance of these discourses is that by accentuating issues of ‘race,’ ethnicity and religion, Zidane’s transgression was framed as an event, scripted as a social tragedy through a set of background signifiers and extant social myths that reified these categories as explanatory concepts, while further implicating already disadvantaged minorities symbolically invested in his-story. Moreover, despite being the alleged source of provocation, women’s voices were for the most part absent from this mediated drama. By disregarding gender, feminist readings were obscured within football’s “theatre of gendered warfare” and the dominant discourses of “chivalric masculinity” (Jiwani, 2008: 11, 14, 25, 28-9). It is apparent that these forms of discrimination are not necessarily demarcated, as sexism may correspond to racial and ethnic prejudice when interpreted within existing structures of power. In this sense, the precise insult made towards Zidane becomes of secondary importance, the event’s tragic construction and mediated visibility illuminating the significance that it held for France’s public imagination and other cultural arenas.

Zidane’s World Cup scandal assumed prominence beyond the domain of sport and triviality usually associated with celebrity misdemeanours. Mediated as a social tragedy, the event reinforces John Thompson’s (2000) observation that scandals provide important insights into the ways in which power is exercised, the transgressions at the heart of personal tragedies publicly contested in the symbolic realm through claims, critiques and counter-critiques. As struggles for “symbolic power,” the importance of social tragedies is their capacity to undermine the protagonist’s reputation and trust - the very resources from which power is derived – and so further affecting those symbolically disempowered by their decline. The construction and ramifications of social tragedy point to the central aim of this chapter: to examine how Zidane’s transgression, which could have been considered a particular historical episode of standard on-field aggression, was transformed into myth’s, rationalised as a necessary or pr’bable sequence of events, a social tragedy, the reification of which reflects the influence of extant social myths and spheres of power.
In forgoing chapters it was observed that from Aristotle onwards there has been a gradual attempt to clarify tragedy, and its connotations with the irrational, through myth’s. As a collective manifestation of myth’s, Zidane’s social tragedy will be interpreted in light of Aristotle's kathartic paradigm with respect to interviews conducted for this thesis and media analysis concerning the scandal. In particular, this chapter will examine how Zidane’s tragedy reflects prevailing social myths specific to France, with myth’s negotiating common frames of reference and background signifiers that resemble in symbolic content and form what Durkheim ([1912] 2001) referred to as the conscience collective. To suggest that myth’s reflects common social myths, which exercise control over the individual, is not to reduce affective experience to a determined structuralist or functionalist response. Rather, the possibility of audiences’ distinct emotional responses to engender a critical community conveys the potential for myth’s to transcend the consensual function of myth as a solidifying source of collective fusion, by energising spectators with the incentive to examine critically the very tenets from which established social myths are derived. Situating katharsis in the mediation of these two outcomes - collective fusion and the critical community - myth’s will be analysed in relation to Zidane’s scandalous transgression, simultaneously raising methodological issues associated with employing Aristotle’s Attic terminology to analyse contemporary social phenomena. Finally, this chapter will substantiate the empirical techniques utilised in this thesis, although these are discussed more thoroughly in the methodological appendix.

The Conceptual Apparatus of Mythos

The significance of Zidane’s scandal for the present study of katharsis, demarcating it from comparative episodes occurring in the domain of sport, was the way in which the footballer’s personal ‘error’ was recognised through myth’s as a social tragedy. Aristotle (2005: 63-5) defined myth’s as a synthesised plot, in which action is unified around a necessary or probable sequence of events that is rational insofar as it coheres to an underlying principle of cause and effect. In establishing the rational dimension of emotions, as cognitive judgments grounded in belief, Aristotle replaced the irrational
(meaning superstitious) aspects of myth with the coherent form of myth’s. Indeed, it is the ‘necessary’ sequence of events employed to script Zidane’s transgression as a social tragedy that is of most interest to the present discussion, as French media relentlessly sought a rationale to explain why the iconic footballer reacted in such a violent manner - even employing professional lip-readers and linguists to verify the precise phrasing of Materazzi’s provocation.

Myth’s employed by the media to script Zidane’s transgression as a social tragedy may be situated within conventional theories of formal and procedural rationality. In making social tragedy rec’gnisable “through accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9), myth’s assumes a broad conception of rationality, encompassing affective dimensions of experience that extend beyond Cartesian orientations towards cognitive thought. Outlining the cultural and pragmatic requirements for a ‘social performance,’ Jeffrey Alexander (2006) attests to the necessity of scripting events to communicate meaning, while Robert Entman (2003) has noted that, to endorse particular interpretations of media events, meaning must be interpolated through scripts. On a technical level, Jean-François Diana (2000) has retained Charles Tesson’s (1986) observation that slow-motion footage orders time hierarchically and ideologically, inviting the mediation of particular narratives. It was through adopting such narrative frameworks that public condemnation towards Zidane’s scandalous transgression transformed the villain into a victim, with media framing the footballer’s misdemeanour as a social tragedy that was rationalised accordingly by numerous audiences.

It would, of course, be an oversimplification to suggest that media coverage of the event was limited to a single script. Reflecting the cultural mosaic of contemporary France, public opinion was more adequately positioned as ‘publics’ opinions,’ as Zidane’s single mode of enactment disseminated myth’s into its plural form - myth’s. As appropriated modes of meaning, myth’s negotiate extant social myths and emergent emotional experiences through metaphorical constructions that allow individuals to comprehend the social world to which they belong. Offending the moral sentiments of France’s social collectivity, spectators, political authorities and social commentators
mediated the scandal in relation to their vested interests and the nation’s *c’nsience c’llective*. It is in this sense that Zidane’s World Cup scandal reveals sport’s ability to dramatise the nexus between politics and culture, with Zinédine Zidane playing on a social arena transcending the domain of sport. A French born child of Algerian immigrants, Zidane is positioned as the product of intersecting histories and the hero of contradictory *myth’i*, coherently rationalised according to spectators’ varying sentiments and cultural orientations. Ultimately, the veracity of the scandal was not the substantial issue; of primary importance was the way in which Zidane’s misdemeanour was rationalised in relation to social myths, collective representations themselves reflecting France’s moral order and those with the authority to mediate the footballer’s personal transgression as a social tragedy:

To be talked about is to be part of a story, and to be part of a story is to be at the mercy of storytellers – the media and their audience. The famous person is thus not so much a person as a story about a person (Braudy, 1997: 592).

When mediated on an international arena, the implications of symbolically communicating events through *myth’s* are significant. For when these mimetic modes of enactment achieve verisimilitude - the appearance of reality - audiences are *c’llectively fused* around social myths. Framed within a set of ‘natural’ assumptions concerning how the footballer’s ‘race,’ ethnicity, religion, gender and class accounted for his transgression, the representation of Zidane’s scandal as a social tragedy legitimised the validity of prevailing social myths. As such, *myth’s* may be seen both to perpetuate extant collective representations inscribed in social myths, while energising spectators with the incentive to probe and challenge the very assumptions on which established beliefs rest – what was referred to in Chapter 2 as the *critical c’mmunity*. While proponents of Durkheim’s legacy, referred to as ‘ritual theorists on emotions’ (Turner & Stets, 2005), have addressed the tendency for communities ritualistically to solidify around affective bonds, few studies have considered the capacity for emotions to *energise* critical inquiry, or demarcate the individual from the heterogeneity of the group.
Consequently, it is these two outcomes that this chapter endeavours to examine within the context of sport: namely, the opportunity for myth’s as an affective mode of rationality to evoke katharsis from tragic performances through intermittently fusing the social collective, while critically probing civic life.

**Collective Fusion**

Sport provides an arena in which to examine the construction, performance and demise of collective identities. Played at both a local and national level, through club and international tournaments respectively, football emerges as a microcosm of civic identification. Historically, the sporting arena has operated as a social stage on which national and local identities constructed around gender, class, religion and politics were forged and maintained (Maguire et al., 2002; Shilling, 2008). Spectators and players construct ‘in-groups’ solidified around shared symbols and values, identities commonly resting on distinction from ‘outsiders’ (Anderson, [1983] 2006; Arrowsmith, 2004; Bairner & Shirlow, 2000; Denham & Desormeaux, 2008; Dunning, 1999; Elias & Dunning, 1986; Foer, 2004; Free, 2005; Hassan, 2002; Percy & Taylor, 1997).

Since the eighteenth century sporting codes have increasingly functioned as national metaphors that legitimise colonial enterprises through classification systems of social inequality (Dunning & Sheard, 1979; Goodger & Goodger, 1989; Mangan, 1992; Mills & Dimeo, 2003; Shilling, 2008). The tendency for sporting ‘membership’ to reflect prevailing social asymmetry correspond to ancient Greek and Roman civilisations’ classification of the sacred and profane, where identity was symbolically manufactured on an ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy: the Hellenistic, male citizen considered diametrically opposed to the barbarian, female ‘other’ (Cartledge, 1993). Distinct from their ancient counterparts, whose Empires were largely constructed around inclusive and exclusive cultural binary oppositions, ‘the Nation,’ according to Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006), emerges in the eighteenth-century with the rise of modernity as an ‘imagined community,’ consciously manufactured around a more dynamic constellation of political ideologies. Promoting public commitment towards pluralism, the emergence of the
nation arguably signifies a shift towards unified political ideals and values rather than exclusive ways of defining nationhood around ‘race,’ ethnicity, religion or gender.

Understood in this tradition of heterodoxy, Anderson’s ([1983] 2006: 19) study suggests that the rise of nationalism reflects a dynamic system of cultural signification. Increasingly, as will be elucidated, conventional sporting identities are segregated in complex societies by diverse and contradictory sub-groups in what Durkheim ([1893] 1984) referred to as the shift from ‘mechanical’ to ‘organic’ forms of solidarity and what Maffesoli (1996) terms ‘neotribalism.’ Emotional solidarity in these contexts is considered to be inherited and acquired: inherited by birth, tradition, residence, lineage and symbols relating to religion, ‘race,’ ethnicity, class. Acquired connotations are further derived from notions of what constitutes being, for example, French or Parisian, and conversely, what these presuppositions contest, including the symbols and ideologies with which spectators consciously choose to avoid association. What applies to individuals also applies to nations, where a shared sense of history and biography shapes the group’s emotional identification towards celebrated players and team ethos. Solidarity in these communities is often reinvented, rather than reflecting a ‘natural’ social order, with club sentiments manifesting in totemic flags, scarves, jerseys, emblems, learnt behaviour, chanting and national anthems sung before international sporting events: “binding believers or fans in their appreciation of their God or side, and against whatever assails them” (Light & Kinnaird, 2002; Percy, 1996: 60; Percy & Taylor, 1997; Shilling, 2008). No longer confined to the temporal and spatial boundaries of belonging to a common locale, in such ‘imagined communities’:

Love of a real place, the soccer stadium, is also linked to the construction of and loyalty to an imagined place, namely the nation as understood by the fans involved (Bairner & Shirlow, 2000: 23 [emphasis added]).

In the context of football in France, the intersection of real and imagined communities is exemplified by the rivalry that French broadcasting network, Canal Plus, constructed in the late twentieth century between local clubs Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and
l'Olympique de Marseille (OM). Realising the potential commercial rewards of endorsing their pay TV channel through the corresponding public support acquired from a local football team, Canal Plus pursued a strategy of what Raymond Kuhn (1994: 203) describes as “vertical integration”: where through ownership of PSG and pay TV broadcasting rights, control was centralised over various parts of the production process to regulate public consumption, while accommodating the largest viewing audience possible. Purchasing PSG in 1991, Canal Plus endeavoured to establish a domestic team capable of challenging the dominant Marseille side through encouraging a rivalry based on existing spatial and cultural conflicts between the respective Northern and Southern French cities: Paris and Marseille.

Historically, local ‘neotribal’ identities have been further segregated by internal conflicts as exemplified by the highly organised, reflexive performances of the competing ‘ultra’ groups (football fanatics) constituting PSG’s supporter base: the B’ul’ gne B’ys and the Tigris Mystic. The symbolic contestation between these ‘ultra’ groups, as well as the antagonism demarcating PSG’s right wing political orientation from their mostly Arab-immigrant counterparts based in the southern port city of Marseille, reflects anxiety over national identity (Shilling, 2008: 150). Indicative of what John Williams (2008) refers to as a “siege mentality” and Manuel Castells (1997) has termed a “resistance identity,” actors marginalised by dominant power structures are inclined to collectively fuse around feelings of insecurity and persecution from their perceived common enemies.¹

The Latin word ‘ultra’ means ‘beyond’ and, despite symbolically demarcating themselves beyond the average supporter in their occupation of certain parts of the stadium and passionate enthusiasm for their respective teams, the various ‘ultra’ groups and hooligan fanatics comprising football spectatorship in France appear highly manufactured. Composed essentially as a city of immigrants, the majority of Paris’ inhabitants, as Patrick Mignon (1998: 83) highlights, have retained identification with their country of origin. In France, as elsewhere across the globe, football has cultivated solidarity between individuals who have no common identity other than belonging to a
mutual urban space. Within dense immigrant populations, celebrated players and teams emerge as symbols of contestation in which spectators represent their struggle for rights and recognition. Whether real or imagined, as the “cultural artefacts” denoted by Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* ([1983] 2006), these “nets of kinship” provide platforms through which to examine how civic and ethnic conceptions of the nation intrinsic to *c`llective fusi`n* are ritualistically constructed, maintained and eroded in relation to existing social myths.\textsuperscript{ii}

Sporting identities necessarily involve a boundary between those imagined to belong to the sacred clan of the social collectivity and ‘others’ excluded from membership to whom the ‘deep horizontal comradeship’ does not extend. As will be demonstrated, this classification system of the sacred and profane applied to the construction of Zidane’s on-field transgression as a social tragedy, where for the footballer to be represented as a victim in light of his indiscretion required his Italian opponent to be cast as evil and coded within background signifiers of profane, colonialist contamination. The symbolic logic required to sustain Zidane’s tragic script was not merely configured around ‘natural’ orientations pertaining to the social collective, but strategically manufactured by those with the power to control the means of production and to mediate social myths of racial injustice in the public sphere.

Resembling what Aristotle referred to as *mimesis praxe’s* (the representation of action), the notion of *myth’s* reveals how mediated representations of the footballer’s transgression were symbolically communicated and affectively rationalised through a repertoire of social myths that exercised control over audiences. Encapsulating Durkheim’s ([1893] 1984: 13) concept of the *c`nscience c`llective*, the collective representations informing these social myths encompass “the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average citizens of the same society.” Far from being reserved to antiquity or limited in scope to a repertoire of classical Greek fables, social myths continue to fuse the *c`nscience c`llective* around common symbols and ideologies.

Durkheim’s investigation into *The Elementary F`rms `f Religi`us Life* ([1912]
(2001) provides a useful analysis of the ways in which social myths solidify society’s moral order. The term ‘moral’ here refers not to the physical or metaphysical realm, but to the common cultural, economic and psychological principles connecting the emotional foundation of social life (Barbalet, 2007b: 85). In emphasising the religious dimension of secular society, Durkheim’s analysis of “the elementary forms of religious life” reveals the prevailing relevance of myth and ritualised performances. As “a repository of allegorical instruction, to shape the individual to his group,” Durkheim’s ([1912] 2001: 102) definition of myth assumes an explanatory function where its *purp’se* “is to interpret existing social rites rather than to commemorate past events” and, as such, “are more an explanation of the present than a history.” It is this explanatory function of myth which, according to Durkheim ([1912] 2001: 71), is “one of the essential elements of religious life,” with social myths describing the sacred activities that rituals presuppose, so positioning rituals as active expressions of mythic content: “the rite is often nothing but the myth enacted.” Generally referred to in the social sciences as ‘structural’ or ‘ritual theorising’ on emotions (Turner & Stets, 2005), Durkheim’s ([1912] 2001: 72) understanding of myth is significant to the present discussion of *myth’s* in demonstrating the relationship between social convictions and civic practices, as well as the extent to which communities embodying social myths ritualistically solidify around shared systems of belief.iii ‘Ritual-like’ performances, to refer to Jeffrey Alexander’s (2004a) term, were shown to play an integral role in the formation and maintenance of local communities in the domain of contemporary sport, both as a celebration of culture and affective facilitator of social solidarity.iv As one respondent explained:

Did you notice that we come together just to watch the show on the TV?  
Because when you are alone and you watch it on TV you can’t express yourself. It sounds silly to express yourself like that, but it’s, it’s ah you have emotions and you want to put it out (Xavier, 2008).

While a Durkheimian perspective illuminates the extent to which religious dimensions of culture, such as social myths, *c’lectively fuse* secular societies, without recognising the temporal and spatial aspect of *myth’s*, a-historical analyses may lead to circular
arguments or structuralist and functionalist reductionism (Graf, 1996). Furthermore, in reducing the creative capacity of myth’s to collective representations, a reductive Durkheimian analysis is susceptible to what Margaret Archer (1995) refers to as “downwards conflationism”: the diminution of agency as an epiphenomenon of social structure. To circumvent these concerns, twenty in-depth interviews were conducted for this thesis to capture French spectators’ responses to Zidane’s transgression on a more subjective level. These will be contextualised and analysed in relation to mediated social myths particular to France to provide a contemporary portrait of how civic beliefs and practices are upheld, negotiated and revised through myth’s. Finally, in examining the social myths employed to rationalise Zidane’s scandal, the implications of these common frames of reference as affectively fusing the conscience collective will be explored. It is proposed that, while Durkheim’s theory demonstrates the solidifying effect of social myths (both as common referents and ideological frameworks), as symbolic modes of communication, myth’s are not reducible to the collective representations from which they emerge.

The paradigm of a social myth and myth’s employed here to examine the phenomenon of social tragedy corresponds to theories of social performance where meaning is culturally and pragmatically attributed to actions by audiences against the background of extant collective representations (Alexander, Giesen & Mast, 2006). In so doing, this thesis endeavours to integrate structuralist theories that prioritise socialised modes of conduct and pragmatic methods that treat meaning as emergent contingencies creatively modified through action. The legacy of social myths indicates that past values remain present, while the appropriation and demise of these common frames of reference illuminate the extent to which relatively complex moral orders have been redefined. It is precisely the distinct emotions evoked from the symbolic content of myth’s that energise the critical community with the capacity to emerge, negotiate and modify ritualised modes of meaning.
Framing the ‘Social Tragedy of Zizou’ around Social Myths

In the aftermath of Zidane’s contentious headbutt, the BBC posted a blog on their website asking readers: “How will Zidane be remembered? How should Zidane be remembered?” (Myrie, 2006). Emerging two days subsequent to the 2006 World Cup scandal, the post invited a spectrum of international voices to be expressed as mythi, with the morally charged ‘should’ in the BBC’s question facilitating a multitude of polemical responses from their global audience. What was pertinent about the BBC’s inquiry, and the debate cultivated from it, was how Zidane was framed as “a Muslim of Algerian parentage, heralded in France as a beacon of multiculturalism,” probing whether, as a ‘race ambassador’ and ‘role model in France,’ the footballer’s transgression ‘should’ be considered excusable. In short, the offended moral sentiments from which Zidane’s scandalous transgression were judged explicitly reified ‘race’ as an explanatory factor contributing to the footballer’s violent gesture.

Clive Myrie’s article for the BBC: ‘An enduring Hero to French Immigrants’ (2006), similarly contextualised Zidane’s violent headbutt within the footballer’s ethnic heritage and working-class origins. Driving from Paris to the Gennevilliers, an archetypal banlieue (a French working class suburb typically comprised of immigrants), Myrie draws parallels between the reported disadvantaged neighbourhood and “the kind of environment that produced” Zinédine Zidane:

This is the kind of environment that produced one of the world's best-ever footballers: Zinédine Zidane, who grew up on a poor council estate in Marseille. For the son of Algerian immigrants, his ticket out of poverty was a prodigious footballing talent. Even though he swapped the banlieue for a comfortable life of riches, he's never forgotten his roots… (Myrie, 2006 [emphasis added]).

Commonly rationalised within the footballer’s working-class origins, the Irish Times suggested that the headbutt “illuminated the harsher facts of the tough upbringing in the
La Castellane that has become such a celebrated part of the Zidane legacy”:

Zidane knew well the lights of the universe were shining on him, and yet something in him, some combination of loyalty, street honour and competitive meanness, made him say to hell with it. His instinct told him an insult from the gutter, the kind he never let anyone get away with, should supersede the biggest show in the world. You can lambaste him for being wrong but you cannot deny it took daring…Maybe he did not realise such a visually shocking attack would cause horror among the perfumed beau monde in the stands. Either way, that headbutt, in front of the aristocracy of world football, illuminated the harsher facts of the tough upbringing in the La Castellane that has become such a celebrated part of the Zidane legacy (Duggan, 2006: 10 [emphasis added]).

Zidane’s ethnic and working class origins, thus, emerged as dominant social myths used to comprehend what appeared for most to be an irrational act of violence, which:

Reestablished the continuity of his life that started on the streets of the suburbs of Marseilles…expressing his solidarity with all those street football players among whom he once was, before he became the myth (Kaelin, 2007: 126-7).

Or, as said by another:

Despite all his education, Zidane is still a boy from the banlieues, that’s why the banlieues identify with him. For him, life is a struggle, and there are times when you lose your fuse (Button, 2006: n.p.).

And another:

Zidane, raised in the harsh Marseille suburb of La Castellane, told the
world what he thought of happy endings (Cohen, 2006: 1).

Zidane may have never forgotten his roots but media coverage of the scandal reveals that neither did journalists. While Zidane recognises his heritage: “I am first of all from La Castellane and Marseille” and growing up in a “difficult area,” vi the problem with situating his transgression within social myths pertaining to an inherent working-class ethos is that a ‘logical’ connection is made between ‘environment’ and character, where Zidane’s headbutt is considered emblematic of the broader inhabitants of the banlieues: “The logic…that you might get a man out of the ghetto, but not the ghetto out of the man” (Kaelin, 2007: 130). Moreover, these social myths position the violent ‘instincts’ of the generation of young immigrants growing up in the banlieues as a ‘unanimous’ threat to France’s Republican ethos: “To reawaken in him those old demons of a kid from the streets of Marseilles, the very demons that soccer’s code of honour, its ethic, its aesthetic, are made to quell” (Lévy, 2006: n.p.).

The social myths that dominated media coverage of the scandal reflect present day fears in postcolonial France generated from the rapid influx of immigration in the aftermath of the Algerian War (remembered by many to be responsible for the collapse of the French Fourth Republic), as well as the social consequences of these historical and spatial conjunctions (Silverstein, 2000: 3). Necessarily temporal, including France’s living memory of the Algerian War, emotions appeared instrumental in shaping public appraisals of the scandal. For insofar as scandalous transgressions offend the moral sentiments of the social collective, emotions render preceding events poignant, understandable and memorable. Mediated re-presentations of this historical episode from ‘real time’ in ‘frozen moments’ exacerbated public speculation and a spectrum of myth i, as the footballer’s transgression was affectively rationalised by audiences into a coherent event. In what follows, the social myths commonly employed to script Zidane’s misdemeanour as a ‘social tragedy’ will be contextualised in France’s postcolonial landscape to interrogate the implications of these frames of reference on the nation’s c’ nsence c’ llective.
Muslim Fanaticism

Zidane’s transgression was commonly framed within Samuel Huntington’s thesis of *The Clash of Civilisations* (1996), where it was forecast that cultural and religious differences would emerge as the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War era. Gross and Livingston (2002) have shown that, in the context of America’s ‘war on terror,’ racial profiling continues to exaggerate ideological associations between terrorism and those of Middle Eastern origin. Yasmin Jiwani’s (2008) study of media coverage of Zidane’s scandal maintains that the footballer’s Algerian heritage and Muslim faith emerged as obvious background signifiers for terrorism and violent warfare in emotional climate post 9-11. With fears of Islamic fundamentalism permeating ‘Western’ imaginations, Zidane’s headbutt was symbolically classified in relation to a myriad of sensationalist discourses concerning America’s ‘war on terror.’ As one journalist for the *Glasgow Herald* observed:

> At the heart of the Zidane story is the pressing theme of our troubled world: racism and religious tension post-9/11. As the first generation descendant of Algerian immigrants to France, Zidane is a walking, talking symbol of successful integration: the Muslim who achieved greatness in a non-Muslim world; the man who, in his dress, his marriage and his career, has accepted western values while retaining his cultural identity. He represents hope in dark days (Reid, 2006).

Thus, even in defending Zidane, media coverage framing the scandal in the context of 9-11 exacerbated evocative connotations of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.

Denham & Desormeaux’s (2008) comparative study of 102 UK press reports covering the scandal revealed that exposure of the ‘media event’ characteristically reflected countries’ sociopolitical allegiances and specific cultural norms. They observed that English journalists tended to sensationalise Zidane’s Islamic heritage as a monolithic threat to France’s secular Republic and, while these reports could be seen to reflect the sensationalist style of tabloid journalism in England, Denham and Desormeaux (2008:
387) argue that English criticism of the French footballer emerged as a metaphor for anti-French sentiment more generally in post-war England.

Media conglomerates even enlisted the expertise of professional lip readers, with The Times hiring Jessica Rees to determine the precise nature of the dialogue that caused Zidane to react in such a manner. After an exhaustive study of the match video, and with the help of an Italian translator, Rees claimed that Materazzi called Zidane “the son of a terrorist whore” before adding “so just f*** off,” supporting the ‘natural assumption’ that the Frenchman must have been insulted by defamatory remarks made about his Islamic heritage (Hughes, 2006: n.p.). J. Tilak Ratnanather highlights the problem with attempting to decipher Materazzi’s provocation verbatim: the professional lip reader provided a phonetic interpretation, before translating their reading into Italian. In only providing approximate interpretations, lip reading Materazzi’s remark exacerbates uncertainty since the Italian word for terrorist (terrorista) appears synonymous with the word ‘sister,’ encouraging speculation ranging from Materazzi rendering Zidane “the son of a terrorist whore,” to a defamatory remark against his sister (Sachs, 2006: n.p.).

Media speculation was indicative of broader attempts to communicate the event through a series of social myths that reflected ‘western’ emotional climates and fears of Islam in particular. In an article headlined: “Shortcuts: Why Iran Loves Zidane,” The Guardian’s, Hossein Derakhshah, reified the footballer’s headbutt as emblematic of Islamic ‘logic,’ which he considered to be synonymous with Muslim fanaticism:

Outspoken presidents and oil are not the only things Iran and Latin America have in common. There’s also football. Which is why the head of the external relations committee of the Iranian parliament, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, has sent a letter to Zinédine Zidane, congratulating him on his ‘logical reaction’ and ‘timely’ defence against the insult to his ‘humane and Islamic’ identity. This, in case you missed it, refers to the exchange in the World Cup Final last Sunday between the French national team’s
captain, and Marco Materazzi, which saw the Italian defender mutter something and Zidane react with his head (2006: 2 [emphasis added]).

Framed within ‘Western’ fears of Iran and the Middle East in general, Zidane’s headbutt was viewed as a linear extension of Muslim fanaticism: fundamental religious devotees mediated in popular consciousness as malevolent terrorists, whose unanimous “logical reaction” and “timely defence” of “Islamic identity” includes violently killing innocent civilians. The irony of these ‘natural assumptions,’ which associate Zidane with Islamic fundamentalism, is that the French-born footballer is a self-confessed ‘non-practising’ Muslim, a French citizen, in a conventional Western marriage and occupation, whose four children all have Western names. In reporting Zidane’s transgression to be symbolic of Islam more generally, media coverage was exemplified in these circumstances to be far from neutral. The concern is that by drawing on social myths to reify the scandal, the media not only reflect but shape public attitudes (Jiwani, 2008; Silverstein, 2000). One obvious implication of associating Zidane’s violent gesture with Islamic fundamentalism is that it perpetuates the ideological social myth that, as potential terrorists, these ‘homogeneous Oriental others’ pose a monolithic threat to France’s national security, consequently, requiring ‘civilising’ from state authorities and assimilation through social policy.

The Civilising Process: Taming the ‘Oriental Other’

Orientalist imagery and discourse were commonly employed to rationalise Zidane’s World Cup c’up de tête. Edward Said defines Orientalism (1979: 2) as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’.” Reflecting the tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history, the orthodox polarisation of ‘the Orient’ and ‘Occident,’ ‘East’ and the ‘West,’ primarily relies upon four dogmas regarding the Orient: namely, that the West is ‘rationally’ more humane and superior to the irrational East, that the Orient represents a ‘primitive’ or ‘classical’ stage of development, and finally that the uniform, eternal character of the Orient renders it a monolithic entity to be feared and controlled (Said,
In crudely juxtaposing ‘the Orient’ with ‘the Occident,’ these discourses typically position Zidane’s headbutt as a primitive “instinct…from the gutter,” indicative of his association with the irrational, Oriental ‘other’ in comparison to his rational, Western audience: “the aristocracy of world football” (Duggan, 2006: 10).

Subsequent to the publication of Said’s *Orientalism* (1979), Western perceptions of ‘the Orient,’ including demeaning tendencies to categorise Muslims as ‘primitive’ counterparts to the West, have been increasingly challenged in academic spheres (Manji, 2003: 20). Indeed, Said (1979: xvii) suggested that neither the term ‘Orient’ nor the concept of the ‘West’ possess any ontological permanence. Orientalist discourses and colonialis image are, nevertheless, persistently employed to describe athletes of colour (Douglas, 2002, Hardin et al. 2004; Jiwani, 2008; Lule, 1995; Spencer, 2004). Yasmin Jiwani’s (2008: 19) thematic reading of 367 French and English reports covering Zidane’s scandal revealed that the footballer’s “fall from grace” was mediated through Orientalist frames that reproduced connotations with animalism, irrationality and violence. Bestial adjectives were employed by a plethora of international journalists to compare Zidane’s headbutt to that of a “rabid rhino” (Doyle, 2006), “like a beaten dog” (Kaelin, 2007), reminiscent of a “bull when he sees red” (Cass, 2006), butting him “savagely…like a bull” (Lichfield, 2006), “like a bull in a bullfight… [he] rammed his head” (Kaelin, 2007: 124), “like an angry goat” (Ralston, 2006), with Zidane’s Italian provocateur, Marco Materazzi (2006), perpetuating these primitive similes by suggesting that “Zidane” assumed the characteristics of France’s national emblem when he “acted like a coq.”

While player violence is controlled by game regulations it appears that the indiscretions of white athletes are not condemned by the media to the same extent as athletes of colour (Rowe, 1997). Television coverage of the 2006 FIFA World Cup, in which Zidane’s transgression occurred, was the most extensive to date, with 376 channels broadcasting the event, attracting a cumulative television audience of 26.29 billion. Evidently, with France and Italy’s Grand Final acquiring the largest global audience of 715.1 million viewers (FIFA, 2007), the scandal undeniably carried greater significance
than violent misconduct occurring during more routine football matches. What was significant, however, were the ways in which Zidane’s transgression was framed as an event in relation to a series of background signifiers and extant social myths, perpetuated by fears of the ‘Oriental other,’ rather than viewing the footballer’s on-field antics as indicative of standard aggressive behaviour between players in the sporting arena.

By framing Zidane’s headbutt within the context of Islamic fundamentalism, the scandal exacerbated social myths concerning the need to civilise ‘Oriental Muslims.’ Perceived as undermining France’s moral order, Islam is characteristically mediated as a monolithic threat, through imagery of ecstatic crowds engaged in spiritual intoxication, group prayers and public riots, rather than interrogating its internal diversity (Silverstein, 2000: 4). Reminiscent of ancient Greek metaphors symbolically discriminating against the Dionysian, barbarian ‘other’ – perceived to be an irrational primitive ensemble – stereotyped constructions are readily projected onto the large immigrant Muslim body in France, depicting proponents of Islam as an unruly, homogeneous mass, diametrically opposed to the more rational, ‘cultured’ French, Apollonian male. The mediation of such evocative symbolic imagery exacerbates alarmist reactions characteristic of Gustave Le Bon’s study of *The Crowd* ([1895] 2002), by cultivating in the *c’nsence c’llective* the possibility for uniform religious movements to erupt in a mass uprising of civil violence and to usurp France’s extant moral order.

Contemporary episodes of rioting and civic unrest in France highlight that these fears are not entirely manufactured. Instead, sensationalised representations amplify extant political conflicts and public sentiments. The concern, therefore, emerges not as fabrication but rather through the media’s propensity to mythologise the Muslim religion as a monolithic threat to public order in a manner reflecting Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ thesis. The problem with referring to a ‘clash of civilisations’ is that the term ‘clash’ presupposes an essential incompatibility between ‘Islam’ and ‘the West,’ estranging Muslims as violent counterparts to the democratic principles underlying liberal pluralism. Perceived to be unanimously unassimilable to French secular principles, these social myths eradicate agency from Islamic faith by maintaining popular conceptions of
Muslims as an undifferentiated crowd of religious devotees.

This homogeneous reading of religiosity is a concern that Irshad Manji expresses in her text *The Trouble with Islam* (2003), namely, the propensity to polarise adherents of Islam, and likewise those perceived to rest outside the Islamic community, as a monolithic mass, when her biography as an educated, lesbian “Muslim refusenik” reveals that these religious communities are anything but uniform. Martha Nussbaum (2007a) highlights that by focusing on cases of religious fundamentalism, political authorities shield their ideologies from scrutiny by conveniently erecting “Islam” as an “evil” adversary through which to foster national unity around civic fears, instead of critically examining tensions emanating from within the nation. She argues that beneath the ideological social myths propagating a ‘clash’ between ‘Islamic’ and ‘Western’ civilisations is a more pertinent “clash within” nations between those who choose to respect diversity and those who seek homogeneity through the domination of a unified religious or ethnic tradition. This Gandhian claim implies that all individuals are capable of respect and aggression and, accordingly, the real conflict for democracy resides in the universal human tension between a desire to dominate the ‘other’ or sympathise with difference rather than a “clash” or religious cultures.

The media plays a critical role in maintaining the tradition of heterodoxy inherent to democracy. The deliberative format of tragic drama positions media scandals as opportune occasions in which to publicly disseminate the opinions of silenced minorities: with “silence,” as Amartya Sen (2005: 39) points out, “a powerful enemy of social justice.” Excavating the voices obscured by social myths calls for a more critical understanding of nations’ emotional climates, one which acknowledges that *collective effervescence* may be stratified by distinct feelings and appraisals: “It’s a sought of ah…collective joy, it’s difficult…ah [laughs] to explain. It’s a collective joy, which you feel individually”, as Xavier (2008) explained. Media commentary documenting Zidane’s scandal, nevertheless, indicate that the fears of orthodox crowd theorists remains in full force in ‘Western’ imaginaries, with Muslim worshippers reduced to a monolithic crowd to be managed and civilised by the state.
In the context of civility, sport emerges as one of the most successful ways of ‘taming’ the Oriental ‘other.’ Indicative of increasingly refined sensibilities characterising modern social life, Norbert Elias’ ([1969] 1983) thesis of the ‘civilising process’ is reflected in sport’s symbolic representation of non-violent competition (Elias & Dunning, 1986: 23). Alvin Gouldner (1981) maintains that violence is not eliminated as a result of the ‘civilising process,’ rather it undergoes historical and cultural transformations in modernity from explicit cruelty to “passionless, impersonal callousness,” with Mary Douglas (1966) emphasising that all societies celebrate their ‘primitive instincts,’ no matter how ‘civilised’ they become. Elias and Dunning (1986: 151) employ the term ‘sportisation’ to convey the extent to which escalating sporting regulations correspond to state attempts to ‘civilise’ society by managing public violence. These policies of ‘ritualised rivalry’ are heightened by globalising processes, in which expanding ‘chains of interdependence’ are mediated on sport’s international social arena. Sport emerges in ‘civilised’ societies as one of the rare spaces in which the enactment of violence is deemed acceptable, presenting the contest as a legitimate site where aggression may be displayed and policed:

Pleasurable excitement can be shown with the approval of one’s fellows and of one’s own conscience as long as it does not overstep certain limits. One can experience hatred and the desire to kill, defeating opponents and humiliating enemies…In short, one can tolerate, up to a point, the arousal of strong feelings of a great variety of types in societies which otherwise impose on people a life of relatively even and unemotional routines and which require a high degree and great constancy of emotional controls in all human relationships (Elias & Dunning, 1986: 125).

Historically, notions of civility have revealed a direct impact on ‘race’ relations by enabling those in positions of authority to impose civilising mechanisms on the body of immigrants and ‘outsiders’ perceived to be racially inferior:
The fact that one is an established group, with superior power resources, and the other is an outsider group, greatly inferior in terms of its power ratio, against which the established group can close ranks. What one calls ‘race relations’, in other words, are simply established-outsider relations of a particular type (Elias & Scotson, 1965: 30).

Indeed, media coverage of Zidane’s scandal was emblematic of the ways in which power is exercised in France’s public domain. As a result of rapid immigration in France during the late twentieth-century in the aftermath of the Algerian War, the French state has actively institutionalised cultural hegemony over the large immigrant body by attempting to ‘civilise’ perceived ‘outsiders’ through sport.

The absorption of the ‘civilising process’ in sport has specific resonance for the context of football in postcolonial France. Paul Silverstein’s (2000) study of the historical relations between Islam and the French state reveals that civic authorities have progressively relied on sport as a means to civilise and integrate the Muslim population. This is particularly the case in France’s working class suburbs, the banlieues, where football has been deliberately employed by state officials to assimilate its inhabitants: mainly disenfranchised youths and Muslim immigrants, and currently facing a 40 per cent unemployment rate and lack of social services (Dauncey & Hare, 2000). Although French law prohibits the census from recording ethnic background or religion, it is estimated that as much as 20-30 per cent of France’s present demographic below the age of twenty-five are Muslim (Lichfield, 2004). In light of these intensifying spatial and cultural conjunctions, successive French governments of the Fifth Republic have targeted ‘sensitive’ urban areas through sport, with the Ministry of Urbanisation investing 40 million francs in September 1992 in a ‘youth and sports’ program designed to integrate Muslim youths into France’s cultural milieu. These measures, as Silverstein (2000: 5-6) notes, responded to the ‘perceived need’ to re-establish French nationalist ideologies by corporeally redefining the immigrant body through sport as an antidote designed to civilise and assimilate ‘outsiders’ into France’s ‘secular’ fraternity:
This “modern” Islam would remain unthreatening, as it would be based in an organic solidarity of its adherents, on their interactions as fully participating citizens in public French life. Such an Islam would constrain itself to the private sphere and thus belong to the non-political category of individual belief and not communitarian identity…Practitioners of such an Islam would play soccer by day, pray to Allah at night, and vote in municipal elections every two years. Unlike in the communitarian version, their religious beliefs would centre on life in France, not on a primordial, essential identity localisable elsewhere (Silverstein, 2000: 5).

Social myths promoting the perceived need to ‘civilise’ these ‘Oriental others’ may be contextualised within a series of historical developments particular to France’s Fifth Republic. In 1905, consistent with France’s Revolutionary Republican ideology of ‘liberty, equality and fraternity,’ the nation’s secular reform was legally established in laïcité: a concept stipulating the absence of religious associations in government affairs. Endorsing the separation of political and religious ideologies, French authorities argued that anticlericalism (the absence of a state religion, and the subsequent separation of the state and Church) was integral to the Republic’s autonomy; a position supported by the institutional reforms of Interior Minister, Charles Pasqua, who sought to unify France’s Muslim community along secular lines:

Recognising that laïcité implies the religious neutrality of the State, French Muslims, loyal to the most authentic Muslim tradition, disassociate themselves from all extremists and witness their achievements to the State which, in accordance with the law, assures the freedom of belief, guarantees the freedom of religion, and treats all religions as equals (Silverstein, 2000: 29).

Emotional bonds fusing secular football audiences resemble traditional, religious rituals. Corresponding to declining shared religious beliefs and the democratisation of the modern western world, Magdalinski and Chandler (2002: 1) observe that “sport
arenas function as substitute places of worship, as ‘cathedrals.’” **ix** Desmond Morris (1981) maintains the “religious” phenomenology of football supporters in their devotion to teams, with Michael Novak (1967) describing football as a type of “humanist sacrament” and Percy and Taylor (1997: 37) depicting football as a “metaphor for religion” to its “devotees.” That the religious dimensions football produce unity, however, does not override sport’s propensity to exclude those perceived to be ‘outsiders.’ The Latin term *religi*’ denotes ‘to link,’ and football literally and symbolically links members of society by facilitating sympathy and solidarity with ‘insiders’ while establishing boundaries with ‘outsiders’ - those to whom the “deep, horizontal comradeship” of fraternity does not extend.

Within France’s neoreligious community there appears a stark contrast between the Republic’s ideal of universal brotherhood, encapsulated by the revolutionary motto – *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity), and the lived reality of local, alienated communities existing in France. French secular universalism and Republican notion’s of ‘absolute citizenship’ generate a particular attitude towards the ‘Islamic other.’ Considered to pose a real and symbolic threat to national identity, Islam is perceived as a phenomenon to be controlled, as exemplified by the state’s initiative to ban headscarves at French public schools and the public’s reluctance to admit Turkey to EU membership. On this subject, *The Times* reported that public opinion polls in France convey an average 70-80 per cent rejection rate (Browne, 2005), revealing that for many French citizens Turkey’s ‘Oriental’ religious and cultural differences are considered incompatible with their Western EU counterparts.

Within this context of nationhood, the competitive ethos of football lends itself to ideological battles over cultural values (Bourdieu, 1980). While hegemonic attempts to control Islam are not isolated to France, the French Republic’s particular segregation of religion and politics, coupled with the rapid influx of North African Muslim immigrants during the aftermath of the Algerian War, poses a perceived threat to France’s secular ethos. Political metaphors of social integration have significantly shaped the dissemination and growth of the French football league. For when establishing itself in
France during the 1990s, football became ideologically associated with the country’s emergence as a secular nation, in which the struggle between Church and state was institutionalised as one of its fundamental characteristics (Mignon, 1998: 85). Christian Bromberger (1995) has employed the term ‘footballisation’ to describe this process where, consequent to the pressures of globalisation, football emerges as a metaphor for the meritocratic principles underlying democracy that value the collective endeavour of teamwork. Exploring the cultural history of *Football in France* (2003), Geoff Hare maintains the metaphor of football as a microcosm of society. Algerian immigrants, for example, relied on football as a mode of social integration, advancement and resistance in France. With Algerian players, such as Rachid Mekloufi, deserting France’s national team for their Algerian counterparts in 1957 as part of the resistance movement that developed into the Algerian War of Independence, football in France unequivocally reflected tumultuous Franco-Algerian relations, staging it as an arena for the “battleground in the war for independence” (Dine, 2002: 499). Consequently, while increasingly globalised by its mediation in international spheres, national divergences persist in sport, and it is in this context that Zidane’s transgression is considered to bear particular relevance to the emotional climate and moral sentiments characterising France’s political landscape.

**The ‘Race Ambassador’**

Within this context of assimilation, athletes are commonly deployed by state authorities as ambassadors of successful racial immigration. Leading the French team into a surprising 3-0 victory over Brazil in the 1998 World Cup: “an event [Zidane describes as being] of great importance to everyone,” it was Zizou’s decisive two goals in this final match that solidified *Les Bleus* triumph and his stature as a revered emblem in France. Carrington (1998: 280) has referred to this tendency to reify racial characteristics with on-field success as the “racial signification of sport,” where teams and athletes are routinely employed as signifiers of broader racial issues. As France continues to ‘combat’ immigration in the aftermath of the Algerian War, Zidane's ‘double-hyphenated’ allegiance to Kabyle, Algerian and French narratives attracts his image to political
spheres as a metaphor for racial harmony and social integration (Bromberger, 1995; Dauncey & Hare, 2000; Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; Glover & McCracken, 2007; Hare, 2003; Jiwani, 2008; Marks, 1999; Mignon, 1998; Silverstein, 2000). Situated in a country divided religiously, ethnically and economically, Zidane’s emblem intersects with extant social myths particular to the emotional climate of France: namely temporal and historical concerns oriented towards past fears, present conflicts and future hopes.

Despite receiving criticism from France’s extremist right-wing Fr’nt Nati’nal Party, whose leader Jean-Marie Le Pen declared France’s multietnic team ‘artificial,’ the former President’s (Jacques Chirac’s) allegiance to Zidane demonstrates that the footballer’s absorption into France’s social arena transcends the domain of sport. Aware that football has ingrained itself in popular consciousness as the new ‘opiate of the masses’ (Herman & Chomsky, 2002), political figures strategically associate the profile of their city with the success of local football clubs as a mechanism to transfer civic euphoria for teams and players into political support – the ecstatic experience of interconnectedness evoked through sport (Turner & Rojek, 2001). For while facilitating ‘neotribal’ identities based on exclusion from the ‘other,’ sport may also transcend symbolic differences by engendering unification through the common objective of winning or shared admiration for teams and players, as was the case with the multiplicity of significatory associations attributed to Zidane (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; McPhail, 1991; Sherif, 1966; Sherif & Harvey, 1952; Sugden, 2006).

Communicated through evocative symbols, the social mythologies fusing sporting communities are intensified by what has been referred to as the ‘sport-media-globalisation nexus’: a process wherein the mediated visibility of athletes on social arenas makes sport increasingly subject to international scrutiny and global demands (Rowe & Stevenson, 2006). These globalising pressures are reflected in the new football culture in France, where club management, state authorities and multinational corporations merge in the pursuit of public support (Mignon, 1998), and commercial incentives with corporate sponsorship, television rights and international audiences rendering football a lucrative business (Tomlinson, 1994). Culminating in a global audience of 40 billion
spectators over 64 matches, the French government subsidised hosting the 1998 World Cup at a cost of 525 million pounds (Dauncey & Morrey, 2000; Hopquin, 1998). Pierre Bourdieu (1999) noted that the economic and political attitudes of French sporting bodies characteristically have a monopoly over athletes and clubs, preserving France’s tradition of centralism and intervention in public life. Miege (1993: 68) maintains this position, observing that sport is considered a public service in France, rather than a matter of private sponsorship and individual initiatives as is characteristic of other countries. From a sociological point of view, sport’s ‘globalising nexus’ reveals that investment in international events, such as the World Cup, transcend financial expenditure by emerging as opportunities to perform and debate “the state of a nation” (Rowe & Stevenson, 2006: 198).

With the attraction of coordinating international sporting events contingent on media exposure, international sporting events provide opportunities for nations to project manufactured images of themselves to local and global audiences, obtaining recognition and pride if successful in their social performance (Rowe, 1997: 206-8; Rowe & Stevenson, 2006: 198). An important element of France’s 1998 World Cup spectacle was the conviction that the country had transcended its former colonialist turmoil with the victorious multicultural football team symbolising French racial integration. “Caught in the French psychodrama about multiculturalism” (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008: 304), Zidane’s outstanding contribution to the nation’s 1998 victory elevated his celebrated emblem (to refer to Durkheim’s terminology) as a ‘race ambassador’ particular to France’s emotional climate as both a tangible expression and opportunity to transform extant fears and civic conflict into feelings of solidarity and hope.

Within the context of rapid immigration in postcolonial France, Zidane himself, and the ethnically diverse national team, were heralded as literal and symbolic representations of France’s Republic: “the symbol of the new multiethnic society” (Hare, 2003: 134). Euphoric celebrations of the footballer’s performance as integral to Les Bleus’ 1998 victory energised Zidane as the national emblem of this newly discovered civic glory, through which the fractured country could reinterpret itself as united and
triumphant. Reflecting political endeavours to reconcile historical, racial tensions through sport, following France’s 1998 victory, President Chirac voiced the slogan: “Football Team equals Nation,” drawing explicit parallels between the multiethnic national team and the ‘new France pluriel.’ France’s Minister of Youth and Sports, Marie-George Buffet, echoed these sentiments, describing the 1998 victory as a “fraternal coming together,” making explicit connections to principles underlying France’s Republican ethos: Liberté, égalité, fraternité.

Historically, sport has operated as an important source of stability during times of economic hardship, political conflict and cultural change through its capacity to evoke sentiments that fuse elements of society (Shilling, 2008: 47). Performed before a global audience, France’s national success emerged as a metaphor for modernisation and confidence, after a extended period of ‘depression’ consequent to the decolonisation of Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s, and a subsequent loss of global dominance and cultural hegemony following the international ascendancy of the English language (Dauncey & Hare, 2000). Fostering feelings of belonging and self worth, France’s surprise victory became all the more affective as a result of being achieved and collectively commemorated on home soil.

Gathering on the Champs-Elysées and surrounding the Arc de Triomphe, the nation’s public expressions of elation drew comparisons with France’s liberation in the aftermath of the Second World War (Rapin, 1998). Symbolically representing the country as a ‘rainbow nation,’ football fans replaced France’s tricoloured flag with the colours black, blanc and beur (a colloquial French term for arabe used to refer to the ethnic minorities from the maghreb region), prompting the popular belief that “the footballers have succeeded where the politicians had failed” (Reid, 1998: n.p.). France’s Prime Minister, Jospin (1998: n.p.), reiterated the multiracial composition of the team: “What better example of our unity and diversity than this magnificent team?” Infused with civic pride and joy, as a model of Franco-Algerian harmony more specifically, Zidane’s symbolic stature presented the opportunity for the nation to replace extant social myths, which had previously suggested that ethnic diversity required assimilation or exclusion,
with the possibility for a multicultural conception of national ‘unity,’ solidified around a plurality of cultural constellations.

Presented as a successful model of French immigration, Zidane’s iconic stature carried temporal significance, positioning Zizou as a vessel of hope for the numerous racial minorities living off welfare as a result of rising unemployment in France. Nurtured by the local French clubs Cannes and Bordeaux, politicians emphasised that an immigrant Kabyle from La Castellane, whose working-class father retained Algerian nationality, achieved social integration and national stature by ‘playing’ within the rules of France’s moral order. Resembling the theoretical contributions of George Herbert Mead (1934), to be elucidated in Chapter 5, Albert Camus reaffirmed metaphors of football as a microcosm of society, reflecting that he owed all he knew about morality and duty to sport. These tropes portray game regulations as well as the virtues associated with football, such as courage and fair-play, as functions comparative to the laws governing society, which regulate conduct according to the moral order of the social collectivity. To bear affective resonance with France’s conscience collective, this social myth required a symbol, and in Zidane France possessed a tangible emblem of national unity, encapsulating Durkheim’s conception of myth as “an explanation of the present [rather] than history” ([1912] 2001: 102). By rationalising Zidane’s transgression according to prevailing convictions and values, the social myths elevating the footballer’s revered emblem operated as social facts.

While assuming a fundamental position as the captain of the French National Team, it was Zinédine’s ‘rise from nothing’ that the media and state authorities characteristically promoted as a social myth. As an example of meritocratic achievement, social myths modelled the footballer’s celebrity as a template for future generations of working class and ethnic immigrants residing in France:

'Rise from nothing' his background and his success have made him a hero to France's immigrant poor and that's why we visited Gennevilliers…This was an area that saw some rioting at the end of last year…He [Zidane]
rose up from nothing and he conquered the world (Myrie, 2006: n.p.).

Zidane actively propagates tropes projecting him as a symbol of the self-made man confirming, not only that “an immigrant must work twice as hard as anybody else” and that “he must never give up” but, moreover, that as the son of a warehouseman, hard work and discipline were the foundation of his success. When asked about his sons’ potential football careers, Zidane reiterated this work ethic:

They are all good footballers. I would be happy for them to go into the game. But they must work hard first. That is what I have learnt (Hussey, 2004: n.p. [emphasis added]).

Aligned with democratic principles that reveal through celebrated members of the dem’s (common people) the belief that ‘anybody can become somebody,’ sport positions itself among the aspirations of a generation of youths seeking social escalation from their working class origins (Ehrenberg, 2008). Spectators’ affective projection onto sporting heroes has facilitated what has been referred to as the ‘Zidane effect’ (Reid, 1998), where successful members of minority groups escape discrimination by emerging as ideal types: “if they all could be like him” (Silverstein, 2000: 34). Despite numerous studies questioning the meritocratic tenets of sport (Jiwani, 2008; Messner, 1990; Stempel, 2006), the heroic celebration of athletes tend to rely on the meritocratic principle that success is not confirmed by birth, but acquired during a lifetime (Bromberger, 1995; 2002) – what Chris Rojek (2001: 17-18) refers to as a shift from ‘ascribed’ to ‘achieved’ celebrity characteristic of the egalitarian principles underlying modern, liberal democracies. Contextualised in this manner, Zidane’s persona is celebrated as a metaphor for basic democratic principles: acquiring success and recognition within a team of equals through discipline, cooperation and abiding by the rules of the game.

In addition to presenting the opportunity for social advancement among the working-class, the Fédération Française de Football’s (FFF) move to professionalism during the 1950s is considered to correspond to the rapid influx of immigration from their
former colonies. While Le Pen criticised the FFF for ‘baptising’ players from former French colonies as national heroes, particularly when he accused most of mouthing words ‘incongruous’ with the *Marseillaise* (France’s national anthem), football was so weakly rooted in France that it required an infusion of talent from abroad (Hare, 2003). By 1940, twenty-five players of foreign origin had represented the nation with Polish, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and African players mirroring successive waves of immigration in France. The country’s reliance on foreign players shaped the perception of football as a metaphor for racial integration in France rather than merely a means of social advancement from one’s working class origins, as has typically been the case in the UK. Michèle Tribalat, a demographer specialising in immigration, observed that the diverse ethnic composition of the French national team compared to their European counterparts, such as Germany, indicates that France supports universalism, while in other countries immigrants remain outsiders (Rapin, 1998). The heroes dominating French football’s *c’ntsience c’ntective* became, as Patrick Mignon (1998: 87) points out, not only “proof” of Republican universalism, but national heroes precisely by enabling France to excel in the international arena. Zidane is situated within these national discourses as the personification of France’s racially integrated Republic and the country’s Republican motto - *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, fraternity) more generally:

They need him, No. They need him not like a footballer, they need him like a…like I told you, like an icon because they…*they have t’ cut the example ‘f a guy with n’ thing wh’ did it s’ well and ah…so they have to protect him and even if there is…of course, not that he beats his wife but, of course, he did it with other girls they…they cannot say this [sic] because…I’ve never understood. People cannot understand. It’s about the same protection like a president used to have (Étienne, 2008).

Of course, one must interpret such accounts circumspectly with respondents liable to exaggerating the off-field antics of celebrities. Yet, the code of silence preserved by local media and state authorities during the aftermath of Zidane’s scandal is a testament to the footballer’s sacred stature in France. For Zidane was a counter-argument to the popular
conflation of immigrants, unemployment, violence and welfare dependency. As such, he provided the public with an alternative narrative to established social asymmetry segregating France, and immigrant football fans with a positive image that they, too, could contribute to the success and ethos of the Republic.

Zidane’s symbolic stature as an emblem of harmonious ‘race’ relations in football and postcolonial France explains why FIFA and French political figures respectively maintained support for the footballer despite his c’up de tête – responsible for helping Italy “get-a-head,” as one blog recalled (Pearson, 2006). David Beckham was vilified by English fans, receiving death threats, including the hanging of an effigy outside a London pub, after a similar incident in which England were eliminated by Argentina from the 1998 World Cup Final in a penalty shootout consequent to Beckham being dismissed with a red card for kicking Argentina’s Diego Simeone. One might have expected Zidane to have received comparable public condemnation succeeding his World Cup dismissal, and yet the French captain maintained his national popularity in spite of his transgression with a poll published in Le Parisien newspaper two days subsequent to the Event revealing that 61 per cent of the 802 people questioned instantly forgave Zidane (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008). Not only did the nation forgive the French captain, within two months of his misdemeanour that reduced the team to a 10-man squad and, arguably, lost Les Bleus the World Cup, the footballer’s iconic grip over the c’nscentre c’llective was expressed in a survey for Le J’urnal du Dimanche in which Zidane was voted the country’s most popular personality for 48 per cent of the surveyed population.

Support for Zidane infiltrated political spheres where, upon receiving the French national team at the Palais de l’Elysée, President, Jacques Chirac publicly expressed his adoration of the sporting icon in spite of his transgression:

Dear Zinédine, What I want to say to you at this most difficult moment of your career is that the wh’le nati’n has admirati’n and affecti’n f’r y’u, and respects you. You are a virtuoso, a genius of world football, and you are also a man of heart, of commitment, of conviction. That is why France
admires and l’ves y’u…a man wh’ pr’ves that France is str’ng when it
is united in all its diversity (Lichfield, 2006: 4).

Notwithstanding Zidane’s sacred grip over the c’nscience c’llective, it was apparent that state authorities had vested interests in protecting the country’s emblem from national and international scrutiny. Heralded as a ‘race ambassador’ in a nation segregated by racial riots and ethnic discord, it was paramount that those with political power prevent the footballer from becoming yet another victim of racial discrimination in post-war France. With temporal and spatial background representations of France’s recent colonialist history threatening to undermine the moral existence of Chirac’s body politic – “united in all its diversity” - it became vital for the President to modify the footballer’s on-field transgression from an act of violence to a pitiable symbolic representation of resistance against dehumanisation: casting Zidane as what Aristotle (2005: 71) described as “the undeserving victim of adversity.” While Chirac had the social power to control the means of production, for this interpretation of Zidane’s headbutt as a compelling tragic performance to achieve verisimilitude, the footballer’s action required a script, itself supported by a set of social myths operating within the political logic of the sacred and profane that could legitimately restore his public image. In short, for Zidane to be cast as the tragic victim of Chirac’s morality play, his ‘error of judgment’ would have to be situated within the tragic genre, perceived more specifically as an ‘honourable’ defence of racial pride – “of heart, of commitment, of conviction” - against his polluted colonialist aggressor.

Contextualised in this manner, Chirac’s public sanctioning of Zidane reflects the President’s deliberate attempt to fuse the moral collectivity of the nation through the social performance of football. While the cultural pluralism and ideological diversity characterising complex societies commonly prevent social performances from fusing in “authentic” ways (Alexander, 2004b: 92), the particular political climate segregating postcolonial France emphasised the perceived ‘need’ for Chirac to stage manage the performance. Given that the interpretive capacity of the critical c’mmunity has the effect of separating dramatic intention from its reception, and alienating actors from the
audience, it was paramount for Chirac to censor media scrutiny of the scandalous footballer for France’s moral order to remain integrated. ‘Re-fusion’ became all the more important with respect to Zidane’s tragic performance insofar as the footballer’s personal transgression symbolically reflected broader civic injustice: the personal tragedy of racial disadvantage characterising his-story emblematic of the social tragedy pertaining to many.

In addition to Zidane’s celebrity status and strategic representation as a ‘race ambassador’ accounting for his sustained public support, it was the footballer’s sacred stature, through which he was revered as a national icon after his decisive role in France’s 1998 World Cup victory, that preserved the nation’s ‘love’ for him. The French President’s and, apparently, “the whole nation’s [sustained] admiration and affection” for their national icon, may be contextualised within Benedict Anderson’s notion of *Imagined Communities* ([1983] 2006). Anderson’s concept of the nation as limited and sovereign refers to “an imagined political community,” in view of the fact that the majority of the nation’s inhabitants do not know each other or attempt to communicate: “yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion.” “Imagined” here implies the exaggerated creation of civic bonds, rather than mere fabrication, with imagination crucial in the emergence and preservation of social solidarity: “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, [1983] 2006: 6-7). The French editorial, *Liberation*, encapsulated the common sentiment permeating the country post-2006: “For over a month, France dreamt with Zidane. This morning she will wake up with Chirac” (Lichfield, 2006: n.p.). Communicated through evocative symbols, Zidane’s sacred emblem as a ‘race ambassador’ - “who proves that France is strong when it is united in all its diversity” – was crucial in fusing France’s fraternity and in sustaining his revered status.

Interviews conducted for this thesis revealed that immigrants residing in France expressed more loyalty towards the national team and ethnic players than to their local counterparts (Élodie, 2008; Étienne, 2008; Serge, 2008; Xavier, 2008). These results appear counter-intuitive as one would expect immigrants to identify with the ‘siege
mentality’ and ‘resistance identity’ previously observed as characterising marginalised local clubs, such as l’Olympique de Marseille. The reason for immigrants’ patriotic sentiments appeared to stem from two paradoxical sources: first, a desire as ‘outsiders’ to assimilate with French society, and second, their identification with the numerous Arab and African players, from ex-colonial countries, composing the French national team, revealing that the ethnically diverse composition of Les Bleus may serve not merely as a metaphor, but as a lived reality of hope and integration for the large immigrant body residing in France. Corresponding to Jeffrey Alexander’s (2004a: 531) model of ‘social performance,’ respondents indicated that their fusion with elements of the football performance were themselves contingent on psychological identification, symbolically connecting spectators and actors in a process of “mimetic vertigo.” Élodie, a French immigrant of Turkish descent, elucidates:

…I like him [Zidane] and ah…I like the French team. But it’s not because I like very much France, and so on. I live here, but I like what the French team signifies.

Interviewer: Which is what?

Which is all the 10 or 11 who are migrant children, and who are coming from popular regions and so on so…that’s, that’s the France [sic]. And all the French people supporting them and putting their hopes on the migrant children, that’s ah, that touched me a lot. So, I’m absolutely for Zidane (Élodie, 2008).

The significance of this statement is twofold: first, it reveals that the depiction of ethnic minorities and coloured athletes as ‘race ambassadors’ are not merely manufactured by commercial and state authorities, but actively energised by spectators’ emotional identification with players. Moreover, Élodie indicates the political significance of multicultural athletes in sport as representations of society ‘writ-large.’ It is precisely because of “what the French team signifies,” which encouraged her, as an immigrant,
sympathetically to relate to these athletes and teams, putting her “hopes” and values on France’s “migrant children” as embodiments of broader cultural experiences and collective aspirations.

Conversely, the racial and ethnic diversity of the French national team hindered some local spectators from identifying with the team. For example, Emmanuel (2008), professional footballer for French local club Paris Saint-Germain, stated that:

…For me, the perfect things would be white players with black and Arab. But, there is like for 11 players, there are 8 black, 2 Arab and 1 white, so we couldn’t say it’s a mix. It’s a mix between black and Arab, just black um…but me, I don’t care. If we win it’s better because football, it’s about quality [sic]. It’s very difficult because I’m sure, like me, when I see [the] French team I d’ n’t think it’s the French team. The National Team, it’s a team, yeah, an African team if you want, but when you speak about the French team n’b’dy rec’gnises themselves in France. If they win, yes, of course, they say, “Yeah, we’re happy”, but in fact they’re not really happy to see this.

Emmanuel’s failure to rec’gnise himself in the French team reveals a discrepancy between the state’s projection of racial minorities as national ambassadors and the public attitudes that these figures intend to affect. The extent to which the national universalism underpinning this imagined c’mmunity is able to surpass the temporary feelings of c’llective effervescence generated by match success, consequently, remains questioned by many:

The crowds on the Champs Elysées or those who watched the scenes on television, in their heter’geneity, were no different from the crowds in the stadium on Saturday: within them coexisted different understandings of what France means…The celebrations of 12 July were indeed symbols for
a call for unity, precisely because that unity is far from real (Mignon, 1998: 95-6 [emphasis added]).

Sporting icons of racial disadvantage may be viewed within these political spheres as political pawns whereby, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner, 1964: 169). In these contexts, the status of the ‘race ambassador’ is not applied to all athletes of colour. Rather, the term is restricted to athletes perceived to personify the vested interests of those for whom it is employed. Consistent with the social myth of “black dominance in sport” (Hoberman, 1997), discourses propagated by the French state and multinational sporting corporations position successful athletes of non-white heritage, such as Zidane, as personifications of civic harmony in a deliberate attempt to affect public sentiments.

Commercial corporations and the French state’s propagation of these personalities encapsulate the extent to which sport “manufactures” individuals and groups in an attempt to legitimise established social myths (Elias & Dunning, 1986: 23). National support for the French team in this context can be read as implying a conscious classification of what it means to be French. Comparable to the competing ‘ultra’ groups and hooligans comprising spectatorship in the national league, the state’s deliberate attempt to define the ethos of the national team against the background of previously existing collective representations, is heightened by fragile notions of nationhood, as well as being cultivated from fears of dereliction and social decline arising from the increasing immigrant body in France (Mignon, 1998: 94). Zidane’s narrative is intrinsic to France’s cultural identity: a “good Muslim” with Algerian heritage assimilated into the autonomous ethos of France’s secular Republic (Mamdani, 2004). In transforming successful players from marginalised ‘outsiders’ into sacred icons, the state’s symbolic construction of multicultural athletes is comparable to Attic bards’ mythic narration of their national heroes. Xavier, a Turkish immigrant residing in Paris for the past decade, reflected on the fickle deployment of ‘race ambassadors’ in France:
[Coughs] To tell you frankly, in the French society it is a little bit different than the other European societies. Meaning if you are successful in France you are accepted as French right away. No matter what origin you are from. [pause] But if you are not successful, you are never accepted. Right? (Xavier, 2008).

History gives credence to this view, revealing that state authorities tend only to draw upon coloured athletes as icons when these personalities serve political and commercial interests. Reminiscent of the Canadian media’s reference to the Canadian national, Ben Johnson, as “Jamaican-born” following his disqualification for steroid abuse at the 1998 Seoul Olympics, Léon highlights France’s strategic adoption of Zidane as a ‘race ambassador’ by comparing the footballer to Jo-Wilfred Tsonga - the contemporary French tennis player with Congolese heritage, who expressed concern that when victorious he was heralded as a national icon in France, only to be “cast out” as a black foreigner when he lost:

Well, in fact, racism is everywhere [quiet laugh and pause]... when the team wins we are all united and when the team loses we all divide. You know? Like Jo-Wilfred Tsonga was saying, as a tennis player also: “when I win I’m a French guy, when I lose I’m a black guy”, which is terrible, which is the truth because you hear people say:

“F*** that black guy!”

“I thought he was a French player?”

“Yeah, he is a French player, but still…”

So um...the victory makes everyone agree, but the defeat makes everyone disagree so...mmm, definitely racism and nationalism is yeah, is part of
the game too. As long as it’s balanced it’s ok, [but] when it’s not it goes, it goes, it goes wrong ([sic] Léon, 2008).

Étienne, a French football fan of African descent, further criticised the state’s inconsistent deployment of racial minorities such as Zidane. Comparing incongruous media coverage of Zidane’s World Cup scandal to former French players vilified after similar incidents of misconduct, Étienne expressed disdain towards France’s strategic propagation of Zidane as a national icon:

When it’s Zidane doing it it’s the team [team’s fault], it’s the team, it’s the team and when it’s this guy, David Ginola, this poor guy, everybody in the media and everybody says, “Yeah, f***ing guy!” and it was finished for him in France. And after that he got another career. But that’s what…that’s what I don’t like and…and, of course, I don’t like another thing, I’ll put it on too, the fact ah…it’s an ic’n, it’s so amazing and ah…it’s not the truth. It’s the same thing. You can see the soul of Zidane in 1998, it’s a good Zidane thing you saw… you saw the bad Zidane in 2006. That’s the same thing in his life and I…I…I can’t um…be against him about it, that’s normal, he’s human but it’s n’t Jesus ‘f Nazareth, y’ u kn’ w?

He continues:

Of course, they have to…they have t’ pr’tect him because they need him. Of course, of course, that’s about it. It just…it just happened mmm…one month ago ah…when people tried to write a book about Zidane…an unauthorised biography, and it was ah…like a big bank robber in his room, like this [imitates holding someone up like a bank robber], you know? He’s really protected (Étienne, 2008).

This cynical depiction of the state’s strategic redemption of Zidane’s emblem is
indicative of the extent to which political spheres rely on successful coloured athletes to evoke *collective fusion*: “symbolically uniting a rather less-than-united nation” (Rowe & Stevenson, 2006: 198). As an ambassador of Franco-Algerian ‘race’ relations, Zidane’s transgression threatened to undermine France’s postcolonial moral order. This perceived threat reveals the impetus for political authorities to camouflage the footballer’s violation of the rules of the game within the symbolic logic of the sacred and profane in order to energise social myths of French fraternity.

Of course, not all social myths and ideologies have negative implications. Social myths elevating the status of coloured athletes are considered to have adverse effects when endorsing stereotyped constructions that correspond ‘race’ to a genetic predisposition towards character or violence (Gilroy, 2000; Hoberman, 1997; Rowe, 1994, 1997; Silverstein, 2000). Paul Gilroy (2000) critiques the “persistence of ‘race’ based identities” arguing that whether employed positively, in commercial campaigns to signify “superhuman black physicality” and mythologises of “black dominance” in sport (Hoberman, 1997), or negatively, the term is invested with explanatory power. In this sense, racialised discourses are not merely descriptive adjectives. Communicated through evocative social myths, notions of ‘race’ include a series of stereotyped constructions and “hypothetical premises” (Goldberg, 1993), about what Aristotle ([1926] 2006) referred to as “human kinds,” where classificatory hierarchies reminiscent of Galton’s (1883) theory of eugenics and Darwin’s (1859) primitive portrayal of indigenous groups serve to perpetuate connotations of coloured athletes as “untamed man animals” (Lawrence, 1982: 64).

There are concerning social implications with reading Zidane’s headbutt in this manner. In symbolising the footballer’s transgression as a reflection of ‘race,’ religion and class, these categories render particular groups and their representatives more susceptible to state violence and disciplinary measures (Elias & Dunning, 1986; Gilroy, 2000; Jiwani, 2008; Silverstein, 2000). Despite ‘race ambassadors’ being employed for the most part to promote political and commercial interests, their mediation may do little
to reconcile public attitudes towards ‘race’ beyond celebrating exceptional athletes of racial origin:

I don’t think it [racism] changes exactly…All the mentality and people say, “Oh, I’m not a racist.” If you were racist before you can be a little bit [influenced], it changes a little the mentality, but not so much because you are going to have to forget that people…for people when you are low class, like perhaps an Arab some um…um…niggers and things, perhaps they think ah…you can do only music and sports, so they like the people in sports and they say, “It is a good musician.” They like [these icons] because the top personalities the people prefer in France, it’s about Zidane, it’s about Noah, you know? But it’s the kind of guys that never [care] about medicine [sic]. It’s difficult to [alter racist beliefs] but…it [sport] permits you to discuss the problem and to change a little the mentality and I think …yeah, it arrived [with Zidane]. Something like that (Étienne, 2008).

So much emphasis rested upon the specific moment of France’s 1998 Victory, with Zidane symbolising an opportunity for reconciliation, precisely because unity was not present in the nation’s political geography, but something desired and projected towards imagined futures. Particular to France, the nation’s emotional climate informs the temporal dimension of myth’s, situated between imagined and structured realities while emerging as alternative visions of unknown futures: accommodating past traumas, present concerns and future hopes.

That ‘something arrived’ with Zidane, does not undermine the propensity for symbolic representations of racial icons in spheres of sport and popular culture to solidify prevailing social myths associated with ‘race,’ gender, class and ethnicity, rather than transcending the discrimination that such mythologies ‘promise’ to resolve. Moreover, in heralding athletes of colour as ‘race ambassadors,’ individuals are often strategically deployed by political authorities to deflect attention from critical debate, and to obscure
state violence: removing racial issues from the larger sociopolitical context in which they occur (Jiwani, 2008: 22). More concerning is the extent to which press reports covering Zidane’s scandal attributed poverty, unemployment and violence as essential to the ethos of the banlieues, symbolically demarcating their profane inhabitants from French ‘civilised’ culture:

By failing to link his experience to the racial and power relations that characterise a whole society and the political and social structures upon which these relations are based, these stories tended to foreground how a twisted and brutalised psyche can emerge out of the suburbs where racism and poverty are quasi-natural and where violence can erupt at any moment, as exemplified by the events that occurred in the Parisian suburbs in 2005 (Jiwani, 2008: 23).

The symbolic content of the ‘race ambassador’ reveals the danger of literally reading symbols. Concretising myth’s through the collective representations and explanatory frameworks inherent to social myths erodes the creative capacity to accomplish meaning from life – supplanting mythology with ideology (Campbell, 1996). Moreover, if established social myths are accepted uncritically, the symbolic content of Zidane’s emblem has the propensity to be read as a sign, naturalising his headbutt as a racial index for the inhabitants of France’s working-class suburbs (banlieues). Investing intangible symbols with explanatory significance is a strategy common to colonialist countries, regularly silencing the voices of minorities by marginalising them within social myths of hegemonic influence (Jiwani, 2008). Indeed, for some, Zidane’s transgression was considered emblematic of the banlieues more than their inhabitants; and yet, the lived reality of recurrent racial riots and civic violence in France demonstrates that these mythologies were not merely scare tactics deployed by state authorities.

Emotions emerge within this paradigm of a social myth and myth’s as incentives to critique the “ideological complexities of the now” and resist manifestations of racism through sport (Rowe, 1994: 23). It is precisely by interrupting the reified framework of
social myths that myth’s provide alternative symbols for the marginalised ‘others’ composing France’s imagined community (though these themselves are susceptible to strategic manipulation, as exemplified by Chirac). Rather than perpetuate the stereotyped constructions projected onto already disadvantaged ‘others’ in France, public sentiments and thoughts regarding the scandal require expression and debate for the hope invested in Zidane as a ‘race ambassador’ to be actualised in policy and reform.

Indispensable to the power relations inscribed in them, social myths have the propensity to enhance discrimination by propagating the politics of the sacred and profane. It was precisely this symbolic logic that enabled President Chirac to script Zidane’s transgression as a social tragedy ‘writ-large’ - where Materazzi’s alleged racial provocation came to symbolise a profane act of injustice that offended not only the footballer, but the moral sentiments of postcolonial France. Zidane was cast within this social tragedy as the embodiment of purity, France’s sacred hero, whose headbutt was not so much an act of aggression but a defence of the nation’s moral order: “united in all its diversity.” With the capacity to control the means of production, Chirac strategically mediated his social tragedy in the public sphere by substituting orthodox collective representations of ‘Muslim fanaticism’ and ‘primitive Orientalism,’ which one may have expected to signify Zidane’s misdemeanour post 9-11, with a social myth unique to France’s postcolonial landscape – that of the ‘race ambassador.’ For framing Zidane’s headbutt within the genre of social tragedy not only demarcated French press reports from international media coverage of the scandal, the symbolic mythologies underpinning Chirac’s script turned a standard act of on-field sporting aggression and personal misfortune into a tragic event of social significance.

Interviews conducted for this thesis have demonstrated that the verisimilitude of Chirac’s tragic mode of enactment was itself contingent upon cultural and emotional dimensions insofar as these factors affected spectators’ ability to sympathise with Zidane and cast him as a tragic hero. In Aristotelian terms, kathartic components of pity and fear were fundamental to scripting the event as a social tragedy, affectively cohering the incident around a necessary or probable sequence of episodes. From a Durkheimian
perspective, for the cultural reality of this tragic mode of enactment to achieve legitimacy, it was paramount that Zidane’s headbutt be situated within a set of signifiers structured against the sacred and profane. In so doing, what appeared to be a disgraceful act of on-field violence was perceived to represent an ‘honourable’ defence of the footballer’s Algerian heritage and French Republican values of postcolonial, racial harmony.

In the following chapter it is suggested that, while social myths may be seen to prevent critical inquiry, operating as social facts that exercise control over the conscience collective, it is precisely the symbolic content of these mythologies that renders meaning open to diverging modes of affective rationalisation – on a civic scale what has been referred to as the emergence of the critical community. Represented and experienced at a ‘safe aesthetic distance,’ sport provides a protected arena in which the critical community may debate issues commonly considered too proximate to disseminate in the public domain. The kathartic affect of Zidane’s scandalous transgression thus emerges as particularly relevant to the political climate of postcolonial France, where the state is legally prevented from engaging with issues of ‘race,’ ethnicity and religion in the public domain. By reflecting on these scandals through the performative dimension of sport, it is suggested that the mediation of social tragedy provides the broader demos with the opportunity to communicate and critique the very tenets from which social myths emerge.
Chapter 4

From Myth to Mythos:
The Emergence of the Critical Community

We always talk about the reaction, and inevitably it must be punished. But if there is no provocation, there is no reaction. First of all you have to say there is provocation, and the guilty one is the one who does the provoking. The response is to always punish the reaction, but if I react, something has happened. Do you imagine that in a World Cup Final like that, with just 10 minutes to go to the end of my career, I am going to do something like that because it gives me pleasure? There was provocation, and it was very serious, that is all. My action was inexcusable but you have to punish the real culprit, and the real culprit is the one who provoked it. Voila (Zidane, 2006a: n.p.).

Zinédine Zidane dramatises the nexus between politics and culture, performing on multiple stages that transcend the football arena. As the product of intersecting histories, Zidane’s ‘double-hyphenated’ allegiance to Kabyle, Algerian and French social myths resonates with emotional climates pertaining to multiple nationalities: representing past fears that continue to haunt nations’ ‘postcolonial unconscious’ while simultaneously emerging as a vessel of hope for what alternative futures could entail (Dauncey & Hare, 2000; Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; Glover & McCracken, 2007: 9; Hare, 2003; Jiwani, 2008; Marks, 1999; Mignon, 1998; Ravindranathan, 2007; Silverstein, 2000). Contextualised within the political terrain of cultural pluralism, Chapter 4 examines Zidane’s World Cup scandal through the relation between a social myth and myth’s, the sacred and profane, noting how French media coverage concealed the dynamic ways in which audiences rationalised the incident. While Zidane’s sacred stature in France may be attributed to his instrumental role in the country’s 1998 World Cup victory, the
footballer’s absorption into popular consciousness emanates from his distinct cultural diversity, a characteristic corresponding to his culturally dynamic spectrum of supporters.

If myth were abundant, they were so as a result of the significatory possibilities projected onto the footballer’s persona. That audiences contested the moral dimension of the scandal does not override the social significance of Zidane’s personal ‘error.’ For the episode to become an event, and the event a ‘social tragedy,’ a narrative framework was required through which the arbitrary factors contributing to Zidane’s misdemeanour could be coherently rationalised around what Aristotle (2005: 65) referred to as a ‘necessary’ or ‘probable’ sequence of cause and effect. The important point being that for katharsis to ‘clarify’ the transgression responsible for offending the moral sentiments of France’s Republic, audiences required a script through which the footballer’s tragic praxis could be recognised.

Publicly mediated as a sacred icon in French political and commercial spheres, the nation’s quest for a rationale through which to reconcile the footballer’s transgression was exacerbated by Zidane’s preceding interview (2006a), for local television broadcaster, Canal Plus, filmed shortly after the event. In light of Zidane’s ambiguous confession (the footballer refusing to disclose the "very insulting” words Materazzi remarked verbatim), journalists generated numerous reasons to account for what “happened” to “provoke” Zizou’s coup de tête. In the context of dramatic representation, cultural symbols assume an integral role in mediating social tragedy. For if Zidane’s scandal does have social significance beyond the domain of sport, it does so for the numerous spectators who consider their sacred icon to personify their own beliefs and values, feelings reverberating with their subjective lived experiences and broader political landscape.

As a social phenomenon, Zidane’s scandalous transgression had tragic repercussions for those individuals and communities symbolically implicated in his headbutt – categorised through a set of signifiers and stereotyped constructions as
'primitive Orientals’ and ‘Muslim fanatics’ as a ‘logical’ extension of his publicly mediated action. Speculation surrounding whether Materazzi denounced Zidane as a ‘Muslim terrorist,’ Algerian or Frenchman evoked authentic sentiments corresponding to how spectators perceived themselves through Zidane. The propensity for negative signifiers to disempower those implicated in Zidane’s ‘fall’ highlights the importance of contesting the scandal. With political scandals emerging as struggles for “symbolic power” that traverse the nexus between reputation and trust (Thompson, 2000), the consequences of Zidane’s World Cup indiscretion transcend trivial, tabloid journalism and the domain of sport. Not only did the moral climate from which France’s social collectivity respond provide a fertile ground for social tragedy, feelings of c’llective fusi’n relied on audiences’ fear that they, too, may experience the unjust fate of their revered hero, extending personal fear towards pity for France’s fraternal icon.

Given local media’s attempt to obscure the scandal, it is proposed that a more comprehensive understanding of the nation’s collective response to Zidane’s misdemeanour may be ascertained by examining subjective responses to the event. Respondents’ recollections, tensions and current feelings reflected emotional orientations toward the scandal, including feeling apathetic, where even silence emerged as a form of communication (Waltzawick et al., 1967). Local media coverage perpetuating the facade that France collectively fused around Zidane’s sacred stature was undermined by interviews conducted for this thesis, counter-narratives revealing the diversity of sentiments constituting France’s c’nsceince c’llective. Moreover, respondents commonly substituted Zidane’s sacred stature with a more human depiction of the nation’s archetypal hero, in the process cultivating the emergence of what has been referred to as a critical c’mmunity: an ensemble of heterodox convictions through which the very foundation of social myths could be examined, challenged and revised.

Sacred Stature

In the previous chapter it was emphasised that Zidane’s public persona as a ‘race ambassador’ both emanated from and reinforced social myths particular to postcolonial
France. The propensity for collective representations to fuse France’s segregated political geography were considered to operate synonymous to religious forms, which Durkheim believed to solidify individuals around ritualistic and symbolic behaviour into a *c’ nscience c’ llective*: where “individuals imagine the society of which they belong and their obscure yet intimate relations with that society” ([1912] 2001: 170-1). Generating moral ascendancy over the individual, Durkheim suggested that common social structures have an inexorable impact on consciousness, with collective representations shaping the way that individuals think, feel and act. Rituals were shown to play an instrumental role in maintaining solidarity, as it was through civic rites that effervescence contagiously permeated the emotional climate of the social collectivity, attaching itself to certain objects, which the community transformed into sacred symbols: things “set apart and forbidden” from the profane. Within the classification system of the sacred and profane, symbols pertaining to the former realm were observed to play an integral role in ritualistically integrating disparate individuals into a cohesive moral order.

Zidane’s symbolic representation as an ambassador for racial minorities was contextualised within the sacred classificatory system as possessing a powerful grip over France’s *c’ nscience c’ llective*. Extending beyond the sporting arena, the footballer was projected in public consciousness as both a tangible and metaphorical embodiment of harmonious ‘race’ relations in postcolonial France: “the material expression of something else” (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 154). Given that sacred symbols emanate from heightened emotional communion (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 164, 238-241, 314), for social myths to solidify the moral foundation of the *c’ nscience c’ llective*, ‘emotional energy’ (to refer to Randall Collins’ (2004a) term) requires objectification in symbolic form. It was emphasised that, as a symbolic representation of French Republican ideologies of postcolonial unity and meritocratic modernisation, Zidane’s metamorphosis from a celebrated football player into a sacred national emblem was indicative of the process through which civic feelings of effervescence were objectified.

From a Durkheimian standpoint, Zidane’s ascent into the realm of the sacred has its genesis in public national euphoria consequent to the footballer’s outstanding
contribution to France’s 1998 World Cup victory. France’s victorious team assume a unique place in the nation’s c’nsence c’llective (Mignon, 1998), and yet, Zidane undoubtedly performed as the hero in France’s win: “Zidane, himself a symbol of French victory, or France’s Symbol of Victory: ‘The Arc of Triumph’ in Paris” (NOA, 2006: n.p.). Staged during the climax of FIFA’s World Cup Final, Zidane’s exceptional two-goal contribution to France’s surprising 3-0 win over Brazil demarcated his stature from the team, elevating his sacred position within popular consciousness. France’s 1998 victory generated temporary solidarity as the nation fused around common sentiments of pride and joy. Assembled in public venues and private residences, the public’s corporeal experience of c’llective effervescence in the aftermath of 1998 extended beyond ‘being there’ live at the stadium. Zidane’s symbol was energised with national significance as fans celebrated their international triumph among jubilant scenes of mass hysteria and rhythmic expression, waving flags and chanting - ‘Zizou’ - the nick name of France’s hero (Rapin, 1998). Mediated as a nationally revered icon, Zidane was erected as a real and imagined emblem of moral unity in France, with his symbolic stature permeating political and commercial spheres.

The propensity for those with the capacity to control the means of production to mediate Zidane as an ambassador of the Republican nation is emblematic of a broader trend in sport. Arjun Appadurai describes the strategic use of sporting personalities as “meta-commodities” insofar as their value is not restricted to on-field success but generates financial value through sportswear and memorabilia. Commercial and media corporations have an economic rationale in propagating Zidane’s celebrated stature with companies, such as Nike, strategically marketing their players as gods with billboards reading: “There is not but one God; there are eleven” (Il n’y a pas qu’un Dieu; il y’en a ’nze). Multinational corporations employ what Paul Silverstein (2000) refers to as “a logic of national patriotism” to mobilise consumer loyalties across territorial boundaries by casting multiethnic players within themes of reconciliation to advertise athletes to the broadest range of consumers possible. Appadurai (1996: 31) refers to this sociocultural practice as the ‘social imaginary’:
The image, the imagined, the imaginary - these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organised field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organised practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility…The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.

Appadurai’s notion of the ‘social imaginary’ reinforces Benedict Anderson’s ([1983] 2006) conception of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ of deep horizontal comradeship. Distinct from mere artifice, representing the world through imaginary association is considered integral to one’s capacity to rationalise meaningful experience. The social imaginary subsequently shares greater semblance with Durkheim’s ([1912] 2001: 256) analysis of religious forms where the symbolic representation of the sacred is itself contingent on civic imagination - if belief decreases, solidarity is undermined:

The main purpose of religion is not to provide a representation of the natural world…religion is above all a system of notions by which individuals imagine the society to which they belong and their obscure yet intimate relations with that society ([1912] 2001: 170-1 [emphasis added]).

While it was observed in Chapter 3 that political and commercial spheres strategically manufactured Zidane’s image to promote social myths of unity in postcolonial France (Jiwani, 2008; Silverstein, 2000), it would be erroneous to suggest that public affection for Zidane is entirely manufactured. For despite being communicated through metaphor,
sacred symbols are not merely state constructions or fabrications. In representing Zidane as the sacred emblem of the “new France pluriel” (Jiwani, 2008), audiences energised the footballer’s persona with moral significance, affectively fusing the c’nsience c’llective through the common convictions, emotions and aspirations characteristic of France’s ‘imagined community.’

The emotional potency of the sacred further accounts for the failure of the Fédération Française de Football (FFF) to commemorate France’s 10-year anniversary of their 1998 victory. It was precisely because the event was devoid of an emblem, such as Zidane - what Durkheim referred to as a “tangible intermediary”- through which to rejuvenate past emotional memories and, in turn, acquire national solidarity that commemoration proved unsuccessful. The empty streets, pubs and venues from which coverage of France’s 2008 Euro Cup performance was televised were a testament that France’s 1998 victory, including national sentiments of pride and joy, were too distant to remain affective. For although rites operate to maintain emotional memories and revive the most essential elements of the c’nsience c’llective, the phenomenon of distancing emphasises that a tangible symbol is required to evoke c’llective effervescence (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 279) - an awareness that the FFF understood with local newspaper, L’Equipe (2008), reporting that the Federation offered Lilian Thuram, the newly retired 36 year-old veteran of France’s 1998 World Cup squad, a prominent position as an “ambassador” of the national side, hired to recoup waning public support for Les Bleus. To seek the veracity of the sacred is to miss the point; a symbol becomes sacred by inspiring feelings of respect that elevate it from the realm of the profane (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 196, 232). Considering reverence an active process illustrates why, for Durkheim, “ideal society is not something outside society but part of it” ([1912] 2001: 317). Beyond mere invention, a symbol derives significance from effervescent communion, including past and present emotional climates, as well as future aspirations. As such, sacred symbols express the most essential components of society, positioning the ‘god-like’ Zidane as the symbolic expression of ‘the nation’s’ moral sentiments.
National Pride

Emotions are paramount to the symbolic construction of sacred objects (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 40, 241). Popular culture engages with extant sentiments and discourses, conditioning and revising them in a transformative manner rather than merely reproducing preconceived beliefs (Rowe, 1994: 6-7). The affective foundation of the sacred encourages spectators to invest emotionally in the team, constituting a symbiotic relationship comparable to Aristotle’s ([1926] 2003) system of ethics where individual well-being corresponds to civic eudaimonia. France was, and continues to be, moved by the moral authority that Zidane’s emblem possessed consequent to his outstanding performance in France’s 1998 World Cup Victory: “Respect is the emotion we experience when we feel this internal and entirely mental pressure” (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 155 [emphasis added]). Reflecting upon Les Bleus’ 1998 triumph, François (2008) elucidated the feeling of national pride emanating from the event:

So, I was pr’ud. I was proud to be French more than happy because I was happy, because I was happy for one month. I was more, I was pr’ud…my feeling was pride, for me and for the country…Still right now, it stopped maybe, it just stopped now, but yeah, I think for five or six years. For five years it changed everything, and people ahh…it gives confidence to all the French people because they think they are the king of the world [sic]. We win the World Cup - you are the king of the world! I think people were so happy, so proud. It means in France that we can be the best. If you are the best in football in France you can be the best at everything else.

The extent to which the c`llective effervescence felt in the aftermath France’s 1998 victory permeated the nation’s c`nsience c`llective, solidifying the country around feelings of pride, was echoed by Étienne:

It was like something arrived…like um…a crescendo, and it was ah…just amazing and it was ah…something I will never…I don’t know you…and
it’s something, I think it just disappeared about ah…perhaps, in two…it disappeared a little this…this feeling perhaps two years ago only. About two or three years ago because it’s…it’s the same joy. I feel it started with this game and just finished, the crescendo, just about three years ago only. So…so it was amazing. It was an amazing joy…it’s an amazing thing…you feel powerful. Like powerful, not because you win personally, but you think [you’re] powerful, you feel powerful for the…you feel proud. It's a mix of ah…You are really, really pr’ud and you can be proud about the team for real, and it was an amazing thing because everybody turned [into a] brother, sister, even if you’re Muslim, or even if you’re a Niger, even if you’re…everybody like, “Wow!” It was a social thing too (Étienne, 2008).

National pride similarly dominated Léon’s recollection of the event, with c’llective effervescence considered a unifying force in the social imagination of an otherwise racially segregated nation:

…I felt pr’ud of, of being French because of my inner diversity and the diversity of the team: blacks, Arabs, whites um…um…I’m sure that if you interviewed everyone, even not a soccer fan, everyone remembers what he or she was doing on the 12th of July 1998, where he was and um…yeah, it gave, it gave so many emotions between ah…like [a] kind of inner ecstasy between tears inside the joy or joy inside the tears, or whatever it was. Hoping, yeah, there was a big h’pe f’r us because um, the h’pes that things c’uld change, that if you believe really hard in one thing and work your ass for it, build your destiny then nothing, nothing will stop you, nothing and no-one. I felt als’ pr’ud because um…it was the revenge of the, revenge of the, of the, of a certain category of people in our country, which means low class people and ah…when we see 11 guys, I mean there were 22, let’s say 30 guys of low class becoming number one in the hearts of the French people then it’s marvellous (Léon, 2008).
The civic confidence generated from Les Bleu’s triumph emerged as both an opportunity and tangible expression of how the emotional dynamics of football could assist in transcending the racial and economic inequities endemic to French society. Conversely, when reflecting upon France’s victory, as a French immigrant of Turkish descent, Xavier expressed feeling disconnected from the country’s conscience collective and, consequently, remained relatively unaffected by the nation’s heightened feeling of pride:

It made me feel good because they played good [sic], but as I don’t define myself as French it didn’t change much for me (Xavier, 2008).

Trans-subjective emotions played an integral role in fusing Zidane’s sacred status to France’s public imagination. It was precisely by psychologically identifying with the objectified footballer that civic emotions elevated his symbolic status from the earthly realm of the profane to the sacred. For, as Jeffrey Alexander (2002: 8) demonstrates, if an audience is to be traumatised by an event that they themselves have not directly experienced, “symbolic extension” and “psychological identification” are required to transmit cultural trauma into public consciousness. Emotions are crucial in transforming a collection of individuals, whose only commonality is shared spatial and temporal presence, into a sacred clan, investing ‘imagined communities’ with such emotional pertinence that members are willing to sacrifice themselves for their national emblems. Images of Zidane kissing the World Cup trophy after France’s 1998 victory were readily employed as metaphors for postcolonial unity. Resembling Roland Barthes’ ([1957] 2000) vignette of the black soldier saluting the French flag, such imagery is situated against background signifiers of colonialist racial disadvantage as a social myth symbolising France’s newly discovered multiracial unity and glory.

Despite Chirac’s strategic mediation of Zidane as a ‘race ambassador,’ interviews conducted for this thesis present an alternative account of why the footballer’s image was elevated beyond the domain of sport. Recurrent themes emerging from interviews were the pride and joy felt by respondents in the wake of France’s 1998 victory, which, as
discussed, considered Zidane instrumental to French supremacy. While social myths promoting postcolonial unity accompanied this patriotic sentiment, one would expect Zidane to have remained, much like other sporting celebrities, in the field of the profane had he not been paramount to the game’s outcome, or had France not secured World Cup glory: “Football is very basic: they win you like them; they don’t win, you don’t like them,” reflected François (2008). Zidane’s ascent to the sacred is situated within France’s temporary feeling of *collective effervescence* post-1998 after which the footballer was objectified as an emblem of national glory:

Sure! [laughs] Only because they won. They just lose last month and ah…everybody wants to kill them. So just because they win…Zidane he becomes like a god, a big god in France, but Zidane he is not charismatic. Who is Zidane, in fact? (François, 2008).

Comparable to the national flag, Zidane’s symbol has no ontological status or intrinsic value. Rather, it was through emerging as a catalyst for French *pride* that the celebrated footballer was invested with symbolic significance and consecrated on the national psyche. Accordingly, while Chapter 3 described the state’s strategic propagation of Zidane as a ‘race ambassador’ to fuse the segregated communities constituting postcolonial France, social myths do not solely account for the footballer’s sacred stature, nor imply that the public’s feelings towards Zidane were inauthentic. For just as the soldier who falls defending his flag surely does not believe that he has sacrificed himself for a piece of cloth (Durkheim: [1912] 2001: viii, 173), civic investment in Zidane sanctioned and legitimised his emblem as a tangible and symbolic manifestation of the country’s social imaginary. In short, Zidane’s sacred stature represents the outcome through which France became conscious of itself, transferring civic pride and joy into reverence for the nation’s objectified football hero: Zidane emerging as a sacred emblem of French supremacy.

Zidane’s immersion into public consciousness was affectively rejuvenated by his ongoing contribution to the national team. In addition to scoring the winning goals in *Les
Bleus’ 1998 World Cup victory on home soil, Zidane’s sacred stature was ritualistically energised at international ceremonies consequent to FIFA crowning him Footballer of the Year in 1998, 2000 and 2003, as well as his instrumental role in captaining the French team in 2006 - a year in which, once again, his performance proved decisive in France’s progression into the World Cup Final. It was generally felt that without Zidane France would have been eliminated in the early rounds of the tournament, feelings validated by his outstanding contribution to the penultimate match of the World Cup. Zidane’s story became central to the nation’s emotional climate by shifting France’s World Cup trajectory from one of despair and disadvantage to hope and success (Kaelin, 2007: 122-3). Cast as the hero of the nation’s mono-myth, Zidane’s on-field success and the public’s investment in him invigorated the celebrated footballer’s position as a sacred icon. Upon declaring his intention to return in 2006 from early retirement to captain the national team, fellow team member, Thierry Henry, articulated Zidane’s numinous impact in France:

> God exists and he has just returned to international football and to the French team (Brewin, 2006: n.p.).

Zidane’s sacred status scripted his return to the professional league within mythological tropes. With his baldhead, strong and silent demeanour, Zidane’s image possessed the resemblance of a medieval monk: the “person was transformed into a mythical figure, and his history into myth” (Kaelin, 2007: 126) – albeit an incongruous one with his emblem simultaneously signifying ‘monk-like’ Christianity and the Muslim faith. Public sentiment intensified following Zidane’s announcement that the 2006 World Cup would be his final performance, the ultimate opportunity for the nation to assemble and pay respect to their revered icon.

Cast as the protagonist in the nation’s social myth of postcolonial glory, Zidane was positioned as a unifying force amongst an otherwise divided country (the ‘neotribal’ communities constituting postcolonial France resembling the politically segregated ancient Greek polis states merging in periods of war and trade under the Achaean body politic). Zidane was characterised within France’s World Cup Iliad in a manner comparable to Homer’s Achaean hero, Achilles, who like Zidane returned to fight and
restore the pride of his country: “I have decided to come back for Les Bleus” (Zidane, 2005: n.p.) – an albeit ironic analogy for those familiar with Achilles’ tragic fate. French press treated Zidane’s return as a significant political event, one that could restore the confidence of a nation depressed by high unemployment, declining geopolitical significance, the loss of the 2012 Olympic Games hosting bid, and unpopular domestic policies (Kaelin, 2007; Lévy, 2006; Lichfield, 2006): “He’s Coming Back!” wrote L’Équipe, “The Incredible Return of Zinédine Zorro” headlined Le Figaro: “Zidane restores hope to an entire people” declared Le Parisien. It is in this context that Lévy (2006: n.p.) refers to Zidane as a member of the “Pantheon of the stadium-gods”: “one of the greatest players of all time, a legend, a myth for the entire planet, and universally acclaimed.” Assuming Aristotelian requisites for heroic ‘superiority,’ Achilles and Zidane were positioned within corresponding narratives in archetypal themes of ‘return and redemption,’ (heightened by Zidane’s French jersey adorning him with sacred imagery of an ‘angel dressed in white’):

Here is a man of providence, a saviour, who was sought out, like Achilles…because he was believed to be the only one who could avert his countrymen’s fated decline. Better yet, he’s a super-Achilles who – unlike Homer’s – did not wait for Agamemnon (in the guise of coach Raymond Domenech) to come begging him to re-enlist; rather he decided himself, spontaneously, after having “heard” a voice calling him, to come back from his Spanish exile and putting his luminous armour back on, and flanked by his faithful Myrmidons (Makelele, Vieira, Thuram) reverse the new Achaeans’ ill fortune and allow them to successfully pull together (Lévy, 2006 n.p.).

Zidane accentuated his mystique reflecting that it was in response to being woken one night after hearing “a voice” summoning him, that prompted his decision to return from early retirement and captain France into battle:
One night at three in the morning, I woke up suddenly and talked to somebody…But nobody knows about it, not even my wife, no one…An irrepressible force came over me at that moment…I had to obey this voice, which was advising me. It’s an enigma but don’t try to find an explanation. You will never find it. You will probably never meet this person. Even I cannot explain this meeting (Lichfield, 2006: n.p.).

Zidane’s numinous reference to “this voice,” consecrating his renaissance to world football, evoked mythological connotations by resembling Homer’s discussion in the *Iliad* of how the immutable cosmic power of *nous* propelled the great Greek warrior, Achilles, to retreat from his tent and lead the Achaean campaign against the Trojans. Equipped with skill and heroic virility, Zidane was presented as a demi-god, an embodiment of Aristotle’s (2005: 71) archetypal hero: “better than most,” possessing the ability, not only to captain but also to secure the nation’s glory. “We missed you so much,” expressed *Le Parisien* (2005b) upon hearing that Zidane, “The Saviour” (2005a: 1), “Our national Zizou, the one, the only, the symbol of the great blue adventures... yes, that Zidane is again going to pull on the shirt to which he owes much of his glory. Let us thank him for changing his mind” (*Ouest France*, 2005). Zidane’s decision to return from early retirement to the international arena of world football in a quest to reclaim French pride, thus, reinvigorated his emblematic status as a revered icon and national saviour.

**National Pride or Fallen Hero?**

France’s support for Zidane in light of his World Cup scandal presents a conspicuous irony since the footballer’s transgression appeared to jeopardise national pride through what seemed to be a selfish act. What is exceptional about the event is that in contrast to comparable sporting scandals, Zidane’s *c’up de tête* did little to destabilise his stature in France, with political and commercial spheres fervently defending his sacred emblem from public scrutiny. In what follows the construction of Zidane’s ‘social tragedy’ will be explored observing how, in spite of his transgression arguably catalysing France’s World Cup defeat, the footballer maintained allegiance to the nation’s imagined body politic.
Moreover, French press reports and international coverage of the scandal will be juxtaposed with interviews conducted for this thesis to assess the impact of the media on informing public responses to the incident.

Media analysis reveals distinct trends in how local French and international press framed Zidane’s transgression. Denham and Desormeaux’s (2008) comparative study of 102 British press reports covering the scandal emphasised that global coverage typically condemned the footballer’s action as inexcusable, signifying his decline from the heights of world football. And, yet, while international journalists and scholars commonly spoke of Zidane’s “fall from grace” (Jiwani, 2008), the footballer’s sacred stature and incorporation into French political spheres appeared to prevent critical inquiry from entering the public domain, prompting one to question whether Zidane can really be said to have ‘fallen’ in the hearts and minds of the conscience collective.

In contrast to the morally charged ‘should’ dominating international commentary, French media conglomerates generally adopted a fraternal attitude towards the footballer, obscuring Zidane’s transgression by focusing on commemorating his prior achievements. As noted, within a day of the event, the “press, public and France’s President seemed to settle for condemning the act, not the man” (Mullins, 2007: n.p.), France’s former President, Jacques Chirac, publicly defending the footballer as a “virtuoso,” “a man of heart, of commitment, of conviction.” Opinion polls and local media further reflected the public’s propensity to separate Zidane’s action and character, shielding the footballer’s image from the contempt ordinarily directed towards player misconduct.

By distinguishing praxis (action) from ethos (character), France’s response to the event subverted Aristotle’s (2005: 49) conception of character, which ascribed “certain qualities” to actors through their actions. The French media’s juxtaposition between censoring Zidane’s misconduct from public scrutiny, while incongruously amplifying his on-field success, was manifest in Chirac’s prompt defence of the footballer. While any scandal involves assessing the relation between an action, event or circumstance in which the moral order of the social collectivity is considered to have been transgressed
(Thompson, 2000: 13), it has been argued that Chirac recuperated Zidane from being cast as the villain responsible for France’s World Cup defeat by scripting the footballer’s personal transgression as a ‘social tragedy.’ Framing the Franco-Algerian footballer’s headbutt as a brave defiance of his Italian opponent’s colonialist aggression, the insult was morally coded within a set of temporal and spatial representations that signified profane injustice through the slur’s symbolic association with racial contamination – Materazzi’s provocation now itself considered responsible for offending the moral order of France’s postcolonial Republic. For, it was not that Chirac concealed the incident from public discussion, rather the meaning attributed to the footballer’s notorious action was symbolically reified as an ‘honourable’ “conviction” through social myths of postcolonial unity. Situated in the political logic of the sacred and profane, Zidane’s transgression was ironically revised from an act of violence to a national symbol of salvation.

Denham and Desormeaux’s (2008: 382, 388) content analysis of British coverage of the scandal reveals that France’s partisan coverage did not go unrecognised by international journalists. English press characterised Chirac’s response as indicative of the “arrogance” of the French in general:

The French reaction was even more typical. They were never going to admit that Zizou had done anything wrong. They still think they had liberated their own country in 1944. When Jacque Chirac told Zidane: ‘You have honoured the country with your exceptional qualities and fantastic fighting spirit,’ he was expressing what most Frenchmen felt. The World Cup has brought out our national traits – Italy’s opportunism, France’s arrogance, Germany’s organisational skills, and Britain’s fatalism (Thomson, 2006: 19).

Zidane’s transgression allowed international journalists to connect national playing styles to France’s cultural ethos (Denham & Desormeaux, 2008: 389). For example, Thompson’s article for the Daily Telegraph (2006) headlined that “Defending Zizou was Typical of the French,” whose inability to recognise that Zidane’s misdemeanour was
inappropriate and detrimental to both France’s ethnic inhabitants and the cohesive image of the World Cup reflected their “cowardly” and “arrogant” national ethos - alleged characteristics of the French during the second World War. Rich reiterated collective memories and analogies of war, recollecting:

In August 1944, with the cemeteries of Normandy filled with the bodies of the British, Commonwealth and American troops, General de Gaulle congratulated the people of Paris on having liberated themselves. It was in this vein yesterday that Jacques Chirac met Zinédine Zidane and extolled his heroic and iconic virtues as a Frenchman – just a few hours after he had been sent off in the World Cup Final for committing one of the most brilliant fouls imaginable, and after the world’s media had agreed that his brilliant career as an international had ended in disgrace (Rich, 2006b: 19).

Indeed, political commentary, media coverage and opinion polls suggest that ‘France’ never stopped loving ‘Zizou.’ Within days of the event 61 per cent of respondents surveyed by Le Parisien indicated that they instantly forgave Zidane, with 78 per cent supporting FIFA’s decision to award him the Golden Ball in 2006 electing him the most valuable player of the World Cup tournament (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008). The French philosopher, François Sureau, echoed these patriotic sentiments:

I see, thanks to Zidane, the victory of a certain national spirit… [Zidane] has given us back our beautiful reputation for insolence (Le Figaro’, 2006).

Since the establishment of the European Union in 1993 it has been argued that Europe has experienced a “blurring of national identities” (Dogan, 1994). That ‘pan-European consciousness’ has subsumed nationalism remains contested, however, by the persistence of distinct local coverage mediating the scandal (Denham & Desormeaux, 2008: 382; Rich, 2006b; Thompson, 2006). In these instances nationalist orientations persist, and even intensify, as a result of globalising processes.
Zidane’s sacred stature in France demarcated his misdemeanour from similar sporting scandals, hindering public contestation and crystallising the nation around extant social myths. Collectively represented through mythologies as an alternative to ‘Muslim fanaticism’ and ‘irrational Orientalism,’ Zidane’s stature was legitimat ed by social myths representing him as a sacred emblem of “the new France pluriel” (Jiwani, 2008). For acknowledging the inappropriateness of Zidane’s transgression threatened not only to challenge France’s image of postcolonial unity and national supremacy, the corollary of undermining Zidane’s emblem would be a critique of Chirac’s symbolic power – the very resources of influence and trust upon which his public standing depended. Public support for Zidane may, accordingly, be situated within the President’s strategic endeavour to solidify France’s *c‘nsceine c‘llective* around the footballer’s emblem in response to escalating tensions permeating the nation’s political geography. It was a strategy reliant upon Republican social myths of racial unity to camouflage the cultural, psychological, economic and religious turmoil further threatening to segregate postcolonial France.

The construction of Zidane’s ‘social tragedy’ as both an idea and an ideal reveals that France’s Republic still requires social myths to preserve the nation’s moral order: “We make these people into heroes because we crave immortality”, as the *Press Dem’crat* observed (Lichfield, 2006). An apparently private and modest man, it was not Zidane who required these myths, but the nation affectively invested in him: those state, public and commercial industries that employed Zidane’s sacred symbol as a vessel of hope to transcend the sociopolitical and economic currents depressing France, offering an alternative vision of what they were and could be. Zidane’s affective currency is unique to France’s emotional climate, largely accounting for his public support. Nevertheless, the state’s strategic mediation of Zidane’s sacred emblem is only part of the story. Several respondents actively complied in promoting Zidane as an emblem for ‘race’ relations in postcolonial France (Étienne, 2008; Léon, 2008). To homogenise French public opinion by speaking of a universal ‘Franco-myth’ is an oversimplification, itself responsible for perpetuating the mono-myth of France’s ‘social tragedy’ at the expense of the counter-narratives employed to interrogate the incident. Rather than passively regurgitating prevailing social myths, respondents’ attitudes towards Zidane’s
transgression reflected fragmented views ranging from contempt to unremitting worship of the nation’s revered icon.

In projecting a deified image of France’s sacred icon, social myths have the propensity to facilitate what has been referred to as collective fusion at the expense of critical inquiry. Analogous to the religious saviour, Zidane is considered sacrosanct above all since his heroic journey embodies common moral values and ideals that energise his emblem as the personification of the nation:

In the past we constantly observe man creating new sacred things. Let a man capture its imagination and seem to embody its principal aspirations as well as the means to fulfil them, and this man will be set apart and considered nearly divine. Opinion will invest him with majesty quite similar to the majesty that protects the gods (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 160).

Investing Zidane with affective pertinence reflected an emotional climate particular to France’s broader cultural ethos. For in critiquing the hero, one is challenging the very tenets of society, including how various members of the public perceive themselves in the hero’s narrative. In light of Zidane’s 2006 misdemeanour, reverence was seen to protect France’s sacred icon from public scrutiny:

We win the World Cup, so after nothing can happen. Because of him we win the World Cup so it can, he can kill people in the street and people will tell you, “that’s not him” [laughs]. He can do anything he wants, we don’t care because after when you make the balance what he gives…when you look at this it’s nothing in the history. You understand what I mean? In France, when you do something good and you make people happy, you can do whatever you want after, and the players of the French team they…they win the World Cup and they can do whatever they want…I don’t like them so much, but it’s like this (François, 2008).
Participants argued that icons are immortalised in France and consequently Zidane was absolved from criticism. Defending France on the football arena, Zidane operates in “moral harmony” with his contemporaries (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 159), ‘prohibiting’ any attempt to deny or challenge his sacred stature:

The problem is like I told you before: Zidane is such a god in France, everybody loves him so much, for years it was difficult for the people to criticise him after what they think about him. So people say, “Oh, his image.” It wasn’t so hard for him. The newspapers were frightened. Everybody in France, you can say nothing bad about Zidane, so they, no body said it was a bad thing that he did. Everybody tried to understand, “Oh…it’s normal.” In fact, it’s not normal...because in France y’u can’t criticise an ic’ n, you can’t…and Zidane is, phew [sighs]…a big icon. You can say nothing bad about Zidane. Zidane is not a good guy, but you can say nothing (François, 2008).

Mediated coverage of the scandal was seen to represent national identity with a conscious justification of French society propagating an echo chamber of homogeneous responses. Interviews indicate that public opinion in France was not as uniform as commonly conveyed. There was consensus from participants, including media representatives and fans of Zidane, that the French press obscured the issue, failing to reflect broader public sentiments and attitudes (Étienne, 2008; François, 2008; Jérôme, 2008; Louis, 2008; Maurice, 2008). Maurice, a professional French footballer, E-News presenter and production assistant, described the media’s manufactured response to Zidane’s World Cup exit as an attempt to preserve commercial and political interests:

Ah…the media is not very responsible about the red card of Zidane because ah…they try to not talk about that, they try to hide the dark side of Zidane because they know Zidane is the best player for France and a lot of industries invest in him and they don’t want to show the bad behaviour of Zidane. So um…press, magazines don’t talk a lot about that...[the] media
try to help Zidane in this situation….No, they try to hide this story so not engage in this (Maurice, 2008).

Thus, despite the extent to which the moral ascendancy of Zidane’s sacred stature camouflaged media coverage of the event, interviews conducted for this thesis reveal that public reactions towards the footballer’s transgression were stratified rather than conforming to a homogeneous ‘Franco-myth.’ With public opinion assuming a plurality of convictions, and myth’s more adequately expressed as myth’i, ‘the nation’s’ social tragedy comprised competing counter-narratives that configured Zidane’s transgression around more dynamic perceptions of what Zizou signified.

**Celebrity Sporting Scandals: Humanising ‘Zizou’**

Zidane’s World Cup scandal paradoxically served both to propagate social myths and to critique the very tenets of these collective representations by censoring and facilitating public debate. For even in attempting to defend Zidane’s sacred stature from public scrutiny, media coverage cultivated civic inquiry about an issue that was for the most part obscured in the public domain. Endeavouring to rationalise ‘why’ their sacred icon decided to conclude his career with such an “incomprehensible” gesture (Toussaint, 2007), the nation’s social myth of postcolonial unity was invariably mediated within a terrain of mythologies, as journalists provided a myriad of fluid and contradictory reasons to account for Zidane’s final action.

Rather than undermine the social significance of Zidane’s personal transgression, inconsistencies and contradictions are endemic to the nature of scandal. For the coherence of scandals necessitate narrative frameworks through which offended moral sentiments may be communicated in a comprehensible manner:

The narrative teleology of media celebrity scandal creates the impossibility of an appeal to a non-narritavised order of things and events. Ultimately, the scandalous insinuations, inferences, evidentiary claims,
causal linkages, and “shock” revelations which comprise scandals are subject to narrative imperatives, because the only framework of meaning that can be posited against one narrativised truth claim is another narrative construction (Rowe, 1997: 206).

The very constitution of a scandal transforms an arbitrary series of accidental episodes, which Aristotle (2005: 55) attributed to the particularities of history, into the ‘universal’ form of myth’s. Inscribing myth’s with meaning requires the author to select and organise a range of separate historical episodes into a consistent plot configured around a clear “beginning, middle, and end.” Synthesised through metaphor, the narrative structure of myth’s precipitates a kind of logic that will be significantly coloured by the author, who they cast as heroes and villains in their morality play, including how perceiving audiences are informed by the emotional climate in which tragedy is received. With Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason ([1781] 1998) demonstrating that the mind, through its innate categories, constructs experience along certain axes of time and space, one would expect scandals to remain highly contested affairs. Despite the arbitrary rationale upholding scandals, by selecting and appropriating events within a coherent plot, the media may assume a voice of moral absolutism, presenting Zidane’s transgression as an opportunity for journalists polemically to judge the condition of society.

Scandals typically undermine the hero’s status precisely insofar as their transgression reveals a discrepancy between the actual person and the celebrity persona projected onto them. In transgressing society’s moral order, and separating the real from the ideal, scandals commonly reduce the symbolic distance demarcating celebrities from the public. David Rowe (1994: 8) emphasises the affective dynamics underpinning scandals, namely the emotional ambivalence felt towards celebrities: a combination of admiration and envy that present scandals as opportune occasions in which to depose the celebrated kings, queens and princes of popular culture from their position of social hierarchy. Audiences possess an incongruous tension between elevating the hero, which Aristotle romanticised as ‘better than most,’ and a desire to reduce this symbolic distance, humanising ‘stars’ by hauling them back to the earthly realm of the profane: “if only in
symbolic terms” (Rowe, 1997: 205). The emotional configuration of celebrity scandals correspond more generally to the format of the tragic genre, with transgressions emerging as the most effective means by which the aesthetic distance demarcating the hero and the audience can be reduced.

Contextualised within the logic of scandal, Zidane’s transgression presents the opportunity to examine the ways in which myth’s intersects with prevailing social myths. It has been emphasised in the previous chapter that France responded exceptionally to Zidane’s transgression than comparable celebrity sporting scandals, in which athletes such as David Beckham (UK) and Matthew Johns (Australia) were ‘dis-graced’ and publicly reprimanded following respective on and off-field misconduct. It has been argued that France’s distinct response to Zidane’s scandal was not merely a reflection of strategically mediated social myths, but also emanated from the footballer’s sacred grip over the nation’s c’nsience c’llective. Whereas sporting celebrities such as David Beckham and Matthew Johns reached the heights of association football and Rugby League respectively, they remained celebrities, and as such their transgressions rendered them susceptible to national scrutiny and conventional tropes of the ‘fallen hero.’ Zidane’s misdemeanour emerged in a different context, the footballer’s sacred stature immunising him from the criticism typically encountered by scandalous athletes. Zizou’s ‘moral authority’ over France’s c’nsience c’llective meant that, while his headbutt was condemned, the context in which it occurred was not, the corollary being Zidane’s sacred emblem remained relatively unscathed in the nation’s public sphere:

Since these powers speak to him in the tone of authority and sometimes even tell him to violate his most natural inclinations, man must imagine these powers as partly external to himself. Of course there would be no mythological interpretations if he could readily see that these influences emanate from society (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 156-7).

With Zidane’s sacred stature shielding his emblem from public criticism, what were potentially undermined by heterodox myth’i were the social myths of racial solidarity
upheld by the footballer’s ‘saintly’ persona that would have to be recuperated for their authority to remain legitimate. For Zidane’s ‘fall’ “did not destroy Zidane the person, but rather Zidane’s actions destroyed Zidane the icon, Zidane the political symbol, Zidane the myth (Lichfield, 2006). Or, as Cohen (2006: 1) put it, “all that Zidane killed was a certain narrative of his life.” Heralded as a symbol of a “nation united in all its diversity,” Zidane’s symbiotic relationship to Republican social myths of racial harmony was thought to be the central factor accounting for the state’s prompt recuperation and redemption of the footballer’s “fall from grace” (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; Jiwani, 2008).

And, yet, the extent to which Zidane encountered a tragic decline remains questionable. Given that scandals are subject to narrative imperatives, one would expect to find national differences in the representation and dissemination of tragedy for public consumption. Consequently, while international coverage and academic scholarship commonly spoke of Zidane’s “fall from grace” (Jiwani, 2008), this thesis interrogates whether ‘refinement’ was ever associated with the footballer, and the extent to which Zidane’s sacred stature was renounced in France’s public domain.

It is proposed that rather than ‘falling’ susceptible to the moral absolutism of conventional sporting scandals, Zidane’s deified image was substituted by a more human persona. This substitution did not signify the decline of Zizou, but rather represented a shift in public perceptions of the footballer: a transformation from the remote sphere of the gods to the proximate mortal realms of humankind, positioned nonetheless as a revered hero. Resembling ‘Achilles’ wrath,’ as Homer frequently describes “the swift and excellent” Achaean warrior, the French captain’s violent outburst indicated, for some, that Zidane had a greater capacity for feeling than most footballers, his ‘wrath’ and anguish assuming superhuman qualities in the climax of his tragic departure from the football arena.

It is ironic that Zidane’s headbutt transformed, and in some cases enhanced, the nation’s public perception of him by enabling spectators to experience the psychological mode of identification referred to in Chapter 2 as the kathartic process of “mimetic
vertigo”: the recognition that the object represented is also representing you (Taussig, 1992: 176-8; 1993: 237). This intersubjective process of identification encouraged spectators to sympathise with Zidane, through pity and fear humanising the French footballer, thereby reducing the safe aesthetic distance demarcating his elevated stature from the broader demos:

Well I [long pause], about Zidane what is very strange first, what I would like to remember here is ah...it’s unconditional love to him, so it means that even if he did that we all still love him...and ah, it’s um [long pause] it’s part ’f the human vulnerability, and even one of the world’s number one players knows that when it comes to basics, like you want to protect your family or being insulted by someone who insults your family, then you’re a human being and ah...for me it’s his vulnerability was yeah um...part ’f his, his humanity as well. I don’t blame Zidane for what he did; I would blame the team for how they reacted to it, too Zidane dependent, which means that ok he’s not here then we’re going to lose the game. I don’t understand that...still today, I don’t understand. Of course, as the captain he had great responsibility but ah...you can’t be number one in your profession with only ah...light in your system, you have a shadow too and the black side of yours has to express itself too, to make the balance. If it’s not, then you are not a human being...like a machine, a machine to win. You know, it’s ah...the people ask him so much, so much all the time, even more and more and more and more and...and ah...then they forget that he’s, he’s like every’ne else...if you’re a t’p champi’n; you’re a t’p human as well. The stronger are much stronger than other people and much more vulnerable than other people at the same time. It goes together, it’s the same, it is the two sides of a coin. You can’t be strong without being vulnerable as well; it doesn’t work (Léon, 2008).

Or, as explained by another:
We don’t mind our players being passionate like Zidane that just means he’s human (BBC, 2006: n.p. [emphasis added]).

Even Zidane’s agent, Alain Migliaccio, suggested that Zidane’s transgression revealed that he belonged, not to the realm of the gods, but to the plane of mortal heroes: “He is a human being, n’t a g’d” (Hughes, 2006 [emphasis added]). Rather than denigrate Zidane’s iconic status, France’s exceptional response to the scandal appeared for the most part to elevate the fraternity’s support for their ‘mortal brother’:

Two minutes before his fall from grace I was sure he was going to go down in history as a man full of honour, grace and control and take his place with the greats. And then he re-wrote his own destiny. But his actions also made me love him more. Bef’re he was a g’d. But then he sh’wed us all that he was just a man. A man with weakness and hate…I am much more affected by him than I would have been had things gone as I hoped (BBC, 2006: n.p. [emphasis added]).

Sympathetic identification, thus, became paramount in humanising Zidane and making the incident comprehensive to spectators:

Zidane is the greatest footballer of his generation, if not of all time. He has been a wonderful ambassador to all kinds of sports, I’ll always admire him as a human and a footballer (BBC, 2006: n.p. [emphasis added]).

Communicated through evocative symbols, trans-subjective emotions enabled spectators to rec’gnise Zidane’s humanity, rationalising praxis into myth’s: since “an average man would have done much worse, I am with Zidane, all the way” (BBC, 2006: n.p.).

Expelled by a red card - the fourth official’s intervention serving to break the illusory fourth wall separating spectators from their hero - Zidane’s ‘inhibited act’ inserted the footballer’s personal tragedy into public consciousness, enabling viewers to
sympathise with their hero’s reversal of fortune and ‘sensitivity to injustice.’ Jean-
Philippe Toussaint exemplified the intersubjective dimension of katharsis: Zidane “C’est m’i,” or to put it another way, “Zidane’s melancholy is my melancholy, I know it, I have
nourished it and I feel it” (2007: 13 [emphasis added]). And, yet, the sympathetic
sentiments expressed in foregoing recollections of the incident obscure the extent to
which pity for Zidane’s social tragedy remained an arbitrary response, strategically
mediated by political authorities, rather than merely “ensuing from the events
themselves,’’ as Aristotle (2005: 87) had proposed. As one critic noted:

Maybe it’s the monastic hairstyle but an awful lot of religious epithets
have been applied to the retired footballer Zinédine Zidane in the past six
days. Martyred, canonised, damned, stigmatised, beatified and
metaphorically crucified, it is confusing to remember that all he did was
stick the head on a mouthy Italian. The hyperbolic language tries to
disguise the inescapable fact that Zidane is very human, and all too prone
to lose his temper and cool at moments of intolerable pressure. The
sanctimonious condemnations that have descended on his errant head
since last Sunday night have been fuelled by the unreasonable
expectations that Zidane had become semi-divine, above the petty spite of
mere humans. That involves a profound misunderstanding of the genius of
great footballers. They become stars not by suppressing their emotional
instincts, but by giving them free reign (Lappin, 2006: n.p.).

In Nietzschian ([1872] 1995) terms, recognising the ‘veil of illusion’ underpinning
Zidane’s ‘irrational act’ threatened to challenge the rational form of myth, the
Apollonian ‘logic of our time,’ whose appearance of temperance and moderation stood in
contrast to the irrational Dionysian impulses inherent to the competitive ethos of football
fandom – the Italian word, tifosi, used to describe football fans literally referring to those
Zidane’s coup de tête was seen to embody what Theodor Adorno (1973) referred to as
“omnipotent impotence”: with Zidane’s simultaneous illumination and shadow, power
and vulnerability, casting the footballer amid the Luke Skywalkers of modernity as the heroic “archetype of our time” (Kaelin, 2007: 129).

Despite being reinforced by moral codes, pity was not restricted to spectators’ ability to recognise in Zidane what Aristotle (2005: 71) referred to as someone culturally “like ourselves.” Pity also extended towards Zidane insofar as his emotional outburst revealed his common social ontology of human vulnerability and indispensable connection to broader international audiences. From an Aristotelian point of view, pity emerges as a derivative of fear – the fear that spectators, too, could succumb to such underserved suffering: for in identifying with the plight of “those who resemble them…all such relations make a man more likely to think that their misfortune may befall him” ([1926] 2006: 229). It was precisely Zidane’s common humanity that lent the footballer’s final geste to universal myth’s of the archetypal tragic hero:

Even people who loathe soccer can appreciate a story about a man who seemingly has it all only to have that power and status threatened by a single ill-advised act. It's a story as old as Oedipus, but it never loses the power to shock. Three days after Zidane plunged his bald pate into an Italian player's chest, people throughout the world are still talking about what it all means (Moore, 2006: n.p.).

It is important to reiterate the emotional foundation of katharsis. For it is only through affectively rec`gnising their common humanity with the hero that audiences may accomplish katharsis: evoking fear through psychological identification with the hero, wherein fearing for one’s own human fallibility and susceptibility to the unjust forces of chance cultivates trans-subjective feelings of pity for the hero:

Yeah, I really felt s`rry f`r him. I can say that. Because, it’s…if I were him, what w`uld I d’?…When I see it there in a final match of the World Cup I c`uld understand him, I think, and then I felt sorry [for him] because he didn’t mean it, he didn’t mean it (Élodie, 2008).
The emotional responses of pity and fear that Aristotle had recognised to be inherent to *katharsis* emerged as key in shaping recollections of Zidane’s *c’up de tête*. For, while mediated through sociocultural processes, it was spectators’ common ontology that *collectively fused* Zidane with broader global audiences, prompting literary readings of the incident as signifying the rebirth of tragedy in modern life (Delbée, 2006).

That the narrative imperatives employed to mediate the scandal implanted Zidane’s personal transgression as a ‘social tragedy’ in France’s public imagination does not deny the capacity for the event to remain a contested affair. Rather, the significance of Zidane’s misdemeanour is the symbolic affect the incident assumed in France, as the footballer’s on-field transgression was constructed as a social tragedy ‘writ-large’ for the postcolonial nation that required sympathy and demanded fraternity. Just as the great Achaean warrior, Achilles, had his heel, Zidane had his head, and as such his emotional outburst was seen to reflect the fraternal attributes which made him human, fusing him with his ‘human brothers’:

The truth is that it is perhaps not so easy to stay in the skin of an icon, demigod, hero, legend…[The Event was read as] a refusal of the halo that had been put on his head…*Ecce H’m’, This is a man…*Achilles had his heel. Zidane will have had his – this magnificent and rebellious head that brought him, suddenly, *back int’ the ranks ’f his human br’ thers* (Lévy, 2006: n.p. [emphasis added]).

By reconciling Zidane’s transgression within tragic metaphors of *hamartia* and the virile “emotional instincts” facilitating the hero’s misjudgment, such statements denote that “this is a man,” a vulnerable mortal, not a god, whose “rage filled moment exposed the tragic flaw in a true sporting hero” (Lichfield, 2006: n.p.), which ultimately “brought him back into the ranks of his human brothers” (Lévy, 2006:n.p.).
By transforming what appeared to be a scornful act of violence into the shadow of Zidane’s greatness, the footballer’s transgression was considered to be emblematic of his human fallibility and common social ontology with France’s Republican fraternity: “like watching the last moments of a Greek tragedy, in which the hero is revealed as human, in all his greatness and all his flaws” (Lichfield, 2006: n.p.). Ironically, it was precisely by reducing the safe aesthetic distance between ideal projections of Zizou and the ‘unmasked’ footballer that Zidane’s violent transgression was sanctified as a human extension of the *c’nsceience c’llective*.

**The Birth of the Anti-Hero**

That the moral ascendancy of Zidane’s sacred stature prevented journalists from publicly scrutinising his misdemeanour does not override the capacity for scandals to invite a plurality of reactions that problematise the telos of *myth*’s. While President Chirac and French press were successful in mediating Zidane’s transgression as a ‘social tragedy,’ contending *myth*’i undermined the social myths of racial unity employed to uphold France’s icon. Aristotle’s *Poetics* illuminates the difficulty of achieving verisimilitude in tragic drama where, for social tragedy to be universally *rec’gnised* “through pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions,” the hero must be perceived to be “the undeserving victim of adversity” (2005: 47-9, 71). Despite Chirac’s ability to mediate Zidane as the victim of ‘the nation’s’ morality play, the cultural and emotional dynamics of tragedy rendered the President unsuccessful in evoking a universal response of pity and fear from French audiences.

Examining the affective dimension of scandals point to the pertinence of emotions in rationalising meaning. Often shifting in significance for the same spectator over time, emotions are paramount in structuring separate historical episodes into *myth*’s. Given that what William James ([1879] 2005) referred to as “subjective marks” invariably *affect* how one perceives the world, one would expect public appraisals of scandals to be affectively rationalised in distinct ways, reflecting not only cultural, temporal and spatial orientations but unique corporeal viewing experiences of these events. The emotional
dimension of consciousness explains why, even in defending Zidane, French media invariably produced a spectrum of *myth*’i - contradictory morality plays - through which the scandal was rationalised.

Field interviews conducted for this thesis revealed a discrepancy between publicly mediated social myths and private *myth*’s, suggesting that despite the apparent homogeneity of France’s *c’nsience c’llective* presented by local press, public portrayals of a national ‘mono-myth’ were façades concealing subjective *myth*’i. This Copernican spirit of perception was perpetuated by France’s cultural pluralism and Zidane’s emblem, both of which obscure any simple reading of his symbolic content. The personification of beliefs, values and social ideals inherent to these forms are subject to the affective experiences of those drawing significance from their symbolic form so that:

Unlike issues, individuals can be framed in a dramatic narrative structure where they become easily accessible symbols (Moritz, 1992: 155).

Precisely what the footballer’s transgression came to embody was made increasingly more difficult due to Zidane’s elusive persona. His enigmatic character and notorious silence endowed spectators with the increased licence to speak for him, with Zidane resisting classification, making him an enigmatic symbol of endless significations:

I think everybody knows Zidane is special. He never speaks this guy, you never see him speak. He never speaks, so nobody can know what he has in his head. So after ten years of never speaking people think, “Wow, he’s so special!” He is still special. It's like he becomes more known in history for that than winning the World Cup (François, 2008).

The semiotic potential to appropriate Zidane’s “incomprehensible” *geste* into a myriad of *myth*’i partly derives from his impenetrable symbolic image (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; Toussaint, 2007). French rock star, Jean-Louis Murat, articulated the footballer’s enigma in his lyrics: “Nobody knows if Zidane is an angel or demon, he smiles like Saint Teresa
and grimaces like a serial killer.” His monkish scalp, humanitarian activities with children (his appointment as UN Goodwill Ambassador in 2001 and role in educational projects in Albania), graceful style of play and modest and softly spoken demeanour are contrasted with his aggressive on-field conduct and grimacing smile. Communicated through evocative symbols, Zidane’s emblem manifests into a combination of contradictory significations that hinder any simple interpretation.

Zidane’s ‘double-hyphenated’ cultural heritage perpetuates his enigma (Glover & McCracken, 2007). Resembling what George Herbert Mead (1934) referred to as ‘significant symbols’ - social stimuli in the form of physical and verbal gestures that elicit the equivalent meaning for both subject and object - Zidane emerges as an emblem for French, Kabyle and Algerian audiences, so adding to his intangible social significance. Embodied within these national discourses there exist dynamic contradictions and perceptions of precisely what Zidane signifies, thus, further stratifying the rationale that spectators attributed to his climactic event. For while Zidane was undeniably poignant to such collectives, the event was rationalised through a multiplicity of cultural significations, each commanding profound emotional legitimacy.

Considered for the most part by international journalists to represent the French captain’s disgraceful fall from the heights of world football (Cohen, 2006; Delbée, 2006; Denham & Desormeaux, 2008; Jiwani, 2006, 2008; Moore, 2006), the corresponding geste was ironically symbolised in multiple myth’i as signifying a rebellious act of bravery (Kaelin, 2007; Lévy, 2006; Toussaint, 2007). Lukas Kaelin exemplified a common alternative to international coverage condemning Zidane’s “irrational act” of violence by emphasising that, within the footballer’s gesture, “there lies a deeper logic; a logic that shows the rati’nality ’f Zidane’s deed’” (2007: 119 [emphasis added]). Imagining Zidane consciously headbutting Materazzi as an act of rebellion against the objectification imposed on him by the “media-business” complex, Kaelin framed the scandal as the footballer’s attempt to recover his identity from those state and economic substructures strategically exploiting his image to pursue their vested interests: “he signed his career by re-establishing his proper identity and refuting the objectification
imposed on him” (Kaelin, 2007: 125-6). These sentiments were echoed by Abilash (2005: 2), who perceived Zidane as detonating “the myth that players, even superbly gifted ones and celebrities, are pawns in the hands of team management” – a conviction maintained by Lévy (2006), who considered Zidane’s *geste* to represent:

…A refusal of the halo that had been put on his head and that he had then, quite *logically*, pulverised with a headbutt, as though saying: I am a living being not a fetish, a man of flesh and blood and passion, not this idiotic empty hologram, this guru, this universal psychoanalyst…which soccer-mania was trying to turn me into.

Resembling Jacques Derrida’s (2002) notion of ‘the signature,’ or what Michel Maffesoli (2004) refers to as ‘the shadow of Dionysus,’ Zidane was portrayed in such *myth*’i as an absurd hero, who through his actions consciously renounced the instrumental ‘monument’ ascribed to him by state and commercial power structures. Despite defending Zizou, such counter-narratives deviated from Chirac’s ‘social tragedy’ of racial injustice. Indeed, for some, Zidane’s transgression was not a tragedy at all. For by rejecting of the ‘false analogies’ of the past that Friedrich Nietzsche ([1872] 1995) had associated with ‘monumental history,’ Zizou’s ‘error of judgment’ was celebrated as a symbol of heroic triumph. In short, it was precisely through his notorious *c’up de tête* that the footballer was considered to acquire freedom, breaking the temporal permanence of the governing narrative imposed upon him by deconstructing the social myths upon which his political status relied:

One cannot love a monument…except in an experience itself precarious in its fragility: it has not always been there, it will not always be there, it is finite (Derrida, 2002: 278).

Here, Zidane’s dilemma resembles the plight of Albert Camus’ absurd hero in the *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* ([1942]) 2000), who finds significance in his menial punishment obliging him repeatedly to push a boulder up a mountain. The malleability of symbolic
content enabled Camus to appropriate Sisyphus’s tragic predicament, as conceived by the Greeks, into the celebrated myth’s of existential glory. Parallels between counter-narratives of Zidane’s sporting scandal and Camus’ text indicate that myth’s and absolute moral judgment are incommensurate:

These two certainties - my appetite for the absolute and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle
– I also know I cannot reconcile them (Camus, [1942] 2000: 38).

For by usurping Sisyphus’ conventional tragic fate with resilience, in spite of recognising what is considered to be a futile predicament, Camus rejects orthodox interpretations of the myth:

The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy ([1942] 2000: 123 [emphasis added]).

Indeed, imagine emerges as the key word colouring French audiences’ myth’s for, although spectators corporeally experienced “Zidane’s melancholy…know it…nourished it and feel it,” since “no one in the stadium understood what had happened” (Toussaint, 2007: 13), audiences were left to affectively negotiate Zidane’s “incomprehensible” geste amid a terrain of mediated commentary and consensual social myths. Zidane’s own recollections of the event appear to challenge the romanticised readings casting him as a rebellious anti-hero: “I felt very lonely, deserted and deeply hurt” (2009: n.p.). It is in this sense, as David Macey (2007: 15) points out, that “seeing with the naked eye becomes a blindness,” judgment itself contingent on subjective feelings, which William James ([1899] 1992) referred to as “a Certain Blindness in Human Beings.”

Discrepancies between international press reports condemning Zidane’s irrational “act of violence” and counter-narratives, glorifying the footballer’s headbutt as a ‘heroic’ geste with which to consummate his career (Kaelin, 2007; Toussaint, 2007: 13), reveals that, despite the impact of social myths, myth’s may nevertheless be creatively
appropriated. Clearly such readings could be rejected as indulgent projections, more indicative of what Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) deplores as ‘moral emotivism’ than the moral value pertaining to the incident. Interest in the scandal, nevertheless, required audiences to be affected by Zidane’s transgression – affects themselves informed by a myriad of cultural and embodied points of view. Rather than undermine the historicity of the event, it is proposed that the quotient of readability generated from Zidane’s c’up de tête provided the ‘pp’rportunity for those offended by the footballer’s transgression to energise moral sentiments into civic discourse (even if local media censored the issue). For precisely what is to be clarified through myth’s remains arbitrary and open to argumentation, with the dialectical mediation of tragedy encouraging public debate.

The Media Event: From Mythos to Mythoi

It is precisely in ‘making visible’ private transgressions for public consumption that the press have played such a pertinent role in mediating scandals: disseminating personal tragedies perceived to offend the moral sentiments of the social collective that attain civic significance through their visibility and accessibility in the global domain (Thompson, 2000: 7, 261). No longer restricted by the spatial and temporal locale in which on-field transgressions occur, global exposure of sporting scandals means that the body of the athlete is made routinely available for mass evaluation and judgment. Sport cultivates a particularly fertile ground for scandal, by mediating events through a series of technical devices including slow-motion footage, replays, close-ups, post-match interviews, live sites, blogs and regular public games which can be publicly evaluated in relation to athletes’ off-field conduct (Rowe, 1997: 219). The unprecedented capacity for mass assessment offered by communication media equips spectators with an increased ability to scrutinise conduct in both real time and archival recollections. Rowe and Stevenson (2006: 198) emphasise the central relationship between sociality and spatiality in the domain of contemporary sport by examining the range of ways in which spectators may experience an event within what Rowe (2009) refers to as the “media sports cultural complex.” The development of media technologies entails that conventional aesthetic distinctions between ‘being there’ as a live crowd member compared with ‘viewing from
a distance’ are increasingly problematised by the media’s complex synthesis of spatial and social configurations between audience, text and context.

By questioning the conventional hierarchy associated with viewing events live at the stadium, compared to mediated from a distance, technological advancements have significantly modified the affective dimensions of spectatorship in time and space. Media technologies have notable implications for orthodox conceptions of the temporally and spatially homogeneous crowd as the genesis for emotional contagion and political unrest (Le Bon, [1895] 2002; Sighele, 1891; Tarde, [1892] 1969), indicating that mediated audiences may share common affective experiences that have the propensity to transpire as social movements and civic protest. Of course, live and mediated audiences are disposed to distinct experiences (the latter more technical and visual, the former typically enhanced by the heightened corporeal experience of being in a crowd at a particular moment in time), yet, it is erroneous to suggest that, when mediated from a distance, sport is necessarily less affective. For, as elucidated in Chapter 5, respondents (Étienne, 2008; François, 2008; Xavier, 2008) frequently expressed feeling more affected when ‘viewing from a distance’ due to the increased regulations imposed at stadiums.

Mediated in the contemporary domain of sport, Zidane’s scandal penetrated various global spaces beyond the Berlin arena (where the 2006 World Cup took place). Not only did media visibility extend the event beyond the stadium, in some cases the mediated experience proved more temporally affective than ‘being there’ and watching the game in ‘real time.’ The significance of media communication was particularly relevant to Zidane’s World Cup scandal where, amid referees’ on-field deliberation and scenes of the footballer departing the ground, spectators watching the game live from the Berlin arena, devoid of media commentary, commonly resorted to calling and messaging friends overseas to discover what had occurred given that, “no one in the stadium understood what had happened” (Toussaint, 2007: 13). Ironically, in this instance, the mediated experience appeared more affective than the live uncertainty derived from ‘being there’ at the stadium: “the only ones who did not know what had happened were those in the stadium” (Cohen, 2006: 1). Temporal and spatial ambivalence prompted
some spectators to undermine the historicity of the act: “it simply did not take place, if one limits oneself to the live observation of events in the stadium,” a conviction that Toussaint (2007: 14) attempted to validate with ‘Zeno’s paradox’ - the principle outlined in Aristotle’s *Physics* ([1854] 1996) in which an arrow in motion, reduced to its innumerable halves, is thought to be unable to reach its target. Expelled from the match by a red card, Zidane’s World Cup closure was, nevertheless, a testament to the *reality* of the incident and not merely ‘virtual-reality’ taking place:

> Whatever might be the importance of the staging, the sporting spectacle whose ending is theoretically unforeseeable is a real act, and not a sham in which all events unwind according to what has been determined in advance (Leiris, [1937] 1988: 28).

Notwithstanding the authenticity of Zidane’s headbutt, the technical dynamics affecting spectatorship cultivated considerable global speculation regarding the motivation and effect of the footballer’s action, as the ‘media event’ penetrated international spheres, traversing multiple axes of space and time (Dayan & Katz, 1992).

In “the postmodern age of scandal” (Rowe, 1997: 213), the moral telos ascribed to public transgressions is increasingly complicated by a plurality of contradictory systems of meaning. No longer limited to violating the objective rules of the game, scandals may challenge the very tenets from which prescribed moral behaviour is derived: including orthodox conceptions of gender, ‘race,’ religion, ethnicity and boundaries of the nation state. That scandals are often contested affairs was reflected in disparate readings of Zidane’s headbutt, as spectators manifested a myriad of inconsistent myth’i to negotiate the footballer’s transgression.⁶ Media coverage encountered a comparable collage of competing mythologies – McMillan’s article for *The Scotsman* (2006), highlighting the confusing and competing ideals of present-day masculinity in an article headlined, ‘Mixed Messages Over Role Model of the Modern Male.’ Patrick Mignon (1998) has emphasised that the “relativism of football within French society” is accentuated by France’s Republican ideology of society as a system of autonomous individuals
irreducible to categories of ‘race,’ religion, gender and ethnicity:

If football has a significance, it does so only within that tension between community and society, with the fact that ‘being in the public’ means manifesting that one belongs to some ‘natural’ group (region, culture, age, gender) but through forms of action, in the sphere of politics, which bring to the group a national dimension and inscribe it as a policy of participation in the community of citizens (1998: 85).

Zidane’s mainstream appeal, combined with the Republic’s explicit separation between public and private spheres, emphasises why, particularly for French audiences, the scandal represented a myriad of national inconsistencies. Spectators negotiated the incident amid different conceptions of precisely what Zidane’s Algerian and French heritage signified, whether he acted violently, heroically, as a national saviour, or prioritised kin and masculinist pride over his patriotic duties.

That liberalism endows the demos with the increasing capacity to rationalise myth’s, does not prevent scandals from being informed by national orientations. Scandals are never devoid of current temporal and spatial concerns and, as such, sport’s collective significance is revealed through the mythologies and ideologies the code promotes and disseminates (Rowe & Stevenson, 2006). With Zidane’s scandal situated in social myths that cast the footballer as a ‘race ambassador’ in the nation’s ‘social tragedy,’ Chirac’s ‘tragic hero’ was invested with significance amid spatial and temporal concerns particular to postcolonial France - the segregated nation attempting to reconcile its colonial past and present context of ‘race’ related violence.

Contextualised within the cultural mosaic of postcolonial France, the footballer’s transgression was scripted as a social tragedy only insofar as the event was recognised as representing broader civic misfortune. Meaning was attributed to the event not only through present emotional climates and future aspirations, but recollections of Zidane’s historical role in the Republic. Emotional memories of the footballer propelling Les Bleus
into their 1998 World Cup victory on home soil, and saving the team from an early quarter-final exit against Brazil in 2006, legitimised his heroic stature, reinforcing why ‘the nation’ continued to publicly support their icon in light of his misdemeanour:

I was lucky in that the people really supported me. They were disappointed with what happened but I got many, many messages of support. I was humbled because it told me the *people never f’rg’ t what I did f’ r the French* team (Zidane, 2009: n.p. [emphasis added]).

Or, as said by another:

Just think of Zizou's history and contribution to this sport. Just think of his experience. Remember his moves and tackles…He does not have to apologise and should not have any hard feelings. Time will prove him and will judge Materazzi as well. I am with Zidane all the way (BBC, 2006: n.p.).

In these cases, meaning was actively ascribed to Zidane’s transgression against the background of extant collective representations that reflected the footballer’s *particular* standing in France. Cast as the hero in a performance shadowed by themes of solidarity and racial reconciliation, France’s propensity to mythologise Zidane’s headbutt reflected intersecting temporal axes permeating the country’s emotional climate: including the nation’s past fears of the Algerian war, present conflicts arising from post-war immigration and future hopes of racial integration. It was in this context that Zidane’s symbol was energised with social significance in the nation’s political landscape: “caught in the French psychodrama about multiculturalism” (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008: 304). Captained by Zidane, the multiethnic French team came to symbolise what the nation could be, and yet within Zidane’s symbol, and the collective mythologies and sentiments on which his status rest, there existed different understandings of what it meant to be French, what Zidane embodied, and how his *c’ up de tête* ‘should’ be rationalised.
Even in seeking to protect Zidane’s sacred stature from public condemnation, the narrative framework that his scandal assumed invariably facilitated distinct rationales. Exacerbated by Zidane’s opaque emblem and spectators’ intersecting orientations (affective, temporal, spatial, historical, cultural, national, ethnic, racial, religious and gendered), the event was mediated as a morality tale, yet one which, due to its significatory possibilities, generated confusion about the ‘right’ course of action the footballer ‘should’ have pursued. Staged on an international arena, the World Cup Final provided a fertile ground for the public to question their icon’s motivation, frequently through myth’s producing a more humanised image of their sacred hero and, in the process, negotiating hegemonic social myths through what has been referred to as the critical community. The global exposure of Zidane’s 2006 World Cup exit presented the scandal as a performative device which could penetrate civic consciousness, informing political and cultural debates transcending the domain of sport:

These are by no means lightweight questions about ephemeral pseudo-events, because they go to the very heart of the elusive politics of the popular. Each scandal becomes an opportunity to deconstruct and interrogate those social ideologies and structures to which all forms of popular culture are tethered and from which each seeks release (Rowe, 1997: 204).

Ironically, although scandals metaphorically represent that which is considered “wrong” with society, these amplified “events of shame” may subvert rather than reflect the prevailing moral order (Rowe, 1997: 214). Believed by some and contested by others, scandals often segregate public opinion, with civic responses to these transgressive acts facilitating the opportunity for critical inquiry as well as the cultivation of novel values and social reform (Thompson, 2000: 16). Despite the media’s control over the agenda and extent to which scandals reside in public consciousness, semiological inquiry into these events requires interpretation. Meaning is further coloured by uniquely embodied affective experiences (themselves subject to change over time), each shaping, and in some cases obscuring, myth’s around particular points of view. Zidane’s sacred stature
and Chirac’s capacity to frame the incident as a ‘social tragedy’ meant that French media typically censored public debate by ascribing national sentiments of pity, fear and resilience to the event. The impact of these hermeneutic frameworks are concerning. The narrative imperatives required to rationalise the transgression, nevertheless, ultimately generated controversy and speculation, providing audiences with an arena in which to ‘safely’ debate civic issues beyond the domain of football.

It has been emphasised that there emerged a discrepancy between publicly mediated social myths and the plurality of myth’s expressed in the interviews conducted for this thesis. Respondents revealed a paradoxical tension between public respect for their revered icon and critical inquiry into what motivated his violent gesture, reminiscent of the crowd’s stratified experiences of collective effervescence: “It’s a collective joy, which you feel individually” (Xavier, 2008). The development from a social myth to myth’s is a perpetual process of mediation and subsequently while the latter indicates a plurality of public sentiments that may facilitate what has been referred to as the critical community, the extent to which affective interpretations and selective portrayals of Zidane’s transgression could be considered ‘critical’ remains arguable. Yet, as elucidated in Chapter 5, the civic value of the social tragedy emerged from the sizable collective affected by the scandal, which energised audiences with the impetus to express their voices, and an opportunity to challenge orthodox Republican social myths.

This chapter has examined how in symbolically representing Zidane’s on-field transgression as a social tragedy the footballer was protected from the public scrutiny typically associated with comparable misdemeanours. With the power to control local media, France’s President scripted the footballer’s on-field misconduct as an ‘honourable’ defence of sacred purity in which Zidane’s headbutt signified a broader social struggle against the polluted, racist sentiments of his colonialist aggressor. Communicated within the logic of the sacred and profane, Chirac not only protected Zidane’s image from public scrutiny, but also sought to consecrate his own political reputation by collectively fusing France’s conscience collectively around social myths of postcolonial unity. For Chirac’s social performance to achieve verisimilitude it was
essential that, rather than be depicted as a standard act of on-field aggression, for which
the footballer would naturally expect to be reprimanded, Zidane’s transgression
symbolically represent his-story as emblematic of a broader social tragedy pertaining to
many minorities, for whom the reality of racial discrimination was all too common. From
an Aristotelian (2005: 47-9; [1926] 2006: 229) point of view, only through the social
phenomenon of tragedy could spectators’ sympathetic identification with Zidane manifest
“fear in regard to themselves,” configuring national identity around pity by evoking
fraternal sentiments of fellow-feeling with society ‘writ-large.’

That Chirac orchestrated a successful social tragedy on France’s public stage does
not undermine the capacity for local audiences to contest the scandal. Despite being
prevented for the most part from entering public debate, it has been emphasised that it
was precisely ‘the public’s’ dissimilar moral sentiments that enabled the *critical c’mmunity*
came to fruition. By examining the tension between international coverage of
Zidane’s sporting scandal, themselves subject to dynamic heterogeneous responses, and
national mythologies committed to publicly preserving his sacred stature, this chapter has
assessed the ways in which France’s *critical c’mmunity* not only inherited, but
challenged and negotiated, extant ideologies. For, while social myths inform
consciousness, they do not determine it. A social myth does not interpret itself, but rather,
akin to *myth’s*, requires the actor to rationalise a series of historical episodes into a
significant event. With *myth’s* itself susceptible to propagating discrimination, the
relationship between a social myth and *myth’s* is not necessarily ‘progressive.’ Rather,
these forms reflect distinct ways of comprehending social life: the former driven by a
factual endeavour, the latter reflecting a contemplative quest for emotional clarification.
While the successful incorporation of social myths into tragic performances engenders
*c’llective fusi’n, a c’mmunity’s critique* of these scripts signifies ‘de-fusion,’ only to be
refused again if katharsis is successful is extending personal fear into transubjective
feelings of pity and fellow-feeling towards the hero and society ‘writ-large.’

Interrogating the relationship between a social myth and *myth’s*, accordingly,
reveals how international coverage of the scandal invited spectators to challenge the
political ideologies and mythologies preserved by the footballer’s sacred stature. While Chirac’s authority and Zidane’s grip over France’s consciousette prevented his transgression from receiving the public condemnation associated with comparable scandals, it has been argued that the media’s relentless quest to ‘discover’ the rationale motivating the French footballer’s actions ultimately facilitated discussion and conjecture about issues emotionally pertinent to, yet obscured from, the public domain. Negotiating prevailing social myths inherent to France’s consciousette and particular readings constructed around spectators’ cultural orientations and affective points of view, public opinion encapsulated a myriad of inconsistencies and distinct narratives emblematic of the current age of scandal. Disparate responses were, of course, coloured by the experiences and projections of various authors and commentators, contingent on how the act was scripted, including the genre in which the event was framed, and how Zidane was cast and represented by emotional memories affecting the body politic. In this context, to see may become ‘a blindness,’ as Macey (2007) points out, given that interpretation and interest in the scandal relied on emotional pertinence for audiences to be affected.

Zidane’s exceptional treatment in France’s public sphere reflects the nation’s emotional climate. The footballer was required not only as a ‘race ambassador’ for political and commercial purposes, but simultaneously energised by adoring fans who perceived his headbutt to signify a virile extension of their revered emblem. Emotions emerge in both instances as paramount to propagating and challenging social myths: sympathy preventing the public from reproving France’s sacred icon, while providing the very impetus from which to evaluate his actions. In the subsequent chapter, the affective foundation of the critical community will be explored. From a Neoa Aristotelian perspective it is proposed that with emotional consciousness inherent to the rational configuration of myth’s a more comprehensive notion of rationality and pedagogy are required - an understanding which both acknowledges and cultivates the emotional foundation of ‘critical’ inquiry.
Chapter 5

EQ: Zidane’s Social Tragedy as a Mode of Kathartic Pedagogy

It is the historian who has decided for his own *reasons* that Caesar’s crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of other people before or since interests nobody at all (Carr, [1961] 1990: 11).

In observing that the past can only be comprehended through ‘the eyes of the present,’ E. H. Carr was making a statement that was emblematic of a series of broader social developments in academic thought. The nineteenth-century’s ‘cult of the fact,’ echoed by the deductive reasoning of logical positivism, was gradually being superseded by an appreciation that rationality is itself informed by the cultural context in which one operates. It is the aim of this chapter to demonstrate that the tenets of such convictions may be located in antiquity and remain integral to understanding the symbolic construction and consequences of social tragedy. By situating Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm in pragmatic notions of rationality, the ramifications of constructing Zidane’s transgression as a social tragedy are empirically grounded in the domain of sport.

It has been proposed that the successful evocation of katharsis is contingent on two mutually conditioning systems. As the “first principle” and “soul of tragedy,” a coherent plot is foremost required – what Aristotle (2005: 53) termed *myth’s* - enabling spectators to affectively rationalise the tragic performance around an intelligible sequence of events. “Accomplishing” this process of ‘feeling-realisation’ is itself contingent upon emotional consciousness where, “through pity and fear,” the significance of *myth’s* may be kathartically *recognised* at a safe aesthetic distance, cultivating affective intelligence from these aesthetic experiences. Despite the pertinence of emotions in motivating and sustaining contemplative thought, Neoplatonic and Enlightenment principles promoting
‘pure reason’ have conventionally prioritised cognitive models of consciousness, neglecting emotional dimensions of conscious experience. Contextualising katharsis as a mode of emotional clarification, rather than detached logic, emphasises that rationality requires broader scope across the field of emotional processes. Emotions are required not only to inspire and navigate intelligent thought and action, but c’stitute reflective intelligence: “through pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9). That emotions are essential conduits for deliberative action is imperative to understanding the pedagogical framework of Aristotelian katharsis and will be drawn upon to interrogate the ethical implications of employing Zidane’s World Cup scandal as a tragic vignette of emotional education.

The Rational Configuration of Emotional Consciousness

George Herbert Mead’s (1934: 347-353) theory of the self supports the notion that katharsis requires both reflective and unreflective consciousness. Mead describes these dual notions of consciousness as interdependent processes central to the acquisition of knowledge. Distinguishing consciousness of feeling, the sensual lived experience of the “biologic individual,” from reflection, Mead suggests that this preliminary stage of consciousness is succeeded by emergent modes of reflexive thought integral to the development of mind, self and society:

It is by means of reflexiveness – the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to m’dify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind (Mead, 1934: 134 [emphasis added]).
From this perspective, as a mere organisation of habit the individual is not self-conscious. Unreflective conscious experiences are ways of emotionally apprehending the world, yet, as elucidated in Chapter 2, these feelings do not signify being self-conscious of the emotion. Consciousness of an emotion, according to Mead, emerges from the ‘inhibited act’. When “an essential problem appears,” activity is arrested, prompting different tendencies to emerge in reflective thought as the individual self-consciously adjusts to their social situation: “In a sense the old self has disintegrated, and out of the moral process a new self arises” (Mead, 1913: 374). Distinguished from the “biologic individual,” who “lives in an undifferentiated now” of sensually driven responses, reflexivity equips the “socially self-conscious individual” with the ability to assume self-control by consciously modifying subsequent courses of action in relation to the ‘other’ and a repertoire of inherited modes of conduct and acquired habits.

Conceptualising the development of mind and self as social processes entail that intelligence is not something abstracted from one’s embodied experience, but affectively acquired through practical engagement with the world. Mead’s pragmatic appraisal of rationality resembles William James’ ‘sentiment of rationality’ ([1879] 2005), which considers emotions integral to practical wisdom in their ability to permit action through sentiments of ‘certainty’ and ‘expectancy’ that would remain inhibited if one were to rely on detached logic or calculation alone. While Mead’s (1934: 347) account of the genesis of self-consciousness positions cognitive capacities as imperative in distinguishing the human mind from ‘lower’ species, this thesis has emphasised emotional consciousness as the foundation of katharsis with pity and fear instrumental in enabling spectators to recognise tragedy’s significance. Prioritising reflexivity in the development of mind, self and society, Mead appears to overlook the affective dimension of social awareness. Emotions, nevertheless, play a fundamental role in motivating deliberative praxis, for without “emotional pertinence” one remains detached from life where, as William James (1897: 83) observes, and Jack Barbalet (2007a: 23) reiterates: “the mind [is left] with little to care or act for”. Respondents’ representations of Zidane’s scandal exemplified that the ‘inhibited act’ intrinsic to the tragic climax of the footballer’s transgression failed to affect audiences if incapable of resonating with their emotional being. To rati`nalise,
in this sense, requires an appreciation of the affective and cultural dimensions of rationality, beyond the goal driven procedures offered by rational choice theory or the objective endeavours promoted by logical positivism.

Recognising the emotional foundation of human social conduct alludes to the fundamental role that the phenomenon of distancing plays in fusing spectators to the tragic performance. The successful evocation of katharsis requires that a ‘safe aesthetic distance’ be established between audiences and the tragic plot (*myth*’s). The word ‘safe’ here refers to tragedy’s capacity to affect audiences by representing a mode of enactment proximate enough to draw relevance from their personal experiences, while remaining sufficiently distant from issues considered too sensitive to their own (Aristotle, 2005, [1926] 2006: 229; Scheff, 1977). If there were no emotional connection between spectators and *myth*’s, audiences would become uninterested in the plot and subsequently unable to *rec’gnise* the ethical underpinnings integral to tragedy: “recognition ensuing from the events themselves, where the emotional impact comes from a probable sequence” (Aristotle, 2005: 87). For katharsis is not an automatic process, nor tragedy inherent to the historical episode itself; events are *only* considered tragic insofar as suffering is perceived to be underserved, where emotional recognition is mediated through sociocultural processes. Renato Rizzoli (1999: 11) confirms the fundamental role that emotional consciousness bears on recognising the *tel’s* of *myth*’s:

The emotional effect peculiar to the tragic action is therefore that of promoting the experience of feelings such as pity and fear, which constitute the ultimate end at which the representation of the *myth*’s aims.

As a lens through which to comprehend experience more thoroughly, katharsis locates emotions as necessary conduits for cognitive thought. Katharsis derives precisely from affectively recognising the ‘probable’ or ‘necessary’ sequence of events responsible for facilitating the hero's tragic decline - a *rati’ nale*, as Aristotle observed, itself contingent on feeling fear and pity respectively for oneself and the plight of the hero represented through *myth*’s.
The emotional capacity integral to making classical audiences ‘care’ about social tragedies corresponds to the affective foundation of contemporary sport’s spectatorship. The function of sport, from an Eliasian perspective, is to fulfil a socially conditioned and psychological need to experience spontaneous and unreflective modes of pleasurable excitement. For Elias and Dunning (1986), sport fulfils spectators’ “quest for excitement” as an antidote to the banal routines endured in everyday life. Constituent of the civilising process, they argue that life in advanced industrial societies is routinised to such an extent that people feel increasingly bored and “emotionally stale.” An important factor contributing to the popularity of sport subsequently emerges from its capacity to stimulate emotions, namely the contest’s ability to generate pleasure, excitement and “de-routinise emotional arousal.” This view does not reduce leisure to a “compensatory function” synonymous with hydraulic theories of “cathartic” purgation. Sport both induces and releases tension, with the function of leisure serving long-term figurational shifts in patters of economic, political and emotional bonding (Rojek, 1985: 164).

In representing imaginary settings of play, the performative dimension of sport constitutes integral aspects of social reality. Imaginary, here, does not denote artifice. Rather, from a Durkheimian perspective, imagination is intrinsic to the aesthetic process of representation, wherein experience is comprehended through symbolic association, whose effects are “no less real than any other part of social life” (Maguire, 1992: 106). Operating as “mimetic” styles of play, Elias and Dunning (1986) suggest that sport maintains an elementary concern with providing a “make-believe” setting that evokes the “controlling decontrolling” of emotions at a safe aesthetic distance.iii Struggles between athletes play a central part in these contests, resembling real battles between hostile groups:

The competitive bodily exertions of people in the highly regulated form that we call ‘sport’ have come to serve as symbolic representations of a non-violent, non-military form of competition between states (Elias in Elias & Dunning, 1986: 23).
The capacity for the emotional dimension of spectatorship to both solidify and estrange social bonds was emphasised in Chapter 3, where it was observed that sport frequently polarises spectators and their respective teams within dichotomous ‘us’ and ‘them’ paradigms. Interest in sporting practices also facilitates fellow-feeling through psychological identification and ritualised emotional engagement: a temporary, effervescent process of communion referred to as *collective fusion*. Emphasising the symbolic dimension of fandom, Joseph Maguire (1992: 109) elucidates sports appeal through a theory of emotions that he refers to as spectators’ “quest for exciting significance” (an explicit appropriation of Elias and Dunning’s *Quest for Excitement*). It is apparent that not all individuals feel passionately about sport. The contest’s ability to generate emotions of excitement and pleasure is contingent on spectators’ interests, which are themselves derived from audiences’ affective identification with symbolic elements of the game, teams and certain players.

Academic scholarship on katharsis, nevertheless, commonly maintains the orthodox subversion of emotions to cognitive capacities. In ‘The Paradox of Tragedy’ (2008), Alex Neill asks: How can it be that Aristotle describes the katharsis of pity and fear, two emotions commonly perceived as negative experiences, to be pleasurable? In contemplating this paradox, Neill draws parallels between katharsis and the ‘thrills’ that audiences seek from horror genres. In doing so, however, Neill’s inquiry appears to overlook the ethical significance of katharsis altogether. In describing contemplative learning as a pleasurable experience, Aristotle ([1926] 2006: 229) persistently differentiated tragic fear from popular associations with terror and horror. In fact, his critique of Plato’s *Republic* rests precisely on this point. A well constructed tragedy, for Aristotle, should not ‘shock’ the audience by depicting the reversal of decent men ‘falling’ from good fortune into misfortune given that this does not excite pity and fear but is *mair’n*: literally ‘disgusting’ and ‘polluted,’ provoking feelings of disgust or revulsion. In ‘polluting’ audiences, the emotions derived from observing horror and terror evidently prove to be the antithesis of katharsis: a term defined as emotional clarification through its association with cleansing and purification (Dodds, 1951; Janko, 1992: 342;
Moreover, for Aristotle, tragedy is pleasurable precisely insofar as the hero’s decline is a **mimetic** representation of action, which when experienced at a ‘safe aesthetic distance’ facilitates the pleasures afforded from learning given that rationalising the hero’s tragic predicament remains somewhat ‘distant’ from audiences’ more pressing concerns:

This is why Amasis is said not to have wept when his son was led to execution, but did weep at the sight of a friend reduced to beggary, for the latter excited pity, the former terror (Aristotle, [1926] 2006: 229).

In explaining that audiences will only sympathise with “whole" **myth**’s, where the hero’s decline corresponds to a logical sequence of events, Aristotle (2005: 69-71) was able to critique Plato's rejection of Homeric myth and Greek tragedy. While Plato condemned these mimetic forms for corrupting undiscerning audiences susceptible to “imitating these imitations,” as emphasised in Chapter 2, Aristotle's defence of tragedy rests primarily on the premise that katharsis will only be "complete" in evoking pity and fear if audiences are able to make ‘intelligent’ (meaning rational) connections between the hero's **hamartia** and their tragic downfall. In short, katharsis ‘nly occurs where the affective activation of sympathy (**ele**’s) is comprehensible to reason (Shields, 2007: 387).

It has been demonstrated in forgoing chapters that spectators reconciled Zidane’s scandal as a social tragedy precisely insofar as his c´up de tête was perceived to represent civic injustice in France. Respondents expressed the affective dimension of rationality wherein “those who resembled” Zidane feared that they, too, could encounter what they considered to be undeserved misfortune (Élodie, 2008; Serge, 2008; Xavier, 2008). Tragic modes of **myth**’s mimetically represented Zinédine Zidane, the ‘honourable’ French captain as an embodiment of what Aristotle referred to as "better than most," actively succumbing to **hamartia** by ‘falling’ susceptible to ‘unjust’ factors outside of his control - in Zidane's case, an Algerian minority contaminated by racial discrimination from his Italian antagonist, Marco Materazzi. Jean-Philippe Toussaint confirms the sympathetic fusion between spectators' subjective emotional experience and the
objectified footballer: “Zidane’s melancholy is my melancholy, I know it, I have nourished it and I feel it” (2007: 13). For Toussaint, Zidane's melancholy assumed significance precisely insofar as the incident reverberated with his own feelings, further highlighting that katharsis requires ‘emotional pertinence’ for spectators to affectively rec‘gnise historical episodes as cohering to a rational plot (myth’s).

Spectators’ ability to construct Zidane's praxis into a social tragedy was not only informed by, but necessitated emotional content. Aristotle's (2005: 53) conviction for plot coherence endeavoured to cultivate affective intelligence by prioritising myth’s (plot) above eth’s (character) as "the first principle" and “soul of tragedy," where katharsis was considered synonymous with ‘feeling-realisation’ and the pleasures afforded from learning. Myth’s, as previously outlined, was the term employed by Aristotle in the P’etics to describe the logic structuring a tragic plot. Comprised of three elements: path’s (painful emotions), peripeteia (reversal), and anagn’risis (recognition), Aristotle (2005: 49) “elevated” tragedy above other narratives since the genre represented “complex” structures characterised by reversal and recognition. Elizabeth Belfiore (1992) emphasises that to understand Aristotle’s defence of tragedy, path’s, peripeteia, and anagn’risis must be considered interdependent components of myth’s that contribute to tragedy’s function: the production of pleasure and kathartic clarification from pity and fear. Katharsis requires pity and fear not only to affectively rationalise myth’s into a coherent narrative, but “through pity and fear accomplishes the katharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9). If tragic events are rec`gnised to be arbitrary, occurring from mere chance or through no ‘error’ of the hero’s own, the performance will lack ‘emotional pertinence’ and fail to materialise into an intelligible plot. Novelist Georg Lukács (1971: 126) echoes Aristotle’s suggestion that reflexive wisdom is a derivative of path’s:

By a strange and melancholy paradox the moment of failure is the moment of value; the comprehending and experiencing of life's refusals is the source from which the fullness of life seems to flow.
Intelligence, for Aristotle, accordingly resembles William James’ pragmatic account of the ‘sentiment of rationality.’ That katharsis is ‘marked’ by fluent feeling denotes that the acquisition of practical wisdom (*phrōnēsis*) emerges from affectively recognising why tragedy occurred, where *rec’gnit’n* is synonymous with emotional clarification, rather than abstract cognition or impulsive sentiments merely designed to shock the audience through horror and disgust.

The repercussions of conceiving of katharsis as a mode of emotional clarification are twofold: First, while tragedy may evoke what are commonly perceived to be negative emotions, Aristotle is emphasising that audiences derive pleasure from this aesthetic experience precisely by *rec’gnising* the symbolic structure pertaining to *myth’s*. Second, an appreciation of the emotional configuration of *myth’s* reveals that the tel’s of tragedy is not inherently moral. Rather, the moral meaning attributed to tragedy is symbolically communicated and practically rationalised by contemplating the underlying logic of *myth’s* – logic that is itself informed by embodied emotions and sociocultural processes. Despite being structured around a coherent “beginning, middle and end,” the meaning of which is *rec’gnised* from a *necessary* or *pr’bable* sequence of events, the rationale underpinning tragedy remains contingent on recognising precisely which historical episodes are considered ‘necessary’ to the logic of *myth’s*, rather than “ensuing from the events themselves,” as the *P’etics* (2005: 87) implied.

It would be misleading to suggest that the arbitrary construction of tragedy is merely a shortcoming on Aristotle’s behalf. Instead, Aristotle’s insistence on the universal structure of tragedy reflects his endeavour in the *P’etics* to defend mimetic forms from Plato’s charge of corruption – an enterprise requiring that “poetic excellence” be achieved through the philosopher’s teleological theory of causes where, "It makes a great difference whether something happens because of, or only after, their antecedents" (2005: 65). Rather than consider tragedy inherent to the historical episode itself, the philosopher’s ‘manual’ for writing poetry is motivated by the awareness that events assume tragic significance only through metaphorically synthesising a selection of episodes into the coherent structure of *myth’s*. What Aristotle does appear to neglect is
the propensity for myth’s to evoke diverse responses – despite being constructed with ‘poetic excellence.’ It is Aristotle’s refusal to acknowledge that ‘immoral’ plots may appear tragic and induce sympathy that undermines his kathartic paradigm. In spite of Aristotle’s failure to appreciate the relative reception of tragedy, the utility of his thesis extends beyond the domain of aesthetic criticism. The concept of katharsis established a rationale for affective conduct and, thus, an original appraisal of emotions as evaluative processes grounded in belief and susceptible to reasoned argumentation.

Considering the rational dimension of sport’s spectatorship indicates a shift from conventional endeavours to locate collective emotional experiences as conduits for irrational conduct ([Le Bon, [1895] 2002; Sighele, 1891; Tarde, [1892] 1969]. By focusing on disruptive or compulsive emotions, orthodox crowd theory maintained Neoplatonic dogmas of emotions as irrational afflictions to rational thought, convictions further inserted into popular consciousness by religious abstinence and Enlightenment principles of ‘pure’ reason. The Cartesian Legacy encapsulated by Descartes’ ([1649] 1931) “cogito ergo sum” corresponded to the Enlightenment’s elevation of reason as the enterprise of objective logic over unruly passions, which were for the most part perceived to be obstacles to this pursuit. In emphasising the rational subject’s instrumental quest to master their environment, Enlightenment ethos corroborated with Puritanical asceticism which,

...like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions...for only a life guarded by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature ([Weber, [1905] 1991: 118, 119).}

In contrast to conventional mind-body dualisms, this chapter has endeavoured to demonstrate that rationality is itself embodied by an emotive subject. To suggest that emotions necessarily undermine reason and cognitive faculties is an inadequate supposition given that emotions are required to motivate and sustain deliberative action.
Emotions extend beyond extraordinary, episodic or pathological phenomena, as inherent contributions towards the enterprise of reason in routine operations of social interaction.

Locating rationality in emotional experience may be rendered problematic when considered an antecedent for ‘moral emotivism’: a theory justifying all forms of belief when understood with reference to a specific context. In *Passions within Reason* (1988: 68), Robert Frank highlights the shortcomings of conflating emotions with rationality by analysing two paradigms referred to as the ‘present aim theory’ and the ‘self-interest theory.’ Reducing rationality to efficient means-ends procedures, the former “permits virtually any behaviour to be considered rational merely by asserting that the person prefers it,” even if their conduct appears irrational or detrimental to their well-being. The latter resolves this deficiency by defining rationality as that which serves the actor’s ‘best’ interests, yet remains flawed in its inability to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate means to satisfy these rational interests. For example, while lying during an interview may assist one’s chances of employment, ‘self-interest’ in this case fails to account for the moral dimension of rational experience. Frank concludes by suggesting that although immoral behaviour may appear advantageous to one’s immediate interests, moral action secures the long-term welfare of the individual and society through altruistic dispositions considered rationally imperative to the welfare of the social collective.

Aristotle’s appreciation of the rational dimension of affective experience may initially appear susceptible to moral relativism and the shortcomings of the ‘present aim theory.’ Closer analysis reveals that his social typology of emotions offers an alternative to the narrow conflation of rationality with objective logic and procedural self-interest. In conceiving of rationality as the emotional configuration disposing one to practical wisdom, Aristotle ([1926] 2006) emphasises the emerging view that emotions and rationality are partial and ambiguous to specific circumstances (Nussbaum, 2001; Smelser, 1998), objects and frames of mind, with the corollary being that rational justification is itself encumbered by subjective and sociocultural particularities. To appreciate that emotions are apprehended from a specific embodied experience, towards particular objects and circumstances, suggests that the Enlightenment quest for objective
rationality be replaced by the notion of rationalities, given that what is deemed rational is necessarily situated in the specificities of space and time (MacIntyre, 1981; Turner & Rojek, 2001).

Turner and Rojek (2001: 39-40), nevertheless, point out that conceiving of rationality as a relative enterprise is frequently interpreted as justifying moral relativism when meaning is validated by specific context. For example, Stuart Hall et al.’s (1978) analysis of mugging in *P*’licing the *Crisis* as a ‘rational choice’ resulting from social marginalisation may be seen to condone violence on the grounds of social and economic inequality. That rationality is configured around cultural and emotional dimensions of experience is not synonymous with relinquishing all universal principles upon which society is constructed or positioning emotions as immune from reasoned critique. The strength of Aristotle’s rational appraisal of emotions is that individual well-being is considered interdependent with the *eudaimonia* of the civic community – a conviction attested to by the civic ramifications of social tragedy derived from the hero’s personal transgression. For Aristotle, rationality is not limited to the subjective means-ends procedures characteristic of ‘rational choice theory,’ nor self-interest crudely reduced to selfish behaviour. Rather, situating his theory of emotions in a system of social ethics, Aristotle reveals the indispensable relationship between self-interest and social-interest, wherein personal fear is considered an antecedent of trans-subjective emotions, such as, pity and fellow-feeling. In affectively fusing audiences around the recognition of their common human vulnerability, Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm avoids succumbing to ‘moral emotivism’ by promoting universal tenets that consider subjective well-being to be intimately bound to the welfare of others, while remaining sensitive to the particular contexts in which action is affectively rationalised.

Given that kathartic incorporates cognitive and emotive faculties, an Aristotelian perspective demonstrates that cognition is not incongruous with emotion content. Echoing the emotional dimension underpinning Aristotle's system of virtue ethics, Daniel Goleman’s (1995) study of ‘emotional education’ has more recently alerted contemporary audiences to the essential role that affective processes play in motivating,
and sustaining rational activity, in addition to facilitating ‘healthy’ interpersonal relationships - what he refers to as ‘emotional intelligence’ (EQ). Despite being directed towards psychological endeavours that promote subjective well-being, as opposed to Aristotle’s ethical paradigm, as discussed in Chapter 2, Goleman maintains Aristotle’s thesis that emotions are integral to rational deliberation while considered to comprise an essential social function in solidifying what Durkheim ([1912] 2001) referred to as the c’nsce ce c’llective. Neoaristotelian theories position emotions as ‘intelligent’ dispositions configured around evaluative judgments, distinguished from what Plato ([1930] 2003) considered to be mere impulsive, spirited states absorbing the entire self.

In short, an Aristotelian-Median synthesis of emotions reveals that what Antonio Damasio (1994) calls ‘Descartes’ Error,’ the equating of thinking with cognition, is undermined when knowledge is practically re-c’gnised through creative, affective engagement with emergent problems. Recognising the emotional dimension of reflective intelligence considers katharsis to be a process of ‘feeling-realisation.’ As a mode of emotional clarification, Mead’s analysis of education resonates with Aristotelian katharsis as a process through which affective disruptions are creatively modified into myth’s through a procedure now popularised as ‘emotional intelligence.’ In what follows, classical instructional methods designed to cultivate practically wise citizens through myth’s will be juxtaposed with the mythic dimensions of sport, to examine the pedagogical ramifications of katharsis in different historical and cultural contexts.

Mythos as a Form of Emotional Education

When understood as a symbolic interactionist, a term which Mead never ascribed to his own theories, although his later articles appear to correspond to the description (Joas, 1985), Mead could be criticised for underestimating the significance of emotions in the genesis of self-consciousness. Analysis of his unpublished manuscripts reveals that affective processes featured prominently in his early writings (Baldwin, 1986; Mead, 1894, 1895, 1910). Emphasis on the emotional dimensions of pedagogy may be observed in The Psych’l gy ’f S’cial C’nsce usness Implied in Instructi’n (1910), an unpublished,
rarely cited article, in which Mead examines the significance of what is now orthodox to refer to as ‘emotional education’ (Goleman, 1995). In it, Mead critiques modern teaching methods by considering the social implications of primitive modes of instruction, namely processes of play and imitation that enabled children to seek aesthetic expression in civic mysteries. Classical education was distinguished from conventional attempts to reduce teaching to rote learning techniques, instead seeking expression in play, mimetic representation and the Platonic dictum of the dialectic – where entering the dialectical arena was understood to be a deliberative activity of argument, critique and counter-critique rather than passively ‘absorbing’ a static body of doctrine (Blackburn, 2006). Mead’s point is that it was precisely by evoking emotional content that mimetic representations of action and play enabled students to enter conversations with educators, facilitating affective and reflective consciousness in relation to broader civic issues and members of the community.

Mead considered the ‘inhibited act’ integral to the acquisition of knowledge given that it is precisely the emotions resulting from disrupted ‘passages of events’ that stimulate reflexive deliberation with emergent problems:

It would be a mistake to assume that man is a biologic individual plus a reason, if we mean by this definition that he leads two separable lives, one of impulse or instinct, and another of reason – especially if we assume that the control exercised by reason proceeds by means of ideas considered as mental contents which do not arise within the impulsive life and form a real part thereof. On the contrary, the whole drift of modern psychology has been toward an undertaking to bring will and reason within the impulsive life…rati`nal c`nduct must gr`w `ut `f impulsive c`nduct (Mead, 1934: 347 [emphasis added]).

According to this view, “reasoning conduct” emerges when impulsive conduct breaks down as a result of the inhibited act failing to consummate its desired ends. The basic pragmatic tenets of this thesis are, of course, not unique to Mead, yet his theory of what
has been referred to as “the emotional self” (Engdahl, 2004), emphasises the integral role of emotions in facilitating creative action and critical pedagogy. By emphasising that the emergence of emotions into conscious experience is integral to rational thought, Mead represents these energies in m’ti’n as crucial to actors’ ability to reflexively deliberate between conflicting impulses and, in so doing, intelligently adjust to the problematic circumstances resulting from inhibited actions and social conflicts.

Mead’s emphasis on dialectical instruction is indicative of his conception of rationality as a pr’cess of deliberation derived from affective problem solving. Conceptualising education as an affective interchange of experience, in which one intersubjectively interprets problematic encounters in relation to others, Mead’s analysis of myth’s as a primary apparatus of ‘primitive’ education corresponds to the kathartic rec’gniti’n attained from tragedy:

If the lesson is simply set for the child – it is not his own problem – the rec’gniti’n of himself as facing a task and a task-master is in no part of the solution to the problem (Mead, 1910: 691 [emphasis added]).

Through affective engagement with objective civic issues, myth’s transfers the subject from a passive observer into an active participant. It is essentially the capacity for myth’s to mimetically represent and establish a safe aesthetic distance between subjective experiences and objective concerns, which engages individuals’ interest in pedagogical material, while facilitating affective intelligence in the development of reflexive self-consciousness. Self-consciousness requires affective consciousness and subsequently pedagogical techniques, according to Mead (1910: 693), ought to elicit “the emotional response which the boy has in the primitive community when he has been initiated into the mysteries and the social code of the group which he [or she] has become a citizen”. Resembling Aristotle’s (2005: 37) understanding of mimesis as an “instinctive” means to cultivate phr’nessis (practical wisdom), Mead’s pragmatic method suggests that it is essentially through affective engagement with problematic encounters that the self emerges ‘modified’ from social experience.
Assuming as I do the essentially social character of the ethical end, we find in moral reflection a conflict in which certain values find a spokesman in the old self or a dominant part of the old self, while other values answering to other tendencies and impulses arise in opposition and find other spokesmen…Where, however, the problem is objectively considered, although the conflict is a social one, it should not resolve itself into a struggle between selves, but into such a reconstruction of the situation that different and enlarged and more adequate personalities may emerge. A tension should be centred on the objective social field. The fundamental difference between the scientific and moral solution of a problem lies in the fact that the moral problem deals with concrete personal interests, in which the whole self is reconstructed in its relation to the other selves whose relations are essential to its personality. The growth of the self arises out of a partial disintegration, – the appearance of the different interests in the forum of reflection, the reconstruction of the social world, and the consequent appearance of the new self that answers to the new object (Mead, 1913: 378).

Mead’s analysis of education positions the self-consciousness as a rational process of intersubjective recognition configured around affective experience. In conceiving of the sympathetic imagination as indispensable with refined critical thinking, an Aristotelian-Meadian synthesis suggests that effective educational materials themselves rely on emotional capacities for deliberative thought.

Indeed, methods of ‘emotional education’ are not without a series of problems when applied to the democratic climate of cultural pluralism increasingly dictating instructional contexts. This is because to be effective, rituals presuppose a mutual understanding of intention and symbolic content – objective forms of symbolic communication that Mead (1934) referred to as ‘significant symbols.’ Where the moral authority of traditional norms have weakened, consistent conceptions of moral virtue and
civic responsibility become increasingly difficult to ascertain as exemplified by the
transition from relatively self-sufficient *mechanical* to more complex *organic* societies,
composed of more abstract beliefs and practices (Durkheim, [1893] 1984; [1912] 2001).\(^\text{xi}\)
In spite of the difficulty in establishing a consistent system of virtue ethics affectively
relevant to dynamic cultural constellations, the social dimension of pedagogy remains
integral to emotional education with intelligence configured in relation to civic issues and
other members of the community:

> The process of acquiring knowledge, of giving attention, of evaluating in
> emotional terms must be studied in their relation to selves in a social
> consciousness (Mead, 1910: 693).

For although social myths employed to promote the moral order of civic communities are
susceptible to developing into mechanisms of social control, Mead’s point is that
emotional engagement with instructional material makes students more inclined to pursue
deliberative *praxis*. Considering that Mead's work is primarily received by present
generations as compilations of students’ lectures notes, it remains important to excavate
his theoretical contributions with respect to a broad range of his unpublished manuscripts
and less renowned articles (Joas, 1985). Neglected texts suggest that, rather than
underestimate the capacity of emotions to direct intelligent inquiry, Mead’s latter articles
assume the contribution of emotion content to reflexive thought. In what follows it is
proposed that Mead’s pragmatic method may be employed to enhance Aristotle's
conception of katharsis, positioning emotions as sources of political recreation and civic
instruction integral to the development of self and society in contemporary contexts.

**Sporting Performances as Mythos:**

*Play, Self-Realisation & Collective Fusion*

Sporting performances operate as kathartic forms of political recreation by affectively
engaging audiences in civic spectacles of “moral rebuilding” (Durkheim, [1912] 2001:
While the centrality of ritualised symbolic communication has been displaced in large-scale, complex societies following the rise of secular democracies and a decline in shared systems of belief, the continuation of ‘ritual-like’ sporting performances indicates that rituals have not been completely ‘rationalised’ by the goal driven procedures that Weber ([1905] 1991) associated with the “disenchantment of the modern world” xii (Alexander, 2004a: 528; Goodman, 2006; Mast, 2006). For Elias and Dunning (1986: 37), sport’s recreational capacity functions to fulfil spectators’ “quest for excitement” increasingly absent from the monotonous lives afforded by the ‘rationalising’ consequences of modernity. Despite their intention and symbolic content being more diffuse, as counterparts to the long-term satisfaction attained from well structured lives, ‘ritual-like’ performances maintain spectators’ ‘quest’ for the spontaneous, effervescent energy and c´llective fusi´n generated from heightened, ritualised interactions:

What the innumerable sporting contests mimetically represent is the experience of reliving this excitement, if only in play, the reliving of the excitement through all the tensions and conflicts to the fulfilment which is pleasurable whether the outcome of the story is necessary or sad. The mimetic representation…moves and stirs emotions which are apt to become sluggish in ordinary life (Elias & Dunning, 1986: 73).

Despite suggesting that the excitement derived from sporting contests disrupts more routine operations of social interaction, Elias and Dunning reject conventional analyses polarising work and leisure. “Routinisation captures all spheres of life,” with the stability derived from order and security commonly facilitating feelings of emotional monotony. Given that the propensity for emotions to become “sluggish” is neither intrinsic to institutionalised employment nor limited to the domain of occupational labour, it is not sufficient to treat work as the counter-pole of leisure. With the routines of paid labour occupying most daily lives, the excitement generated from recreational leisure ‘naturally’ emerges as a counterpart to the monotonous habits endured in daily life.

In an attempt to guarantee excitement, the structured format of football relies
upon spontaneous reversals that challenge expectations to ensure that games remain interesting, rather than repetitive and disappointing. To achieve these “tension-balances” sport’s administrators are required to manufacture spontaneity – what Elias and Dunning (1986: 75) refer to as the correspondence between socially generated leisure needs and the structure of the socially instituted leisure events designed to fulfil them. Conversely, Fiske (1991: n.p.) associates the popularity of sport with spectators’ ability “to slip the disciplinary mechanism of the workday world into reverse gear.” Sport, according to this Neofoucauldian standpoint, functions as an “inverted panopticon” where spectators, who are “monitored and totally known” in their everyday lives, monitor players through their “total visibility” on the sporting arena. In considering sport a functional antidote to the regimes of power that Foucault (1977) associated with the governmentality of social life and the rationalising consequences that Weber ([1905] 1991) ascribed to the “iron cage” of modernity, Fiske echoes Elias and Dunning’s (1986: 3, 29, 49, 89) appraisal of sport as a means to evoke the civic “we-feelings” and “controlling-decontrolling” of emotions increasingly sanctioned from public life.

Fiske’s conception of spectatorship as facilitating an “inverted panopticon” is undermined, however, by the heightened police surveillance regulating sporting arenas. It has been well documented that state attempts to manage sport have resulted in a loss of spontaneity and play (Elias & Dunning, 1986; Huizinga [1938] 1970; Shilling, 2008). When Étienne was interviewed for this thesis he was asked, for example, whether he felt more emotional at the stadium, or in the privacy of his own home, to which he replied:

I think perhaps on the contrary, I can feel less emoti’nal [at the stadium] than when I’m in my room with my TV or with my friends because ah…I don’t have all the crowd around because um…when you’ve got all the crowd around you’ve got also to set a certain regard because people don’t know who you are, so you’re not exactly natural and perhaps in my place even if I’ve got some person I will know, I really…I can go “ahh” [excitedly]…I will be more emotional and expressive [at home]. Watching it in a stadium like I told you before, it’s like, you more control yourself
[sic], you like it…but there are cops, there are people you don’t know, it’s not the same thing (Étienne, 2008).

While the respondent’s appraisal could be attributed to other factors, such as alcoholic lubrication or the comfort afforded by residential viewing, his statement, nevertheless, challenges orthodox correlations of collective behaviour with irrational behaviour that are offered by crowd theorists (Le Bon, [1895] 2002; Sighele, 1891; Tarde, [1892] 1969). Ironically, it appears that despite the heightened effervescent atmosphere conventionally associated with being a crowd member at a live event, spectatorship is increasingly hindered by state measures to regulate public conduct in modern, ‘civilised’ societies.

Considering the cultural dimension of sport as a symbolic mode of identity-formation further challenges the notion that spectators are obscured within the ‘inverted panopticon’ as passive observers of the sporting spectacle. The performativity of football fanatics and hooligans, discussed in Chapter 3, demonstrated that spectatorship plays an important role in what Goffman ([1959] 1975) referred to as “the presentation of self in everyday life.” To be a member of a crowd, the category of ‘ultra’ or hooligan involves consciously communicating with live and mediated audiences, wherein one is altered by their collective experience, even if this merely entails modifying conduct to an abstract ‘generalised other’ (Mead, 1934). It was previously emphasised that ‘ultra groups’ engaged in overt racism and discrimination at live events precisely as embodiments of what Riesman (1961) termed ‘the other directed’ personality, where spectators were conscious of being observed by the media and fellow onlookers. Achieving self-consciousness intersubjectively through the presence of ‘others’ positions the symbolic communication of emotions as fundamental to the development of the reflexive spectator (Gerber, 1979; Goffman, [1959] 1975, 1961; Kaelin, 1968; Maguire, 1992). From an Aristotelian (2005: 67) point of view: “recognition is recognition between people,” where self-consciousness is indispensible to social consciousness, or what Mead (1934) termed ‘taking the role of the other’ (even if this entails a more abstract ‘generalised other,’ as opposed to concrete interactions).
Given that “social life is about interdependence and interaction” (Dunning & Rojek, 1992), the spectator’s subjective concern with self-realisation is, of course, itself configurred around long-term social processes. The interactive figuration between self and society exemplifies Elias’ notion of the ‘civilising process,’ which situated leisure historically by correlating the personality structure of the spectator with the social structure in which they operate (Elias & Dunning, 1986). Within this paradigm contemporary sporting contests are considered to assemble around modern capitalist structures by occupying necessary spaces to compensate for the pressures of work. Notwithstanding the historical and cultural dimensions of spectatorship in ‘civilised’ societies (Maguire, 1992: 104), it is the notion of the spectator as an active participant in the sporting performance that is of most interest to the present discussion of katharsis.

Represented and experienced at a safe aesthetic distance, sport provides a protected arena in which audiences may engage with elements of the social performance. Recreational role-play is positioned within the domain of sport as essential to the development of self-consciousness. It is precisely through assuming roles that individuals are able to frame their identity through play commencing with the mimetic representation of action in leisure, evolving into more comprehensive understandings of how one's actions relate to the moral order in which they reside. Pondering the ability for aesthetic media to represent subjective experience, Clifford Geertz asks: “How is it that other people’s creations can be so utterly their own and so deeply part of us?” (2007: xv). Preceding chapters suggested that this mimetic experience of simultaneously inhabiting the role of subject and object relies on identification with emotionally charged symbols. Communicating through evocative symbols, sporting contests enable spectators to negotiate common social myths through myth’s – poetic appropriations through which the self is both rec’gnised and reintegrated within the social order. Within this paradigm, the successful evocation of katharsis was shown to facilitate a critical c’mmunity of what Alexander et al. (2004a) refer to as ‘de-fused’ performances, distinct from ritualised feelings of c’llective fusi’n with the community. The notion of social tragedy elucidated in this thesis emphasises that, by engaging audiences at a ‘safe aesthetic distance’ in a process that Taussig (1992: 176-8; 1993: 237) terms “mimetic vertigo,” pity and fear may
infuse this ‘de-fused’ critical community with a comprehensive sense of ‘fellow-feeling,’ united, albeit abstractly, by recognising their common social ontology of human vulnerability.

The mimetic foundation of sporting performances corresponds to Mead's ‘play stage,’ where individuals acquire self-consciousness by imitating certain social roles. For Mead (1934), this initial mimetic stage of play, in which the child assumes one role at a time, is supplanted by the more sophisticated ‘game stage’ where one is able to judge and reflexively modify their actions in relation to the ‘generalised other’ – an abstract moral order characterised by the social community to which one belongs. It is precisely by ‘taking the attitude of the other’ and sympathetically imagining how ‘others’ perceive them that individuals reflexively modify themselves and the society that they comprise:

We are conscious of our attitudes because they are responsible for the changes in the conduct of other individuals. A man’s reaction toward the weather conditions has no influence upon the weather itself. It is of importance for the success of his conduct that he should be conscious not of his own attitudes, of his own habits of response, but of the signs of rain or fair weather. Successful social conduct brings one into a field within which a consciousness of one’s own attitudes helps toward the control of the conduct of others (Mead, 1910: 403).

Or, to emphasise the intersubjective relation between self-consciousness and what Mead refers to as ‘social consciousness’ more explicitly:

The very nature of this conversation of gestures requires that the attitude of the other is changed through the attitude of the individual to the other’s stimulus...The reaction of the individual in this conversation of gestures is one that in some degree is continually modifying the social process itself. It is this modification of the process which is of the greatest interest in the experience of the individual. He takes the attitude of the other toward his
own stimulus, and in taking that he finds it modified in that his response becomes a different one, and leads in turn to further changes (Mead, 1934: 179).

Mead’s point is that as initiators of social change, emotional capacities are responsible for cultivating what has been referred to as a critical community and enabling the self to alter society:

The only way in which we can react against the disapproval of the entire community is by setting up a higher sort of community which in a sense out-votes the one we find (Mead, 1934: 167-8).

To critique a social myth through myth’s does not entail two exclusionary modes of meaning, nor a radical emancipation from the sociocultural context to which one belongs. Rather, the emergence of myth’s from a social myth signals a stage of development energised by the emotional incentive to modify the ‘inhibited act’ in a process that Hans Joas (1985) refers to as “intersubjective praxis.” It is the enduring mediation between subjective incentives and social norms - what Mead referred to as the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ – that represents the creative capacity for myth’s to modify self and society.

An Aristotelian-Meadian synthesis positions mimetic representation as an integral component of self-conscious spectatorship. Lise Kjølsrød (2003) observed this mimetic process in her study of leisure as a conduit for self-realisation. Distinguishing herself from contemporary currents of ‘cultural pessimism’ (Lasch, 1979; Sennett, 1974, 1998), which lament the rise of individualism in modernity as symptomatic of the “corrosion of character,” “culture of narcissism” and disintegration of traditional communal bonds, Kjølsrød echoes Simmel's ([1911] 1971: 338) suggestion that contemporary society offers a large repertoire of “adventures” that replace conventional civic sources of meaning and may avoid modernity’s alienating impact upon the self: “the atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture.” When established at a safe aesthetic distance, identity may be represented metaphorically on the social stage of
the sporting arena. It is in this context that Mignon (1998: 92) describes football spectatorship as providing a field of self-discovery and experimentation in which individuals may engage in their quest for social significance in the safety of the football arena. Fiske (1991: n.p.) maintains the pertinence of affective play in the construction of identity within the domain of sport: the sporting arena “produces spaces” in which fans can construct identities and relationships that enable them to know themselves differently from the way in which they are known by the “monitoring order.” Of course, of the many possible selves a person may relate to, only some roles are embraced and, consequently, the incorporation of sporting practices into self-supporting narratives requires spectators to identify psychologically with these representations through emotional engagement. When sporting practices are affectively experienced at a safe aesthetic distance, contradictions within the self may be temporarily reconciled by fusing spectators’ unique experiences in common representations manifest through myth’s.

Leisure activities kathartically reintegrate self and society by enabling spectators to rec’gnise their place in the moral order of the social game. Self-actualisation emerges as a major outcome of leisure insofar as committed participants draw on their emotions to acquire practically the skills and wisdom necessary for reflexive engagement in civic society. As emotional and intellectual modes of expression, when successfully performed, leisure activities have been shown to facilitate c’llective fusi’n:

A fleeting unity with your surroundings where, rather than merely segregate self and society through the combat of sport, there emerges a melting of the two (Orlick, 1990: 4-5).

A primary outcome of katharsis derives from tragedy’s ability to temporarily fuse individuals to an established moral order in an emotionally charged performance. While Platonic paradigms limited moral instruction to the domain of ‘philosopher kings,’ sporting practices dem’cratically engage the broader dem’s (common people) through sport’s mainstream appeal to popular consciousness and mediated accessibility for public consumption. Popular culture in general, and sporting practices in particular, reveal the
Strategic incorporation of social myths in public performances as opportunities to propagate ideological ‘truths’ and moral values to affect the social collectivity. Sporting rituals convey that ‘life is more than an egoistic performance’ (Carroll, 2008); sport symbolically communicates an individual and group ethos, emblematic of local and national values and exemplars of a culture’s moral ethos in general.

Suggesting that “the addiction to sports marks an arrested development of man’s moral nature,” Veblen (1925: 170) denounced leisure activities as juvenile. To claim that sport has moral significance may appear absurd yet, from a Durkheimian ([1912] 2001) standpoint, the moral foundation of sport emerges when rules are broken and violations of the sacred threaten the established code of the game. Structured against the logic of the sacred and profane, the social significance of Zidane’s sporting scandal derives from its ability to highlight that, despite declining religious practices in modern democracies, France’s ‘secular’ Republic remains sustained by an established moral order, however opaque it may appear. Just as Mead valued the capacity of myth to affectively engage students with instructional materials, the social phenomenon of sporting scandals involve transgressions that provoke public debate by offending the moral sentiments of the conscience collective in which the scandalous incident occurs (Thompson, 2000: 13). It is important to reiterate that this process of what Durkheim refers to as “moral rebuilding” is essential to the religious dimension of sporting performances:

For when a rite functions only as entertainment, it is no longer a rite ([1912] 2001: 284 [emphasis added]).

To elevate tragic drama beyond mere “spectacle,” Aristotle (2005) similarly held that mimetic forms required the moral significance derived from tragedy’s two primary components: myth’s (the tragic plot) and ethos (character). While on-field violence appears to challenge the ‘moral’ underpinnings of sport, the existence of a moral order emerges when sporting administration, teams, players and spectators are reprimanded for violating the code by ‘bringing the game into disrepute.’ Congruent with Durkheim’s appraisal of the religious dimensions of secular life, as a manifestation of society’s moral
order, sport classifies on and off-field conduct against the logic of the sacred and profane. The moral foundation of sport is further conveyed by Mead’s (1934) metaphor of the ‘game stage’ where, analogous to the rules governing the sporting contest, individuals reflexively adjust to the actions of other ‘players’ and ‘rules’ regulating the society to which they belong.

Commercialisation has unquestionably impacted on spectatorship, yet it would be spurious to infer that capitalist movements towards commodification have entirely eroded the moral dimension of sport. While the allure of financial gain increasingly positions contest, success and a desire to win as the hallmarks of commercialised spectator sport, sporting practices continue to communicate evocative social myths pertaining to cultures’ moral ethos through the circulation of club values, game regulations and the heroic projections of ideal character types. Represented at a safe aesthetic distance, the moral ethos of sport enables spectators to identify with heroic virtues of courage, skill and self-sacrifice, while simultaneously allowing viewers to imaginatively project narratives onto the hero through aesthetic creation. The sporting hero emerges in this context as a representative source of inspiration:

Man has made his victory a spectacle, so that it might become the victory of all those watching him and rec’gnising themselves in him (Barthes, 2007: 9 [emphasis added]).

The increasing tendency to conflate heroism with celebrity occupies a precarious place within conventional prototypes of the hero as those who have accomplished ‘great deeds’ (Armstrong, 2005; Boorstin, 1964; Rojek, 2001). As will be elucidated in Chapter 6, the moral framework of katharsis places an even greater emphasis on the contestation of heroic role models in sport. Contemporary sport’s spectatorship tends to be characterised by a romantic celebration of amateurism as ‘morally superior’ to the professionals ‘paid to play’ (McKay et al. 2001). This orthodox view proposes that altruistic values of comradeship and self-sacrifice, as well as skill, courage and fair play, underpinned the ethos of conventional sportsmanship where players exhibited unyielding attachments to
Commodification is considered for the most part to undermine ‘authentic’ fandom, with commercialisation thought to manipulate ‘cultural citizenship’ (Miller, 2006). Nick Hornby’s *Fever Pitch* (1992) exemplifies such non-consumerist passion where ‘nothing matters but football,’ in contrast to impressionable ‘fair weather supporters’ whose interest fluctuates with new players and team success (Foer, 2004; Giulianotti, 2005; Williams, 2006). In spite of the impact of commodification on sport, this thesis maintains the integral role that ‘moral sentiments’ play in fusing spectators to the established code of the game.

Notwithstanding the importance of emotions in constituting the routine operation of all spectatorship, research on the affective dimension of sporting contests generally remains focused on the disruptive behaviour of the crowd. Gary Armstrong’s *Football Hooligans* (1998: vii), for example, commences with an acknowledgment of the author’s journey from an emotional fan to an intellectual spectator as though these adjectives describe separate states of being. Highlighting the pragmatic connection between emotion, thought and action, this thesis rejects the orthodox notion that intelligence is limited to cognitive reflection distinct from emotion content. Challenging conventional depictions of the crowd as an ‘unconscious mass’ (Le Bon, [1895] 2002; Park, [1904] 1982; Sighele, 1891; Tarde, [1892] 1969), interviews conducted for this thesis exemplified the stratification of affective judgments on issues emerging through sport. While some spectators projected heroic narratives onto Zidane, others were unable to sympathise with the footballer, rendering katharsis ineffective. This is not to say that those uninterested in sport are morally inferior to avid spectators, it simply illuminates William James’ thesis that “emotional pertinence” is required for meaningful social action. Moreover, such a view corresponds to Alexander’s (2002: 8, 2004d) model of ‘cultural trauma,’ where for an audience to feel path’s from tragic events that they have not directly experienced, symbolic extension and psychological identification are required. Katharsis requires spectators be affected by tragic representations with emotions providing the foundation for self-realisation and collective fusion. Although clubs are internally and externally divided by distinct moral codes, the significance of sport as a moral apparatus is maintained by its ability to operate as a medium representing a culture’s ethos. Sporting
scandals invite crowds to comment on these spectacles and, subsequently, while the ‘ritual-like’ dimension of spectatorship encourages solidarity, sporting performances also provide spectators with the ability to transform ‘mass’ consciousness into a stratified critical *community*.

When established at a safe aesthetic distance, sport provides an arena in which audiences may energise the moral sentiments offended by sporting scandals and provoke civic debate: “in sport he [the spectator] is a participant, an actor” (Barthes, 2007: 59). The emotional impact of these mimetic representations of action in sporting performances explains why, for Aristotle (2005: 47-9), katharsis is contingent upon “the mode of enactment, not narrative.” For even though tragedy necessarily assumes a narrative form (myth’s) in which to render the performance comprehensible: “dramas are so called because they represent people in action.”

The transference of the hero’s on-field transgression into public consciousness challenges the theatrical device of the fourth wall separating performance from reality. Considered in this light, scandals present opportunities for global audiences to critically deliberate about the moral values perceived to be transgressed in sport. Thus, while Boorstin (1964) reduces celebrity scandals to a “human pseudo-event,” the increased visibility and accessibility of communication technologies mediating the ‘fall’ of ‘public personalities’ emerge as vehicles to stimulate debate, accountability and social inquiry for those affected by the transgressive act (Rowe, 1997; Thompson, 2000: 19-20). For this reason, to critique celebrity scandals as “pseudo-events” does not entail that these events are fake. Despite being arbitrarily constructed from a series of historical episodes, events maintain evocative symbolic significance that often materialises into deliberative *praxis*. Negotiating proximate social issues at a ‘safe aesthetic distance,’ sporting scandals have the capacity not only to reflect but also to reorient spectators’ values in an intersubjective process of self-realisation and critical transformation of the *community* ‘writ-large.’ It is in this sense that myth’s pertaining to Zinédine Zidane’s World Cup scandal are considered pertinent in reflecting and informing France’s moral order. In what follows it is proposed that despite the ambivalence of katharsis as a pedagogical
apparatus, social tragedy remains morally significant in modern life. By turning the misfortune of one footballer into a visible testimony to the everyday struggles of many ethnic minorities living in France, Zidane’s social tragedy had important repercussions since part of what was at stake in contesting his scandal were the very resources of reputation and trust upon which the power of those with symbolic investments in history depended.

**Moral Sentiments of Rationality**

The extent to which Zidane’s World Cup transgression affected France’s moral order was illuminated by the duration and range of media forms devoted to covering the scandal. Not only were political leaders, sporting commentators and the public embroiled in speculating on the issue, the scandal became a tribute to the ethos of France as public figures fervently defended their icon’s behaviour as an example of righteous indignation. Interrogating how Zidane was rationalised as a national hero in spite of his transgression, the pedagogical ramifications of aesthetics texts appropriating the French footballer’s 2006 World Cup scandal will be explored.

Heroic representations of Zidane were particularly evident in two texts released in 2006 within months of the scandal: Gordon and Parreno’s film *Zidane: Un portrait du XXI siècle* (Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait) and Jean-Phillipe Toussaint’s *La Melancolie de Zidane* (The Melancholy of Zidane). In the latter, Toussaint (2007: 15) casts Zidane as the existential hero of a tragic narrative scripted around his dismissal from the 2006 World Cup Final. France's iconic hero is represented as the melancholic victim of a preordained tragic fate: “caught by the hostile divinities of melancholy.” In addition to suggesting that divine forces predetermined Zidane's tragic *praxis*, Toussaint undermines the footballer’s culpability through associations with Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil* ([1886] 2003), where all actions are *rationalised* as intersecting incidents, and so unable to be morally condemned as isolated events. Referring to “Zidane’s paradox,” Toussaint evokes obvious comparisons to ‘Zeno’s paradox’ (as cited in Aristotle’s *Physics*), further relinquishing responsibility for his on-field transgression: "motion is impossible, because an object in
motion must reach the half-way point before it gets to the end” (Aristotle, [1854] 1996). Zidane, according to this view, cannot be held solely responsible for L’Affair Headbutt given that it was an intersubjective action requiring active engagement from both players.

Representing Zidane’s tragic closure as a preordained, existential revolt may be seen to excuse the violence pertaining to the footballer’s transgression by rationalising the moral significance of the incident relative to the culture in which it occurred (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008). Disrupting the final minutes of the game, Zidane’s transgression reduced France to a 10-man team to Italy’s 11, depriving Les Bleus of their captain and arguably best goal scorer. Consequently, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the indiscretion of the three-time FIFA world footballer, whose preeminence was further illuminated by his achievement in securing the Golden Ball award for the best on-field during the World Cup Final by half time, had a considerable impact on Italy’s 5-3 victory over France in over time (responsible for helping Italy “get-a-head” (Pearson, 2006: n.p.), as one blog recalled). It was observed in Chapter 4 that while English fans voted David Beckham the nation’s primary enemy following his expulsion from the 1998 World Cup for similar on-field misconduct, sending the footballer death threats and hanging effigies of him outside British pubs, Zidane remained relatively immune from national resentment. It is unlikely that other members of the French team would have escaped persecution in these circumstances yet, as previously discussed, the particular representation of Les Bleus’ captain as a tragic victim must be situated within the moral logic of the sacred and profane, including how Zidane’s revered symbolic status affectively pertains to a culturally diverse spectrum of spectators.

While the ostensible construction of Zidane’s World Cup misdemeanour as a social tragedy may be considered arbitrary, Materazzi’s racial provocation amplified moral issues resonating with French cultural sensibilities. The country’s turbulent social relations provided a fertile ground for scandal, as what could have been considered merely a typical example of on-field aggression proceeded to be evaluated within discourses of ‘race,’ ethnicity, class, culture and religion. Suggestions that Zidane’s transgression was emblematic of the footballer defending his Algerian heritage must
accordingly be contextualised within the emotional climate specific to France’s political geography. xx Situated within France’s political landscape of postcolonial guilt, these ‘geological upheavals of thought,’ to refer to Proust’s ([1927] 2000) metaphor of affective phenomena, had a considerable impact on the value that local audiences attributed to Materazzi’s provocation. David Rowe (2008a) has emphasised that shifting postcolonial attitudes in Europe increasingly challenge the conventionally racist attitudes deployed in ‘white-nonwhite binary models.’ France’s public mediation of the scandal represented such a shift, with the lived and inherited emotional memories of Algerian minorities in France, including the resentment of the Pied N’îre towards their former colonisers, xxi for the most part scripting Zidane’s c’up de tête as a heroic geste of purification juxtaposed with the racial contamination engendered by his ‘villainous European persecutor.’ Had the event occurred several decades earlier, before France’s public imagination had been scarred by the emotional turmoil of the Algerian war, Zidane’s gesture would have certainly evoked different emotional memories and come to symbolically represent alternative values. Appreciating the temporal and spatial dynamics of katharsis indicates that the construction of social tragedy is not merely determined by evocative cultural symbols. For these symbols to be affective, meaning must be rationalised by an embodied spectator.

**Zidane: Hero or Villain?**

Zinédine Zidane’s social tragedy operated within archetypal paradigms of the tragic hero. Despite personifying cultural values that manifest distinctly in time and space, the hero’s trajectory corresponds to an elementary form: their journey embodies the individual’s quest for meaning and salvation within society’s moral order (Campbell, [1949] 1993; [1987] 2003). Characterised by a series of testing endeavours, the hero enters the social imagination by pursuing a cause greater than themselves. xxii Communicated through emotionally charged symbols of the sacred and the profane, it was Zidane’s perceived journey of physical eminence and self-sacrifice that elevated the French footballer within the nation’s moral order as a heroic emblem of the ‘greater good.’
There is irony in locating Zidane’s transgression within tropes of the archetypal hero, virtue and national honour. Despite what appeared to be an act of masculine pride and uncontrolled aggression, defending the ‘honour’ of kin over team responsibilities and game regulations, Zidane maintained that he prioritised the team over personal success: “I favour those who are group-centred, the team players, over those who place importance on individualism. I think of myself as someone who put the team first” (2009: 2). Yet, as discussed, precisely which ‘team’ took precedence during the World Cup Final remains arguable.

It has been emphasised that Zidane’s headbutt was scripted for the most part by French audiences as a social tragedy by framing the footballer’s transgression within themes of self-sacrifice. Situating Materazzi’s provocation within the political logic of the sacred and profane, the Italian’s alleged racial slur cast him as the embodiment of ‘polluting,’ colonialist evil, with Zidane’s headbutt symbolising a noble defence of his Algerian heritage and Republican French ethos. As an extension of this symbolic logic, Zidane was cast as the ‘good,’ pure hero through whom France’s colonialist past could be redeemed – his headbutt coded morally through a ‘logic of affect’ that transformed Zidane from villain to victim, and finally victim to victor. The broader ramifications of communicating Zidane’s scandal in this manner was that through offending the moral sentiments of the social collectivity, the footballer’s personal on-field transgression was hermeneutically inscribed as a national insult – a social tragedy.

Those sympathetic towards Zidane commonly rationalised his transgression through the "psychological process of identification" which transforms "athletes into symbolic representations of social groups” (Guttmann, 1992: 158). Despite the media portraying the scandal as a social phenomenon offending the moral sentiments of the broader collectivity, interviews conducted for this thesis indicate that sympathy for Zidane for the most part reflected cultural forms of identification rather than society ‘writ-large.’ It was observed in foregoing chapters that psychological identification with ‘those who resembled’ Zidane was paramount in communicating the scandal through evocative symbols that reconciled his transgression as a sacrificial act of ‘honour’ through
a series of social myths and discourses of ethnic pride. The corollary was that sympathy for the French captain corresponded to spectators’ cultural identity. This point, worth reiterating, was exemplified by Élodie (2008), a female French immigrant of Turkish descent:

Yeah, I really felt sorry for him. I can say that...because...if I were, if I was [sic] him...what would I do? I come from a country, which is...not the same as his origin country maybe, but I can understand the reaction. I know what it means to...I don’t support it that someone saying something about your sister or mother that you know, hitting them. But I come from that culture....when I see it there in a final match of the...the World Cup I could understand him, I think. And then I felt s’rry because he didn’t mean it, he didn’t mean it (Élodie, 2008 [emphasis added]).

Élodie demonstrated that coming from “that culture” enabled her to experience emotions of pity and fear necessary to accomplish katharsis. It was precisely by sharing a common ethnic heritage with Zidane that cultural identification extended Élodie’s personal fear into trans-subjective feelings of pity for the footballer as she “felt sorry” for Zidane, sympathising with his ‘undeserved misfortune.’ Facilitating a sense of affective recognition these emotional responses of pity and fear enabled Élodie to “understand the reaction,” moreover to “understand him.”

Serge (2008) and Xavier (2008), also of Turkish descent, illuminated the effect of cultural identification on framing the scandal within discourses of ‘race’ and nationality as an honourable defence of Zidane’s ethnic origins:

I think he did right. Yeah...It was wrong at the end. To hit someone is wrong in the French understanding. In mine? No, it’s not wrong. If he deserves, I do, so (laughs)...I was thinking he did the right thing. I would have done much worse if I was [sic] in his place [laughs] (Xavier, 2008).
By rationalising Zidane’s transgression with respect to a specific cultural context, the respondent not only excused the violent action, he applauded it, transforming what could have been considered a selfish, aggressive act into a symbolic representation of self-sacrifice and national pride. The tendency to frame Zidane’s headbutt as an ‘honourable’ gesture was a common theme propagated by French media:

> Long live Zidane, you have put the dignity of a whole people, or even of a single man, before a cup awarded by the white world to those who keep quiet (Lasne, 2006: n.p.).

The above statements allude to the shortcomings of rationalising Zidane’s scandal according to ‘moral emotivism.’ Interviews reinforced that moral conceptions of ‘right’ action are encumbered by leniency towards audiences’ cultural context. By casting Zidane as the virile representation of ‘pure’ honour, such appraisals may be seen to condone violence by justifying anti-social conduct as a derivative of social and economic disadvantage. Consequently, with kathartic recognition contingent upon subjective interpretation, the emotional configuration of rationality must remain open to critical deliberation and reasoned argumentation.

Recognised by many as restoring Algerian ‘honour,’ Zidane’s emblematic status was publicly confirmed outside France when he received Algeria’s highest honour: the Athir medal. Referred to as ‘Yazid’ by youths of North African origin, this process of psychological identification evoked sympathy for the footballer as ‘one of us’ (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008: 305). As the son of Algerian immigrants, ethnic characteristics are readily projected onto the French footballer, as in the case of, the North African news website, Magharebia:

> Algerians strive to find elements of ‘Algerianess’ in Zidane…Algerians see the player [Zidane], who is proud of his heritage, as one of their own. Many Algerians consider Zinédine Zidane to be Algerian despite his French nationality (Aflou, 2006: n.p.).
Although avoiding explicitly discussing the particularities of his Kabylie heritage, including political conflicts between the region and the Algerian government, Zidane has been active in accentuating his cultural identity:

I have always been immensely proud of my African origin. It is one of the things that propelled me this far…My family is very proud of me, but I am very proud of them and where they come from. I am proud that they come from Kabylie. It is a special place and my roots there are important to me. We used to go all the time to my father’s home village when we were young…I am proud that my father is Algerian (Hussey, 2004: n.p.).

Zidane’s statement was visually reinforced by a television advertisement for a Kuwaiti mobile telephone company. Filmed in France, the advertisement portrays the footballer as an emblem of hope and reconciliation, embodying these ideals through the image of him embracing immigrant children while adorned in a jersey for the Algerian national team: a team he is symbolically considered to be part of, despite having never played for. Engaging in humanitarian work in Algeria, including donating his endorsement income to Algerian charities and victims of the 2003 Boumerdes earthquake, providing local schools with computers and co-sponsoring the Children of the Sahara Association, Zidane has actively consecrated himself as a ‘significant symbol’ of Algerian pride.

**Kathartic Instruction or Violent Aggression?**

It is in this context of Zidane being characterised as a devout Algerian Muslim that the Italian periodical, *La Repubblica* (2007: 1), framed the footballer’s transgression as a ‘noble’ response maintaining ‘the honour of a Muslim woman’ (an ironic association considering Zidane’s secular attitude towards his religious heritage). Declaring, “I am a man,” in an interview conducted with *Canal Plus* (2006a) shortly after the event, Zidane’s actions were further portrayed as defending ‘his women’ - sentiments accentuated by the footballer’s mother, who emphasised that she was proud of her son’s
‘honourable’ action. Structured around the political logic of the sacred and profane, notions of ethnic ‘honour’ recuperated Zidane’s violent outburst from moral culpability. For, while providing what he rec’gnised to be a poor example to children, Zidane’s headbutt was considered by many to be morally just when rationalised as a defence his sister’s ‘honour’ and Algerian salvation in general.

Social myths rationalising Zidane’s transgression as proudly defending ‘ethnic honour’ must be interpreted with caution. The disturbing ramifications of anthropological functionalism emerge, as Ernest Gellner (1970) forewarned, when abuses of basic human rights are justified with respect to specific cultural beliefs and values. Considered shameful enough to offend the moral sentiments of the social collectivity, religiously motivated ‘honour’ killings for ‘crimes of dishonour,’ such as rape and violence against women, attest to the precarious rationale of ‘moral emotivism’ motivating these acts (Nussbaum, [1986] 2001; Wikan, 2008). With spectators impressionable to the allure of the footballer’s celebrity and extant social myths concerning ‘race’ and religion, it is evident that scripting Zidane’s transgression as an ‘honourable’ act of ethnic pride may accentuate rather than erode symbolic violence.

Examining Zidane’s scandal on the basis of public sentiment makes it difficult to reconcile the footballer’s ‘tragic’ geste within an ethical paradigm of katharsis. On the one hand, psychological identification with Zidane grounded in ‘race’ suggests that, despite being integral to katharsis, sympathy may ameliorate ethical instruction. Partial to ‘moral emotivism,’ a more sinister dimension of pity was exemplified by Élodie’s (2008) conviction: "I really felt sorry for him...he didn't mean it, he didn't mean it" (despite Zidane publicly confirming that he did not regret his actions). Conversely, those uninterested in French football or unsympathetic towards France’s ‘tragic’ hero commonly perceived the event from a detached point of view, mostly as signifying an aggressive act of masculinist violence. For uninterested spectators the incident remained a matter too distant from their concerns, too remote from their sensibilities to achieve the affective outcomes and appropriate aesthetic distance necessary for katharsis to actualise.
A lack of emotional engagement renders it incomprehensible for those outside French football contexts or unsympathetic towards Zidane’s reversal of fortune that his final gesture could be rationalised as a ‘tragic’ sequence of events, let alone evoke a kathartic outcome. The emotional dimension of katharsis explains why those uninterested in football and unsympathetic towards France’s national hero generally suggested: “This is a story of a man driven to an irrational act for which he feels no remorse, for which in fact he feels nothing” (Cohen, 2006: 1). Writing for the Daily Telegraph (2006), Thompson reiterated this view, headlining: “Lack of Shame will Forever Tarnish Zidane’s Legacy,” who became with “one gesture a bad example to thousands of children in the housing estates who dream of being a future Zizou.” While criticism mainly emerged from international journalists unaffected by France’s cultural emblem, local Frenchman, François (2008), condemned Zidane’s character, highlighting that as a national icon the footballer remained immune from criticism:

…in France you can’t criticise an icon, you can’t…and Zidane is phew [sighs]…a big icon. You can say nothing bad about Zidane. Zidane is not a good guy, but you can’t say nothing.

That Zidane’s headbutt was not an isolated incident, but one of fourteen misdemeanours in his football career, was for the most part obscured by local audiences. The nation, as represented in the French press, nevertheless, continued to respond with what Schneidermann referred to as ‘Zizou-mania’:

Saint Zidane has hit out, and everything is a shock in this headbutt...A shock between the raw and brutal photo of this action and the long-term carefully constructed media image of Zidane as the wise, kind man involved in helping sick children; the shock of the abyss opening up beneath the secular sanctification of Zidane in the Pantheon of France’s great men...Everything is a shock, and then initial reactions of a traumatised France reveal a country obsessed by its worship of Zidane (Schneidermann, 2006: n.p.).
Of course, French authorities could not publicly condone the violence underpinning the action, which Marie-Georges Buffet, the Minister for Youth and Sports described as ‘unpardonable.’ French media, nevertheless, generally obscured the scandalous headbutt from the ethos of their sacred icon. These contradictory projections onto Zidane’s transgression initially appear to refute the kathartic significance of ‘social tragedy’ with the footballer’s rec’gniti’n of his midemeanour occupying an ambiguous position within Aristotle’s moral paradigm. For, while FIFA explained on its website that “during the course of their hearings, both players also apologised to FIFA for their inappr’priate behaviour and expressed their regret at the incident” (2006: n.p.), in an interview conducted with Canal Plus shortly after the scandal, Zidane made it clear that he did not regret the act:

*I can’t regret what I did* because that would mean that he was right to say what he did, and that I can never do. He wasn’t right to say what he did, no way. No way (Zidane, 2006a: n.p. [emphasis added]).

Despite apologising for the consequences of his actions, insofar as headbutting Materazzi provided a poor example for children prone to emulating their hero’s transgression, Zidane (2006a: n.p.) reminded the public after the match that he did not feel remorse. Headbutting Materazzi was justifiable, according to Zidane, when rationalised as an ‘honourable’ response to insults made towards his family and perhaps, as a corollary, his Algerian heritage and postcolonial identity. Juxtaposing Zidane’s recollection of the event to that of FIFA (2006) makes it apparent that, by rationalising scandals through myth’s, the heroes cast in these ‘morality plays’ are spoken for by the public. Jiwani (2008) raises this concern emphasising that, by attributing the footballer’s actions to his Algerian heritage, the media invariably neglected the sexist comments underlying Materazzi’s provocation and, in the process, subordinated feminist interpretations “within a discourse of chivalric masculinity.”
By defending Zidane’s scandalous transgression within discourses of ‘race,’ both French media and public may paradoxically amplify Materazzi’s provocation through reiterating sensationalist frames of reference pertaining to ‘the Orient’ and speculative representations of Muslims fanaticism. The dialectical form of myth’s presents the opportunity for the public to challenge prevailing injustices in a global forum as affective concerns manifest as politicised debate. In this sense, the re-presentation of social tragedy becomes as significant, if not culturally more so, than the actual transgression itself. In making the tragic vignette of the hero resonate with the unfortunate circumstances pertaining to many, mimetic engagement with civic tragedies provide opportunities for emotional clarification that may cultivate novel norms and values through publicly contesting the scandalous transgressions at the heart of personal tragedies in the symbolic realm through claims and counter-critiques.

Given that katharsis relies on the affective rec’gniti’n that hamartia facilitated the hero’s tragic downfall, Zidane’s lack of remorse appears to obscure the scandal’s tragic significance. With the phenomenon of distancing and “mimetic vertigo” so integral to “accomplishing” katharsis, Zidane’s failure to emerge enlarged from his transgression, or rec’gnise his action as an ‘error of judgment,’ indicates that audiences may likewise remain unperturbed by the footballer’s transgression. Interpreted within gendered, religious, racial, ethnic and national social myths of honour and pride, spectators, political figures and media commentators for the most part appeared to condone the violence facilitating Zidane’s ‘tragic fall.’ By situating the footballer’s transgression within ideological paradigms of ‘saintly’ self-sacrifice, preordained tragedy and existential crisis, Zidane’s sacred stature remained immune from public criticism, so rendering the notion of a tragic ‘fall’ obsolete.

Diverging from conventional archetypes of the tragic hero, whose climactic recognition of hamartia was considered integral to tragedy’s ethical function, by failing to rec’gnise his ‘error of judgment’ and arguably refraining from experiencing a tragic ‘fall’ at all, Zidane’s transgression appears void of kathartic significance. This prompts the question: Can audiences rec’gnise and learn from Zidane's ‘tragic error’ even if he
fails to do so? Traditionally, tragic genres paralleled the fall of the hero with the destruction of their external world, thereby, enabling audiences to *recognise* the consequences of human agency through its implications for the broader community. Zidane’s World Cup scandal deviates from Aristotle’s orthodox format with the footballer’s sacred stature preserved in spite of his *c’up de tête*. Mimetically reflecting what appeared to be Zidane’s internal state of no remorse, media commentators, spectators and political figures largely responded to his misdemeanour by emphasising the grandeur of his heroic act as solidified by national honours and "unconditional love" towards "France’s most popular person" (Léon, 2008). Thus, it must be asked, what did audiences kathartically *recognise* from Zidane’s World Cup transgression? If there is no *recognised* ‘error of judgment,’ no remorse towards the actions facilitating his tragic decline, can Zidane’s *myth’s* be considered to mimetically cultivate kathartic clarification?

While Dauncey and Morrey (2008: 318) propose that Zidane’s final act and aesthetic representations of it “ultimately offer little insight,” the issue seems to be more complex than initially suggested. *Myth’s* arising from Zidane’s World Cup scandal may be more aptly understood in the term’s plural form, *myth’s*, and, as will be elucidated, dynamic representations of *myth’s* bear social significance extending beyond permitting what appeared to be a violent act of masculine pride.
Although tragedy appears rooted in social reality, that does not mean that it is a reflection of it. It does not reflect that reality but calls it into question. By depicting it rent and divided against itself, it turns it into a problem (Vernant, 1992).

Chapter 6

Virtue Ethics in Cultural Constellations

In the aftermath of Zinédine Zidane’s 2006 World Cup scandal, Jonathan Young, a clinical psychologist specialising in myth, compared the footballer’s transgression to the archetypal fall of the tragic hero. The Greeks cautioned audiences about the dangers of hubris and mortals assuming properties reserved for the gods. When the inevitable fall came, it occurred during the climactic moment of glory: "It will be when we're really up there - and there's no bigger thing than the World Cup," explained Young (2006: n.p.).

Mark Griffith, Professor of Greek literature, dismissed Young’s myth’s. He emphasised that Zidane was not consumed by hubris but rather resembled Homer’s hero, Oedipus, a considerate man whose ‘error of judgment’ (hamartia) was a repercussion of chance and human frailty rather than maliciousness: "Just when you think someone has got it totally made, like Oedipus...you find out this horrible thing about him and it's a total devastation," declared Griffith. "It's not that you decide he was actually wicked. He was just incredibly unlucky" (2006: n.p.).

In contesting whether Zidane’s transgression was motivated by unbridled passion, social disadvantage or simply bad luck, incongruous rationales were employed to comprehend the scandal. Disparate ways of rationalising the incident indicate that, though archetypal tragedies transcend limits of space and time, as symbolic forms manifesting local cultures’ ethos and spectators’ embodied points of view, myth’s is necessarily arbitrary. Without rendering myth’s an exemplar of moral emotivism, or reducing agency to the confines of structuralism, this chapter explores how katharsis mediates the terrain of subjective emotional experience and collective representations structuring society. It is argued that while katharsis is embodied distinctly, it is precisely the sociocultural configuration of emotion content that represents the drama as a social
tragedy. To appreciate the sociological significance of tragedy demonstrates that “accomplishing” katharsis is a deliberative process achieved by synthesising subjective and objective dimensions of experience wherein personal fear may extend into trans-subjective pity for the hero, facilitating recognition of a common bond of human vulnerability with the broader body politic.

Representations appropriating the historical episode of Zidane’s scandal into a social tragedy ‘writ-large’ have been criticised for employing the footballer’s transgression as a "blank canvas" on which France’s preoccupation with ‘race’ and ethnicity were mediated for popular consumption (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; Jiwani, 2008). Disturbed by the "spurious discourses" employed to rationalise the scandal, which frequently neglected Zidane's previous on-field misconduct as "invisible," Dauncey and Morrey (2008: 318) emphasise that situating the footballer’s headbutt in mythological references of divine intervention relinquish agency and responsibility for his action while glorifying "masculinist violence.” It was observed in Chapter 5 that critics, particularly those ‘distant’ from French sporting contexts, expressed concern at representing Zidane as a tragic hero. For to frame Zidane’s headbutt as a ‘rational choice’ shaped by the footballer’s upbringing of social disadvantage not only serves to legitimise violence, when understood with reference to a specific context, the pedagogical significance of tragedy is undermined if myth’s remains relative to those representing the hero’s trajectory. Considering the symbolic dimension of myth’s as a culturally relative system of communication consequently questions whether Zidane can be considered a progressive hero in light of his World Cup transgression, and, moreover, what the ethical implications are of sanctifying his revered stature.

This chapter contextualises the kathartic significance of Zidane’s social tragedy in Aristotle’s system of virtue ethics by interrogating the social implications of the film: *Zidane: A 21st Century P’trait*, upon which Dauncey and Morrey base their critique of the French captain. The text’s emphasis on temporality, as socially constructed time, highlights that dynamic readings of Zizou’s transgression inescapably reflect a spectrum of unique, embodied viewing experiences given that the way in which the scandal is
scripted necessarily acquires meaning through symbolic form. Examining the ramifications of interpolating Zidane’s emblem in dynamic ways, it is proposed that the significance of the footballer’s climactic geste derives from the malleable appearance of symbolic content. It is precisely since suffering is represented and recognised in symbolic form that, when appropriated through myth’s, social tragedy remains elusive as well as pertinent to a broader spectrum of the demos (common people). Respondents’ capacity to contest the meaning attributed to Zidane’s transgression encapsulates the democratic ethos of egalitarianism by emerging as an opportunity for those symbolically implicated in the footballer’s social tragedy to examine the scandal’s civic significance as a site of critique and counter-critique in the public domain. Given tragedy’s dialogical tradition, it is argued that rather than prioritise cultural relativism or moral universalism, myth’s subjectively negotiates meaning within the constraints of an established social structure.

**Pluralism, Globalisation and the Democratic Hero**

In a global world, permeated by diverse norms and values, it becomes increasingly difficult for audiences to reconcile their subjective kathartic experiences to an established moral order. Nietzsche’s declaration that "God is dead" and Weber's ([1905] 1991) analysis of the "disenchantment of the world" were symptomatic of broader religious and economic changes encountered in modern secular orders, no longer supported by the moral authority belonging to the realm of the gods. Corresponding to declining authority structures, and the certainties derived from them, the scientific revolution has presented autonomous agents with new challenges in liberal democracies, primarily the struggle to obtain conviction from life in this modern ‘age of doubt’ (Boorstin, 1964; Campbell, [1949] 1993; Carroll, 2008). The solidarity that Durkheim formerly pronounced as a moral sentient being is increasingly stratified by liberalism’s emphasis on individual rights and freedom, and its corollary of cultural relativism in modern democracies. The state of ‘relative normlessness’ characteristic of these segregated societies is inclined to facilitate alienation in a condition that Durkheim ([1897] 1952) referred to as ‘anomie.’ It has been emphasised that sporting performances increasingly emerge in contemporary contexts as antidotes to alienation by evoking moral sentiments that temporarily fuse
spectators to, and in some instances estrange them from, the social collectivity. In the latter case, the sporting contest allows spectators to ‘split the persecutor’ where fans may identify with their ‘good’ team within the competitive ethos of the game (Carroll, 2008: 52; Elias & Dunning, 1986; Williams, 2006). Yet, exactly how players and teams are grafted onto mythological tropes and archetypes remains subject to the negotiation of inherited and acquired affective attachments around established social myths.

Evolving democratic social structures have transformed the tragic hero from their conventional noble origins to the celebration of lay athletes in the domain of sport. Tragedy is increasingly positioned as “the tragedy of democracy, where the god is beheld crucified in the catastrophes not of great houses only but of every common home” (Campbell, [1949] 1993: 27). This democratic ethos is particularly evident in the French football league, whose players represent diverse racial, ethnic and religious demographics, embodying the nation’s Republican motto: ‘liberty, equality and fraternity.’ The dynamic cultural constellations comprising football in France are further reflected by the range of spectators composing local football crowds, the repercussion of which reveals sport’s appeal and accessibility to a broad audience.

Heterogeneous systems of belief constituting France’s contemporary moral order reflect what Michel Maffesoli (1996) refers to as ‘neotribalism’ rather than an erosion of traditional communal structures. Distinguished from traditional clans, based on kinship and rigid contractual agreements, neotribal groups solidify around voluntary emotional connections that enable individuals to participate as members of numerous collectives. Characterised by fluid social relations, these groups are symbolised and actualised by dress, rituals, shared values and ideals manifested in contemporary subcultures in the form of political affiliations, virtual worlds and, evidently, sporting communities. Contrasting with the individualisation thesis of civic decline lamented by ‘cultural pessimists,’ the “time of the tribes” emerges in modernity as a time when the mass is tribalised (Maffesoli, 1996). With religious communities conventionally fused through dogma and faith, as the world religio (which literally means ‘to bind’) denotes, sport may be viewed as a neoreligious ritual-like performance that ‘binds’ spectators around
common symbols, club values and codes of conduct (Carroll, 2008; Dunning, 1999; Elias & Dunning, 1986). The important difference being that whereas conventional tribal bonds were inherited and preserved around hierarchical authority structures, emotions assume greater significance in liberal democracies in structuring and maintaining neotribal identities and, as such, may be seen to play an even greater role in the fusion of audiences to the performance of social tragedy.

The significance of examining the solidifying effect of social tragedy is that katharsis undermines trends inherent in contemporary sociological literature that lament the decline of civic values in modernity with “the culture of narcissism” (Lasch, 1979) and “the fall of public man” (Sennett, 1974). Suggesting that social structures are generally more diffuse in liberal democracies, such individualist doxa overlook the formation of novel modes of solidarity in the present age. In modern liberal democracies where traditional ties may encounter fragility, sporting performances occupy the vital task of providing the opportunity for spectators to communicate with members of their class, ethnic group, subculture and nation. France's postcolonial past entails that contemporaries are experiencing unprecedented forms of immigration, with the nation's c’nsience c’illective comprised of intersecting individual and collective histories from a diverse constellation of cultural contexts. The authoritarian voice traditionally reflected in the bard’s mythic script is increasingly performed on a social stage littered with traces of France's colonialist heritage, often considered to be incompatible modes of living, in light of what Toussaint (2007: 22, 24) refers to as the nation’s "postcolonial unconscious."

Staged on an arena foreshadowed by postcolonial guilt, the public mediation of Zidane as a sacrificial hero in relation to his colonialist persecutor reveals an emotional climate particular to France. Just as the presence of ghosts in tragedy signifies that past turmoil remains unresolved, the living emotional memory of the Algerian war contributed significantly to France’s representation of the scandal as a social tragedy. This notion of tragedy as “memory in action” emerges during moments of crisis in the public’s understanding of itself when the community risks being segregated by competing values (Poole, 2005: 36, 41). Despite promoting society as an interdependent moral system, in
which the personal ‘error’ of the hero results more generally in social tragedy, it is commonplace in these ritual-like performances for there to exist in tragedy different understandings of what the symbolic content of the hero and their action represents.

That “emotional pertinence” assumed a greater role in spectators’ rationalisation of myth’s, is not to undermine the social significance of tragedy. Media analysis demonstrated that President Chirac had the symbolic power to publicly script the scandal as a social tragedy by evoking moral sentiments rationalised around the political logic of the sacred and profane. Solidified public responses to Zidane’s scandal emerged in this context comparable to Durkheim’s ([1912] 2001) analysis of Dreyfus, the French Jew unjustly convicted of high treason, where public support for France’s hero became a testament to the secular nation’s underlying moral order, however opaque it may appear. The country’s public defence of their revered icon suggests that, despite Nietzsche’s declaration that “god is dead,” the sacred is very much alive in France. Rather than render dynamic manifestations of myth’i in contemporary democracies void of moral significance, the c’llective fusi’n of the dem’s has diversified in complex societies positioning the critical c’mmunity as an emergent body in which individuals may liberally negotiate moral virtue according to emotional and cultural incentives.

The propensity for the symbolic foundation of tragedy to undergo constant reinterpretation in modern liberal democracies appears to problematise the moral framework of Aristotelian katharsis. Corresponding to declining hegemonic power structures, emotions assume increasing relevance in the representation of myth’s and, yet, to render katharsis susceptible to ‘moral emotivism’ undermines the pedagogical utility that Aristotle attributed to tragedy. For to rationalise symbolic content around to spectators’ affective experiences or a nation’s emotional climate is an elusive process, subject to change over time.ii It would, however, be erroneous to suggest that the ambivalence of emotional climates is novel to modernity, or that classical tragedy evoked a uniform response from Greek audiences. Serge Mascovici (1981), for example, distinguishes all crowds according to emotional climates, while Joseph de Rivera and Dario Páez (2007) reveal the inexorable impact that emotional climates have on
individual and collective behaviour (including how these climates are affected by sociopolitical events that shape civic responses to emerging incidents). Rather than refute katharsis, recognising the impact that emotions bring to bear on the telos of myth’s is intrinsic to understanding how social tragedy operates. For the representation of tragic myth’s is not inherent to the incident; an historical episode assumes the stature of an event - a social tragedy - through attributing sociocultural significance to suffering, a process in which emotions are paramount.

What relative responses to Zidane’s transgression do problematise are absolute conceptions pertaining to ‘right’ moral action in what has been referred to as the “postmodern age of scandal” (Rowe, 1997: 213). Given that katharsis entails a subjectively embodied process of emotional clarification, contesting the significance of tragic drama would seem to be an elementary outcome of the social performance. Despite ancient Greece also being marked by “extreme social heterogeneity and conflict” (Hall, 2007: 95), the historical development from the more cohesive, hegemonic order of the polis towards pluralism in modern democracies has undoubtedly complicated the pedagogical system underpinning katharsis. The central shortcoming of Aristotelian katharsis, nevertheless, is not marked by modernity alone but rather emanates from the philosopher’s defence of tragedy as “accomplishing” a standard response of moral recognition. To suggest that personal pain is represented as a social tragedy is not sufficient for Aristotle to shield tragedy from Plato’s charge of corruption. For although it is possible to construct moral universals in liberal democracies, moral recognition is not a necessary corollary of social tragedy and, as such, the telos of Aristotelian katharsis is undermined when tragedy’s moral significance is contested.

Distinct from the Greek polis, which was hegemonically solidified around a relatively simple social structure, and established as a sovereign nation-state, France’s secular Republic is comprised of a plurality of moral views that have expanded the semantic scope through which kathartic forms are mediated and consumed. Katharsis must accordingly be contextualised in relation to a series of broader social transformations. Foremost among these developments is the transition from the
centralised power structures governing ancient polis communities towards the democratic acceptance of pluralism in diverse cultural constellations that enable affective experiences to transmute more liberally into myth’s. Given that these systems have their genesis in principles of egalitarianism, rights and trust where accountability is demanded from public authorities, liberal societies provide fertile ground for disagreement. The changing nature of modern media communication has also made significant contributions to the malleability of tragedy, altering the boundary between public and private spheres by enhancing the mediated visibility of those in public life (Thompson, 2000: 6).iii Moreover, as elucidated in Chapter 4, globalising processes have engendered a radical transformation of society (Turner & Rojek, 2001), with the international visibility and accessibility of contemporary scandals mediating tragic transgressions amid fluid and contradictory notions of what constitutes ‘right’ moral conduct in the global domain.

The Enlightenment’s emphasis on the rational subject further troubles the moral telos of katharsis. Liberal democracies render moral arguments interminable insofar as there appears to be no single ‘rational’ way of achieving moral consensus. Each spectator may attribute meaning to tragedy distinctly through logically valid reasoning, yet at the source of myth’s are competing premises that imply contending claims:

From our rival conclusions we can argue back to our rival premises; but when we do arrive at our premises argument ceases and the invocation of one premise against another becomes a matter of pure assertion and counter-assertion (MacIntyre, 1981: 6-9).

Given that premises can never be deductively validated, it becomes impossible to conclusively refute the principles pertaining to myth’s, presenting the moral telos of tragedy as an arbitrary construction. That rationality is ambivalent towards subjective and contextual circumstances, however, is not synonymous with justifying all forms of rational thought. For, inherent to tragedy’s dialogical structure, the rational configuration of myth’s may be critiqued, contested and revised through public reasoning.
Contextualising Zidane’s scandal in culturally dynamic climates makes it unlikely that the footballer’s transgression will be unanimously reconciled according to a universal moral trajectory. This is particularly evident in liberal democracies where the ‘tragedy of democracy’ places even greater emphasis on emotions to rationalise myth’s. To suggest that tragedy ever evoked a uniform kathartic response from audiences remains doubtful, yet it is proposed that the increased tolerance for cultural pluralism in modern democracies complicates the moral coherence of tragedy. Rather than undermine katharsis, a Neoaristotelian standpoint considers tragedy’s propensity to be contested in liberal democracies to be a necessary corollary of the construction of myth’s – an appreciation of agency and structure that negotiates meaning in the symbiotic relationship between self and society, without prioritising either of the two. In what follows, suggestions that Zidane’s scandal perpetuates ‘moral emotivism’ are contextualised within Platonic and Aristotelian debates on emotions. In examining Gordon and Parreno’s film: Zidane, un P’rtrait du 21e Siècle, it is emphasised that, rather than undermine katharsis, alternative myth’s acquire social value by deliberating upon the significance of Zidane’s symbol. After demonstrating that katharsis is not merely the consequence of the incident itself, but mediated by sociocultural processes, this chapter concludes by interrogating the broader implications of social tragedy in civic life.

Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait

The ambiguous position that katharsis occupies in globalised societies as a pedagogical apparatus was exemplified by the proliferation of aesthetic texts appropriating Zidane’s transgression in the aftermath of the scandal. With the ‘social tragedy’ tailored to promote particular commercial and artistic endeavours, the collective memory attributed to the event became a commodity, the meaning of which remained highly contested. Understood in this context of commodification, secondary sources assume a precarious place in Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm insofar as their malleable appropriation of Zidane’s heroic symbol and tragic narrative lend the footballer’s emblem to a variety of dynamic and contradictory meanings structured around vested interests rather than a moral conception of the ‘good life.’ Produced and received by internationally mediated
audiences in complex cultural constellations, these representations signify a shift from the more coherent structures that governed ancient Greek *polis* communities, the corollary of which suggests that Aristotelian katharsis requires revision if the moral dimension of the term is to remain relevant to the cultural mosaic of contemporary France and broader global communities.

‘Race,’ ethnicity and nationality appear at the forefront of Zidane’s celebrity persona, attracting his emblem to a spectrum of spectators beyond the French border. The propensity for media to relinquish the footballer’s transgression through justifying his actions with reference to such forms of identification has been challenged by some critics (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; Jiwani, 2008). Analysing two texts: Jean-Pierre Toussaint’s essay, *Zidane’s Melancholy* (2007), and Gordon and Parreno’s film, *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006), Dauncey and Morrey scrutinise how references in these media to divine intervention and preordained mythologies undermine Zidane’s accountability for his violent headbutt while noting the moral implications these representations bear for those who blindly emulate the footballer’s celebrity persona. This chapter interrogates the moral ramifications of these corresponding texts by situating Dauncey and Morrey’s criticisms within Platonic and Aristotelian debates on emotion.

*Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006) is a film directed by Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno featuring Zinédine Zidane playing football in real time over the course of a single 90-minute match. Filmed on April 23, 2005, during what was considered to be a rather inconsequential match in the Spanish Liga championship, the film illustrates Zidane playing for the Spanish football club, Real Madrid, against their local counterparts, Villarreal CF, at Madrid’s Santiago Bernabéu football stadium. Assembled from footage shot by 17 synchronised cameras, a mix of 35mm and high-definition formatting, placed in various locations around the playing field, the film – a 90-minute portrait - captures Zidane from numerous angles and distances, ranging from intimate close-ups to extended footage traversing the entire pitch, consistently fixated on the sole footballer even when the central action of the match moves elsewhere across the stadium.
Described by the directors as a “psychological portrait,” the film invites the audience to adopt Zidane’s subjective point of view as he proceeds throughout the game. According to Parreno (2006: n.p.) the idea was to “make a feature film which followed the main protagonist of a story, without telling the story.” The film breaks with conventional documentaries insofar as there is an absence of explicit representation of Zidane beyond his on-field performance - no direct reference to his French-Algerian heritage or upbringing in the working-class suburbs of Marseilles. Instead, the audience is directed by sporadic, superimposed subtitles throughout the film taken from a post-match interview with Zidane. Both directors were adamant that the film be presented, not as a factual record of the event, but as a “portrait in motion” that focused solely on representing the subjective experiences of the protagonist during a single football match, thereby enabling the viewer to sympathetically occupy Zidane’s position - imagining what he thinks, feeling what he feels and seeing what he sees.

Referring to Jean-Luc Douin’s review of the film, Dauncey and Morrey (2008: 310) view the portrait’s objective circumspectly: “in truth…we do not really see what Zidane sees,” they point out, due to the intrusive camera angles which focus on what is immediately around Zidane rather than “sharing his global view of the entire pitch, the whole game.” Their main criticism is that Zidane is heroically glorified by “the film [which] invites us to imagine his thoughts and feelings.” Yet this “subjective portrait” is exactly what the directors intended to convey. To expect a factual documentary would be to deprive the 90-minute portrait of its form, and the film’s subject of his multifaceted, symbolic significance through concretising meaning and replacing spectators’ respective myth’i with a type of social myth, which as demonstrated in Chapter 3, is precariously prone to transmitting ideology instead of mythology.

Gordon and Parreno’s experimental film techniques have, nevertheless, been organised to strategically affect audiences. The hypnotic drones of Mogwai’s musical score, corresponding to the sporadic subtitles dispersed throughout the game from an interview with Zidane (not necessarily legitimised by Zidane’s experience at that point in time), the selection of camera angles, film editing and subject himself undeniably lend
themselves to certain connotations steering audiences’ “existential drift.” Insofar as the film’s style and protagonist were deliberately chosen to convey meaning - Parreno (2006: n.p.) recollects his attempts “to figure out how and where to make people drift.” Mogwai’s sound track for the film accentuates this “existential” representation of Zidane with one member of the crew acknowledging: “It’s so dependent on sound in a lot of ways because as we’re going through the film we are almost defining the images by sound.” Spectators are positioned as both active interpreters and passive recipients of the “cultural intermediaries” who stage-manage celebrities’ public image in an effort to market human sentiments as part of the commodification of everyday life (Rojek, 2001: 10).

Walter Benjamin (1936: X) captured these concerns in his critique of “the cult of the movie star” whose magnified image, corresponding to godly pre-eminence and mass appeal, he viewed with suspicion. Fostered by commercial interests, Benjamin cautioned that the film star’s representation preserves not the unique aura of the person but the “spell of the personality,” the “phony spell of a commodity,” so that the “film industry is trying hard to spur the interest of the masses through illusion-promoting spectacles and dubious speculations.” Cinematography has conventionally employed close-ups to guarantee intimacy with its subject, a feature that it shares with the tradition of portraiture: the notion that the image expresses interiority. Camera angles presenting Zidane isolated and amplified against organic scenes capturing the emerald football pitch and dim evening sky may appear disconcerting, for spectators in whom it evokes connotations similar to those deified images promoted in Nazi propaganda films, such as Leni Riefenstahl’s Triumph of the Will (1935). Such comparisons are rendered particularly disturbing when considered to condone violence, as could be argued with respect to Gordon and Parreno’s film where Zidane was arguably heroically portrayed despite being dismissed for yet another incident of on-field misconduct towards the closure of the game.

Criticism towards the film’s ‘heroic’ depiction of Zidane was undoubtedly heightened by his 2006 World Cup dismissal, a scandal largely foreshadowed in Gordon and Parreno’s film released at the Cannes Film Festival that same year. The film’s
propensity to legitimise violence was enhanced by references to preordained fate, with subtitles taken from an interview with Zidane corresponding to the footballer’s on-field play: “Sometimes when you arrive in the stadium you feel that everything has already been decided. The script has already been written” (2006b: n.p.). While both directors repeatedly emphasise that the film was not intended as a heroic representation, their accounts are somewhat undermined by their paradoxical recollection that, in trying to convince Zidane to take part in the project, they showed him the film *Garrincha, Alegria do P’ovo* (1962). IV Featuring Brazilian football legend Manuel Francisco dos Santos, the film pictures “Garrincha” (as he is commonly referred to by fans) as a heroic expression of the oppressed black underclass: “That was when he [Zidane] realised the power and the legacy his own film could have,” recalled Gordon (2006, n.p.). An interview with Zidane accentuates the extent to which this “monumental” testimony of his legacy contributed to his decision to participate in the film:

It’s a good way to end a career…It’s also something that’s going to be around after I’m gone…even if we don’t know exactly what it’s going to be, or even if it’s not really big, it will still be a great memory for me and something that will have taken me somewhere…and that will stay forever in my mind and theirs (2006b: n.p.).

Zidane’s explicit desire to be ‘immortalised’ in film is reminiscent of the aspirations of Homer’s archetypal Achaean warrior, Achilles:

My brothers of the sword! I would rather fight beside you than any army of thousands! Let no man forget we are lions! Do you know what waits? Immortality!

Indeed, the closure of the portrait, which features Zidane being expelled for misconduct, may be seen to undermine his celebrated sportsmanship through another passionate outburst for which the footballer has become notorious. Both directors refer to their inclusion of such unconventionally documented incidents as movements away from the
commonly mediated, brief footage representing the couple of minutes it would take to celebrate Zidane’s on-field triumphs. That Gordon and Parreno’s representation presents Zidane as an archetypal anti-hero remains arguable, challenged by the film’s audio-visual techniques and post-production interviews, revealing the directors’ awe of ‘Zizou’s’ heroic stature. Concerns over the moral ramifications of Zidane’s heroic representation indicate the fluid ways in which equivalent actions are received within common social contexts, illuminating Camus’ existential ontology: where action is not inherently meaningful but relatively conferred. The corollary of appreciating the cultural dimension of tragedy is to question Aristotle’s belief that spectators will only sympathise with morally ‘just’ plots – perhaps capturing the essence of Gordon and Parreno’s “existential drift” precisely in light of the film’s dynamic reception.

Studying Zidane’s heroic representation in aesthetic texts problematises the relationship between a social myth and myth’s, questioning whether individuals are responsible for their own kathartic responses. One may interrogate, for example, whether tragedy operates as an ‘instruction manual’ with spectators’ emotions susceptible to manipulation by political ideologies, or whether individuals can transcend ritualised feelings of collective fusion by emerging into a critical community capable of critiquing the social order to which one belongs. Dayan and Katz (1992) employed the term “media events” to describe the transformative capacity of live broadcasting events as world rituals whose contents are dictated by state organisations holding the means of symbolic production. Jeffrey Alexander (2004a: 532-3) further highlights the extent to which “social power” governs the hermeneutic frameworks pertaining to “social performances”: how the distribution of power in society affects the performance process, namely, what is included and omitted from these cultural texts and who has the means to cast, observe and legitimate their meaning. Chirac’s public defence of Zidane may be contextualised within France’s social stage as the President’s strategy to “refuse” the fractured postcolonial nation through the performance of football, social myths and the sacred stature of the country’s sporting emblem.

Given that the media are equipped with the capacity to transmit social drama into
public consciousness (as chroniclers of institutions that they help endorse), Pierre Bourdieu ([1968] 1990: 211) complained that within this process of culture “becoming natural,” the moral commentary of communication media dictates what people *should* think rather than inviting social inquiry. Joanne Finkelstein (1996: 276) echoes these concerns, attesting that while commercial structures and communication technologies have altered the form of spectacles, premodern and present-day spectacles maintain an overarching concern with collectivism consummated by the obliteration of the individual. It is precisely since spectacles are mediated to audiences as strategically defined scripts that Finkelstein cautions against mediated moralising commentary. Despite portraying the façade of inviting ‘spectator-speak,’ Finkelstein argues that media more commonly penetrate spectators into the economic and political strictures of myth. Gordon and Parreno’s film appears to avoid such criticism insofar as “there was no script” and they “didn’t create the event,” instead becoming involved in recording a live football match that was already scheduled to take place. Reitering this view, Zidane (2006b: n.p.) recollected that his decision to participate in the project was because the portrait documented reality: “I didn’t have to play a role. If I had to play a role, I would have refused. I’m not an actor…Here I just had to be myself, doing what I do every Sunday…and that’s it.” Representation necessarily involves appropriation and, as S. Brent Plate (2004: 111) cautions, even texts documenting live events in ‘real time’ should be viewed with circumspection. For media claim to document ‘reality’ by obscuring the audio-visual techniques involved in their formation, with covert technical constructions rendered particularly disconcerting when social myths are employed to propagate power relations that legitimise unjust ideologies and manipulate public opinion.

Criticisms regarding the aesthetic reception of tragedy reflect more general concerns relating to the ethics of art and the state’s responsibility in censoring aesthetic texts. These debates epitomise the discrepancy between Plato ([1930] 2003) and Aristotle’s view of poetic forms: “an old quarrel” between philosophy and poetry, namely the extent to which sensual themes expressed in these aesthetic representations are susceptible to corrupting the impressionable audiences that consume them. Aristotelian katharsis, as outlined in Chapter 2, is considered to be a critique of Plato’s appraisal of
the harmful effects that poetry inflicted on the “well-ordered state” and those endeavouring to live the ‘good life’:

And so in regard to the emotions of sex and anger, and all the appetites and pains and pleasures of the soul which we say accompany all our actions, the effect of the poetic imagination is the same. For it waters and fosters these feelings when what we ought to do is dry them up, and it establishes them as our rulers when they ought to be ruled, to the end that we may be better and happier men instead or worse and more miserable (Plato, [1935] 2006: 463).

Plato’s suggestion that through mimetic imitation poetry may nourish emotions belonging to the appetitive part of the soul, which would be better suppressed or restrained by reasoning faculties, resonates with contemporary views endorsing state censorship of art and the detrimental impact of communication technologies (Janko, 1992: 342). For Aristotle’s notion of katharsis as a mode of affective purification to achieve validity, he must refute Plato on this point. Understood in this context, the *Poetics* extends beyond a manual for writing poetry. Aristotle’s prescriptions regarding what constitutes a “good tragedy” and how to evoke appropriate affective responses in audiences reflect his ethical endeavour to demonstrate how poetic forms can ‘manage’ the population through kathartic processes of ‘feeling-realisation’ – a pedagogical aim to achieve temperance somewhat distinct from tragedy’s original alliance with Dionysian chaos (duBois, 2004; Goldhill, 2007; Nietzsche, [1872] 1995; Vernant, 1992). Although the universal moral framework of Aristotle’s perspective occupies a precarious place in modern liberal democracies, his appreciation of katharsis as an affectively embodied experience of *rec’ gniti’n* maintains the significance of aesthetic texts representing Zidane’s scandal as facilitators of critical inquiry into more pertinent civic issues for those with symbolic investments in his-story.

Viewed in isolation, the film captures a myriad of responses and judgments reflecting spectators’ subjective viewing experiences. Jean-Luc Douin noted that,
consequential to the film’s elusive symbolic form: “At the end of the film, we do not know much more about Zidane, and you are not seeing some of the paint. Rather a document on the helplessness, the race in vain, the drudgery. A variation on bl’w up: the more you enlarge, the more we probe the matter, the most secret escapes” (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008: 309). When Martha Fischer (2006: n.p.) reviewed the film she explained: “The movie is difficult to describe, because it's a feeling as much as anything else,” her favourable response exemplifying the affective dimension at the source of critics’ concerns. Criticisms regarding affective appropriation of symbolic content capture the essence of the film’s intention, with both directors explaining their objective: “We didn’t want to make a flat portrait. It’s n’t ab’ut physical representati’n, we wanted a psychological, you know people to imagine that they were Zidane, or as close as they could get” (Gordon, 2006: n.p. [emphasis added]). To imagine is to empathise, and it is reasonable that this intention could evoke criticism from those who feel that empathy with Zidane’s tragic plight may facilitate blind sympathy in audiences’ psychologically identifying with the celebrated footballer. In fact, the propensity to sympathise with morally suspect themes and heroes lay at the heart of Plato’s critique of mimetic forms:

The very best of us, when we hear Homer or some other of the makers of tragedy imitating one of the heroes who is in grief, and is delivering a long tirade in his lamentations or chanting and beating his breast, feel pleasure, and abandon ourselves and accompany the representation with sympathy and eagerness, and we praise as an excellent poet the one who most strongly affects us in this way (Plato, [1935] 2006: 459).

Or, as observed by Barbara Finkelstein (1992: 256):

Through the recovery of the past, historians can sow seeds of hope and/ or despair, encourage and/ or discourage particular courses of action, sound political or moral calls, or otherwise shape the forms that future imagining can take.
Aristotle’s *Rhet’ric*, which operated as an instruction manual for orators on methods of persuasion, gave reason for these concerns by highlighting the susceptibility of belief to affective manipulation. These apprehensions were given credence in Chapter 4, where it was revealed that positioning Zidane’s ‘fall’ as emblematic of his common human vulnerability played an instrumental role in evoking sympathy. For, whether the hero demonstrates fallibility in the bard’s epic, football stadium or other arenas of popular culture, their universal social ontology is prone to engender sympathy from audiences in a process referred to as “mimetic vertigo” (Taussig, 1992: 176-8; 1993: 237) - even when this humanity assumes the transgressive form of violent misconduct (as was the case with Zidane).

The Platonic legacy of prioritising reason points to a noteworthy difference between epic poetry and the tragic genre succeeding it. Achilles emerges mortal and vulnerable in the *Iliad* through his all-consuming rage, which, despite wavering, at times remains uncontrollable, ultimately contributing to his demise. This humanisation of Achilles by the events of war is an important theme in the *Iliad*:

The Wrath of Achilles is my theme, that fatal wrath which, in fulfilment in the will of Zeus, brought the Achaeans so much suffering and sent the gallant souls of many noblemen to Hades, leaving their bodies as carrion for the dogs and passing birds. Let us begin, goddess of song, with the angry parting that took place between Agamemnon King of Men and the great Achilles son of Peleus. Which of the gods was it that made them quarrel? (Homer, [1950] 1987: 23).

By attributing Achilles’ wrath and its tragic consequences to divine intervention, Homer’s preordained conception of action undermines Achilles’ agency, positioning him as a pawn at the mercy of the gods. Achilles’ fate is characteristic of ancient Greek vocabularies in which there was an absence of the word ‘will.’ The concept of free-will developed relatively late in Greek thought, with Homer’s heroes executing their volition according to the commands of the gods (Jaynes, 1976: 70; Nussbaum, 1992) - “which of
the gods was it that made them quarrel?,” inquired Homer. Tragic texts mark a significant shift to a more secular consideration of human action insofar as the individual was considered to be an active agent. Emphasising agency renders the individual partly responsible for their ‘error of judgment’ (hamartia), with Aristotle prohibiting in the *Poetics* (2005), for example, that events be manipulated by *deus ex machina* (god from the machine), which as a form of godly interference extended beyond the scope of human capacities. These sociohistorical changes are emblematic of a shift in consciousness, according to Julian Jaynes (1976), which extended beyond the ancient mentality of what he refers to as the bicameral ('two-chambered') mind to a more complex mode of consciousness contingent on agency and free-will. Secularisation corresponds to Aristotle’s rational conception of katharsis as a process of ‘feeling-realisation,’ in which tragedy is made *recognisable* to audiences precisely by *recognising* in hindsight how the hero’s actions contributed to their tragic *decline*. The secular imagination is equally as important in contemporary manifestations of ‘the tragic’ given that it equips the democratic hero with responsibility for their agency, a concern lying at the heart of Dauncey and Morrey’s (2008) critique of aesthetic texts mythologising Zidane’s scandal.

Brief interviews with both Zidane and the film’s directors, Douglas Gordon and Philipe Parreno, illuminate the aesthetic significance of the film beyond the literal experience of viewing the game from Zidane’s psychological perspective. Aware that Zidane’s celebrity persona remains both elusive and open to a range of contradictory significations, the film’s objective was to “disturb the architecture” of representing the footballer from a single point of view. In an endeavour to represent this Kantian view of reality as necessarily situated within limits of space and time, Parreno drew inspiration for the film’s dynamic perspective from Pier Paolo Pasolini, the Italian film director who believed that the only way to authentically record life was to multiply the subjective points of view to infinity:

So the first idea we came up with for this project was that since there are 90,000 people in the stadium, there should be 90,000 cameras.
Considering the complex intersection between ‘real time’ and temporality, it is curious that the directors considered that one camera per spectator could capture audiences’ intersecting temporal points of view: the bricolage of those past, present and future images themselves subject to traversing a constellation of intersecting orientations amidst dynamic social structures (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). These intentions are important, nevertheless, as indications not only of the film’s objective but as insights into potential ways the text may be received. In an attempt to demystify ‘Zizou’s’ celebrated persona the portrait could be seen to indicate that the significance of Zidane’s myth’s resides in spectators’ subjective appreciation of the footballer’s symbolic form, an affective connection irreducible to the cognitive categories of thought, or specificities of space and time, pertaining to l’g’s.

One of the most significant techniques through which the relationship between time and temporality is explored is in the half-time montage of global events occurring simultaneously with the football match on April 23 2005: In Germany, hundreds of toads swell to three times their normal size and explode. The ivory-billed woodpecker, thought to be extinct since 1920, is spotted in North America. There is the release of new online videogames, a flood in Montenegro, the closure of an Asian-African summit in Jakarta and a 48-hour marathon reading of ‘Don Quixote.’ Scenes reporting Sir John Mills dying juxtaposed with the performance of a puppet show featuring a marionette of Bob Marley staged on an Ipanema beach, and poignantly a car bomb in Najaf kills nine where an Iraqi at the scene is shown wearing Zidane’s jersey. These vignettes capture a gamut of experiences ranging from the spectacular to the mundane: “My son had a fever today”...“I had something to do today,” recalls Gordon (2006: n.p.). Designed to take spectators on an “existential drift,” images of war and scientific invention reveal the insignificance of the film’s celebrated protagonist in this “parallel world”: “We wanted to have this parallel reality thing, you know? Life exists outside of a football stadium, life exists all over the world for 90 minutes as well” (Gordon, 2006: n.p.). Just as Zidane occupies a limited position within the playing field, spectators are also restricted by their affective, temporal and spatial viewing experiences: where “the sporting moment is everything and nothing” (Rowe, 2008c: 153). The film is entrenched in temporal themes
encapsulated by the directors’ endeavour to take a portrait of a man from ‘real time’ to “absolute time”:

It also came from a conversation with Zidane where he said: “It’s not only football in my life. I know I’m not the centre of the universe and things are happening around me,” and that was really one of the keys. And so we thought maybe there was a way to address that by introducing that idea of portrait in time but also in absolute time, so it’s now, you know, and it’s also a psychological portrait. So a lot of discussions we had with him we found ways to try to a picture him through sound, so all discussions would give us some input to figure out how and where to make people drift (Parreno, 2006: n.p.).

Footage of an Iraqi citizen fleeing during the aftermath of a car bomb in Najaf while wearing a black jersey revealing Zidane’s name and team number ‘5’ emblazoned across his back operates as a reminder that, despite religious and political differences, there are common symbols unifying these apparently incongruous global communities - linking individuals and collectives in what Parreno refers to as “real” and “absolute time.” In this sense, despite focusing on Zidane’s journey, the film simultaneously conveys the insignificance of the featured football match compared to those more pertinent events also taking place on April 23 2005: “who could have imagined that in the future, an ordinary day like this might be forgotten or remembered, as anything more or less significant than a walk in the park,” is repeatedly projected on screen during the film’s footage. Moreover, the film points to the central role that emotions occupy in providing events with significance and distinguishing the meaning represented through myth’s. The affective dimension of myth’s resonates with Adam Smith’s ([1759] 1976: 136) emphasis on the limitations of embodied social experience:

Let us suppose that the great empire of China, with all its myriads of inhabitants, was suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake, and let us consider how a man of humanity in Europe, who had no sort of connection
with that part of the world, would be affected upon receiving intelligence of this dreadful calamity. He would, I imagine, first of all, express very strongly his sorrow for the misfortune of that unhappy people, he would make many melancholy reflections upon the precariousness of human life, and the vanity of all the labours of man, which could thus be annihilated in a moment. He would too, perhaps, if he was a man of speculation, enter into many reasonings concerning the effects which this disaster might produce upon the commerce of Europe, and the trade and business of the world in general. And when all this fine philosophy was over, when all these humane sentiments had been once fairly expressed, he would pursue his business or his pleasure, take his repose or his diversion, with the same ease and tranquility, as if no such accident had happened. The most frivolous disaster which could befall himself would occasion a more real disturbance. If he were to lose his little finger tomorrow, he would not sleep tonight; but, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren, and the destruction of that immense multitude seems plainly an object less interesting to him, than this paltry misfortune of his own.

Here, Smith is reiterating David Hume’s observation:

‘Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger ([1739] 1967: 416).

Hume and Smith indicate that sympathy alone is an unreliable guide to moral action given the extent to which the values orienting emotions are subject to more immediate concerns. Recognising the limitations of emotion content is essential to interrogating the moral dimension of katharsis given that myth’s is rationalised with respect to spectators’ particular embodied experiences. Considering the affective dimension of Gordon and Parreno’s film emphasises that emotional reactions to the sporting event are partial, and the intersecting lives and incidents occupying this ‘parallel world’ limited, thus,
illuminating the significance of social life beyond the domain of the football stadium and the 90,000 spectators inhabiting it.

Contextualising any aesthetic text requires an appreciation of the mutually conditioning relationship between representation and reception, positioning katharsis not merely as a reflection but as an opportunity to critique the broader tensions underpinning social life. Emotions occupy a central position in kathartic clarifications of Zidane’s scandal. It is precisely spectators’ dynamic emotional engagement with the footballer’s scandalous transgression that presents these moments as opportunities for deliberation, preventing meaning from solidifying into ideological social myths. By focusing solely on Zidane for the entire 90-minute duration of the sporting contest, Gordon and Parreno’s portrait is susceptible to glorifying the footballer’s celebrity persona through the amplified image of “the cult of the movie star” (Benjamin, 1936). The propensity to deify Zidane through audio-visual techniques has been scrutinised by critics, yet while intimate footage, organic scenery and ethereal musical scores encourage a sympathetic relationship with ‘Zizou,’ it has been argued that the film conversely situates sympathy in the myopic lens through which emotions are experienced. By complicating ‘real time’ through a multiplicity of media sources, Gordon and Parreno’s film illuminates that there is no single point of view from which to judge life as tragic, accentuating spectators’ responses as limited when considered within the larger scheme of events taking place that day. It is in this context that Christopher Kuhn (2007: n.p.) emphasises the significance of the original French title for the film: ‘Zidane, un P’rtrait du 21e Siècle,’ which can be literally translated as ‘Zidane: A Portrait of the 21st Century.’ That the film focuses on Zidane does not reduce the text’s significance to a heroic celebration of the French footballer. For despite representing a celebrated persona created by popular culture, the film’s protagonist symbolises the social struggles pertaining to many and, in this sense, may be considered a tragic portrait of the age.

The public mediation of Zidane’s social tragedy transcends his personal ‘fall from grace,’ assuming significance for those members of society symbolically implicated in his-story. Comparable to other symbolic media the film could operate as a vehicle to
propagate social myths, yet the precise ways in which spectators negotiate the text remains malleable, contingent on subjective experience and the cultural context from which the performance is affectively received. Moreover, it has been argued that *mythos* encapsulates the deliberative approach inherent to the democratic ethos of tragedy, the nexus between a social myth and *mythos* itself ensuring that aesthetic media remain open to critique. Understood within the Greek’s tradition of the dialectic, appropriations of Zidane’s heroic symbol maintain tragedy’s traditional role as an opportunity for civic debate when represented at a safe aesthetic distance in the public sphere.

**Embodied Affects in Cultural Constellations**

The central question concerning the present discussion of katharsis is whether the term maintains relevance in light of recent social developments. It has been observed that the moral dimension of tragic drama has undergone notable modifications in modernity with more dynamic aesthetic responses corresponding to movements towards secularism in liberal democracies. The diffusion of the centralised hegemonic power structures that conventionally governed classical Greek *polis* communities has welcomed more fluid conceptions of what constitutes kathartic recognition. As a result, the rationale underpinning *mythos* is increasingly configured around how audiences negotiate their affective embodied experiences with sociocultural beliefs and values, rather than an established universal doctrine dictating the moral telos of the tragic performance.

Sociohistorical shifts towards liberalism have significant implications for the pedagogical function of Aristotle’s tragic paradigm. Whereas the *Poetics* specified a standard format to achieve “poetic excellence” and kathartic recognition, the fluidity of aesthetic responses to ritual-like performances in contemporary democracies undermine the moral strictures of tragedy. It has been proposed, from a Neoaristotelian point of view that, rather than erode the social significance of tragedy, the dynamics of *mythos* are essential to the dialectical tradition from which Greek drama emerged. Notwithstanding the value of tragedy’s dialogical approach, if the symbolic content of the tragic hero is interpreted relatively in diverse cultural constellations, concerns emerge over how
symbols may be employed as ‘floating signifiers’ to advance social myths, political ideologies and fundamentalist views, subject to spectators’ affective flux and national emotional climate - for example, whether Zidane’s headbutt undermines his sacred stature and the ethical implications if the footballer is heroically represented in spite of his violent transgression.

Gordon and Parreno’s arguably heroic representation of Zidane, that foreshadowed the footballer’s 2006 World Cup scandal, raises concerns over the cultural reception of tragedy. That tragedy is mediated through sociocultural processes is, however, not limited to Zidane’s scandal. For the cultural dimension of tragedy entails that symbolic content representing suffering is necessarily interpreted by embodied audiences. Despite being culturally constructed, it is proposed that the progressive hero embodies democratic values precisely through remaining open to critique with Zidane’s emblem an important symbol for the demos in spite of his transgression. Finally, it is suggested that, while assuming an integral role in Aristotle’s paradigm, to focus solely on the trajectory of the hero is to overlook the sociological significance of tragedy: namely, those members of society symbolically implicated in tragic praxis that render kathartic responses necessarily sociocultural and heterogeneous. To appreciate the cultural mediation of suffering is not to undermine tragedy’s universal ethos. From an Aristotelian point of view, tragedy operates through the basic principle of society as interconnected. Personal misfortune assumes the significance of social tragedy precisely through the sociocultural configuration of emotional processes wherein audiences recognise their common ontology of human vulnerability “through pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9).

It has been emphasised that contrary to preceding theories of ritual and social drama (Durkheim, [1912] 2001; Turner, 1969), tragedy does not merely maintain extant beliefs through effervescent fusion with the social collectivity. Tragic drama provides opportunities to critique prevailing moral orders, often cultivating novel norms and values through what has been termed the critical community. ‘Critical’ here refers to the interrogation of established social myths through mythos in a process of rational
deliberation itself energised by affective processes. Rather than undermine katharsis, dynamic responses contesting the significance of tragedy are considered instrumental in sustaining the cultural relevance of these performances and preventing meaning from being concretised. Given that the symbolic content of tragedy necessitates interpretation, one would anticipate Attic audiences to have responded distinctly to equivalent scripts – a conviction indicated by the considerable disagreement that the ancient Greek tragedian, Aristophanes, aroused from his contemporaries for ridiculing Euripides in several of his plays (Poole, 2005: 27). It appears an oversimplification and somewhat condescending to propose that Attic audiences would have experienced katharsis ‘en masse.’ That the ability to contest tragedy’s meaning has intensified as a consequence of liberalism’s emphasis on individual rights and pluralism, is not to say that heterogeneous responses to tragedy are merely a corollary of modern democracies. Emerging during periods of social transition, tragedy maintains an elementary concern with challenging rather than reflecting reality. For to appreciate that social tragedy is the result of sociocultural and embodied processes reveals the dynamic and contingent ways in which suffering is rationalised.

A necessary outcome of embodiment is that spectators are considered active in how mythos is affectively rationalised. Responding to the Cartesian legacy, which emphasised the dominance of cognitive faculties and instrumental reason over emotion content, the notion of embodiment suggests that as perceiving, rational and evaluative subjects, the body is essential to humans’ social ontology (Turner, 2000). Emotions constitute integral components of the embodied subject that mediate culture, rather than passively surrendering to a series of collective representations. Culture does not interpret itself, but requires the embodied actor practically to negotiate mythos: “through pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9). Embodiment is crucial to understanding the affective dynamics of katharsis. For despite observing equivalent scripts in common cultural climates, audiences are stratified by the ‘emotional baggage’ that each spectator brings to the performance that uniquely informs their kathartic experience.
To appreciate that katharsis is an embodied process indicates that it is only in hindsight that the social implications of tragic praxis are recognised. Despite being recognised too late to alter the hero’s irrevocable misfortune, contemplating hamartia is essential for audiences’ to accomplish emotional clarification (katharsis). For the telos of tragedy does not merely endeavour to lament suffering, but to recognise the interactions that contributed to the hero’s tragic plight – with re-cognition signifying “a change from ignorance to knowledge” (Aristotle, 2005: 65). Rather than view representations of social tragedy in the domain of popular culture through a myopic lens of absolute moral judgment, it is proposed that the social value of tragedy emerges from Greek’s tradition of the dialectic, as opportunities for critical inquiry that may both emotionally engage and circulate a variety of opinions when disseminated at a safe aesthetic distance.

The Progressive Hero

An integral component of Zidane’s kathartic significance as a progressive hero is his democratic appeal across the broad spectrum of society. Corresponding to the decline in traditional hegemonic power structures and the emancipation of emotional experiences in contemporary liberal societies (Mignon, 1998; Wouters, 1992), the ability to feel emotions more autonomously has transported the democratic hero from their exceptional noble origins to the common recognition of the ‘everyman.’ Appropriating Aristotelian (2005: 71) conceptions of tragedy traditionally concerned with “eminent men from such lineages,” this revolutionary democracy reflects egalitarian ideals where anyone can be a hero given that fame is no longer the “validation of a class distinction” (Braudy, 1997: 371). Embodied by James Joyce’s Ulysses (1922), the democratic hero represents what Leo Lowenthal (1956) calls “the proved specimens of the average,” a well publicised “version of us” and, as such, emerge as precursors to the proliferation of ordinary reality television ‘stars’ and sporting celebrities assuming ‘heroic’ status in popular culture. Chris Rojek (2001: 17-18) refers to this redefinition from the predetermined status of “ascribed” celebrity as “achieved” celebrity, in which the inherited stature of what was most commonly ascribed as a man of noble birth or religious significance is replaced by
the celebrated accomplishments achieved by the ‘self made man’ - or woman following the advent of feminism.

The rise of the democratic hero may be contextualised in broader social and economic transformations, namely democratic and capitalist ideologies that claim to engender more inclusive opportunities for social mobility and personal success than alternative political systems. Zidane’s cultural significance to France’s emotional climate exemplifies the nation’s quest to alleviate postcolonial guilt through adopting a progressive, multicultural hero to validate the country’s public commitment to pluralism. Encapsulating the Franco-Republican slogan ‘liberty, equality and fraternity,’ Zidane’s meritocratic rise to fame positions him as a progressive hero for those disadvantaged minorities residing in France. Zidane epitomises the democratic ‘promise’ that, through discipline, self-determination and ‘adhering to the rules of the game,’ it is possible for an individual resembling the footballer to transcend their working-class origins and ethnic heritage and to captain the French national team - a symbolic metaphor consecrated by the footballer’s stature as the most celebrated person in France.

The ascendance of the democratic hero in popular consciousness occupies a precarious position in Aristotle’s tragic paradigm. For Aristotle, the ‘great’ hero’s mythos corresponded to a causal sequence of events reflecting the philosopher’s system of virtue ethics. Hamartia was considered essential to Aristotle’s defence of tragedy, recognised as the ‘error of judgment’ responsible for facilitating the hero’s tragic decline. It was on this point that Aristotle was able to challenge Plato’s criticism of mimetic poetry, given that recognising hamartia facilitated the ethical instruction that katharsis endeavoured to promote. When applied to what has been referred to earlier as the “postmodern age of celebrity scandal” (Rowe, 1997: 213), the polemic commentary dominating the media raises concerns over precisely what constitutes appropriate moral action in dissimilar cultural constellations. Moreover, public investment in progressive heroes is challenged by concerns over the extent to which the hero’s symbolic content may be strategically manipulated by state and commercial interests in marketable endeavours to maximise financial gain or preserve social myths. Dennis Carlson’s analysis of the African-
American civil rights activist, Rosa Parks, expresses these concerns. Carlson suggests that since heroes are cultural artefacts, promoted for specific purposes and embodying certain ideals and virtues, their enduring ability to remain progressive or radically democratic is questionable:

Even those whose words and deeds represented a radical challenge to the dominant or hegemonic social order can be – and have been – incorporated within conservative narratives of national identity and progress (2003: 45).

Indeed, the strategic incorporation of Zidane’s Algerian heritage into his image as a ‘race ambassador’ in France’s postcolonial landscape exemplifies that, even when heroes emerge as revolutionary symbols for minority groups, there is no guarantee that upon reception they will continue to serve progressive purposes. While heroes may be employed as progressive models to emulate and vehicles for reform, their symbolic content makes meaning susceptible to appropriation according to the cultural climate and subjectively embodied experiences from which they are constructed, rendering any attempt to fix the tragic hero to a rigid conception of moral virtue problematic.

Despite being constructed according to cultural and emotional processes, the hero’s propensity to be employed as a ‘floating signifier’ does not render their kathartic significance redundant. Analysing the pedagogical implications of progressive heroes in modern democracies, Carlson (2003) locates the most significant repercussion as the postmodern disruption of the binary opposition that framed how education was conceived in the modern era: the logos-mythos or truth-myth binary opposition. The deliberative tradition inherent to the dialectic challenges the hero’s universal significance in time and space. Exemplifying tragedy’s dialogical approach, the critical community’s ability to contest meaning engenders novel ways of mythologising traditionally marginalised members of society through casting multicultural heroes, such as the Franco-Algerian footballer, Zinédine Zidane, as progressive models for underrepresented members of society. Of course, representing progressive heroes as examples of what Nietzsche ([1872]
referred to as “monumental history,” has the propensity to objectify the hero as an emblem to preserve defining effervescent moments in time. It was observed, for example, that Zidane was publicly preserved as a sacred symbol of France’s 1998 World Cup victory in spite of his transgression, positioning the hero in a paradoxical arena as both democratically progressive and increasingly susceptible to state and commercial manipulation. While discrimination is not a necessary corollary of objectification, appropriating the symbolic content of the hero may introduce new inequalities associated with the commercialisation of fandom (Williams, 2006). For, as observed in Chapter 3, heroic representations of ‘superhuman’ coloured athletes frequently reify ‘race’ through social myths that correspond ‘race’ and biology to regressive characteristics reminiscent of colonialist discourses (Andrews, 1996; Carrington and McDonald, 2001; Hoberman, 1997; Rowe, 2009). Consequently, even if democratic principles include more expansive gendered and multicultural heroes, there is no guarantee that upon reception their symbolic content will be employed to signify the progressive purposes originally intended.

Michael Dyson (2000: 6) articulated these concerns, highlighting how political conservatives have undermined Martin Luther King’s progressive legacy as a civil rights activist to minimise his radical initiatives and transform him into a passive symbol of non-violence. Dyson argues that presenting King as a “great pacifist” sanitises his revolutionary ideas, including his mistrust of white America and capitalist ideologies, as well as his commitment to solidifying the black freedom struggle. The malleability of the symbolic content of the hero becomes particularly alarming when applied to ‘the glory of war,’ religious fundamentalism and terrorism - for example, images of suicide bombers heroically depicted as altruistic martyrs and ‘freedom fighters’ pursuing ‘noble ends’ for their political cause and fellow community. That the symbols and metaphors representing mythos remain open to dispute does not undermine their mythic significance: “Now you from another position might say that something was something that shouldn’t have been realised, you know? That’s judgment from another side but it doesn’t destroy the heroism of what was done, absolutely not” (Campbell, [1987] 2003: n.p.). It is precisely due to the hero’s malleable construction, coloured by sociocultural processes and the fluid
emotional orientations that emblems, such as Zidane, remain progressive vehicles by energising civic expression and critical debate.

Yet, to focus on the tragic hero as the nucleus of katharsis is problematic. Corresponding to the actor’s separation from the chorus in the development from classical Greek to Attic tragedy, Aristotle was instrumental in elevating the hero as the foundation of tragic drama. Despite prioritising *mythos* (plot) over *ethos* (character) as “the first principle” and “soul of tragedy,” Aristotle’s (2005: 51-3) definition of tragedy as the *mimesis* of an action – “not of persons but of action and life” – “elevated” the hero’s reversal of fortune as the antecedent of kathartic recognition. It is no accident, as Raymond Williams ([1983] 1991: 23) elucidates, that as ancient Greek culture evolved from its traditional concern with collective rituals to subjective reason, that the chorus was the crucial element of tragedy to be discarded. That the chorus was abandoned in the Hellenistic period remains arguable (Wilson, 2003: 167), there is, nevertheless, a clear indication that the collective dimensions of Greek tragedy were superseded by an overarching emphasis on the hero as rational subject integral to the tragic genre.

Maintaining the fifth century Attic concern with subjectivity, Richard Dyer (1987: 87) observed that the development of celebrity in global capitalism promotes the liberal principle whereby individuals are seen as “separate, irreducible and unique” from society. The Socratic legacy of the rational subject was the motivation behind Nietzsche’s critique of Attic tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy* ([1872] 1995), which Page duBois (2004) echoed, arguing that Aristotle’s postclassical perspective (written a century after the tragedies he documented) began an extensive tradition of misunderstanding tragedy by focusing solely on the hero as the locus of moral action. Notwithstanding the various orientations configuring the philosophy of the tragic and the poetics of tragedy espoused by Aristotle (Szondi, 2002), the *Poetics*’ emphasis on recognising the trajectory of the hero as the antecedent of katharsis has had a considerable impact on subsequent readings of tragedy, with Hegel, Freud, Lacan, and Judith Butler all prioritising the hero in their appraisals of the tragic genre.
Critical of Aristotle’s deviation from the collective origins of tragedy, duBois argues that the rituals from which Greek tragedy emerged exceed the hero’s trajectory. Such criticism appears unreasonable. To criticise Aristotle for ignoring the collective dynamics of tragedy is to overlook the social significance of katharsis. Aristotle is explicit in the *Poetics* that it is precisely humans’ social ontology of common vulnerability that maintains the universal capacity for sympathy to fuse the moral community. It is for this reason that representing the hero’s personal misfortune as a social tragedy emerges from recognising the civic consequences of their ‘error of judgment,’ and fearing that such misfortune could befall oneself. The limitations of Aristotle’s paradigm derive not from elevating the hero, but rather the universal moral telos that the philosopher attributed to their tragic decline. Not only is it unlikely that audiences will appraise tragedy in a universal manner, interrogating Zidane’s transgression indicates that celebrity does not necessarily correspond to moral characteristics of heroism.

Chris Rojek (2001: 198) is reproachful of celebrities’ democratic “claim to fame” given that there is no necessary connection between merit and achievement and, as such, celebrity must be contemplated circumspectly rather than accepted at face value. Karen Armstrong (2005: 134) similarly remains sceptical towards conflating celebrities with heroes. Celebrities are “suspiciously heroic,” she suggests, given that traditional Greek heroes were not designed as icons to passively admire but intended to invoke the hero within the perceiver through mimetic participation. It was in this vein that Daniel Boorstin (1964: 46) renounced the “greatness” projected onto the “achievement” of celebrity. Whereas the hero conventionally depicted a self-made ‘man’ admired for their courageous achievements as an archetype of “great deeds,” the prototype for celebrity is to be manufactured by press agents and, as such, “suffocated” by the very media responsible for elevating their image:

There is not even any tragedy in the celebrity’s fall, for he is a man returned to his proper anonymous station. The tragic hero, in Aristotle’s familiar definition, was a man fallen from great estate, a great man with a
tragic flaw. He had somehow become the victim of his own greatness. Yesterday’s celebrity, however, is a commonplace man who has been fitted back into his proper commonplaceness not by any fault of his own, but by time itself (Boorstin, 1964: 63).

From a sociological perspective, katharsis exceeds the psychologically decimated state of the tragic hero. Tragedy is not reduced to narratives of ‘great’ heroes or the ‘everyman.’ As outlined in Chapter 2, the tragic repercussions of the hero’s *hamartia* have consequences for those members of society implicated in their fatal action – the personal misfortune of Zidane becoming a social tragedy ‘writ-large’ for those with symbolic investments in his-story. To appreciate the social phenomenon of the tragic entails a shift from viewing the hero through a myopic moral lens of awe and emulation, to perceiving the sociocultural relevance of their symbolic content as vehicles through which to critically engage in debates resonating with spectators’ emotional experiences.

Understood in this context, it is argued that Zidane’s scandal resembled a Greek tragedy insofar as his World Cup misdemeanour was a public spectacle with social consequences. When classicist Page duBois (2004: 63) was asked to comment on O. J. Simpson’s tragic decline during the height of his public trial in 1997, she agreed that the situation did resemble that of a Greek tragedy, not due to the fall of the celebrated American footballer resulting from hubristic pride or a fatal flaw. Instead, tragedy emerged from the sociopolitical consequences for those members of society implicated in Simpson’s case:

Especially for African-American defendants, in criminal trials all over America. If this particular jury including African-American members acquitted O. J., future juries would react to ensure that other defendants, especially African-Americans, would not get off lightly.

The Latin term *socius*, from which the term ‘society’ is derived, denoted ‘companionship’ with the broader civic community. Avoiding conventional expositions
corresponding the hero’s ‘fall’ to moral deficiency, duBois locates the sociological significance of tragedy in the effects of their decline on members of the broader community. For if *mythos* focuses on the individual rather than the social implications of their fall, action is deprived of its intersubjective significance, meaning becomes partial, and the numerous ‘others’ implicated in the hero’s tragedy are excluded from *recognition*.

A sociological standpoint considers Zidane’s World Cup scandal a social tragedy only when the footballer’s on-field transgression is recognised as resulting in social consequences for those members of society represented by the footballer’s *mythos*. Zidane’s headbutt had ‘tragic’ repercussions for those associated with his headbutt, particularly ethnic minorities and inhabitants of Parisian *banlieues* (working-class suburbs), who were denounced as ‘irrational Muslims’ and ‘primitive Orientals’ in the context of extant French social myths and the nation’s turbulent emotional climate: France’s unresolved colonialist past, present racial riots, as well as religious stereotypes concerning Islam, sexism and the treatment of women. Thus, the tragedy of Zinédine Zidane was not limited to the personal ‘fall’ of the French footballer. The real tragedy centred on those inhabitants implicated in the event who had symbolic investments in the footballer as a symbol of hope and social mobility, tragically ‘falling’ further into stereotypical constructions pertaining to lower echelons of society as a consequence of his transgression, while Zidane’s celebrity persona remained relatively unscathed, if not more publicly revered, in light of his misdemeanour.

A consequence of social tragedy is the drama’s ability to affectively communicate concerns of the broader *demos*. Greek tragedy was an “active ingredient” in popular Attic consciousness (Cartledge, 2007), just as sporting events are frequently mediated in present-day societies as opportunities for *logos* to be made common and brought into the public arena for popular consumption through debate, discussion, critique and counter-critique. Greek tragedy was *demokratic* in the sense that it provided a voice for the silenced *demos* (common people), extending beyond the limited sphere of the *kratia* (state rulers) of Greek, male citizens. Providing a ‘sociology of tragedy,’ Edith Hall (2007) suggests that while debarred from public debate in the *polis*, the voices of women,
slaves and barbarian ‘others’ were represented in mythos through the range of characters exploring the plights of men and women from divergent ethnicities. The Greek dramatist, Euripides, reiterates the egalitarian ethos of Attic tragedy, asserting that his democratic (demokratikon) play reflected the broader demos, including female and servile characters otherwise excluded from society. It is for this reason that Attic tragedy was ‘democratic’ in the present sense of the word:

Tragedy is born when myth starts to be viewed from the point of view of the citizen (Vernant, 1992: 37).

In the social arena of French football, players of African descent generally absent from political life in France frequently deploy their celebrity status and mediated sporting scandals as opportunities to engage in political issues through fair play initiatives and anti-racism campaigns, such as F.A.R.E. (Football Against Racism in Europe). The mediation of social tragedy invites audiences to evaluate the transgressions at the heart of scandals by representing the ‘noiseless pain’ that George Eliot (1866) associated with unrecognised suffering. For even in attempting to protect Zidane’s sacred stature from public scrutiny, mediated coverage of the event incorporated marginalised citizens into the various scripts employed to rationalise the misdemeanour. These voices were further explored and debated among communities in France’s private domain as spectators contested how Zidane’s transgression reflected the emotional climate of racism, ethnic disadvantage and class injustice stratifying postcolonial France. The mediation of these mythologies for public consumption may have negative ramifications through advancing stereotypes and ideological social myths, as well as speaking for those represented instead of providing them with a voice. The hero’s tragic transgression, nevertheless, remains an important vehicle to contest issues of racial discrimination, ethnicity, gender, religion and class at a safe aesthetic distance too often censored in the public sphere of France’s secular Republic.

The progressive significance of tragedy emerges from the possibility of cultivating a critical community through interrogating extant beliefs. Greek tragedy is
marked by a number of characteristics, including tensions between myth and forms of thought peculiar to the city, conflicting human values, and structural issues concerning religious and political conflicts (Burian, 2007; Vernant, 1992). As appropriated myths, tragedies do not merely reflect reality but call it into question by problematising action:

Tragedy is not only an art form; it is also a social institution…a spectacle open to all the citizens, directed, acted, and judged by the qualified representatives of the various tribes. In this way it [the city] turned itself into a theatre. It’s subject, in a sense, was itself and it acted itself out before its public. But although tragedy…appears rooted in social reality, that does not mean that it is a reflection of it. It does not reflect that reality but calls it into question. By depicting it rent and divided against itself, it turns it into a problem (Vernant, 1992: 36).

It was precisely by interrogating social myths that tragedy emerged as a medium for political participation. Encapsulating emergent tensions between self and society, the kathartic affect of tragedy operates as a mode of sociality: the process of change outlined in Chapter 5, which Mead ([1932] 2002: 49) described as “the stage betwixt and between the old system and the new,” where the self develops dialogically through their interactions with other members of society. Representing the tragic plight of the hero as a reflection of broader civic concerns, katharsis relates directly to spectators’ intersubjective experience of “mimetic vertigo” (Taussig, 1992: 176-8; 1993: 237), their ability to occupy two systems simultaneously, the “phase of adjustment” in which the ‘I’ and the ‘me,’ hero and spectator, are understood as elements of a unified personality. In an interview documenting the making of the 90-minute portrait, Gordon (2006: n.p.) suggests that this mimetic process of recognition lies at the heart of their artistic representation of Zidane: “what makes a portrait that has some lasting power, some impact in the world, are the portraits where you look for something about yourself in that image.” Brought before the public as the subject of social inquiry, the very status of the hero is debated in terms of the broader social impact of their transgression on the demos viewing the spectacle. It is only by dissecting mythos at a safe aesthetic distance that
audiences can identify with the hero’s misfortune: proximate enough to resonate with present civic concerns, yet distant enough to avoid public horror and pandemonium.

**Universal Morals or Moral Emotivism?**

Social tragedy is dramatic precisely insofar as it mediates temporal tensions in a particular emotional climate between a past that is still alive and present cultural ideals. Whereas a social myth explains, tragic drama unfolds, with *mythos* challenging the conceptual and intellectual boundaries responsible for structuring thought and action (Pirro, 2001). Only when liberated from the authority of convention does the hero cease to be celebrated as a model of emulation, instead becoming an “object of debate” (Vernant, 1992: 34). Nicole Loraux (1999: 137) refers to this practice as “anti-politique” since the dialectic transcends the ideological myths on which city-states are established, with the coherence that Aristotle ascribed to tragedy’s ‘unity of action’ better understood as an arbitrary sociocultural representation. Historical episodes are metaphorically synthesised into a ‘whole’ event – *mythos* - that may challenge prescriptive political discourse when accomplished uniquely during moments of kathartic recognition. Notwithstanding the ability of tragedy to assume universal significance, *mythos* calls the authority of social myths into question from various embodied points of view, rendering it improbable that audiences will be resolute in achieving consensus on the moral telos of tragedy. Instead, emotional engagement becomes a vehicle through which to critique tentative social issues at a safe aesthetic distance. As such, spectacles emerge as opportunities to challenge existing dynamics of power with *mythoi* undermining the coherence of established social myths.

The relationship between a social myth and *mythos* is paramount to the critical capacity of katharsis. In its original form myth explained the world. It was only when tragedy replaced mythical traditions that social performances emerged as opportunities to problematise actions for which there were no definitive solutions (Vernant, 1992: 34). For Aristotle, *mythos* is the “first principle” and “soul of tragedy” precisely for the reason that it depicts the hero engaged in action. Tragedy’s emphasis on praxis distinguishes the
genre from lyric and epic poetry in which individuals were perceived to be predestined to the mercy of the gods, rather than agents with free-will. The centrality of agency to tragedy indicates why *hamartia* is conceived as an ‘error of judgment’ derived from a moral dilemma in which the hero must choose between alternative courses of action. Mary Whitlock Blundell (1992: 155) observes that “What shall I do?” emerges as the archetypal question reverberating with the tragic genre: “What shall I do?” cries Orestes in the *Choephoroi*, “what should I now do?” laments Ajax, reiterated in Sophocles’ text by Teemessa: “Alas, child, what shall I do?,” “I do not know what to do my heart is gripped with anguish; should I take action or not?” reflects Pelasgus in the *Suppliants*. This series of eternal human dilemmas corresponds to Zidane’s dramatic predicament where he was situated in an unfortunate predicament of being forced to choose between ignoring Materazzi’s provocation or defending his sister’s ‘honour.’

Comparable to speculative moral commentary dominating contemporary media scandals, the hero’s tragic predicament is expressed by the oscillating views of the chorus as exemplified by King Agamemnon’s moral dilemma in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* of having to choose between sacrificing his daughter and disobeying the gods. Evidently, Zidane’s ‘tragic’ choice appears somewhat trivial compared to Agamemnon’s more serious predicament. The common thread weaving both their plights under the rubric of tragedy is that their climactic action signifies an alternative between conflicting commitments and unwarranted circumstances, a decision revealed to have substantial implications for the hero’s domestic relations and the civic community to which they belong. For despite the Greek’s concern with the rational subject, the primary function of tragedy was to emphasise through *praxis* the interdependence of the social collectivity.

Recognising the intersubjective dimension of tragic praxis (inherited from an unresolved past with implications for an imminent future) complicates blame by rejecting crude polemics of moral culpability. Martha Nussbaum (1992: 267) points out that the real misfortune of tragedy is that in response to life’s “terrible reversals” there is no single action that could have prevented the hero’s demise. Audiences accomplish katharsis precisely through affectively recognising this common vulnerability – what
Nussbaum refers to as “the fragility of goodness” ([1986] 2001) - through fearing that they, too, could have been susceptible to such an unjust predicament, a feeling that engenders pity for the misfortune of others. The paradox of social tragedy, as an accident waiting to happen, mediates the terrain of chance and moral responsibility as negotiated by the logic of probable events comprising the telos of mythos (Poole, 2005: 6). Aristotle’s (2005) original “uncaused cause,” the incalculable factum that Maffesoli refers to as hasard objectif (objective chance), indicates that an elementary component of the human condition is that all individuals, no matter how heroic, humble or prosperous, are susceptible to ignorance, misfortune and injustice. Recognising humans’ common vulnerability breaks from Plato’s moral paradigm in which ‘the good’ are free from pain in their ability to stoically transcend emotion. For Aristotle, pity rests precisely upon audiences’ recognition that, despite the hero’s ‘error,’ suffering is undeserved, a dilemma indicating that even the ethically lived life may be struck by tragedy.

The subjectively embodied foundation of emotional consciousness positions the affective dimension of tragedy as both a necessary antecedent of, and impediment, to katharsis. Tragedy is affective precisely insofar as it engages audiences through ‘inhibited action,’ where the protagonist’s temporal crisis between past, present and future spheres emerge as vehicles through which pertinent social issues may be publicly disseminated at a safe aesthetic distance. It was Proust ([1927] 2000) who popularised the affective dimension of temporality: the social construction of time where the moments of the past do not remain fixed, but retain in memory the motion which drew them towards the future. Proust’s recollections of how emotions, what he refers to as “geological upheavals of thought,” colour the significance of life corresponds to the affective construction of mythos as a temporal sequence of events. One becomes conscious of time through affective inhibition, an interruption of action responsible for demarcating the problematic present from past habits and potential future resolutions. The recognition that Aristotle attributed to tragedy’s closure entails that misfortune may be the source of creative action, a fall fortunate and disabilities enabling (Eagleton, 2004; Steiner, 2004). Simultaneously traumatising and liberating, the ‘Janus-faced’ closure of tragedy epitomises not merely the Apollonian but the Dionysian dimension of human existence, xi where destruction is
considered to be a source of creativity through the transformative capacity for emotions to reorient action:

One must still have chaos in oneself, to be able to give birth to a dancing star (Nietzsche, [1886] 2003: 39).

Tragic disruptions emerge in the context of Greek drama as opportunities for dialogue, debate and social reform (not through tragedy alone, but rather the manner in which suffering is encountered). Exposing the myriad of ways in which mythos may be constructed around affective experience, tragedy may forge a critical community founded on a heterogeneous conscience collective. The word 'critical' evokes a range of connotations, employed in this thesis as an evaluation of the consensual undercurrents driving social myths that interrogate prevailing ideas rather than accepting them at face value. While the critical community is open to a plurality of voices, this is not to say that all kathartic responses are ‘critical,’ progressive and emancipatory. With katharsis recognised through emotional content, itself encumbered by values, needs and desires, the critical component of the critical community must be recognised as inherently limited given that “…we are ourselves a term in the equation” (Stevenson, 1909: 138).

Challenging the Greek legacy of reason over the passions, Aristotle’s insight was to demonstrate through katharsis that all emotions possess rationality insofar as emotions are constituted by beliefs (even if these beliefs appear unreasonable). The shift from perceiving the emotional dimension of human experience as an irrational source of civic unrest to a rational response marks a significant movement towards democratic pluralism: “however unintelligible these may be to us” (James, [1899] 1949: 264). Elucidating the centrality of emotions in providing life with significance, William James was emphasising that under certain conditions affective dispositions can contribute to “emergent realities” of pragmatic reform given that action necessarily requires “emotional pertinence” to be energised:
Any philosophy which annihilates the validity of the reference by explaining away its objects or translating them into terms of no emotional pertinency, leaves the mind with little to care and act for (1897: 83).

The configuration of katharsis around sociocultural processes emphasises that *mythos* must remain contestable and open to revision to continue to be affectively relevant to needs and values of succeeding generations. To recognise the cultural dimension of tragedy signifies the arbitrary composition of social myths as rational modes of explaining the world. The ambivalent ways of rationalising experience encapsulate what Nikolas Kompridis (2006) refers to as the “disunity of reason”: the dynamic configuration of heterogeneous rationales coexisting in globalised cultural constellations. Moreover, the dynamic ways in which emotions negotiate rationality accentuates the proposition that emotions are not value neutral and, as such, must remain open to reasoned argumentation.

Recognising the arbitrary sociocultural construction of tragedy commences from a Kantian ‘critique of pure reason’ that troubles the rational coherence of Aristotle’s ‘unity of action,’ while illuminating the common ontology of human vulnerability that enable tragedies to transcend limits of space and time regardless of the contingencies of culture. The notion of embodiment emerges in this context as an appreciation of the fusion of mental, physical and social life (Turner, 2000: 448). Practical wisdom enables spectators to *recognise* that meaning is practically contingent on varying circumstances, where what exists are not things made but *things in the making*, as what is considered rational is liable to modification through experience (James, 1897: 260). To appreciate democratic pluralism is not synonymous with cultural relativism where: “nothing is worthy of passion or commitment because everything solid dissolves upon one’s approach” (Smith, 1996: 10). For, as Aristotle (2005) observed, and MacIntyre (1999) reiterates, it is precisely universal suffering and a recognition of this shared sense of vulnerability that characterise humans as “dependent rational animals” regardless of the contingencies of culture. Turner and Rojek (2001) maintain that the moral foundation of society is fused around a universal bond of vulnerability beyond the particularities of politics and culture.
Locating the universal frailty of the embodied subject in the precarious nature of social life reflects the enduring circumstances capable of transforming personal suffering into a social tragedy ‘writ-large.’

Just as readers continue to debate the legacy of Achilles’ wrath as a vignette capturing universal concerns of the human condition, present-day audiences become emotionally engaged in media scandals when archetypal narratives affectively resonate with the emotional climate in which media are consumed. The hero-worship of Zidane may be an exception to the general laws and aggregates stratifying French social structures, yet it is precisely for this reason that ‘the moment’ of his climactic geste was infused with such “emotional pertinence,” presenting his transgression: “Not an imitation of human beings, but of actions and life” (Aristotle, 2005: 51-3). Contextualised in this manner, Zidane’s tragedy is not reducible to the particularities of his-story. His scandal assumes kathartic significance precisely by evoking the broader sentiments of those spectators symbolically implicated in his tragic action.

Relational pragmatics considers these tragic predicaments opportunities for creative democracy by analysing the reconstructive potentialities of human agency when interrupted by problematic encounters. Moral and practical problems encountered in a rapidly pluralistic globe may be resolved communicatively when actors reconstruct the temporal-relational contexts within which they are embedded, transforming their values and selves. Pragmatism’s tenet of creative action emphasises intelligent, experimental and intersubjective responses, “conjoint communicated experience” in which imaginative projection negotiates past habits and presents problematic encounters as a precursor to practical wisdom (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 1013). Mead (1913: 380) elucidates:

The fundamental difference between the scientific and moral solution of a problem lies in the fact that the moral problem deals with concrete personal interests, in which the whole self is reconstructed in its relation to the other selves whose relations are essential to its personality. The growth of the self arises out of a partial disintegration – the appearance of the
different interests in the forum of reflection, the reconstruction of the social world, and the consequent appearance of the new self that answers to the new object.

The emotional dynamics integral to pragmatic action are exemplified by the mediation of social myths and *mythos* in which pluralism may be appreciated in its diversity through the cultivation of a *critical community*. The hero emerges in this context as democratic in the literal sense of the word by representing the broader *demos* beyond those with the authority to publicly vocalise their opinions.

Contextualised in this manner, the reality of Zidane’s scandal is not undermined by its quotient of readability. *Mythoi* emerge as vehicles through which issues such as the Algerian War, racism, social disadvantage and sexual discrimination may be debated and reinterpreted as individuals *creatively* orient their feelings towards imagining alternative futures. Operating on multidimensional temporal axes, *mythoi* require revision if they are to maintain cultural significance for succeeding generations. These revisions potentially result in both real and symbolic consequences as *mythos* becomes intrinsic to how individuals and nations perceive themselves and affectively engage with the world. It was in this sense that William James (1897: 261) justified the importance of hero-worship, where “the difference between an America rescued by a Washington or by a ‘Jenkins’ may be little, but …is important,” as a vehicle for social change which, moreover, addresses life’s important topics. National and personal heroes present opportunities to affectively communicate matters of practical concern in the public domain. Heroes emerge as symbols which have the capacity to affectively reorient spectators’ passions and inspire social change by creatively energising alternative courses of action in the moving present: “the stage of the living drama of life” (James, 1897: 259). It must be reiterated that to emphasise the importance of contesting symbolic content is not synonymous with cultural relativism:

…the notion that social life counts for nothing outside of discourse. On this tack the improvement of life can be accomplished if one tells a better
story about it. But life is not merely talk; inequalities of opportunity, for example, are not redressed if individuals, or even whole classes, tell more ‘agenic’, optimistic autobiographies (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992: 7).

The verbal provocation contributing to Zidane’s climactic transgression is a testament, nevertheless, to the actual implications that words, “very hard words,” and symbolic systems of communication more generally may set in motion. Symbolic myths operate as affective modes of meaning yet, as Zidane’s role as a ‘race ambassador’ suggests, for the legacy of such incidents to transcend discourse mythos must be affectively energised into pragmatic action in order to be realised.

This chapter has endeavoured to convey the enduring relevance of katharsis as an affective apparatus of emotional clarification. In contextualising Zinédine Zidane’s 2006 World Cup sporting scandal in the moral system underlying Aristotle’s tragic paradigm, two primary issues emerged concerning the pedagogical dimension of katharsis. First, can katharsis remain instructive if tragedy is rationalised relatively in liberal moral orders? Second, what is the progressive utility of the hero if their emblem may be appropriated to advance fluid and contradictory mythoi? Commercial and state appropriations of Zidane as a ‘race ambassador’ in spite of his transgression raise concerns over how glorifying the footballer may condone masculinist violence. The propensity for Zidane’s emblem to operate as a vehicle for propaganda emphasises the need for the symbolic content of the progressive hero to remain open to conjecture, with the social performance emerging as a medium to deliberate upon issues at the heart of the critical community.

Given that tragedy may not be redeemed through katharsis, reference to the term ‘progressive’ in this thesis is not synonymous with salvation. Rather, as Jeffrey Alexander (2002: 30-31) points out, the endpoint of suffering defines tragedy’s telos: the living memory of tragedy resisting closure by transforming the particular historical episode into an archetypal tragic event that recognises through pity and fear why such traumas should not be repeated. Insight does not guarantee foresight and consequently even this reading of tragic drama as a preventative device for prospective cultural trauma.
is more progressive than the social phenomenon of tragedy warrants (Rorty, 1992: 17-18). The universal experience of social tragedy instead emerges as one of irreparable loss (Williams ([1966] 2006). From an Aristotelian perspective the social significance of tragedy derives from affectively recognising the indispensable connection between self-interest and social interest, where personal suffering and well-being are considered interdependent with the eudaimonia of the polis community:

Happiness is to be defined as well-doing, the active life is the best life both for the whole state collectivity and for each man individually (Aristotle, [1932] 2005: 551).

Whereas the Holocaust became a cultural fact by transforming localised suffering into an archetypal tragic reference for succeeding generations (Alexander, 2002), it has been observed that while Zidane’s transgression was mediated as a social tragedy, pity remained for the most part a culturally motivated sentiment confined to those audiences with affective investments in his-story. Given that the moral telos of tragedy is not inherent to an event, tragic suffering must be actively recognised by audiences. That tragedy is dynamically received, however, is not merely symptomatic of modern democracies. While the ability to contest the moral significance of tragedy has certainly intensified in modernity, this chapter has emphasised that the construction of social tragedy necessarily configures embodied emotions around sociocultural representations.

This arbitrary representation of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ classified around the political logic of the sacred and profane accentuates the need to view circumspectly the social construction of moral universals. While the legacy of Zidane's social tragedy and the implications of this ‘new multiethnic France’ beyond temporary feelings, collective effervescence remain questionable (Mignon, 1998), the event enabled the demos to voice their concerns through the emotional foundation of the critical community. It has been emphasised that not all emotions are critical. The critical community is a possibility rather than a guarantee since the intellect and consciousness are grounded in emotions themselves responsible for subjectively investing value in life. For this reason, katharsis
must be recognised as partial given that the general structure of tragedy permits numerous opinions specific to audiences’ embodied experiences.

The civic consequences of Zidane’s social tragedy reflect Platonic and Aristotelian debates concerning the moral impact of poetic forms. Aristotle’s critique of Plato rest on the pedagogical insights attained from mythos, which he argued, through katharsis, evoked ethical excellence when audiences recognised the logic structuring the tragic plot. For Aristotle emphasised that by instructing audiences through mimetic representation about the probable and necessary consequences of action, tragedy was morally, politically and psychologically sound and not corrupt, as Plato had suggested. Represented through a variety of mythoi, one may never be sure whether spectators will discern that aesthetic texts are merely mimetic imitations, as Aristotle suggested, or succumb to emulating mythos, giving credence to Neoplatonic concerns notably summarised by Oscar Wilde’s (1902) aphorism: “Life imitates art.” Rather than undermine katharsis, tragedy’s malleability emphasises the importance of contesting performances through mythos. It is in this sense that the fateful words of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: “Dead are all the gods,” signifies an important transition from the hero as the object of passive emulation into a symbol of critical contemplation. This change presents democratic audiences with an accountable hero since “there is no hiding place for the gods from the searching telescope and microscope” of democratic secularism (Campbell, [1987] 2003: 387), thus, shifting Zidane’s sacred stature from that of a celebrated persona of awe to a more humane depiction of a fallible human being.

A sociological perspective suggests that the moral dimension of tragedy is not limited to recognising how the hero’s ‘tragic flaw’ pronounces them reprehensible. Rather, hamartia points to the need to examine the social conditions engendering the hero’s tragic predicament – in Zidane’s case how Materazzi’s provocation reflected broader racial and social injustice. While Zidane was held accountable for his misdemeanour, and recognised that his actions were incongruous with his celebrated image as a role model for children, his transgression accentuates the need to actively contemplate, rather than emulate, celebrity. When mediated for public consumption,
'moral dilemmas' enable individuals to critically engage with normative social myths through *mythos*. Accordingly, to reduce myth to a single moral paradigm would be to strip it of its potential to kathartically render “emotional pertinence” into a vehicle for critical inquiry. More than a reductive allegory, positioning Zidane’s scandal in Attic conceptions of tragic drama presents a comparative reference that demonstrates how the symbolic content of tragedy manifests as an opportunity for katharsis to negotiate tentative social issues during periods of social change.

That the hero’s journey may represent universal themes does not override the need for katharsis to negotiate audiences’ embodied viewing experiences on a terrain of cultural representations. Tragedy only extends beyond personal misfortune when suffering is culturally represented and affectively recognised as a social tragedy. It was for this reason that the public mediation of Zidane’s transgression transcended his on-field misconduct, assuming social significance for those members of society symbolically implicated in the footballer’s transgression. And yet to recognise the social ontology of human vulnerability underlying tragedy, the cultural and affective vicissitudes from which *mythos* is experienced, does not justify moral emotivism. For to understand emotions as rational ways of experiencing the world, is not to render emotions immune from criticism. Given that all emotions involve value judgments, susceptible to cultural representation and embodied experience, kathartic pity and fear must themselves be recognised as limited and, as such, remain open to reasoned argumentation. Contextualised in this manner, the progressive role of the tragic hero as a subject of critical inquiry emerges as an opportunity to kathartically release the democratic imagination at a safe aesthetic distance that through *mythos* may creatively energise social life.
Chapter 7
Conclusion

W. H. Auden’s poem emphasises that one must be personally affected to feel compassion for the plight of the tragic hero. Referring to Pieter Brueghel’s landscape depicting the death of Icarus, the boy whose hamartia was to disregard warnings flying too close to the sun - an ‘error of judgment’ responsible for melting his waxen wings, which led to his watery demise - Auden suggests that comparable to the border framing Brueghel’s painting, perspective is necessarily limited.

Resonating with the theories of emotion articulated by David Hume and Adam Smith in the preceding chapter, this observation emphasises that “accomplishing” katharsis is itself dependent on audiences’ emotional apprehension of tragedy’s emergent circumstances. While the ploughman may have sensed the incident – “heard the splash, the forsaken cry” - “for him it was not an important failure.” Not only did he not care for Icarus, his emotional experience was motivated by more immediate concerns - “he had somewhere to get to” - and so, unaffected, “sailed calmly on.” In short, emotions exceed sense perception and appetite, involving evaluative judgments about the value of objects and circumstances. In this sense, pity and fear must themselves be recognised as limited towards “those who resemble us,” “ourselves or for those whom we care for” (Aristotle, [1926] 2006: 211, 213). Notwithstanding the inequitable manner in which one may be affected by tragedy, katharsis positions emotions as invaluable resources in the cultivation of ethical individuals, who through recognising their common vulnerability, are inclined towards fellow-feeling with the social collectivity. The irony is that while recognising tragedy to be a subjective experience, katharsis emerges as an intersubjective process, affectively rationalised around common symbolic content structuring society.


The ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure;
And the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

The ‘Fall’ of Public Man?

Tragedy’s climax presents the opportunity for the actor and the audience mutually to recognise how a certain sequence of events facilitated the hero’s reversal of fortune and subsequent decline. Yet, precisely what is to be discerned from this mimetic process of kathartic recognition is increasingly troubled by the culturally dynamic and democratic arena in which manifestations of the tragic are mediated for popular consumption. Rather than hinder the social significance of tragedy, the malleability of the plot’s poetic form is integral to the genre’s sustained relevance over time. Despite being appropriated by succeeding historical and cultural generations, for the most part mythos remains structured around universal themes. What does change is the playwright and audiences’ recognition of precisely how hamartia - that unfortunate ‘error of judgment’ encapsulated in tragic praxis - contributed to the hero’s downfall and the broader social tragedy emanating from the act. Employing a Neoaristotelian paradigm to establish the semantic differences pertaining to a social myth and mythos, it has been proposed that these modes of appropriation serve as important points of conjecture where deliberating upon the motivation and circumstances facilitating the hero’s tragic decline may enable audiences to debate the very issues lying at the heart of the body politic.

Of course, it makes a significant difference precisely when the playwright represents the hero’s reversal of fortune as starting to go awry. In attributing the lust at the core of Phaedra’s downfall to Aphrodite’s punitive spell, for example, Euripides casts Phaedra as the victim of her emotions. Emblematic of religious beliefs of divine intervention endemic to Greek polis life, the Attic playwright partially exonerates the blame attributed to his heroine. That context has a dramatic effect on the meaning attributed to tragedy is exemplified by Racine’s succeeding appropriation of the equivalent myth, which indicative of increasing notions of free-will in seventeenth-century France, located Phèdre’s incestuous desire for her stepson, Hippolytus, in her iniquitous disposition towards jealousy and lust.
In the context of Zinédine Zidane’s 2006 World Cup scandal it is evident that the same principles apply. It is apparent that whether Zidane’s headbutt is considered a spontaneous incident of on-field aggression, attributed to his disadvantaged upbringing in the Parisian working-class banlieues, or rationalised within the political logic of the sacred and profane as an ‘honourable’ defence of his Algerian heritage and the postcolonial values characterising France’s conscience collective, remains arbitrary. In selecting what Aristotle referred to as the initial ‘uncaused cause’ of tragedy, and synthesising historical episodes into a rationally coherent plot, the media assume an elevated position in publicising the collective significance of suffering. By inscribing a national reaction to Zidane’s on-field misdemeanour that became kathartically recognisable as a ‘social tragedy,’ the French press had a considerable impact on the way in which the footballer’s scandalous transgression was framed and reconciled in the public domain. That the media have the capacity to inform public opinion does not, however, denote that they determine it. Thematic media analysis and interviews conducted for this thesis demonstrate that Zidane’s headbutt was affectively rationalised by various publics as signifying incongruent mythoi: both a tragic ‘fall from grace’ and heroic act of insolence. In the latter case, what was considered by some to represent ethnic pride and courage in the face of adversity glorified Zidane for his heroic revolt against the ‘polluted’ colonialist identities imposed upon him - an action further perceived to embody audiences’ common human vulnerability and, consequently, responsible for humanising the stature of France’s sacred emblem.

Corresponding to archetypal Greek tragedies, whereby the hero’s greatness was juxtaposed with their fallible human existence, Zidane’s personal tragedy may be seen to represent the eternal struggles, inequalities and paradoxes encountered in social life:

[Zidane]…reflects the greatness of human weakness. The hero is a mixture of inextricable pettiness and generosity…Neither white nor black. But the chiaroscuro of all existence (Maffesoli, 2009: 241).

Experienced at the height of Zidane’s career during the 2006 World Cup Final, the
footballer’s on-field transgression was “elevated” to be of “great magnitude” for both the French captain and his Republican fraternity. Representing the undeserved suffering of “those who resemble them,” tragedy corroborates with spectators’ common humanity, where self-interested fear is considered essential in facilitating trans-subjective feelings of pity for the hero’s reversal of fortune. It is precisely through evoking these essential emotions of pity and fear that public representations of tragedy represent the frailty of human existence. For the Greeks, such sympathetic feelings towards the other were recognised as bearing social consequence on the body politic, as poignant reminders of the limits of humanity and the need for individuals to remember the intersubjective ramifications of their personal praxis on the broader polis community.

So does Zidane’s transgression represent the French footballer as a present-day Prometheus or a virile aggressor? Nietzsche considered the myth of Prometheus not as the ‘fall’ cautioned by ancient Greek mythology, but as a journey of ‘self-elevation’ - man recognising himself through his convictions. By juxtaposing the conventional format of Greek tragedy with the transgressions characteristic of modern media scandals, it has been emphasised that the manner in which tragedy is affectively rationalised in the public domain is of social consequence. For, in kathartically recognising Zidane’s action to be a tragic accident, act of hubris or heroic geste, including whether his actions constitute honour or ‘dis-grace,’ the trajectory of the footballer bears significant implications for those individuals with symbolic investments in his-story. If Zidane is revered in spite of his scandalous transgression, it is understandable that critics may caution against glorifying the footballer’s action as the kind of anti-social behaviour members of the public may seek to emulate. For in justifying Zidane’s coup de tête as ‘rational choice’ resulting from racial discrimination, social and economic disadvantage, the ‘rationale’ of social myths may not only legitimise violence, anti-social behaviour is liable to become reified, further classifying symbolic representatives from these groups within lower echelons of society.

The moral dimension of Zidane’s mythos encourages one to question the pedagogical ramifications of the social phenomenon of the tragic. Are Zidane and
Sisyphus imperfect representations of humanity, or bold anti-heroes revered in their ability to transcend social conformity and the ‘natural’ trajectory pertaining to their tragic fate? Camus reminds readers that if one believes Homer, Sisyphus was the wisest and most prudent of mortals, while according to others he was disposed to practice the profession of the highwayman. Perhaps Camus is accurate in observing that these views are not irreconcilable. For while opinions differ as to the reasons why Sisyphus became the futile labourer of the underworld, the metaphorical structure of mythos enables emotions to breathe life into orthodox social myths, so clarifying tragedy’s significance. Moreover, in finding meaning in what appears to be the nihilistic punishment cursing Sisyphus to push a rock up a hill, only to watch it roll back down in an eternal sequence of unconsummated action, Camus’ anti-hero presents an alternative, albeit absurd, mode of mythos for individuals identifying with his tedious struggle. If Sisyphus is a hero, he is made so as much through his emotional apprehension of the world as he is through the thoughts and actions with which he responds to his torture. His contempt of the gods and passion for life engendered that “unspeakable penalty in which his whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing.” It is these very emotions that represent Sisyphus as superior to his fate, energising the convictions that portray him as more resilient than the rock that threatens to destroy him:

If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him? The workman of today works everyday in his life at the same tasks, and his fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious. Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn (Camus, [1942] 2000: 109).

Camus’ representation of Sisyphus as an anti-hero exemplifies the propensity for the hero to be explored through dissimilar rationalities that revise the moral value of social myths.
through mythos. With the hero’s tragic predicament corresponding to difficult encounters endured in social life, there is significance in audiences’ emotional resonance with tragedy. For to renounce spectators’ appraisal of tragedy or their emotional apprehension of the hero, would be to erode the very values from which individuals affectively endue meaning in the social world, the very rubric from which tragedy is derived.

To appreciate that tragedy is limited by perception and to reveal the need to appreciate diversity in all its plurality, is not to promote moral bankruptcy. Contemporary tragedies, such as, the ethnic cleansing in Darfur and the genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda serve as poignant reminders of the danger in affectively rationalising tragedy around social myths constructed on the annihilation of an enemy unto whom individuals and nations have all too conveniently projected their own fears. Moreover, ‘honour’ killings emerging from offended moral sentiments are a tangible testament to a more sinister side of sympathy and emotional relativism. Rather than endorse ‘moral emotivism,’ an Aristotelian conception of katharsis reveals that to achieve the ‘Supreme Good’ of society, individual praxis and well-being must be comprehended as indispensable to the eudaimonia of the broader civic community. To appreciate humans’ social ontology of vulnerability entails recognising “through pity and fear” that all individuals are susceptible to tragic events beyond their control or acting ignorantly, with conscious awareness of this common fallibility energising fellow-feeling with the social collective.

The propensity for fear to both engender human hatred and solidify the sympathetic foundation of the body politic is not a paradox. Instead, it exemplifies Aristotle’s theory of emotions where, rather than polemicise emotions as prosaically ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ affective processes are evaluated according to their appropriateness in given circumstances – the mean “relative to us.” Embodied apprehensions of temporal events motivate deliberative thought to pursue certain courses of action that affectively reflect distinct values, circumstances, needs and aspirations. For this reason, despite the moral telos that Aristotle ascribed to tragedy, a Neoaristotelian perspective considers the emotional configuration of katharsis to be partial and contingent, requiring the meaning attributed to mythos to remain open to critique and public reasoning.
Aristotle’s espousal of tragedy in the *Poetics* was not intended to provide a systematic theory of emotions. Rather, his point was to defend tragic drama by revealing the practical formation of consciousness under particular social conditions in a process of emotional clarification referred to as katharsis. Emotions emerge in this context as embodied experiences through which the self is recognised. With the emotional climate of ‘terror’ characterising contemporary tragedies, the pedagogical dimension of Aristotelian katharsis reverberates with Gandhi’s endeavour to clarify violent hatred through a “total reform of emotions” (Nussbaum, 2007a). Social tragedy is situated within this Neoaristotelian paradigm as an evocative mode of symbolic communication, integral to the cultivation of *collective fusion* and refined critical thinking. That social tragedy is embodied and represented by sociocultural processes does not undermine the enduring significance of katharsis. It is precisely through *recognising* the social ontology of human vulnerability that fearful human beings may consider their well-being as inextricably bound to the other - to pity their undeserved misfortune - engendering fellow-feeling within the social collectivity. Recognising the emotional foundation of the *critical community*, thus illuminates Aristotle’s quest in the *Poetics*: to resurrect the significance of the poetic imagination through aesthetic forms as a means to cultivate *eudaimonia* in civic life.

**Reasons to Revive Katharsis: A Neoaristotelian Perspective**

These insights reflect the theoretical contributions of the phenomenon of social tragedy developed in this thesis. In demonstrating that “accomplishing” katharsis requires a tragic event to be affectively rationalised “through pity and fear,” orthodox Freudian interpretations of ‘catharsis’ as the ‘discharge’ of emotion are undermined. Trans-subjective feelings of pity require spectators personally fear for those “like ourselves” in an intersubjective process termed “mimetic vertigo” (Taussig, 1992: 176-8; 1993: 237). This mutually conditioning relationship of “intersubjective praxis” was shown to resonate with George Herbert Mead’s (1934) theory of the self in which the development of self-consciousness is considered synonymous with social consciousness – the continual
mediation of the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ - where sympathetically “taking the attitude of the other” engenders a process of mutual adjustment for self and society. With the emotional dimension of katharsis conceived of as an intersubjective mode of civic enactment, psychological studies attempting to elicit ‘catharsis’ through introspective methods and the purgation of behavioural responses bear little resemblance to the Neoaristotelian paradigm of social tragedy developed in this thesis.

The present study of katharsis has established an analytical framework of social tragedy through which the affect of ‘the tragic’ on society may be more comprehensively understood. In demarcating the universal significance of tragedy from the particularities of history, Aristotle (2005: 47-9) suggested that, when constructed with “poetic excellency,” mythos will “through pity and fear accomplish the katharsis of such emotions.” The Poetics implies a universal kathartic response from the social collectivity towards tragic modes of enactment, yet the extent to which katharsis may be “accomplished” universally remains dubious. That as “the first principle” and “soul of tragedy” mythos is the most ‘potent’ component of tragedy, does not guarantee katharsis. Mythos does not interpret itself, but requires an active spectator whose emotional consciousness of tragedy’s emergent circumstances enables them to rationalise distinct historical episodes into a coherent sequence of events.

Recognising that mythos is itself contingent on emotional consciousness indicates that what is considered tragic will depend upon subjective viewing experiences and the collective emotional climates in which tragedy is represented. Despite the solidifying impact of the conscience collective on individual consciousness, rationality is recognised by what William James ([1879] 2005: 63) refers to as certain “subjective marks” of emotional experience. The corollary of this proposition is that spectators will respond heterogeneously to mythos (the tragic plot), no matter how traumatic cultural scripts appear. Through an analysis of Zidane’s World Cup scandal this thesis has demonstrated that not all historical episodes will be constructed as tragic events in the same manner, let alone be recognised as tragic at all. This is because for an event to be considered tragic audiences must affectively identify with the protagonist, casting them as a tragic hero,
wherein personal fear for those “like ourselves” is replaced by “pity [for] those who resemble them” and a broader sentiment of “fellow-feeling” with society (Aristotle, 2005: 71; [1926] 2006: 229). Not only is katharsis affected by individual and collective modes of rationalisation, events will be emotionally apprehended distinctly over time depending on how cultural, temporal and spatial spheres modify the self and society, including how life’s contingent circumstances situate meaning. Dynamic rationalities pertaining to the tragic are not only a repercussion of cultural pluralism flourishing in modern liberal democracies, tragedy’s tradition of heterodoxy reveals the dynamics of emotional consciousness in general. The universal tenets of Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm could therefore be critiqued: for in prioritising pity and fear as necessary outcomes of ‘the well constructed plot’ (mythos), Aristotle fails to recognise that the sympathetic affect of tragedy is itself partial and limited, rather than being universal as his manual for writing poetry implies.

Considering kathartic re-cognition a mode of affective rationalisation requires a reconsideration of tragedy’s primary component - mythos. Since Plato and the Sophistic Enlightenment the emotional dimension of mythos has engendered much scrutiny, exacerbated by the climate of ‘rationalism’ permeating the modern Western world. This thesis has proposed a novel way of understanding mythos. Applying Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm to examine affective responses to Zinédine Zidane’s World Cup scandal, it has been suggested that this contemporary social tragedy presents a lens through which to examine mythos as a form of rational inquiry. Despite the fact that tragic instruction was inexorably politicised in antiquity and, therefore, susceptible to operating as a mechanism of social control, it would be an oversimplification to reduce mythos to rhetorical modes of persuasion. The tendency to conflate mythology with ideology points to an important distinction between what has been referred to in this thesis as a social myth and mythos – the former operating as a common referent and normative framework through which the conscience collective is solidified around Durkheimian feelings of collective effervescence, while the latter is conceptualised as a heterogeneous, metaphorical construction through which the very foundation of social myths may be interrogated in the experimental realm that drama affords. Accordingly, while a social myth refers to
collective representations, *mythos* represents experience on a more subjective level indicating that *creative action* is informed rather than determined by cultural structures. Of course, when mediated publicly as a social fact, *mythos* is itself susceptible to assuming the collective significance of a social myth. The propensity for the rationale of *mythos* to become reified into collective memories that transpire into civic action, highlights the social importance of counter-*mythoi* as creative apparatus of reasoned argumentation. Conceiving of *mythos* in this way makes substantive contributions to the field of emotional inquiry by moving beyond popular confluations of metaphor with fabrication, while emphasising the dynamic ways in which aesthetic experience is symbolically communicated, contested and affectively rationalised in the social sphere.

These contributions imply that, comparable to katharsis and myth, notions of rationality and emotions are themselves encumbered by culture. Rather than existing as pure forms of objective analysis, emotions are considered rational or irrational within a culture depending on whether they appear appropriate or inappropriate in their evaluation of situations (Solomon, 2009, n.p.). It was emphasised in foregoing chapters that to appreciate the emotional configuration of *mythos* as pertaining to relative rationalities is not synonymous with advocating ‘moral emotivism.’ The importance of an Aristotelian ([1926] 2003; [1926] 2006) conception of katharsis to ensuing theories on emotion is in representing tragedy as a social construction configured around a ‘logic of affect.’ Such a view encapsulates Aristotle’s unorthodox appreciation of emotions as “states of consciousness” involving value judgments particular to the circumstance, an object towards which the emotion is directed and the perceiver’s embodied physiological condition. Rationality is considered to emerge through emotional consciousness, despite the propensity for these “states of consciousness” to occur below the threshold of conscious awareness. Accordingly, while Aristotle’s cognitive appraisal of rationality could be accused of neglecting the role of unconscious emotions, such criticism appears unfounded. For his point is not that consciousness of the emotion is necessarily ‘recognised’ by the emotive agent and, therefore, controllable: “we are not angry or afraid from choice…we are said to be ‘moved’ by the emotions” ([1926] 2003: 89). Rather, in emphasising that these “states of consciousness” necessarily involve value judgments and
beliefs regarding the significance of objects and circumstances, it becomes apparent that even unreflective emotional experiences are rationalised as particular modes of apprehending the world. For to imbue an event with significance is to be emotionally conscious of it: without “emotional pertinency” one remains detached from life where, as William James (1897: 83) and Jack Barbalet (2007a: 23) observe: “there is little to care or act for.” In conceiving of emotions as intelligent states of consciousness rationally configured around unreflective and reflective experiences, katharsis rejects conventional attempts to distinguish emotion from rational thought.

Re-evaluating mythos as an affectively rationalised experience has implications for the ways in which emotions are conceptualised. The problem with conventional theories on emotion is that they maintain a misleading dichotomy between thought and emotion, derived from a limited understanding of rationality that couples cognition with reason over emotion as appetite, polarising mythos and logos. Contrary to such Neoplatonic views, which for the most part consider emotions to be impediments to ‘critical’ faculties and the objectivity demanded of scientific thought, the emotional foundation of mythos is understood as not only susceptible to reason but intrinsically rational. That rationality is informed by emotion content is not to suggest replacing deductive logos based reasoning with the metaphorical inductive premises pertaining to mythos. For logos and mythos serve distinct purposes, requiring different forms of rationality, with the latter involving:

...much difference of opinion and uncertainty, so that we must therefore be content if, in dealing with subjects and starting from premises thus uncertain, we succeed in presenting a broad outline of the truth...it is the mark of an educated mind to expect that amount of exactness in each kind which the nature of the particular subject admits (Aristotle, [1926] 2003: 7-9).

Aristotle’s use of the term ‘rational’ must itself be contextualised within his endeavour to defend mimetic poetry by refuting Plato’s claim that emotions corrupt reason. For
Aristotle, rationality refers to the ability to make life intelligible, rather than reducing rationality to ‘pure’ logic, the positivist quest to discover ‘facts’ or the procedural decision-making objectives characteristic of rational choice theory. In this sense, the rational dimension of Aristotelian katharsis may be more aptly compared to William James’ “sentiment of rationality” ([1879] 2005), where rationality is “marked” by fluent thinking in a process of emotional clarification.

Conceiving of emotions as illuminating modes of consciousness reveals the shortcomings of Neoplatonic distinctions between emotion and rationality. Echoed by religious asceticism, Enlightenment doctrines and the logical positivist tradition, emotion and evaluative thought have been considered for the most part in conventional scholarship to be independent processes, elevating ‘pure reason’ as rational, immune from criticism and the compulsive consequences of emotion content. More recently, the rationality underpinning the technological, democratic and scientific advancements of Western culture have themselves been problematised as sources of social alienation, capitalist exploitation and racial discrimination, as the “dream of reason” is more aptly replaced by the “nightmare of reason” (Alexander, 1995: 77-80). Rather, than render reason redundant, these ‘nightmares’ point to the limitations of conflating rationality with a ‘progressive’ means-ends telos and the need to recognise that the ‘civilising process’ is itself accompanied by ‘de-civilisation’ and its discontents (Elias, [1969] 1983; Freud, [1930] 2002). In appreciating that reason and rationality are themselves informed by culture and subjective appropriation, orthodox reductions of rationality to cognition may be replaced by an appreciation of the emotional configuration of rational thought.

Reviewing literature on katharsis, it has been emphasised that attitudes on the topic depend on whether emotions are considered impulses devoid of thought and intention, or as involving cognitive faculties (Nussbaum, 2007b). Plato’s ([1935] 2006: 459) condemnation of Homeric myth and Greek tragedy reflected his belief that emotions comprise a “faction” of the soul incompatible with rational thought. Aristotle’s contribution to the field of emotional inquiry was to break from this orthodox view by demonstrating that emotion content is not only compatible with reasoning faculties, but
that rational deliberation and ethical action require affective processes to motivate and sustain them.

Identifying the emotional foundation of kathartic re-cognition challenges conventional theories depicting the emotive crowd as devoid of rational capacities for subjective thought (Le Bon, [1895] 2002; Sighele, 1891; Tarde, [1892] 1969). Acknowledging that emotions are not merely pathological but feature in the routine operation of all social interaction reveals the limitations of reducing emotions to irrational impulses. A life free of ‘emotion content’ would not enhance rationality, but leave thought without direction and action deficient in motivation (Barbalet, 1998: 190). While Park ([1904] 1982) and Blumer (1951) extended crowd theory to include the critical public as a modern manifestation of collective behaviour, maintaining a Neoplatonic “faction” between the crowd as emotional and public as rational, both operate in dualistic terms for the most part disregarding the intelligence of emotions (McPhail, 1991). The ostensible tendency to depict collective behaviour as emotive and consequently uncritical has been the impetus for developing the notion of the critical community as an emotionally intelligent public.

Negative depictions of crowds reflect not only the Enlightenment precedence of ‘rational man’ over collective superstition, and the tumultuous historical and cultural contexts in which these studies were conducted, empirical research tends to focus on social movements and violent protests concerned with compulsive and disruptive conduct, rather than ordinary group behaviour. iv To counter the problematic way in which crowds have traditionally been conceptualised, emotions have been analysed in this thesis from a pragmatic perspective, where conflicts emerging from inhibited activity may energise creative deliberation in the public sphere. Comparable to present-day sporting spectators Attic audiences appeared to be stratified by varied aesthetic experiences, distinct from orthodox depictions of the crowd as a homogeneous, uncritical mass. In recognising that within the conscience collective there exist different understandings of social tragedy, the notion of katharsis makes important contributions to the rational configuration of group behaviour and collective emotional experience.
While an Aristotelian conception of katharsis is incongruous with studies of ‘cathartic purgation’ that for the most part dismiss the insights that affective processes may afford, to appreciate the value of emotions as guides to deliberative action is not to echo Hume ([1739] 1967) that “reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions.” Despite being ardently believed by the perceiver, Aristotle recognised that emotions may represent false beliefs involving values that appear unreasonable and inappropriate to given circumstances. In referring to the affective dimension of social myths employed to frame Zidane’s tragedy, for example, unequivocally to fear all Muslims as violent aggressors as a ‘logical’ extension of the footballer’s headbutt, or to resent Italians as proponents of symbolic violence in light of Materazzi’s racial slur, would represent such unreasonable and inappropriate emotional responses. Aristotle’s point was not to privilege emotions as immune from criticism, rather his cognitive model proposed that it is precisely because emotions involve rational beliefs that these intelligent experiences are susceptible to modification through reasoned evaluation. In short, educating values through ethical instruction will both unreflectively and consciously refine emotions as conduits to achieve well-being.

It has been demonstrated that the increasing appreciation of emotions as essential components of well-being emerges from an established tradition of Aristotelian ethics. While Goleman’s (1995) notion of EQ has established the significance of ‘emotional intelligence’ in popular consciousness and the proliferation of self-help industries, for the most part these theories and practices maintain prosaic notions of ‘good healthy’ and ‘bad toxic’ emotions. Aristotle’s contribution to the field of emotional inquiry was to demonstrate that emotions are not in themselves for the most part either good or bad, possessing the capacity to operate as either indiscriminate or discerning guides in motivating ethical thought and action. Given that all emotions may be experienced on a spectrum between excess and deficiency, such a view entails that emotions must be practically reasoned in relation to the mean “relative to us.” Emotional intelligence is pragmatically acquired from emergent circumstances which is why, without aesthetic experience to actively cultivate appropriate moral judgments, the doctrines characteristic
of self-help manuals and folk-psychology are inclined to illuminate little *phronesis* (practical wisdom) beyond what Aristotle (2005: 69; 2003) referred to as trained “loves and hates.” Despite Aristotelian and contemporary notions of ‘emotional intelligence’ being demarcated by a series of broader historical orientations from the Greek’s moral concern with ‘being good’ to modern psychology’s quest to ‘feel good,’ both emphasise the instrumental role that emotions play in sustaining well-being.

Exploring how Aristotle’s universal paradigm promoting the ‘Supreme Good’ resonates with dynamic cultural configurations in contemporary liberal societies may assist in establishing a kathartic model of democratic moral instruction. Global initiatives such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicate that emotional embodiments of common values are achievable on an international level without distinction, despite the cultural differences segregating current political climates. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to defend questions concerned with such a normative view of morality. While these issues are paramount to the cultivation of values, human rights and democracy, the topic requires careful consideration and warrants a dissertation in its own right.

The endeavour of this thesis has a different orientation yet, it is proposed, makes a nonetheless significant contribution to academic scholarship: to develop a Neoaristotelian paradigm of katharsis that through *mythos*, as the rational configuration of the tragic plot, considers emotions to be of central importance to the recognition of personal misfortune as a ‘social tragedy.’ Of course, with rationality itself encumbered by experience, mediating tragedy through social myths, where meaning is attributed to actions against previously existing collective representations, may have negative ramifications for those members of society symbolically implicated in the tragic plot. Yet, the emotional dynamics of tragic drama do not necessitate stereotyped constructions or a uniform collective response. Interviews conducted for this thesis indicate that, despite the capacity for those in positions of authority to mediate ‘social tragedy,’ there are profound differences in how spectators respond to equivalent ‘tragic’ events. Contemporary manifestations of ‘social tragedy’ provide the opportunity for affected audiences, like their ancient predecessors, to contest the plot’s telos and, in so doing, develop novel
norms and values on the social stage. Thus, while concerned with collective emotional experiences, this research emphasises that social tragedy motivates individuals to affectively rationalise mythos in varied and complex ways, not indicated by homogeneous readings of the conscience collective.

That tragedy is dynamically represented in liberal democracies is not to echo George Steiner in suggesting that Enlightenment principles of reason signal The Death of Tragedy (1961: 323) from modern life. Embedded in religious rituals, shared cultural beliefs and historical memory, Greek tragedy communicated meaning through “great myths” about the indispensable power of law, justice and ethical values, which Steiner argued were undermined in modernity by elevating “rational man” with the capacity to reason his own destiny. That it is ostensibly more challenging to apply universal modes of kathartic instruction in relatively complex, less integrated societies is not to undermine the common ontology permeating social life or infer that moral emotivism is particular to modernity. For emotions necessarily involve values, needs and desires that demarcate embodied engagement with social life (Barbalet, 2004a, Hume, [1739] 1967; James, [1899] 1949; Nussbaum, 2001; Smith, [1759] 1976). Thus, while Steiner spoke of “the death of tragedy,” current manifestations of the tragic from vast historical events to the misfortune of the ‘everyman’ suggest that tragedy is very much alive in modern life.

Re-cognising the Future of Katharsis

With emotions occupying a central component of what it is to be human, the present study of katharsis proposes that any adequate theory of society requires a comprehensive understanding of emotions. The notions of katharsis and mythos elaborated in this paradigm of social tragedy could be applied theoretically and practically to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the affective dimension of terrorism, resilience, redemption, restorative justice, conflict resolution and human rights initiatives, or to more micro concerns with symbolic systems of meaning, subjectivity, health and well-being.

A significant contribution of katharsis derives from highlighting the positive
consequences of what are commonly perceived to be negative emotions, subsequently recognised by neurologists and social scientists as being integral to intelligent decision making and survival (Bechara et al., 1997; Damasio, 1994, 2003; Ekman, 2004). Analysing the British elite’s fear of the labour movement during the period of the First World War, Jack Barbalet (1998) has argued that fear is not necessarily an incapacitating emotion but may motivate organisational development and innovation. By specifically focusing on kathartic components of pity and fear, it has been emphasised that orthodox aversions to fear in popular consciousness are inadequate in their polarisation of fear and hope, and conflation of the former with only negative behaviour and action. Fear is neither reducible to prosaic notions of good nor bad but must be contextualised as appropriate to particular contexts. Moreover, katharsis reveals that personal fear may lead to positive social consequences such as the evocation of trans-subjective feelings of pity and fellow-feeling with the community. Further research could elaborate these theoretical insights by analysing what demarcates fear as an antecedent for compassion, for example, from the propensity for fear to energise narcissistic desires and social myths that seek to annihilate the other. Empirically applied to collective contexts, such studies would augment traditional theorising on fear, assuming relevance for a range of fields from economics, psychology, social science to educational reform.

Future research could further apply a Neoaristotelian paradigm of social tragedy to anticipate public responses to tragic events, while appreciating the variance with which meaning is affectively rationalised. It is evident that contrary to Aristotle’s thesis, not all events will be interpreted consistently despite being constructed with “poetic excellence.” A Neoaristotelian model would emphasise that tragedy is rationalised according to emotional dimensions of experience – values, goals, desires and ambivalence towards objects - with sympathy recognised as partial. In this sense, rationality would also be seen to correspond to a “logic of ambivalence” that may simultaneously hold positive and negative feelings towards the same object or vary for equivalent audiences according to temporal and spatial circumstances, and conflicting needs (Smelser, 1998). Conceiving of emotions in this way highlights that what distinguishes katharsis is not merely the tragic circumstance, but the way in which the
event is affectively rationalised (both reflectively and unreflectively) which, while informed by social myths, situates meaning in subjectively embodied experience. The implication of recognising the dynamics of emotional consciousness for future studies of social tragedy is that an event is not innately tragic, but interpreted as such through meaningful symbolic communication.

Developing a schema that analyses the conditions facilitating katharsis would complement the work on ‘social performance’ established in the field of cultural sociology (Alexander, et al., 2006). Jeffrey Alexander’s (2004a) model of ‘cultural pragmatics’ demonstrates that, since trauma requires a moral script in order to be symbolically interpreted, the construction of moral universalism with its constituents of good and evil depend upon symbolic codes to be understood. With the signification of tragedy contingent upon the socio-historical context in which events are represented, the moral dimension of katharsis must itself be recognised as partial to affective viewing experiences and the emotional climate in which meaning is symbolically communicated.

Recognising the symbolic construction of social tragedy poses further questions regarding how events affecting society activate civic responses to symbolic violence, war, policy and political reform. With the emotional pertinence of *mythos* occupying what Aristotle refers to as “the first principle” and “soul of tragedy,” it becomes of great importance to interrogate the moral validity of these scripts by recognising who controls the means of production in rendering events socially significant, visible and accessible to the media. The semantic distinction between a social myth and *mythos* is not limited to tragedy. This paradigm could be applied to comprehend how social myths regarding the environment and global warming, for example, mobilise collective sentiments into policy on climate change and institutional reform. Such symbolic logic was particularly evident in Zidane’s social tragedy, whose moral validity was based on social myths representing stigmatising beliefs about national superiority, racial, ethnic and class reification that achieved their legitimacy through the political logic of the sacred and profane. With the transgression of the tragic hero representing experiences pertaining to the broader social collective, the emotional dynamics of tragedy assume particular importance not only as
incentives to challenge instrumentalism, but also given the resources of power and capital that those symbolically invested in social tragedy depend.

Future research could elaborate this thesis by examining the more affirmative ramifications of social myths as coping strategies for tragedy. It must be reiterated that a social myth is only one manifestation of the collective form of myth (Campbell, [1987] 2003). While social myths may engender inequities, discrimination is not a necessarily corollary of these collective representations. From a Durkheimian perspective, a social myth explains the world through collective representations that endow individuals with a shared sense of reality. Given the ‘potency’ of social myths, researching the capacity for aesthetics to resolve suffering through the affective dimensions of tragic drama could, for example, test whether tumultuous emotional climates may “through pity and fear accomplish the katharsis of such emotions.” If such research resulted in illuminating insights, these studies could assist individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and community development in regions affected by social tragedy in the aftermath of war, violence and natural disasters.

Studies could further explore kathartic components of pity and fear by measuring emotional responses to social tragedies occurring in the current climate of terrorism and religious fundamentalism: September 11, the London, Madrid and Mumbai bombings. This paradigm of social tragedy established in this thesis could be developed in conjunction with Jeffrey Alexander’s (2004a) model of ‘social performance,’ the micro-sociological framework of Randall Collins (2004a, 2004b, 2008) and the ‘power-status theory’ of Theodore Kemper (2002), whose study of the September 11 terrorist attacks situated different publics’ emotional responses and propensity to cope with trauma in distinct structural conditions. The phenomenon of distancing emerges as particularly relevant to such research. For Aristotle, the kathartic recognition derived from rationalising mythos is pleasurable precisely insofar as the mimetic representation of tragedy is experienced at a ‘safe aesthetic distance’ - proximate enough to be affective while remaining safely distanced from audiences’ more pressing concerns, as discussed:
This is why Amasis is said not to have wept when his son was led to execution, but did weep at the sight of a friend reduced to beggary, for the latter excited pity, the former terror ([1926] 2006: 229).

In analysing what distinguishes aptitudes for resilience from despondency, such research could develop Thomas Scheff’s (1977) work on the phenomenon of distancing by investigating the necessity of mythos as a public script to affectively rationalise trauma, while noting the impact of those devoid of such devices. Given that the way in which tragedy is affectively rationalised is informed by the context in which events are experienced, it would be rewarding to conduct cross-cultural studies on civic responses to equivalent tragedies. By examining the ways in which emotional memories and social myths distinguish the hermeneutic frameworks of local and diaspora communities, the capacity for mythos to extend beyond national borders could be assessed. Such studies would not only prove effective in predicting civic responses to social tragedies and accounting for cultural variation, they could enhance understanding on the emotional climates that enable individuals and collectives to persevere in spite of traumatic events.

Historical and political endeavours towards restorative justice and conflict resolution present further cases in which katharsis could be explored. Research conducted by Tanya Goodman (2006) on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a modern ritual performance could be applied to different post-conflict contexts, while examining the effect of national apologies on the body politic to which they pertain. For example, this approach could seek to ascertain whether the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd’s public apology to the ‘Stolen Generation’ on February 13 2008, or truth commissions into the war crimes endured in East Timor (2001) and Sierra Leone (1999), have cultivated redemption. With redemption and resistance towards apologies entailing deeply emotional foundations and effects, a paradigm of social tragedy could be employed to analyse the extent to which pity and fear are required to “accomplish” reconciliation, beyond the symbolic rewriting of history.

Moreover, future studies could explore the temporal process of redemption by analysing long-term emotional responses to annual commemorations. This research
would complement existing studies on collective forms of redemption such as Vincent Waldron and Douglas Kelley’s *Communicating Forgiveness* (2007), Elazar Barkan’s analysis on negotiating historical injustices in *The Guilt of Nations* (2000), and Valentin Rauer’s (2006) analysis of the political import of Willy Brandt’s kneefall at the Warsaw memorial. While there is an existing body of research into collective memory and trauma in relation to the Holocaust, there is scarce analysis of the role of specific emotions in constructing national identity (Flam, 2009). It is in this context that redemption may be situated within the economy of sentiment, solidifying the nation as a kathartic process rationalised through the emotional logic of apologising and forgiveness. Such research could produce new practical insights into the emotional dimensions of nationalism, contributing to a void in the field of emotional inquiry.

Katharsis would be conceptualised in these studies as a mode of emotional clarification. Illuminating the ‘logic of affect’ underpinning katharsis, Aristotle’s unorthodox paradigm resonates with contemporary theories pertaining to the intelligence of emotions. Yet, in fervently defending the moral telos of tragedy, including the universal manner in which *mythos* will be recognised, Aristotle’s pursuit of ‘poetic excellence’ is hindered by his original endeavour. Not only are embodied audiences susceptible to dynamically interpreting meaning, the rationale underpinning *mythos* is itself more arbitrary than Aristotle described. To speak of ‘Zidane’s tragedy,’ is to pronounce judgment on the incident, selecting certain episodes at the expense of others. From a Neoaristotelian perspective, the propensity for tragedy’s ‘logic of affect’ to manifest personal misfortune into social tragedy, and to disempower those symbolically implicated in the hero’s demise, is of social consequence. Thus, to recognise the construction of social tragedy through the dialectic of *mythos* becomes integral to interrogating the reified social myths employed to rationalise existence. For, whether *mythos* signifies the sheer ‘illusion of rationality,’ as Nietzsche believed, or a more ‘probable’ sequence of events, as Aristotle forewarned, it is apparent that katharsis pertains not merely to ‘purging’ Dionysian passions, nor to ‘pure’ rational dimensions of Apollonian experience. Katharsis, crucially, synthesises emotions and rationality as interdependent modes of clarifying social life.
References


Maggi, V. (1550). In Aristotelis Librum de Poetica Communes Explanationes, Muenchen W. Fink.


Glossary

anagnorisis - the recognition ensuing from tragic contemplation marked by a change from ignorance to awareness

arête - moral virtue

eleos - pity

demos – common people

ergon - function

ethos - character

eu - good

eudaimon - one who is in good spirits or happy

eudaimonia - well-being or human flourishing

hamartanein - a sporting term that refers to an archer missing their target

hamartia - an error of judgment from which the term sin is derived

hexis - a state, habit or disposition to act

katharsis - a concept referring to a process of emotional purification and/or purgation. It was the term employed by Aristotle in the Poetics to refer to the emotional clarification accomplished from observing Greek tragedy

kratos – state rulers, those who possess power

logos – an argument derived from reason, one of the three modes of persuasion

miasma - pollution

mimesis - representation or imitation

mimesis praxeos – the representation or imitation of an action

mytho-logos – a storyteller

mythos - a metaphor or allegory. Referred to by Aristotle in the Poetics as the synthesis of a sequence of events into a coherent tragic plot
mythoi - plural to mythos

pathe - passive states of suffering akin to pathos

pathos - painful emotions or suffering

pepsis - proportion

peripeteia - a reversal of fortune

philia - kinship

phobos - fear

phronesis - practical wisdom

phronimos - a practically wise citizen

polis - an ancient Greek city-state or community

praxis - action

sophrosyne - wisdom

stasis – pursuing or exploring questions to clarify the main issues of a debate

telos – an end or purpose
Methodological Appendix

Why Sport?

The original proposal for this PhD intended to examine the contemporary relevance and ramifications of Aristotelian katharsis in contemporary life. While the Poetics (2005) of tragedy espoused by Aristotle was concerned with the practical effects of katharsis as a mode of emotional clarification “accomplished” through observing Greek tragedy, the evolving nature of modern theatre amid a series of social developments rendered a reductive allegory of theatrical performance unfeasible. Foremost among these developments were the prevalence of liberal democracies and, the changing nature of public communication and media technologies (Thompson, 1995, 2000). That the popularity and accessibility of theatre has diminished overtime is reflected in the rising costs and declining interest that prevents many audiences from participating in such forms of leisure. Consequently, it was decided that the present study of katharsis would not be restricted to assessing orthodox contexts of performance. The mediated visibility and accessibility of sporting performances, by contrast, appeared more generally to exemplify the effect of popular culture on public consciousness, providing a spectacle of national significance comparable to that of Greek tragedy.

Why the Zidane headbutt scandal?

The performative dimension of sport has been elucidated in Chapter 3, yet it is important to note that the initial focus of this dissertation was not limited to assessing the impact of Zidane’s World Cup scandal. Originally centred on the kathartic effects of football performances in France, of which the incident was included, it was only subsequent to conducting empirical research in 2007, and again in 2008, that the social significance of Zidane’s headbutt came to occupy the key domain of this study. Not only did respondents’ construction of the historical episode into an archetypal event correspond to Aristotle’s tragic paradigm, the public mediation of the footballer’s transgression as a ‘social tragedy’ in modern liberal democracies challenged the moral telos that Aristotle had ascribed to katharsis. It was only during the final months of completion that the relevance of the Neoaristotelian paradigm of ‘social tragedy’ established in this thesis to corresponding models of ‘social performance’ and ‘cultural trauma’ was recognised. Despite being oriented towards distinct objectives, these models maintain similar endeavours regarding the sociocultural construction and implications of suffering, providing the potential for further exploration.

Why France?

France’s cultural diversity was the primary reason that the country was chosen as the fieldwork location for this dissertation. That the evolution of football in France, including the composition of local teams and the national league, corresponded to the migration of racial, ethnic and religious communities to France provided an optimal environment to examine the broader sociocultural effects of katharsis on the nation’s Republic (Dauncey & Morrey, 2008; Hare, 2003; Mignon, 1998). Moreover, with racial and religious issues
remaining censored from public discourse in France, discussing sensitive topics through the ‘veil’ of sport facilitated disclosure from respondents regarding the country’s present political climate.

**Interviews**

While there has been a profusion of academic research examining local and international media coverage of Zidane’s World Cup scandal (Denham & Desormeaux, 2008; Jiwani, 2008; Rowe, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c), there is an absence of empirical studies assessing subjective responses to the event. Given the capacity for those who possess ‘social power’ to control the means of production (Alexander, 2004a), it was integral to the analysis to juxtapose press reports mediating the incident with attitudes expressed on a more subjective level. With state and commercial authorities invested in defending Zidane for political and financial reasons, empirical research extending beyond media coverage became paramount within this study.

Interviews assumed the following form, with a graph below contextualising the respondents involved in this study.

- **20 semi-structured interviews** were conducted in French ranging in duration from 45mins to 2hrs. The decision to conduct a smaller sample of in-depth interviews, rather than a larger survey, reflected the author’s intent to employ a method that would evoke respondents’ emotional engagement with sport rather than superficial answers limited to previously established categories (Neuman, 2000). The propensity for respondents to disclose feelings more readily towards the closure of the interview, and after a series of ‘ice breaking’ questions, achieved the intended objective. Given that interviews were recorded through audio devices, no page numbers were used to reference quotations from respondents.
- As discussed in Chapter 3, interviews were juxtaposed with local and international press reports to compare personal responses to the incident with extant social myths and representations on a more collective level. It was particularly important that **media analysis** not be limited to France, so as to comprehend the global impact of the event.
- The **snowballing technique** was employed to maintain a ‘passive’ method of recruitment that complied with the University of Sydney’s (where the doctoral research began) ethical code (2006). The limitations of employing the snowballing technique may be observed in the concentration of male, youth comprising the study, although the sample could be said to be emblematic more generally of sport spectatorship in France.
- **Pseudonyms** were used throughout the dissertation to maintain the anonymity of respondents. While names have been altered for ethical purposes, participants’ gender, ‘race,’ ethnicity and cultural background information have not been disguised as these factors were considered important factors in contextualising responses to Zidane’s misdemeanour.
### Table of Respondents’ Contextual Characteristics

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<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<td>Arab</td>
<td>Paris</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>African</td>
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<td>16 (80%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Notes

Chapter 1

The reason for referring to the original Greek spelling of the term is a deliberate attempt on behalf of the author to signify an elaboration of Aristotle’s paradigm of emotional clarification, rather than contemporary lexicons which have popularised ‘catharsis’ by conflating it with Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of emotional repression.

Eudaimonia is interpreted as well-being or human flourishing. The Greek terms ‘eu’ and ‘daimon’ translated into the words ‘good’ and ‘spirit’ respectively, leading to common equations of the concept with happiness, although modern notions of happiness as subjective pleasure neglect the civic foundation of the term.

Given that emotions involve values that reflect cultural sensibilities, the rational configuration of kathartic pity and fear cannot be reduced to a factual endeavour. For katharsis reflects moral sentiments pertaining to an evaluation of an event, more specifically, the action the hero ‘ought’ to have taken, which is necessarily coloured by the reception of tragedy in time and space. One cannot deductively proceed from an ‘ought’ to an ‘is,’ the former involving value judgment compared to the latter’s quest for impartial veracity. See de Sousa, 2007 on David Hume.

For example, Richard Davidson (2004: 185) explains that one of the most important insights observed in contemporary neuroscience is that any kind of complex behaviour, such as emotion, is not limited to a single cause or part of the brain. Rather, the emotion process requires many components operate together to produce the emotion.

It should be noted that this thesis is not intended as a critique of Freud. Rather, the author is critical of the present disrepute of katharsis in modern scholarship ensuing from the term’s conflation with Freudian ‘cathartic’ techniques of emotional purgation.

Chapter 2

Plato believed he was, “…justified in not admitting him [the poet] into a well-ordered state, because he [the poet] stimulates and fosters this element in the soul, and by strengthening it tends to destroy the rational part, just as when in a state” ([1935] 2006: 459).

The imitation, “is neither easy to imitate nor to be understood when imitated, especially by a nondescript mob assembled in the theatre” (Plato, [1935] 2006: 457).

To suggest that emotion and cognition are integrated processes is not to reduce these faculties to a causal procedure. As demonstrated by Richard Davidson (2004) and Paul Ekman (2004: 135), emotions may either precede, emerge simultaneous to, or after thought – the central point being that emotion and cognition are interdependent components of deliberative action.

In referring to katharsis as ‘catharsis,’ the author is making a deliberate attempt to distinguish classical interpretations from modern usage, with the latter’s emphasis on purgation implying notable differences to Aristotle’s paradigm of emotional clarification.

Hippocrates transferred his clinical findings into mythology, proposing that tragic heroes (Heracles, Bellerophon and Ajax) suffered from melancholy: an excess of black bile.

“Tragedy, then, is mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the katharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 2005: 47-9).

Freud’s decision to dispense with hypnotism was also likely to have been influenced by Breuer who, according to Freud, recognised that he had become the object of ‘transference’ - Anna O’s libidinal projection towards him. A married man in the Victorian era, Breuer terminated their sessions, thereafter, rejecting ‘catharsis.’

Cornelius (2001) emphasises the incongruity between studies conducted on the ‘cathartic’ effects of crying. When people were asked during interviews (Cornelius, 1981), questionnaires (Lombardo, 1983) or reflecting upon diary entries (Frey 1983, Kraemer & Hastrup 1986) whether they felt more relieved or in a better mood after crying there emerged a consensus that the ‘cathartic’ release of repressed emotional
tension contributed to psychological well-being. However, experimental studies observing the effects of crying after being exposed to real tragedy or sad films tended to contradict the physiological mood benefits derived from weeping.

ix The endeavour of this thesis is not to establish a definitive conception of katharsis. Rather, the author objects to the term’s present disrepute ensuing from associations with Freudian psychology that fail to appreciate the application of katharsis in antiquity.

x Often translated as katharsis.

xi For additional commentary on this subject, see Belfiore (1992: 326).

xii The theoretic fund was a scheme comparable to the modern doll in which relatively disadvantaged citizens could acquire government funding to reimburse their admission fees for tragic performances.

xiii It is curious that Scheff (2007) references Elizabeth Belfiore (1992) in his description of Aristotelian katharsis as the “purification of pity and terror,” when she clearly criticises hydraulic theories of purgation for “interpreting katharsis too narrowly…” In arguing for an exclusively medical interpretation of katharsis,” Belfiore (1992: 259) argues that “Bernays [Freud’s uncle-in-law, whose work was heavily influenced] failed to take into account Aristotle’s view that the emotions have cognitive as well as physical aspects.”


xv This position was voiced during the Renaissance by Maggi (1550: 97-8): “If tragedy freed the spectators from terror when terror concerns criminals, tragedy would make men more ready to commit crimes…Would it not be astonishing to want to have tragedy purge the human mind of pity and terror if trouble were the result should the human race be deprived of them? For if it were deprived of pity, how would we perform work for the needy?”

xvi On discussing the pleasures derived from contemplative learning, Aristotle (2005: 39) elucidates: “The explanation of this too is that understanding gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but likewise to others too, though the latter have a smaller share in it.”

xvii Plato distinguished between psychic and medical katharsis, so giving credence to the notion that katharsis could produce both effects in audiences (Belfiore, 1992: 332).

xviii Plato (1935: 264) indicates that, while emotions are “different from reason” they are also “different from desire,” which more closely resembles the appetitive component of the soul. Moreover, he suggested that emotions could be considered to be “the natural auxiliary of reason” when freed from the corruption of “bad education”: a direct critique of Homeric myth and Athenian tragedy.

xix For Aristotle, a well constructed tragedy should not depict the fall of decent ‘men’ from good fortune into misfortune since this does not excite pity and fear, but is mairon, “disgustingly,” literally “polluted” provoking feelings of shock or revulsion. These outcomes evidently prove to be the antithesis of katharsis, which aimed to cleanse, purify and clarify the emotions (Janko, [1990] 1992: 342).

xx It is interesting to note that while Aristotle defended audiences’ ability to approach epic poetry and Greek tragedy with reasoned discernment that the violent conquests of his pupil, Alexander the Great, to which he objected, were to be inspired by Homer’s Achaean hero, Achilles – the Iliad a gift given to him by no other than Aristotle.


xxii The golden mean is not universally consistent, it must be judged appropriately, meaning relative to the particular situation at hand. Aristotle demonstrates the specific application of the mean with regard to the legendary Greek wrestler, Milo of Croton. While Milo may require four sandwiches to sustain him, a standard individual may only require half this portion to endure their daily activities and accordingly to eat the same amount as Milo would be considered excessive and gluttonous. If that same individual were to suddenly train rigorously each day, it may become appropriate to consume similar portions to Milo as moral virtues are relative to the situation at hand. Although the mean between deficiency and excess is judged relative to particular circumstances, virtues are maintained by objective factors. In the case of Milo, these factors include dietary intake, physiology, temperament, body size and metabolism. Analogous to the food intake of Milo the wrestler, Aristotle is emphasising that one’s emotional reaction to a particular situation must be judged with respect to these objective principals to evaluate the mean “relative to us.”

xxiii “Those who either are, or seem to be, highly prosperous do not think they are likely to suffer anything; wherefore they are insolent, contemptuous, and rash” (Aristotle, [1926] 2006: 207).

xxiv With King Oedipus acquiring insight into his true identity simultaneous to learning of his tragic reversal of fortune, the tragedy of Oedipus Rex typifies how hamartia (an ignorant error of judgment) was
considered to be vices.

Or said another way, “Tragedy’s most potent means of emotional effect are components of plot, namely reversals and recognitions” (Aristotle, 2005: 51-3).

“So that whenever it is preferable that the audience should feel afraid, it is necessary to make them think they are likely to suffer, by reminding them that other greater than they have suffered, and showing that their equals are suffering or have suffered, and that at the hands of those from whom they did not expect it, in such a manner and at times when they did not think it likely” (Aristotle, [1926] 2006: 207).

Although Aristotle suggested that to re-cognise mythos is key to accomplishing katharsis (emotional clarification), this experience of tragic contemplation remained distinct from the homogenising effect of social myths. Whereas a social myth reifies meaning through stereotyped constructions and shared cultural beliefs, despite being rationally configured around a 'logic of affect,' mythos attains its coherence through the synthesis of metaphor that remains elusive and contestable in light of its symbolic form. As soon as the tradition of heterodoxy inscribed in the metaphorical mode of mythos is reduced to a literal framework, mythos transmutes into a social myth. The point may be clarified by Joseph Campbell (1996) who distinguished the contemplation attained from meditating on the myth of the Ganges from those who concretise its symbolic meaning through literally bathing in the river to attain health and good fortune.

Between the eighth and fourth centuries BCE a series of social processes began to establish mythos and logos as contrasting forms (Vernant, 1992: 35).

It must be noted that although the meaning attributed to the metaphorical structure of mythos necessitates symbolic codes, not all symbols manifest into mythos. It follows that while those celebrated as heroes in contemporary society may be elevated in symbolic stature, it is only under certain conditions that the hero’s symbol is incorporated into mythos.

The fusion of mythos and history occupies a precarious position in Aristotle’s tragic paradigm. Aristotle introduces the notion of mythos in the Poetics as a distinctly poetic construction of events that acquires superiority over other aesthetic forms as a result of its emphasis on unified action, a concern he considers to be absent from history. Book 9 of the Poetics (2005) commences as a disparaging critique of history with respect to poetry: while history is comprised of particular episodes (kath’ ekaston), poetry is concerned with the universal (katholou), history reports the actual (ta genomena), while poetry portrays the possible (ta dynata). Oriented around a series of separate episodes, history is void of the coherence possessed by the “complete” plot, in which various actions (synthesis ton pragmaton) are unified into a “whole” consisting of a “beginning, middle, and end” (2005: 115). In short, the central difference between these forms is that while poetry operates through universals - what certain agents will say or do “according to probability or necessity” - history examines particulars - such as “what Alcibiades did or had done to him” - contextualising the philosopher’s claim that of all plots and actions, “the episodic are worst…in which the episodes follow one another without probability or necessity” (2005: 63). As isolated incidents, the coherence of history is at best accidental and, consequently, incongruent with Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm where through mythos spectators come to recognise how the hero’s tragic decline corresponds to a causal sequence of events.

To understand Aristotle’s emphasis on causality, it is important to locate the Poetics within his broader ethical paradigm. Just as the Nicomachean Ethics (2003) presents virtue as an affective disposition to act, the Poetics corresponds the hero’s tragic fate with hamartia, making a causal link between their actions, choices and tragic decline (Aristotle, 2005: 51, 79, 87). This is not to say that all actions are determined, as Aristotle (2005: 63) is explicit that the unjust predicament the protagonist finds themselves in evokes audiences’ pity precisely insofar as tragedy derives from an initial “uncaused cause,” emerging “contrary to expectation” from the show of chance and misfortune. What Aristotle is referring to when he elevates mythos above history is that all tragic events, even when unexpected, should follow a probable or necessary causal sequence. Indeed, Aristotle’s critique of Plato relies precisely on the premise that spectators’ final state of recognition derives from audiences’ ability to make “probable” or “necessary” moral connections between praxis and ethos (2005: 69, 87). Accordingly, Aristotle encourages epic poetry to emulate tragedy and shun the example of history. For, while historical events may form a chronological narrative, composed of an accidental series of particular episodes, history does not exhibit the unity of action required to produce a kathartic response from audiences.
Aristotle’s appraisal of history and poetry, nevertheless, appears limited. Indeed, the very notion of historiography implies that theories of history have changed overtime with one of the founding fathers of modern historiography, E. H. Carr proclaiming: “the study of history is a study of causes” ([1961] 1990: 87). Without asking ‘why’ events and actions occurred distinctly in space and time, including selecting and organising facts at the expense of omitting others, one is left with a meaningless series of incidents rather than his-story. Recognised as the ‘father of history,’ the ancient Greek Historian, Herodotus, defined his purpose in The Histories as preserving a memory of the deeds of the Greeks and barbarians and in particular “to give the cause of their fighting one another” since it is absurd that “blind fate has produced all the effects.” In the Histories, Polybius maintains that history’s importance derives primarily from a concern with predictability and causes: “For the mere statement of a fact may interest us but is of no benefit to us; but when we add the cause of it, study of history becomes fruitful.” Even Thucydides’ historical exegesis, and portrayal of “what Alcibiades did or had done to him,” maintains that through understanding the past one may anticipate the future given the concordance between “the events which have happened and those which will some day, in all human probability, happen again in the same or similar way.” As a result, critics may question whether Aristotle’s dichotomy of history and poetry may be reconciled: the general form pertaining to mythos with the particular historical episode in which tragedy occurs. With contemporary manifestations of ‘the tragic’ successfully synthesising historical incidents into mythos, it is proposed that Aristotle’s rigid demarcation of history and poetry is unsound.

It should be noted that Aristotle appears to allow some association amongst poetry and history. In Book 9, Aristotle indicates that tragedy demarcates itself from the comic convention of assigning characters fictional names, preferring to employ the names of real historical figures to its tragic heroes. In explaining why tragedy is authorised by historical traditions, Aristotle cites what appears to be a circular argument: “the reason is that the possible seems plausible: about the possibility of things which have not occurred we are not yet sure; but it is evident that actual events are possible – they could not otherwise have occurred” (Aristotle, 2005: 61 [emphasis added]). These lines, as MacPhail points out, imply collapsing the actual and possible on which Aristotle bases the superiority of poetry to history. Aristotle proceeds to explain that even when tragic poets construct plots out of historical events they remain poets, for there is nothing to prevent historical events from conforming to the principle of probability. While some critics interpret this passage as a paralogism, it appears to indicate that history is an appropriate subject for poetic mythos. Indeed, Greek tragedies commonly fused history and mythos as exemplified by Homer’s Iliad, Aeschylus’ The Persians and Phrynicus’ tragedies, The Phoenician Women and The Fall of Miletus. Frank Walbank suggests that history has always had an affinity for tragedy and accordingly while narratives may fail to evoke audiences’ pathos, this is not a necessary corollary. Katharsis is not undermined by historical content, rather evocation is contingent on whether the construction of mythos around sociocultural points of reference affect the spectator and thereby complies with the “universal” synthesis of probable and necessary events outlined in the Poetics (2005: 115) (de Ste. Croix, 1992: 28; Halliwell, 1992a: 251).

Here the author concurs with Eric Dods (1951) that the rational configuration of Greek tragedy encompassed many dimensions of human experience that would be deemed ‘irrational’ or ‘illogical’ according to modern conceptions of rationality. For while rationally configured around audiences’ affective experiences, the coherence of mythos and the plot’s initial ‘uncau sed cause’ are themselves open to interpretation, debate and public reasoning. Moreover, while Aristotle excludes irrational components from the representation of tragedy, he does not exclude irrational dimensions of experience from events preceding or succeeding the text: “The deus ex machina should be employed for events outside the drama – preceding events beyond human knowledge, or subsequent events requiring prediction and announcement; for we ascribe to the gods the capacity to see all things. There should be nothing irrational in the events; if there is, it should lie outside the play, as with Sophocles’ Oedipus” (2005: 81). With mythos signifying the “union” of Dionysian passions and Apollonian cognitive realms of experience, “mutually augmenting one another” (to employ Nietzsche’s ([1872] 1995) vocabulary), the extent to which Aristotle eliminated ‘the Dionysian’ from tragic contemplation remains arguable. The capacity for religious mythos to be revised according to reasoned argumentation is exemplified by Daniel Goleman’s (2004) edited volume documenting a conference between distinguished scientists, philosophers and the Dalai Lama.

It is rarely noted the extent to which the Greek’s pluralist toleration contributed to the scope and longevity of Greek civilisation. Hellenistic culture was not merely transmitted through violently conquering
neighbouring states, but rather largely emblematic of the Greek’s hegemonic approach to territorial expansion: so long as Greek laws and customs were respected, communities were for the most part free to maintain local beliefs and practices. Of course, despite the Greek’s tradition of heterodoxy, it would be unreasonable to suggest that participatory democracy was distributed evenly across all sectors of society. With male citizens comprising the majority of the ‘demos,’ social asymmetry stratified ancient Greek democracies according to inequities of class, gender and ‘race.’

By excavating the emotional currents of the chorus, including noting which voices are expressed and marginalised, one acquires insight into Greek ethos. The attendance of women at tragic performances remains a disputed topic, nevertheless, through the incorporation of female characters tragedy provided this typically silenced community with a voice in which playwrights could address their underprivileged social status. Nowhere is the interrogation of inequities pertaining to gender more apparent than in Euripides’ and Sophocles’ Medea, a text dealing with a women’s angst as an underprivileged member of a patriarchal system.

Chapter 3

i It is orthodox to note that nationalism and collective identities are accentuated during times of war, in which civic identities crystallise around antagonism felt towards a common enemy (Cartledge, 1997).

ii Civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity respond to different beliefs and degrees of affective attachment to the nation. The former tends to favour multiculturalism whereas the latter is racially prejudiced, prioritising bloodlines, ancestry and cultural assimilation. Heath and Tilley (2005) emphasise that younger generations are for the most part neither civic, nor ethnically oriented to the nation. Instead, youth generally remain uninterested in political life, a consequence most likely attributed to generational differences, reflecting their early stage in the life cycle and affective climate in which they were socialised.

iii It must be noted that while social myths have a propensity to propagate stigmatising ideologies, this is not a necessary consequence. At their most basic level, social myths operate as common frames of reference through which individuals are fused to shared systems of beliefs and values.

iv No longer solidified around mutual systems of belief, the transition from relatively simple social structures to more complex moral orders signals the “de-fusion” of shared beliefs with traditional rituals replaced in modern societies by “ritual-like” performances (Alexander, 2004a).

v Of course, emotions themselves both shape and are shaped by cultural beliefs and social norms, it is proposed, however, that these factors do not account for the heterodoxy of subjective experience alone. Rather, emotions are embodied in a more comprehensive sense that negotiates sociocultural processes with corporeal experience.

vi Zidane elucidates: “I was lucky to come from a difficult area. It teaches you not just about football but also life. There were lots of kids from different races and poor families. People had to struggle to get through the day…Before it was hard to talk about certain things, especially if, like me, you came from a difficult area or an immigrant background. We were a family who had come from nothing and now we had respect from French people of all sorts… I’m very inspired by him [Zidane’s father] -it was my father who taught us that an immigrant must work twice as hard as anybody else, that he must never give up” (Hussey, 2004: n.p.).

vii Nussbaum (2007a: 5) notes, for example, that Bangladesh’s 85 per cent Muslim population has two major political parties each led by women.

viii For Bromberger (1987: 30-1), football is distinct from religion insofar as the sport is not a self-conscious ritual, nor a form of salvation.

ix Durkheim ([1912] 2001: 283-4) suggests that games and major art forms seem to have emerged from religion. This is particularly evident in the phenomenon of distancing required of both these aesthetic experiences where the distance between real and imaginary representations of sacred symbols is at times indistinguishable. Yet, for Durkheim, when a rite functions purely as entertainment, it is no longer a rite. While recreation contributes to the “moral rebuilding” of the religious community, the moral dimension of a rite elevates the practice beyond recreation.
xi Zidane is a particular exemption of the racial asymmetry stratifying France’s Republic. Of the 577 members of the French national assembly none are of North African origin (The Guardian, 2006), with this lack of representation permeating other political and economic spheres.

xii Moreover, that France’s conscience collective fused the country’s moral community around their national icon, further supports Durkheim’s thesis that the idea of society is “the soul of religion” ([1912] 2001: 314).

xiii The French team had a weak start to the 2006 World Cup. Despite winning the tournament in 1998, France’s success was relatively new. Moreover, many considered the national team, who averaged over thirty, too old to rival the agility of players from other nations. As well as captaining the team, Zidane played a central role in France reaching the World Cup Final.

xiv For further commentary on the topic see Rowe (1997: 212-3).

xv Durkheim (1912: 282) suggested that state recreation facilitated a safe aesthetic distance responsible for transporting the individual into the outer world with greater ease.

Chapter 4

i A compelling argument that exemplifies the impact of social structures on individual sporting preferences has been made by Koen Stroeken (2002: 13), who argues that football’s dominance in Europe, and relative insignificance in America, may be attributed to the distinct sociocultural sensibilities demarcating their respective public spheres. Football, with its neo-religious emphasis on “chance” and “luck,” he explains, has little in common with the American dream. Moreover, not only may the best team lose in football, the game may end in a goalless deadlock that deviates from conventional “Hollywood endings” and America’s capitalist system and dream on individual achievement.

ii When interviewing Léon (2008: n.p.), the Frenchman revealed the extent to which Zidane’s ‘social tragedy’ traversed into France’s social arena. He recollected that subsequent to the Zidane-Materazzi incident, his Italian friend was no longer welcome at the family home during matches between Italy and France: “we have a friend in the family, one of our closest family friends, and when France and Italy play against each other he cannot come to our home so as to preserve our relationship. It’s incredible, but it’s true.”

iii The term ‘universal,’ for Aristotle, referring to the configuration of meaning around a ‘necessary’ or ‘probable’ sequence of events.


v The individual’s capacity to engage with, yet remain a discerning member of the crowd indicates that the crowd and the public are not polar opposites, as Park suggests. This thesis challenges conventional crowd theory and successive models of collective behaviour, as conceived by Park and Blumer, by situating the self as a creative actor, who remains critically aware, rather than passively transformed by interacting with the crowd. As an active spectator, rather than a passive observer, the individual contributes to the dynamics of the crowd. For while modified through social interactions, the intersubjective constitution of the self is not reducible to being dominated by the ‘collective impulse’ of the group.

vi In its plural form, mythoi negotiated prevailing social myths amid a terrain of subjective cultural orientations and corporeal affective experiences. Both at the stadium and through mediated systems of communication, mythoi cultivated speculation and global conversation: “theories are swirling, a planetary fog of electronic opinion arising from an act virtually nobody saw was there” (Cohen, 2006: 1). Media coverage the event appeared to facilitate two exceptionally different views: On the one hand, heroic myths of the body integral to Orwellian impressions of sport depict football as: “war minus the shooting” (Orwell, 1945), reconciling Zidane’s headbutt as an extension of his virile athletic attributes - what Léon (2008) described as the “killer instinct” integral to the competitive ethos of sport. FIFA, the French state and multinational corporations promoted an altogether different mode of mythos, one concerned with fair play, game regulations and football as the realisation of the world’s common humanity, as echoed by FIFA’s President: ‘Football is hope’ (Blatter, 2008). Resonating with this positive appraisal, Babok Fozooni (2007) observed that, historically, football has operated as a site of social contestation for Iranian women, an apparatus for social reform, convictions further emphasised by John Sugden’s (2006) study of the contribution of football initiatives as means to promote conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence between Jewish and Arab children in Northern Israel. Played in a universal language with an emphasis on team work and social integration, these narratives suggest that football can bridge cultural and religious
differences, promoting peace through ‘super-ordinate’ goals aimed at ‘bringing the nations together,’ the very principles that Orwell had formerly scorned (Blatter, 2008; Kaelin, 2007; Sheriff, 1966; Sheriff & Harvey, 1952).

It was precisely Zidane’s mainstream appeal that attracted his emblem to a range of commercial, public and political spheres. In contrast to the more rigid identities occupying local football clubs, Zidane’s emblem was ‘popular’ in the Republican sense of the word, as Mignon (1998) notes, literally and symbolically uniting individuals from all sectors of French society: “Zidane is to football what Nelson Mandela is to politics – an international icon who appeals across a spectrum. A phenomenon” (Kortjaas, 2009: 2).

Scepticism towards individuals’ portrayal of the event was heightened by spectators’ propensity to neglect Zidane’s notorious past, in which he was expelled 14 times for misconduct.

Chapter 5

The difference between emotional consciousness and consciousness of the emotion may be clarified by Jean-Paul Sartre’s phenomenological theory of emotion. With respect to fear, for example, Sartre ([1939] 2002: 50-1) explains: “Fear is not originally conscious of being afraid...Emotional consciousness is, at first, consciousness of the world...the person who is afraid is afraid of something”. From this premise, Sartre maintains that an emotion is never unconscious, but merely unreflective. For an emotion is itself a form of consciousness, involving a way of apprehending the world, even if this experience is not self-consciously recognised as being felt by the emotive being.

Aristotle emphasises the importance that the phenomenon of distancing plays in ‘accomplishing’ katharsis of pity and fear. In the Rhetoric ([1926] 2006: 227-9), for example, he elucidates: “The persons men pity are those whom they know, provided they are not too closely connected with them; for if they are, they feel the same as if they themselves were likely to suffer. This is why Amasis is said not to have wept when his son was led to execution, but did weep at the sight of a friend reduced to beggary, for the latter excited pity, the former terror.”

Despite corresponding to equivalent mimetic functions, namely the production of pleasure and the “controlled decontrolling of emotions,” Elias and Dunning (1986) distinguish art-forms from sport. They propose that the latter occupies the ethos of warfare, resembling real battles fought between rival groups, rather than an “elevated” mode of emotional clarification. In recognising how Zidane’s World Cup scandal was affectively rationalised as a social tragedy, it becomes evident that the aesthetic experiences of art and sport’s spectatorship are not necessarily demarcated.

Aristotle ([1926] 2006: 229) elucidates: “The terrible is different from the pitiable, for it drives out pity, and often serves to produce the opposite feeling.”

The notion of ‘emotional intelligence’ implied by Aristotle’s kathartic paradigm is not synonymous with popular understandings of intelligence as an objective enterprise for deductive logic. It is precisely through embodied engagement with the world that practical wisdom is subjectively acquired. For katharsis refers to a process of emotional clarification corresponding to a ‘logic of affect,’ rather than the subversion of emotions to cognitive faculties.

Indeed, Aristotle’s defence of mimetic forms rests on demonstrating the universal affect of tragedy. There is, however, a passage in the Poetics that seems to indicate that Aristotle was aware of the dynamic responses tragedy was capable of evoking, despite the ability for such a claim to undermine his critique of Plato’s Republic. On discussing the pleasures derived from contemplative learning, Aristotle (2005: 39) elucidates: “The explanation of this too is that understanding gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but likewise to others too, though the latter have a smaller share in it.”

The arbitrary construction of social tragedy may be contextualised in the performative dimension of terrorism. For example, that a terror attack may signify tragedy for some audiences while being celebrated by others alludes to the arbitrary construction of ‘the tragic’ from equivalent symbolic content.

For the Greeks and the Stoics, emotions were for the most part considered uncontrollable impulses. Aristotle broke from conventional preoccupations circumscribing passions to disruptive behaviour. Insisting that emotions were ‘states of consciousness’ involving value judgments, he argued that all moral action required emotions to motivate and sustain it with the corollary being that emotions are compatible with reason. That Aristotle grounded his theory of emotions in belief is not to reduce emotion to belief. For
Despite being informed by beliefs, emotions are also the result of unreflective habits, physiological experiences and contingent circumstances. Aristotle’s comprehensive theory of emotion accordingly requires a broader notion of rationality that extends beyond the goal driven procedures offered by rational choice theory and instrumental reason.

That rationality is situated in a specific cultural environment is not to justify all rational action as morally reasonable. For, as Aristotle forewarned in the *Rhetoric* ([1926] 2006), the propensity for emotions to be manipulated through belief accentuates the need for emotion content to remain open to critique and reasoned argumentation.

Antonio Damasio (1994, 2003) has amassed an impressive body of neurological evidence suggesting that emotions maintain this function in everyday reasoning. For example, subjects in his studies with injuries to the prefrontal and somatosensory cortices of the brain had a diminished capacity to experience emotions and were consequently severely hindered in their ability to make intelligent practical decisions. Damasio’s research indicates that emotions are integral to rationality, even if affective processes may not be consciously recognised as such.

To acknowledge that traditional rituals are increasingly replaced by ‘ritual-like’ performances in contemporary society is not to suggest that moral universals are unattainable. The establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, attests to the ability to maintain universal values while appreciating diversity and cultural pluralism.

Weber’s reference to the term ‘rationalised’ here refers to procedural rationality as the efficient calculation of means-ends goals as opposed to the broader Aristotelian conception of rationality employed in this thesis.

Linking what he referred to as ‘the Protestant work ethic’ with ‘the spirit of capitalism,’ Weber’s notion of the ‘iron cage’ refers to a series of social and economic developments in modernity in which instrumental norms intersect with other spheres of public life, namely the ethos of rationalisation, individualism, discipline, success, and competition.

Moral values are epitomised by the rise and fall of iconic players in sport. Communicated through the logic of the sacred and profane, reverence and scandal instruct spectators as to which actions are heroic and shameful, thereby educating emerging generations about appropriate forms of action through what Aristotle (2005) referred to as “trained loves and hates.” Standard motifs of mythic heroes operate as ideal character types promoting moral virtue through emulation and seeking to avoid the scandalous transgressions responsible for engendering the decline of sporting heroes. This moral dimension of contemporary sport was exemplified by Michael Phelps’ 2009 drug scandal - the American swimmer publicly apologising for ‘acting inappropriately’ after a photo featured in British tabloids portrayed Phelps inhaling from a marijuana pipe: "I engaged in behavior which was regrettable and demonstrated bad judgment.” Despite winning a record eight gold medals at the Beijing Olympic Games, the swimmer’s ‘error of judgment’ reveals that even the heroic Phelps, commonly considered ‘better than most,’ was not immune from violating the moral order to which he belongs. Zidane’s World Cup transgression has been received with greater ambivalence regarding its relationship to moral discourses of honour and shame, with spectators subjectively appropriating the significance of the scandal through mythos.

Football transfers civic values across cultures while promoting excellence, courage and discipline of the mind and body. It is a rite that anchors the conscience collective through moral education where club loyalty and the nation are often elevated as the heroic ideal.

An important function of football is to collectively fuse new and existing generations into the ethos of the warrior tribe through the common objective of winning to secure a club’s eudaimonia (well-being). The team comes to symbolise a single organism during sporting events, producing heightened sentiments of what Durkheim ([1912] 2001) referred to as collective effervescence, as the ecstasy of cheering fans is oriented towards the “group hymn” (Carroll, 2008: 61). The rhythmic synchronisation of football crowds was expressed by Léon (2008): “When the players are running on the ground, you know, and approaching the ball, you can hear the breath, you can feel the breath of the whole audience at the same time stopping...The breath comes out very loudly as your team attacks, so, it’s ah...if you listen carefully and share that with other people then it’s very impressive.”

Alexander elucidates, “Identity involves a cultural reference. Only if patterned meanings of the collectivity are dislodged is traumatic status attributed to an event. It is the meanings that provide the sense of shock and fear, not the events in themselves. Whether or not the structures of meaning are destabilised
and shocked is not the result of an event but the effect of a sociocultural process. It is the result of an exercise of human agency, of the successful imposition of a new system of cultural classification. This cultural process is deeply affected by power structures and by the contingent skills of reflexive social agents" (2004d: 10).

xviii The noun ‘drama’ derives from the verb dраn meaning to ‘do’ or ‘act’ (Aristotle, 2005: 35).

xix On this note, Apter (2006: 228) suggests, “political theatre, as distinguished from theatre itself, is not mimetic of the world around it but an aspect of the world itself.”

xx Mediated on a global stage, the discourses emerging in the aftermath Zidane’s transgression meant that the implications of the scandal, and the controversy and public sentiment attached to it, acquired social significance beyond the football arena. These controversies and the social myths through which they were communicated must be contextualised within evolving moral and racial discourses particular to postcolonial France to illuminate what public emotional reactions reveal about the ways in which power is exercised. Just as sport cannot be abstracted from its cultural context, mythos invariably reflects the audience’s perception of reality, appropriating the form’s metaphorical significance across evolving spheres of time and space.

xxi The term ‘pied noir’ literally means ‘black foot.’ It refers to Algerian soldiers who fought for France during the Algerian War of Independence only to be denied the standard rights of French civilians upon return.

xxii Yet, while the archetypal hero operates through themes of self-sacrifice, it is precisely tragedy’s foundation as a dramatic contest, which enables audiences to debate the civic value of the hero’s sacrificial action. Walter Benjamin (1974: 287) elucidates, “The content of the hero’s achievements belong to the community, as does language. Since the community denies this content, it remains unarticulated in the hero…The greater the discrepancy between the tragic word and the situation-which can no longer be called tragic when there is no discrepancy-the more surely the hero has escaped the ancient statutes to which, when they finally overtake him, he throws only the silent shadow of his being, the self, as a sacrifice, while his soul finds refuge in the word of a distant community.”

xxiii It appears paradoxical that Zidane maintained his iconic status despite being expelled during the crucial stages of the World Cup, depriving France of a much needed player which, as noted earlier, ultimately contributed to Italy defeating Les Bleus by two penalty goals in extra time. The vignette of Zidane hanging his head in shame as he walked past the World Cup trophy obscures his revered status. The footballer’s shame confirmed in an interview given shortly after the World Cup: “I felt very lonely, deserted and deeply hurt” (2006a: n.p.). Sepp Blatter, FIFA’s President, reinforces Zidane’s shame, explaining that when speaking to the footballer after his World Cup misdemeanour, the French captain had refused to accept his runners-up medal following the match replying that “he didn’t deserve any medal” (Harrell, 2006: 2).

xxiv While not all members of society were affected by the event, the capacity for the incident to be framed by international media as a ‘social tragedy’ in the global domain of sport (beyond the cultural arena of France and Algeria) accounts for the notion of ‘social tragedy’ employed in this thesis.

Chapter 6

i These amplified, albeit temporary bonds, solidified around Dionysian rituals of cheering and dancing, encapsulate Durkheim’s ([1912] 2001) notion of collective effervescence - the corollary being that emotional communion rejuvenates moral solidarity.

ii Framed within the emotional climate of America’s “war on terror,” fears of Islamic fundamentalism have solidified in western imaginations, presenting Zidane’s Muslim heritage as an obvious signifier for terrorism and violence (Jiwani, 2008). To challenge the social myths of Muslim fanaticism that threatened to undermine Chirac’s Republic, it was observed that the postcolonial landscape particular to France emerged as the primary background signifier employed to rationalise Zidane’s on-field transgression as a social tragedy ‘writ-large’ for the nation.

iii In light of recent social developments, Thompson (1995: 254) has emphasised that, despite the appeal of the ancient Greek’s notion of “participatory democracy,” the Greek model does not provide a compelling practical response to the dilemmas of modern life. For the ancient Greek conception of the public sphere presupposes a shared spatial-temporal locale, equality among participants and civic dialogue that does not correspond to the unequal power relations present in mediated spheres of global communication.
Gordon (2006: n.p.) further refutes criticisms that the film heroically represented Zidane: “We didn’t want to make a heroic portrait and actually we ended up with a portrait of an anti-hero.”

Aristotle (2005: 71) points out that the hero should not be pre-eminent in virtue and justice, nor evil or depravity. Rather, the hero should belong to those echelons of society who enjoy renown and prosperity, that is, “eminent men from such lineages.” For, “this very distinction separates tragedy from comedy: the later tends to represent people inferior, the former superior, to existing humans” (Aristotle, 2005: 35).

It is believed that tragedy first emerged around 533BCE when the actor Thespis (from which the word ‘thespian’ is derived) removed himself from the chorus (Poole, 2005: 4). The emergence of the social phenomenon of tragedy in modern life simultaneous to the rise of the public sphere is exemplified by the shift from the dithyramb - a unison hymn sung by a khoroi of fifty men that accomplished the sociopolitical function of katharsis through dance and song - in classical Greek tragedy to the emphasis on the hero in tragic drama (Wilson, 2003: 166, 170). The development from ritual to drama indicates that not all socially meaningful symbolic action may be reduced to shared systems of belief. Contrary to Durkheim, who considered culture synonymous with ritualised religious practices, Alexander and Smith (2005) conceive of ritual as merely one moment along a continuum of social performance that ranges from ‘fused’ to ‘defused.’ Social drama is, then, as Alexander and Smith point out, a successor to ritual and not its continuation, as Victor Turner (1982) had suggested.

Peter Szondi (2002: 7) has argued that, by no longer focusing on the “effect” that tragedy has on the audience but on the phenomenon of the tragic itself, modern philosophers and psychologists have deviated from Aristotle’s pragmatic analysis of the kathartic affects of tragedy to a history of the theory of the tragic.

Moreover, the notion that democratic societies are meritocratic conceals the social inequities and privileges that predispose some individuals to achieve more than others.

Of course, one must be careful of imposing contemporary notions of democracy on ancient demokratia. Reflecting the Greek statesmen, Solon’s, constitutional reforms, Athenian democracies of the fifth and fourth centuries limited the scope of the demos to Greek, male citizens, excluding a majority of the population according to distinctions of ‘race,’ ethnicity, gender and class.

Jeffrey Alexander further elucidates: “It is the actuality of myth that marks ritual” and, thus, whereas myth translates and explains, tragic drama “unfolds” emerging from ritual as a social forum of public negotiation in response to the development of more complex social structures” (2004a: 541, 543).

Despite Dionysian chaos conventionally being juxtaposed as the antithesis of Apollonian temperance, the ‘twice born’ God of the theatre was also considered, Dionysus the ‘Liberator.’ Dionysus’ choral song, the dithyramb, had powerful associations with kathartic ideas of cleansing and renewal, particularly civic renewal seeking purification from ills endured in life (Wilson, 2003: 172, 176-7). In his analysis of the kathartic effect of the dithyrambic contest, Peter Wilson elucidates that the politics of dance “brings this god [Dionysus]…into the most public religious arena, and so harnesses to the benefit of the city as such the resources of cleaning and regeneration that lay in his mythic store. The political sickness of a community divided against itself in stasis is prominent among the ills to which this choral cure is applied; and it is here that we return to the powerful socio-political pragmatics of dance” (2003: 173).

The limits of failing to recognise the arbitrary construction of social tragedy is further exemplified by the shifting principles governing ancient Greek polis communities and contemporary liberal democracies. Writing a century after the fifth century Attic plays that were the focus of his analysis, Aristotle’s Poetics (2005) is itself vulnerable to the limits of historicity. Given that Aristotle was a Macedonian philosopher of the fourth century, Vernant (1992) has labelled the philosopher “a stranger” to tragic man since his perspective was restricted to that of an ‘alien’ (Macedonian), philosopher, rather than a fifth century Athenian citizen (Halliwell, 2005: 4-5).

The extent to which cultural pluralism may co-exist with a universal system of ethics is exemplified by the United Nations’ aim to respect diversity while promoting a basic foundation of human rights.

Although, as demonstrated in the foregoing chapters, the media’s censorship of the scandal meant that critical expression was for the most part limited to the private domain.

The imitation, “is neither easy to imitate nor to be understood when imitated, especially by a nondescript mob assembled in the theatre” (Plato, [1935] 2006: 457).
In the play *Hippolytus* (2007: 6), the goddess Aphrodite claims responsibility for making Phaedra the victim of lust. Aphrodite speaks in the prologue:

"Phaedra saw him [Hippolytus]
and her heart was filled with the longings of love.
This was my work."

To employ a Neoaristotelian conception of katharsis is not intended as a reductionist interpretation of the term wherein the 6 elements that Aristotle required to achieve “poetic excellence” correspond with the construction of social tragedy. Rather, this thesis provides a Neoaristotelian framework of social tragedy through which to examine the pertinence of katharsis as a mode of emotional clarification in contemporary social life.

On a similar note, Aristotle’s exclusion of the irrational components of ‘the Dionysian’ from the well-constructed tragedy signify not the rejection of impulse, unreflective or unreasonable emotional behaviour from tragedy, but rather metaphysical or supernatural reasons accounting for the hero’s decline. For example, in Euripides’ *Medea*, where action is mediated by *deus ex machina* (literally ‘God from the machine’ referring to a prop used to signify divine intervention), rather than free will. See Chapter 6 for more detail.

While traditional crowd theory presented an exaggerated correlation between passions and violent, mob consciousness, there is increasing research in fields of sociology and psychology which reveal the reasonable motivations driving social movements (McPhail, 1991).

With the exception of spite, shamelessness and envy, which Aristotle ([1926] 2003) unequivocally considered to be vices.

Of course, in considering emotions to be subjectively embodied experiences, it is apparent that any attempt to predict reactions to tragedy could only offer a proximate account based on the sympathetic relationship between the transgressor and the sociocultural context in which tragedy is represented.

To reduce the significance of *mythos* to its concrete articulation threatens to override the form’s elusive dimension.

There is an ostensible gap between the significance that theatre assumed in public consciousness in Greek *polis* communities compared to most contemporary societies. Moreover, whereas sport is commonly mediated for public consumption, theatre is conventionally restricted to those viewing the event live.