Norbert Elias

THE CIVILIZING PROCESS

Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations

Translated by Edmund Jephcott
with some notes and corrections by the author

Revised Edition

edited by
Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell

Blackwell Publishing

This edition © 1994, 2000 by Norbert Elias Stichting

The History of Manners: © 1939, 1968 by Norbert Elias
English translation © 1978 by Basil Blackwell Ltd

State Formation and Civilization: © 1939, 1969, 1976 by Norbert Elias
English translation © 1982 by Basil Blackwell Ltd
Originally published as *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* as two separate volumes in 1939 by Haus zum Falken, Basel.

BLACKWELL PUBLISHING
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK
550 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

This edition first published 1994
Revised edition published 2000

17 2013

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Elias, Norbert.
[Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. English]
The civilizing process : sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations / Norbert Elias; translated by Edmund Jephcott with some notes and corrections by the author and edited by Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell.—Rev. ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-631-22160-9 (alk. paper); ISBN 978-0-631-22161-6 (alk.paper)
1. Civilization—History. 2. Civilization—Philosophy. I. Dunning, Eric. II. Goudsblom, Johan. III. Mennell, Stephen. IV. Title.
CB83. E413 2000
909—dc21 99-056203

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Set in 10 on 12 pt Garamond
by Photoprint, Torquay
Printed and bound in Singapore
by Ho Printing Singapore Pte Ltd

The publisher's policy is to use permanent paper from mills that operate a sustainable forestry policy, and which has been manufactured from pulp processed using acid-free and elementary chlorine-free practices. Furthermore, the publisher ensures that the text paper and cover board used have met acceptable environmental accreditation standards.

For further information on
Blackwell Publishing, visit our website:
www.blackwellpublishing.com

1

Sociogenesis of the Antithesis Between Kultur *and* Zivilisation *in German Usage*

I

Introduction

1. The concept of "civilization" refers to a wide variety of facts: to the level of technology, to the type of manners, to the development of scientific knowledge, to religious ideas and customs. It can refer to the type of dwelling or the manner in which men and women live together, to the form of judicial punishment, or to the way in which food is prepared. Strictly speaking, there is almost nothing which cannot be done in a "civilized" or an "uncivilized" way; hence, it always seems somewhat difficult to summarize in a few words everything that can he described as civilization.

But when one examines what the general function of the concept of civilization really is, and what common quality leads all these various human attitudes and activities to be described as civilized, one starts with a very simple discovery: this concept expresses the self-consciousness of the West. One could even say: the national consciousness. It sums up everything in which Western society of the last two or three centuries believes itself superior to earlier societies or "more primitive" contemporary ones. By this term Western society seeks to describe what constitutes its special character and what it is proud of: the level of *its* technology, the nature of *its* manners, the development of *its* scientific knowledge or view of the world, and much more.

2. But "civilization" does not mean the same thing to different Western nations. Above all, there is a great difference between the English and French use of the word, on the one hand, and the German use of it, on the other. For the former, the concept sums up in a single term their pride in the significance of their own nations for the progress of the West and of humankind. But in German usage, *Zivilisation* means something which is indeed useful, but nevertheless only a value of the second rank, comprising only the outer appearance of human beings, the surface of human existence. The word through which Germans interpret themselves, which more than any other expresses their pride in their own achievements and their own being, is *Kultur*.

3. A peculiar phenomenon: words like the English and French "civilization" or the German *Kultur* appear completely clear in the internal usage of the society to which they belong. But the way in which a piece of the world is bound up in them, the manner in which they include certain areas and exclude others as a matter of course, the hidden evaluations which they implicitly bring with them, all this makes them difficult to define for any outsider.

The French and English concept of civilization can refer to political or economic, religious or technical, moral or social facts. The German concept of *Kultur* refers essentially to intellectual, artistic and religious facts, and has a tendency to draw a sharp dividing line between facts of this sort, on the one side, and political, economic and social facts, on the other. The French and English concept of civilization can refer to accomplishments, but it refers equally to the attitudes or "behaviour" of people, irrespective of whether or not they have accomplished anything. In the German concept of *Kultur*, by contrast, the reference to "behaviour", to the value which a person has by virtue of his or her mere existence and conduct, without any accomplishment at all, is very minor. The specifically German sense of the concept of *Kultur* finds its clearest expression in its derivative, the adjective *kulturell*, which describes the value and character of particular human products rather than the intrinsic value of a person. But this word, the concept embodied in *kulturell*, cannot be exactly translated into French and English.

The word *kultiviert* (cultivated) is very close to the Western concept of civilization. To some extent, it represents the highest form of being civilized. Even people and families who have accomplished nothing *kulturell* can be *kultiviert*. Like the term "civilized", *kultiviert* refers primarily to the form of people's conduct or behaviour. It describes a social quality of people, their housing, their manners, their speech, their clothing, unlike *kulturell*, which does not refer directly to people themselves, but exclusively to particular human accomplishments.

4. Another difference between the two concepts is very closely bound up with this. "Civilization" describes a process or at least the result of a process. It refers to something which is constantly in motion, constantly moving "forward". The

German concept of *Kultur*, in current usage, has a different relation to motion. It refers to human products which are there like "flowers of the field",[1] to works of art, books, religious or philosophical systems, in which the individuality of a people expresses itself. The concept of *Kultur* delimits.

To a certain extent, the concept of civilization plays down the national differences between peoples; it emphasizes what is common to all human beings or—in the view of its bearers—should be. It expresses the self-assurance of peoples whose national boundaries and national identity have for centuries been so fully established that they have ceased to be the subject of any particular discussion, peoples which have long expanded outside their borders and colonized beyond them.

In contrast, the German concept of *Kultur* places special stress on national differences and the particular identity of groups; primarily by virtue of this, it has acquired in such fields as ethnological and anthropological research a significance far beyond the German linguistic area and the situation in which the concept originated. But that situation is the situation of a people which, by Western standards, arrived at political unification and consolidation only very late, and from whose boundaries, for centuries and even down to the present, territories have again and again crumbled away or threatened to crumble away. Whereas the concept of civilization has the function of giving expression to the continuously expansionist tendency of colonizing groups, the concept of *Kultur* mirrors the self-consciousness of a nation which had constantly to seek out and constitute its boundaries anew, in a political as well as a spiritual sense, and again and again had to ask itself: "What really is our identity?" The orientation of the German concept of culture, with its tendency towards demarcation and the emphasis on and detailing of differences between groups, corresponds to this historical process. The questions "What is really French? What is really English?" have long since ceased to be a matter of much discussion for the French and English. But for centuries the question "What is really German?" has not been laid to rest. One answer to this question—one among others—lies in a particular aspect of the concept of *Kultur*.

5. Thus the national self-images represented by concepts such as *Kultur* and "civilization" take very different forms. But however different the self-image of the Germans, who speak with pride of their *Kultur*, and that of the French and English, who think with pride of their "civilization", they all regard it as completely self-evident that theirs is the way in which the world of humans in general wants to be viewed and judged. The Germans can perhaps try to explain to the French and English what they mean by the concept of *Kultur*. But they can communicate hardly anything of the specific national background and the self-evident emotional values which envelop the word for them.

The French or English person can perhaps tell the German what elements make the concept of civilization the sum of their national self-image. But

however reasonable and rational this concept may appear to them, it too grows out of a specific set of historical situations, it too is surrounded by an emotional and traditional aura which is hard to define but which nevertheless represents an integral part of its meaning. And the discussion really becomes futile when a German tries to show the French and English person why the concept of *Zivilisation* does indeed represent a value for him, but only one of the second rank.

6. Concepts like these two have something of the character of those words which from time to time make their appearance in some narrower group, such as a family or a sect, a school class or an association, and which say much to the initiate and little to the outsider. They take shape on the basis of common experiences. They grow and change with the group whose expression they are. The situation and history of the group are mirrored in them. And they remain colourless, they never become fully alive for those who do not share these experiences, who do not speak from the same tradition and the same situation.

The concepts of *Kultur* and "civilization", to be sure, bear the stamp not of sects or families but of whole peoples, or perhaps only of certain classes of these peoples. But in many respects what is true of the specific words of smaller groups is also true of them: they are primarily used by and for people who share a particular tradition and a particular situation.

Mathematical concepts can be separated from the group which uses them. Triangles may be explicable without reference to historical situations. Concepts such as "civilization" and *Kultur* are not. It may be that particular individuals formed them from the existing linguistic material of their group, or at least gave them new meaning. But they took root. They became established. Others picked them up in their new meaning and form, developing and polishing them in speech or writing. They were tossed back and forth until they became efficient instruments for expressing what people had jointly experienced and wanted to communicate. They became fashionable words, concepts current in the everyday speech of a particular society. This shows that they met not merely individual but shared needs for expression. The shared history has crystallized in them and resonates in them. Individuals find this crystallization already in their possibilities of use. They do not know very precisely why this meaning and this delimitation are bound up with the words, why exactly this nuance and that new possibility can be drawn from them. They make use of them because it seems to him a matter of course, because from childhood they learn to see the world through the lens of these concepts. The social process of their genesis may be long forgotten. One generation hands them on to another without being aware of the process as a whole, and the concepts live as long as this crystallization of past experiences and situations retains an existential value, a function in the actual being of society—that is, as long as succeeding, generations can hear their own experiences in the meaning of the words. The terms gradually die when the

functions and experiences in the actual life of society cease to be bound up with them. At times, too, they only sleep, or sleep in certain respects, and acquire a new existential value from a new social situation. They are recalled then because something in the present state of society finds expression in the crystallization of the past embodied in the words.

II

The Development of the Antithesis of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*[2]

7. It is clear that the function of the German concept of *Kultur* took on new life in the year 1919, and in the preceding years, partly because a war was waged against Germany in the name of "civilization" and because the self-image of the Germans had to be defined anew in the situation created by the peace treaty.

But it is just as clear, and can be proved, that to a certain extent the historical situation of Germany after the war only gave a new impulse to an antithesis which had long found expression through these two concepts, even as far back as the eighteenth century.

It seems to have been Kant who first expressed a specific experience and antithesis of his society in related concepts. In 1784 he wrote in his *Ideas on a Universal History from the Point of View of a Citizen of the World*: "Cultivated to a high degree by art and science, we are civilized to the point where we are overburdened with all sorts of social propriety and decency . . ."

"The idea of morality," he added, "is a part of culture. But the application of this idea, which results only in the similitude of morality in the love of honour and in outward decency, amounts only to civilizing."

Related as this formulation of the antithesis already seems, in the moment of its genesis, to our formulation, its concrete point of departure in the experiences and situation in the late eighteenth century, though not without an historical connection to the experiences on which its present-day use rests, is nevertheless significantly different. The contraposition here, where the spokesmen of the developing German bourgeoisie, the middle-class German intelligentsia,[3] still spoke in large part "from the point of view of a citizen of the world", related only vaguely and at best secondarily to a national contrast. Its primary aspect was an internal contrast within the society, a social contrast which nevertheless bore within itself in a significant way the germ of the national contraposition: the contrast between the courtly nobility, predominantly French-speaking and "civilized" on the French model, and a German-speaking, middle-class stratum of intelligentsia recruited chiefly from the bourgeois "servers of princes" or officials in the broadest sense, and occasionally also from the landed nobility.

This latter was a stratum far removed from political activity, scarcely thinking in political terms and only tentatively in national ones, whose legitimation consisted primarily in its intellectual, scientific or artistic *accomplishments*. Counterposed to it is an upper class which "accomplished" nothing in the sense in which the others do, but for which the shaping of its distinguished and distinctive *behaviour* was central to its self-image and self-justification. And this is the class which Kant has in mind when he spoke of being "civilized to the point where we are overburdened", of mere "social propriety and decency", of "the similitude of morality in the love of honour". It is in the polemic of the stratum of the German middle-class intelligentsia against the etiquette of the ruling courtly upper class that the conceptual contraposition of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* originated in Germany. But this polemic is older and broader than its crystallization in these two concepts.

8. It can be traced long before the middle of the eighteenth century, even if only as an undertone in thought much more muted than after the middle of the century. A good idea of this can be obtained from the articles on *Hof*, *Höflichkeit*, and *Hofmann* (Court, Courtesy, Courtier), too long to be reproduced here in full, in the *Zedler Universal Lexicon* of 1736.[4]

> Courtesy undoubtedly gets its name from the court and court life. The courts of great lords are a theatre where everyone wants to make his fortune. This can only be done by winning the favour of the prince and the most important people of his court. One therefore takes all conceivable pains to make oneself agreeable to them. Nothing does this better than making the other believe that we are ready to serve him to the utmost of our capacity under all conditions. Nevertheless, we are not always in a position to do this, and may not want to, often for good reasons. Courtesy serves as a substitute for all this. By it we give the other so much reassurance, through our outward show, that he has a favourable anticipation of our readiness to serve him. This wins us the other's trust, from which an affection for us develops imperceptibly, as a result of which he becomes eager to do good to us. This is so common with courtesy that it gives a special advantage to him who possesses it. To be sure, it should really be ability and virtue which earn us people's esteem. But how few are the correct judges of these two! And how many fewer hold them worthy of honour! People, all too concerned with externals, are far more moved by what reaches their senses externally, especially when the accompanying circumstances are such as particularly affect their will. This works out exactly in the case of a courtier.

Simply, without philosophical interpretation and in clear relation to specific social configurations, the same antithesis was here expressed which eventuated in Kant, refined and deepened, in the antithesis of culture and civilization: deceptive external "courtesy" and true "virtue". But the author only spoke of this

in passing, with a sigh of resignation. After the middle of the century the tone gradually changes. The self-legitimation of the middle classes by virtue and accomplishment becomes more precise and emphatic, and the polemic against the external and superficial manners to be found in the courts becomes more explicit.

III

Examples of Courtly Attitudes in Germany

9. It is not easy to speak of Germany in general, since at this time there were special characteristics in each of the many states. But only a few were eventually decisive for the development of the country as a whole; the rest followed. And certain general characteristics were more or less clearly apparent everywhere.

To begin with, there is the depopulation and the dreadful economic devastation of the country after the Thirty Years War. In the seventeenth century, and even still in the eighteenth, Germany and in particular the German bourgeoisie were poor by French and English standards. Trade, and especially the foreign trade which was highly developed in parts of Germany in the sixteenth century, was in ruins. The huge wealth of the great mercantile houses had been destroyed, partly by the shift in trade routes due to the overseas discoveries, and partly as a direct consequence of the long chaos of the war. What was left was a small-town bourgeoisie with narrow horizons, living essentially by supplying local needs.

There was not much money available for luxuries such as literature and art. In the courts, wherever there was enough money to do so, people inadequately imitated the conduct of the court of Louis XIV and spoke French. German, the language of the lower and middle classes, was unwieldy and awkward. Leibniz, Germany's only courtly philosopher, the only great German of this time whose name won acclaim in wider courtly circles, wrote and spoke French or Latin, seldom German. And the language problem, the problem of what could be done with this awkward German language, occupied him as it occupied many others.

French spread from the courts to the upper layer of the bourgeoisie. All *honnêtes gens* (decent people), all people of "consequence" spoke it. To speak French was the status symbol of all the upper classes.

In 1730, Gottsched's bride wrote to her betrothed: "Nothing is more plebeian than to write letters in German."[5]

If one spoke German, it was considered good form to introduce as many French words as possible. In 1740, E. de Mauvillon wrote in his *Lettres Françoises et Germaniques*: "It is only a few years since one did not say four words of German without two of French." That was *le bel usage* (good usage).[6] And he had more to say about the barbaric quality of the German language. Its nature, he said, was

"d'être rude et barbare" (to be rude and barbarous).[7] There were the Saxons, who asserted "qu'on parle mieux l'Allemand en Saxe, qu'en aucun autre endroit de l'Empire" (German is spoken better in Saxony than in any other part of the Empire). The Austrians made the same assertion in regard to themselves, as did the Bavarians, the Brandenburgers and the Swiss. A few scholars, Mauvillon continued, wanted to establish rules of grammar, but "il est difficile, qu'une Nation, qui contient dans son sein tant de Peuples indépendans les uns des autres, se soumette aux décisions d'un petit nombre des Savans" (it is difficult for a nation that embraces so many peoples independent of one another to submit to the decisions of a small number of *savants*).

Here as in many other fields, a small, powerless, middle-class intelligentsia fell heir to tasks which in France and England were undertaken largely by the court and the aristocratic upper class. It was learned middle-class "servers of princes" who first attempted to create, in a particular intellectual class, models of what German was, and thus to establish at least in this intellectual sphere a German unity which did not yet seem realizable in the political sphere. The concept of *Kultur* had the same function.

But at first most of what he saw in Germany appeared crude and backward to Mauvillon, an observer grounded in French civilization. He spoke of the literature as well as the language in these terms: "Milton, Boileau, Pope, Racine, Tasso, Molière, and practically all poets of consequence have been translated into most European languages; your poets, for the most part, are themselves only translators."

He went on: "Name me a creative spirit on your Parnassus, name me a German poet who has drawn from his own resources a work of some reputation; I defy you to."[8]

10. One might say that this was the unauthoritative opinion of a badly informed Frenchman. But in 1780, forty years after Mauvillon and nine years before the French Revolution, when France and England had already passed through decisive phases of their cultural and national development, when the languages of the two Western countries had long since found their classic and permanent form, Frederick the Great published a work called *De la littérature allemande*,[9] in which he lamented the meagre and inadequate development of German writing, made approximately the same assertions about the German language as Mauvillon, and explained how in his opinion this lamentable situation might be remedied.

Of the German language he said: "I find a half-barbarous language, which breaks down into as many different dialects as Germany has provinces. Each local group is convinced that its patois is the best." He described the low estate of German literature and lamented the pedantry of German scholars and the meagre development of German science. But he also saw the reasons for it: he spoke of

Germany's impoverishment as a result of continuous wars, and of the inadequate development of trade and the bourgeoisie.

"It is", he said, "not to the spirit or the genius of the nation that one must attribute the slight progress we have made, but we should lay the blame only on a succession of sad events, a string of wars which have ruined us and left us poor in men as well as money."

He spoke of the slowly beginning recovery of prosperity: "The Third Estate no longer languishes in shameful degradation. Fathers educate their children without going into debt. Behold, a beginning has been made in the happy revolution which we await." And he prophesied that with growing prosperity there would also come a blossoming of German art and science, a civilizing of the Germans which would give them an equal place among the other nations: this was the happy revolution of which he spoke. And he compares himself to Moses, who saw the new blossoming of his people approaching without experiencing it.

11. Was Frederick right? A year after the appearance of his work, in 1781, Schiller's *Die Räuber* and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared, to be followed in 1787 by Schiller's *Don Carlos* and Goethe's *Iphigenie*. There followed the whole blossoming of German literature and philosophy which we know. All of this seems to confirm his prediction.

But this new blooming had been long in preparation. The German language did not achieve its new expressive power in two or three years. In 1780, when *De la littérature allemande* appeared, this language had long ceased to be the half-barbaric "patois" of which Frederick spoke. A whole collection of works to which today, in retrospect, we assign considerable importance had already appeared. Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* had been produced seven years earlier, *Werther* was in circulation, Lessing had already published the major part of his dramatic and theoretical works, including *Laokoon* in 1766 and *Die Hamburgische Dramaturgie* in 1767. Frederick died in 1781, a year after the appearance of his book. Klopstock's writings had been published much earlier; his *Messias* appeared in 1748. This is without counting Herder, many of the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) plays, and a whole collection of widely read novels such as Sophie de la Roche's *Das Fräulein von Sternheim*. There had long since developed in Germany a class of buyers, a bourgeois public—even if still a relatively small one—which was interested in such works. Waves of great intellectual excitement had flowed over Germany and found expression in articles, books, plays, and other works. The German language had become rich and flexible.

Of all this Frederick gave no hint in his work. He either did not see it or assigned it no significance. He mentioned only a single work of the young generation, the greatest work of the period of *Sturm und Drang* and enthusiasm for Shakespeare, *Götz von Berlichingen*. He mentioned it, characteristically, in connection with the education and forms of entertainment of the *basses classes*, the lower strata of the population:

> To convince yourself of the lack of taste which has reigned in Germany until our day, you only need go to the public spectacles. There you will see presented the abominable works of Shakespeare, translated into our language; the whole audience goes into raptures when it listens to these ridiculous farces worthy of the savages of Canada. I describe them in these terms because they sin against all the rules of the theatre, rules which are not at all arbitrary.
>
> Look at the porters and gravediggers who come on stage and make speeches worthy of them; after them come the kings and queens. How can such a jumble of lowliness and grandeur, of buffoonery and tragedy, be touching and pleasing?
>
> One can pardon Shakespeare for these bizarre errors; the beginning of the arts is never their point of maturity.
>
> But then look at *Götz von Berlichingen* making its appearance on stage, a detestable imitation of these bad English pieces, while the public applauds and enthusiastically demands the repetition of these disgusting stupidities.

And he continued: "After having spoken of the lower classes, it is necessary for me to go on with the same frankness in regard to the universities."

12. The man who spoke thus was the man who did more than any of his contemporaries for the political and economic development of Prussia and perhaps indirectly for the political development of Germany. But the intellectual tradition in which he grew up and which found expression through him was the common tradition of Europe's "good society", the aristocratic tradition of prenational court society. He spoke its language, French. By the standard of its taste he measured the intellectual life of Germany. Its prescribed models determine his judgement. Others of this society had long spoken of Shakespeare in a way altogether similar to his. Thus, in 1730, Voltaire gave expression to very similar thoughts in the *Discours sur la tragédie*, which introduced the tragedy *Brutus*: "I certainly do not pretend to approve the barbarous irregularities with which it [Shakespeare's tragedy *Julius Caesar*] is filled. It is only surprising that there are not more in a work composed in an age of ignorance by a man who did not even know Latin and had no teacher except his own genius."

What Frederick the Great said about Shakespeare was, in fact, the standard opinion of the French-speaking upper class of Europe. He did not "copy" or "plagiarize" Voltaire; what he wrote was his sincere personal opinion. He took no pleasure in the rude and uncivilized jests of gravediggers and similar folk, the more so if they were mixed in with the great tragic sentiments of princes and kings. He felt that all of this had no clear and concise form; these were the "pleasures of the lower classes". This is the way in which his comments are to be understood; they are no more and no less individual than the French language he used. Like it, they bore witness to his membership in a particular society. And the paradox that while his politics were Prussian his aesthetic tradition was French (or, more precisely, absolutist-courtly) is less great than the nationally unified concepts of the present day may suggest. It is bound up with the special

structure of this court society, whose political institutions and interests were multifariously fissured, but whose social stratification was into estates whose taste, style and language were by and large the same throughout Europe.

The peculiarities of this situation occasionally produced inner conflicts in the young Frederick, as he slowly became aware that the interests of the ruler of Prussia could not always be brought into accord with reverence for France and adherence to courtly customs.[10] Throughout his life they produced a certain disharmony between what he did as a ruler and what he wrote and published as a human being and philosopher.

The feelings of the German bourgeois intelligentsia towards him were also sometimes correspondingly paradoxical. His military and political successes gave their self-identity as Germans a tonic it had long lacked, and for many he became a national hero. But his attitude in matters of language and taste, which found expression in his work on German literature though by no means there alone, was exactly what the German intelligentsia, precisely as a *German* intelligentsia, had to fight against.

Their situation had its analogue in almost all the greater German states and in many of the smaller ones as well. At the top almost everywhere in Germany were individuals or groups who spoke French and decided policy. On the other side, there was a German-speaking intelligentsia, who by and large had no influence on political developments. From their ranks, essentially, came the people on whose account Germany has been called the land of poets and thinkers. And from them concepts such as *Bildung* and *Kultur* received their specifically German imprint and tenor.

IV

The Middle Class and the Court Nobility in Germany

13. It would be a special project (and a very fascinating one) to show how much the specific mental orientation and ideals of a courtly-absolutist society found expression in classical French tragedy, which Frederick the Great counterposes to the Shakespearean tragedies and *Götz*. The importance of good form, the specific mark of every genuine "society"; the control of individual feelings by reason, a vital necessity for every courtier; the reserved behaviour and elimination of every plebeian expression, the specific mark of a particular stage on the road to "civilization"—all this finds its purest expression in classical tragedy. What must be hidden in court life, all vulgar feelings and attitudes, everything of which "one" does not speak, does not appear in tragedy either. People of low rank, which for this class also means of base character, have no place in it. Its form is clear, transparent, precisely regulated, like etiquette and court life in general.[11] It shows the courtly people as they would like to be and, at the same time, as the

absolute prince wants to see them. And all who lived under the impress of this social situation, be they English or Prussian or French, had their taste forced into the same pattern. Even Dryden, next to Pope the best-known courtly poet of England, wrote about earlier English drama in the epilogue to the *Conquest of Granada* very much in the vein of Frederick the Great and Voltaire:

> Wit's now arrived to a more high degree;
> Our native language more refined and free,
> Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
> In conversation, than those poets writ.

The connection with social stratification is particularly clear in this aesthetic judgement. Frederick, too, defends himself against the tastelessness of juxtaposing on the stage the "tragic grandeur" of princes and queens and the "baseness" of porters and gravediggers. How could he have understood and approved a dramatic and literary work which had central to it precisely the struggle against class differences, a work which was intended to show that not merely the sorrows of princes and kings and the courtly aristocracy but those of people lower on the social scale have their greatness and their tragedy?

In Germany, too, the bourgeoisie slowly became more prosperous. The King of Prussia saw this and promised himself that it would lead to an awakening of art and science, a "happy revolution". But this bourgeoisie spoke a different language from the king. The ideals and taste of the bourgeois youth, the models for its behaviour, were almost the opposite of his.

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*), Book 9, Goethe wrote: "In Strasbourg, on the French border, we were at once freed from the spirit of the French. We found their way of life much too ordered and too aristocratic, their poetry cold, their criticism destructive, their philosophy abstruse and unsatisfying."

He wrote *Götz* from this mood. How could Frederick the Great, the man of enlightened, rational absolutism and aristocratic-courtly taste, have understood it? How could the King have approved the dramas and theories of Lessing, who praised in Shakespeare precisely what Frederick condemned: that his works fitted the taste of the people far more than do the French classics?

"If someone had translated the masterpieces of Shakespeare ... for our Germans, I know well that it would have a better result than thus making them acquainted with Corneille or Racine. In the first place, the people would take far more delight in him than in them."

Lessing wrote this in his *Letters Concerning the Most Recent Literature* (part I, letter 17), and he demanded and wrote bourgeois dramas, appropriate to the newly awakening self-consciousness of the bourgeois classes, because courtly people did not have the exclusive privilege to be great. "This hateful distinction which men have made between themselves", he says, "is not known to nature. She parcels

out the qualities of the heart without any preference for the nobles and the rich."[12]

The whole literary movement of the second half of the eighteenth century was the product of a social class—and, accordingly, of aesthetic ideals—which was in opposition to Frederick's social and aesthetic inclinations. Thus, they had nothing to say to him, and he therefore overlooks the vital forces already active around him and condemned what he could not overlook, like *Götz*. This German literary movement, whose exponents included Klopstock, Herder, Lessing, the poets of *Sturm und Drang*, the poets of "sensibility", and the circle known as the *Göttinger Hain*, the young Goethe, the young Schiller, and many others, was certainly no political movement. With isolated exceptions, one finds in Germany before 1789 no idea of concrete political action, nothing reminiscent of the formation of a political party or a political party programme. One does find, particularly in Prussian officialdom, proposals and also the practical beginning of reforms from the standpoint of enlightened absolutism. In the work of philosophers such as Kant one finds the development of general basic principles which were, in part, in direct opposition to the prevailing conditions. In the writings of the young generation of the *Göttinger Hain* one finds expressions of wild hatred directed against princes, courts, aristocrats, "Frenchifiers", courtly immorality and intellectual frigidity. And everywhere among middle-class youth one finds vague dreams of a new united Germany, of a "natural" life—"natural" as opposed to the "unnatural" life of court society—and again and again an overwhelming delight in their own exuberance of feeling.

Thoughts, feelings—nothing which was able in any sense to lead to concrete political action. The structure of this absolutist society of petty states offered no opening for it. Elements within the bourgeoisie gained self-assurance, but the framework of the absolute states was completely unshaken. The bourgeois elements were excluded from any political activity. At most, they could "think and write" independently; they could not act independently.

In this situation, writing became the most important outlet. Here the new self-confidence and the vague discontent with what existed find a more or less covert expression. Here, in a sphere which the apparatus of the absolute states had surrendered to a certain extent, the young middle-class generation counter-posed its new dreams and oppositional ideas, and with them the German language, to the courtly ideals.

As has been said, the literary movement of the second half of the eighteenth century was not a political one, but in the fullest sense of the word it was the expression of a social movement, a transformation of society. The bourgeoisie as a whole did not yet find expression in it. It was at first the expression of a sort of bourgeois vanguard, what is here described as the middle-class intelligentsia: many individuals in the same position and of similar social origin scattered throughout the country, individuals who understood one another because they

were in the same position. Only occasionally did individual members of this vanguard find themselves together in some place as a group, for a shorter or longer time; often they lived in isolation or solitude, an élite in relation to the people, persons of the second rank in the eyes of the courtly aristocracy.

Again and again one can see in these works the connection between this social situation and the ideals of which they spoke: the love of nature and freedom, the solitary exaltation, the surrender to the excitement of one's own heart, unhindered by "cold reason". In *Werther*, whose success shows how typical these sentiments were of a particular generation, it was occasionally said quite unequivocally.

In the letter of 24 December 1771, one reads: "The resplendent misery, the boredom among the detestable people gathered together here, the competition for rank among them, the way they are constantly looking for a chance to get a step ahead of one another."

And under 8 January 1772: "What sort of people are these whose whole soul is rooted in ceremonial, and whose thoughts and desires the year round are centred on how they can move up a chair at table."

Under 15 March 1772: "I gnash my teeth . . . I eat at the Count's house and after dinner we walk back and forth in the great park. The social hour approaches. I think, God knows, about nothing." He remains, the nobles arrive. The women whisper, something circulates among the men. Finally the Count, somewhat embarrassed, asks him to leave. The nobility feel insulted at seeing a bourgeois among them.

" 'You know' ", says the Count, " 'I notice that the company is displeased at seeing you here.' . . . I stole away from the distinguished company, and drove to M., to watch the sunset from the hill there while reading in my Homer the noble song of how Ulysses was hospitably received by the excellent swineherds."

On the one hand, superficiality, ceremony, formal conversation; on the other, inwardness, depth of feeling, immersion in books, development of the individual personality. It is the same contrast which was expressed by Kant in the antithesis between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, relating to a very specific social situation.

In *Werther*, Goethe also shows particularly clearly the two fronts between which the bourgeoisie lives. "What irritates me most of all", we read in the entry of 24 December 1771, "is our odious bourgeois situation. To be sure, I know as well as any other how necessary class differences are, how many advantages I owe to them myself, only they should not stand directly in my way." Nothing better characterizes middle-class consciousness than this statement. The doors below must remain shut. Those above must open. And like any other middle class, this one was imprisoned in a peculiarly middle-class way: it could not think of breaking down the walls that blocked the way up, for fear that those separating it from the lower strata might also give way in the assault.

The whole movement was one of upward mobility: Goethe's great-grandfather

was a blacksmith,[13] his grandfather a tailor, then an innkeeper with a courtly clientele and courtly-bourgeois manners. Already well-to-do, his father became an imperial counsellor, a rich bourgeois of independent means, with a title. His mother was the daughter of a Frankfurt patrician family.

Schiller's father was a surgeon, later a badly paid major; his grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather were bakers. From similar social origins, now closer, now farther off, from the crafts and the middle administration, came Schubart, Bürger, Winckelmann, Herder, Friedrich August Wolff, Fichte and many other members of this movement.

14. There was an analogous movement in France. There, too, in conjunction with a similar social change, a profusion of outstanding people emerged from middle-class circles. They included Voltaire and Diderot. But in France these talents were received and assimilated without great difficulty by the large court society of Paris. In Germany, on the other hand, sons of the rising middle class who were distinguished by talent and intelligence were debarred, for the most part, from courtly-aristocratic life. A few, like Goethe, achieved a kind of elevation to these circles. But aside from the fact that the court at Weimar was small and relatively poor, Goethe was an exception. By and large, the walls between the middle-class intelligentsia and the aristocratic upper class in Germany remained, by Western standards, very high. In 1740 the Frenchman Mauvillon noted that "one observes in the German gentleman an air that is haughty to the point of arrogance. Swollen with a lineage the length of which they are always ready to prove, they despise anyone not similarly endowed. Seldom", he continues, "do they contract *mésalliances*. But no less seldom are they seen behaving simply and amiably towards middle-class people. And if they spurn connubiality with them, how much less do they seek out their company, whatever their merit may be."[14]

In this particularly sharp social division between nobility and middle class, to which countless documents bear witness, a decisive factor was no doubt the relative indigence of both. This impelled the nobles to cut themselves off, using proof of ancestry as the most important instrument for preserving their privileged social existence. On the other hand, it blocked to the German middle class the main route by which in the Western countries bourgeois elements rose, intermarried with, and were received by the aristocracy: through money.

But whatever the causes—they were doubtless highly complex—of this very pronounced separation, the resulting low degree of fusion of the courtly-aristocratic models with their "ascriptive", "quality-based" values on the one hand with bourgeois values based on achievement on the other, had a decisive influence for long periods on the emergent national character of the Germans. This division explains why a main linguistic stream, the language of educated Germans, and almost the entire recent intellectual tradition expressed in literature received their decisive impulses and their stamp from a middle-class

intellectual stratum which was far more purely and specifically middle-class than the corresponding French intelligentsia and even than the English, the latter seeming to occupy an intermediate position between those of France and Germany.

The gesture of self-isolation, the accentuation of the specific and distinctive, which was seen earlier in the comparison of the German concept of *Kultur* with Western "civilization", reappears here as a characteristic of German historical development.

It was not only externally that France expanded and colonized early in comparison with Germany. Internally, too, similar movements are frequently seen throughout her more recent history. Particularly important in this connection is the diffusion of courtly-aristocratic manners, the tendency of the courtly aristocracy to assimilate and, so to speak, colonize elements from other classes. The social pride of the French aristocracy was always considerable, and the stress on class differences never lost its importance for them. But the walls surrounding them had more openings; access to the aristocracy (and thus the assimilation of other groups) played a far greater role here than in Germany.

The most vigorous expansion of the German empire occurred, by contrast, in the Middle Ages. From that time on, the German Reich diminished slowly but steadily. Even before the Thirty Years War and more so after it, German territories were hemmed in on all sides, and strong pressure was exerted on almost all the external frontiers. Correspondingly, the struggles within Germany between the various social groups competing for limited opportunities and autonomy, and therefore the tendencies towards distinction and mutual exclusiveness, were generally more intense than in the expanding Western countries. As much as the fragmentation of the German territory into a multiplicity of sovereign states, it was this extreme isolation of large parts of the nobility from the German middle class that stood in the way of the formation of a unified, model-setting central society, which in other countries attained decisive importance at least as a stage on the way to nationhood, setting its stamp in certain phases on language, on the arts, on manners and on the structure of emotions.

V

Literary Examples of the Relationship of the German Middle-Class Intelligentsia to the Court

15. The books of the middle classes which had great public success after the mid-eighteenth century—that is, in the period when these classes were gaining in prosperity and self-assurance—show very clearly how strongly this dissimilarity was felt. They also demonstrate that the differences between the

structure and life of the middle class, on the one hand, and the courtly upper class, on the other, were matched by differences in the structure of behaviour, emotional life, aspirations and morality; they show—necessarily one-sidedly—how these differences were perceived in the middle-class camp.

An example of this is the well-known novel by Sophie de la Roche, *Das Fräulein von Sternheim*,[15] which made the authoress one of the most celebrated women of her time. "My whole ideal of a young woman", wrote Caroline Flachsland to Herder after reading *Sternheim*, "gentle, delicate, charitable, proud, virtuous, and deceived. I have spent precious, wonderful hours reading the book. Alas, how far I still am from my ideal, from myself."[16]

The curious paradox that Caroline Flachsland, like many others of similar make-up, loved her own suffering—that she included being deceived, along with charity, pride and virtue, among the features of the ideal heroine whom she wished to resemble—is highly characteristic of the emotional condition of the middle-class intelligentsia, and particularly of the women among them, in the age of sensibility. The middle-class heroine was deceived by the aristocratic courtier. The warning, the fear of the socially superior "seducer" who could not marry the girl because of the social discrepancy between them, and the secret wish for his approach, the fascination that lay in the idea of penetrating the closed and dangerous circle, finally the identifying empathy with the deceived girl: all this is an example of the specific ambivalence which beset the emotional life of middle-class people—and not only women—with regard to the aristocracy. *Das Fräulein von Sternheim* is, in this respect, a feminine counterpart of *Werther*. Both works point to specific entanglements of their class, which found expression in sentimentality, sensibility and related shades of emotion.

The problem presented in the novel: A high-minded country girl, from a family of landed gentry with bourgeois origins, arrives at court. The Prince, related to her on her mother's side, desires her as his mistress. Having no other escape, she seeks refuge with the "scoundrel" of the novel, an English lord living at the court, who speaks just as many middle-class circles would have imagined an "aristocratic seducer" to speak, and who produces a comic effect because he utters middle-class reproaches to his type as his own thoughts. But from him, too, the heroine preserves her virtue, her moral superiority, the compensation for her class inferiority, and dies.

This is how the heroine, Fräulein von Sternheim, the daughter of an ennobled colonel, speaks:[17]

> To see how the tone, the modish spirit of the court suppresses the noblest movements of a heart of admirable nature, to see how avoiding the sneers of the ladies and gentlemen of fashion means laughing and agreeing with them, fills me with contempt and pity. The thirst for amusement, for new finery, for admiration of a dress, a piece of furniture, a new noxious dish—oh, my Emilie, how anxious and sick my soul grows. . . . I will not speak of the false ambition that hatches so many base intrigues, grovels

before vice ensconced in prosperity, regards virtue and merit with contempt, and unfeelingly makes others wretched.

"I am convinced, Aunt," she says after a few days of court life, "that life at court does not suit my character. My taste, my inclinations, diverge from it in every way. And I confess to my gracious aunt that I would leave more happily than I came."

"Dearest Sophie", her aunt tells her, "you are really a most charming girl, but the old vicar has filled your head with pedantic ideas. Let go of them a little."[18]

In another place Sophie writes: "My love of Germany has just involved me in a conversation in which I sought to defend the merits of my Fatherland. I talked so zealously that my aunt told me afterwards that I had given a pretty demonstration of being the granddaughter of a professor. . . . This reproach vexed me. The ashes of my father and grandfather had been offended."

The clergyman and the professor—these are indeed two of the most important representatives of the middle-class administrative intelligentsia, two social figures who played the most decisive part in the formation and diffusion of the new language of educated Germans. This example shows quite clearly how the vague national feeling of these circles, with its spiritual, non-political leanings, appears as bourgeois to the aristocracy at the petty courts. At the same time, both the clergyman and the professor point to the social centre most important in fashioning and disseminating the German middle-class culture: the university. From it generation after generation of students carried into the country, as teachers, clergymen, and middle-rank administrators, a complex of ideas and ideals stamped in a particular way. The German university was, in a sense, the middle-class counterweight to the court.

Thus it is in words with which the pastor might thunder against him from the pulpit that the court scoundrel expressed himself in the middle-class imagination:[19]

You know that I have never granted love any other power than over my senses, whose most delicate and lively pleasures it affords . . . All classes of beauty have pandered to me. . . . I grew sated with them. . . . The moralists . . . may have their say on the fine nets and snares in which I have captured the virtue and pride, the wisdom and the frigidity, the coquetry and even the piety of the whole feminine world . . . Amour indulged my vanity. He brought forth from the most wretched corner of the countryside a colonel's daughter whose form, mind, and character are so charming that . . .

Twenty-five years later, similar antitheses and related ideals and problems could still earn a book success. In 1796, *Agnes von Lilien*,[20] by Caroline von Wolzogen, appeared in Schiller's *Horen*. In this novel the mother, of the high aristocracy, who must for mysterious reasons have her daughter educated outside the court circle, says:

> I am almost thankful for the prudence that compels me to keep you far from the circle in which I became unhappy. A serious, sound formation of the mind is rare in high society. You might have become a little doll that danced to and fro at the side of opinion.

And the heroine says of herself:[21]

> I knew but little of conventional life and the language of worldly people. My simple principles found many things paradoxical to which a mind made pliable by habit is reconciled without effort. To me it was as natural as that night follows day to lament the deceived girl and hate the deceiver, to prefer virtue to honour and honour to one's own advantage. In the judgement of this society I saw all these notions overturned.

She then sketches the prince, a product of French civilization:[22]

> The prince was between sixty and seventy, and oppressive to himself and others with the stiff, old French etiquette which the sons of German princes had learned at the court of the French king and transplanted to their own soil, admittedly in somewhat reduced dimensions. The prince had learned through age and habit to move almost naturally under this heavy armour of ceremony. Towards women he observed the elegant, exaggerated courtesy of the bygone age of chivalry, so that his person was not unpleasing to them, but he could not leave the sphere of fine manners for an instant without becoming insufferable. His children . . . saw in their father only the despot.
>
> The caricatures among the courtly people seemed to me now ridiculous, now pitiable. The reverence that they were able, on the appearance of their lord, to summon instantly from their hearts to their hands and feet, the gracious or angry glance that passed through their bodies like an electric shock . . . the immediate compliance of their opinions to the most recent utterance from the princely lips, all this I found incomprehensible. I seemed to be watching a puppet theatre.

Courtesy, compliance, fine manners, on the one hand, sound education and preference of virtue to honour, on the other: German literature in the second half of the eighteenth century is full of such antitheses. As late as 23 October 1828, Eckermann said to Goethe: "An education as thorough as the Grand-Duke appears to have had is doubtless rare among princely personages." "Very rare", Goethe replies. "There are many, to be sure, who are able to converse cleverly on any subject, but they do not possess their learning inwardly, and merely tickle the surface. And it is no wonder, if one thinks of the appalling diversions and truncations that court life brings with it."

On occasion he uses the concept of *Kultur* quite expressly in this context. "The people around me", he says, "had no idea of scholarship. They were German courtiers, and this class had not the slightest *Kultur*."[23] And Knigge once observed explicitly: "Where more than here [in Germany] did the courtiers form a separate species."

16. In all these statements a quite definite social situation is reflected. It is the same situation that is discernible behind Kant's antithesis of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. But even independently of these concepts, this phase and the experiences deriving from it became deeply imprinted in the German tradition. What was expressed in this concept of *Kultur*, in the antithesis between depth and superficiality and in many related concepts, was primarily the self-image of a middle-class intellectual stratum. This was a relatively thin layer scattered over the whole territory, and therefore individualized to a high degree and in a particular form. It did not constitute, as did the court, a closed circle, a "society". It was composed predominantly of officials, of civil servants in the broadest sense of the word—that is, of people who directly or indirectly derive their income from the court, but who, with few exceptions, did not themselves belong to courtly "good society", to the aristocratic upper class. It was a class of intellectuals without a broad middle-class background. The commercial-professional middle class, who might have served as a public for the writers, was relatively undeveloped in most German states in the eighteenth century. The rise to prosperity was only beginning in this period. The German writers and intellectuals were therefore floating in the air to some extent. Mind and books were their refuge and their domain, achievements in scholarship and art their pride. Scope for political activity, political goals, scarcely existed for this class. Commerce and the economic order were, for them, in keeping with the structure of their life and society, marginal concerns. Trade, communications and industry were comparatively undeveloped and still needed, for the most part, protection and promotion by mercantilist policy rather than liberation from its constraints. What legitimized this eighteenth-century middle-class intelligentsia to itself, what supplied the foundation of its self-image and pride, was situated beyond economics and politics. It existed in what was called for precisely this reason *das rein Geistige* (the purely spiritual), in books, scholarship, religion, art, philosophy, in the inner enrichment, the intellectual formation (*Bildung*) of the individual, primarily through the medium of books, in the personality. Accordingly, the watchwords expressing this self-image of the German intellectual class, terms such as *Bildung* and *Kultur*, tended to draw a sharp distinction between accomplishments in the areas just mentioned, between this purely spiritual sphere as the only one of genuine value, and the political, economic and social sphere, in complete contrast to the watchwords of the rising bourgeoisie in France and England. The peculiar fate of the German bourgeoisie, its long political impotence, and the late unification of the nation acted continuously in one direction, reinforcing concepts and ideals of this kind. Thus the development of the concept of *Kultur* and the ideals it embodied reflected the social situation of the German intelligentsia, a class which lacked a significant social hinterland, and which, being the first bourgeois formation in Germany, develop an expressly

bourgeois self-image, specifically middle-class ideas, and an arsenal of trenchant concepts directed against the courtly upper class.

Also in keeping with their situation was what this intelligentsia saw as most worth fighting against in the upper class, as the opposite of *Bildung* and *Kultur*. The attack was directed only infrequently, hesitantly and usually resignedly against the political or social privileges of the courtly aristocracy. Instead, it was directed predominantly against their human conduct.

A very illuminating description of the difference between this German intellectual class and its French counterpart is likewise to be found in Goethe's conversations with Eckermann: Ampère has come to Weimar. (Goethe did not know him personally but had often praised him to Eckermann.) To everyone's astonishment the celebrated Monsieur Ampère turns out to be a "cheerful youth of some twenty years". Eckermann expressed surprise, and Goethe replied (Thursday, 3 May 1827):

> It has not been easy for you on your heath, and we in middle Germany have had to buy dearly enough such little wisdom as we possess. For at bottom we lead an isolated, miserable life! Very little culture comes to us from the people itself, and all our men of talent are scattered across the country. One is in Vienna, another in Berlin, another in Königsberg, another in Bonn or Düsseldorf, all separated from each other by fifty or a hundred miles, so that personal contact or a personal exchange of ideas is a rarity. I feel what this means when men like Alexander von Humboldt pass through, and advance my studies further in a single day than I would otherwise have travelled in a year on my solitary path.
>
> But now imagine a city like Paris, where the outstanding minds of the whole realm are gathered in a single place, and in their daily intercourse, competition, and rivalry teach and spur each other on, where the best from every sphere of nature and art, from the whole surface of the earth, can be viewed at all times. Imagine this metropolis where every walk over a bridge or across a square summons up a great past. And in all this do not think of the Paris of a dull, mindless epoch, but the Paris of the nineteenth century, where for three generations, through men like Molière, Voltaire, and Diderot, such a wealth of ideas has been put into circulation as is not found anywhere else on the entire globe, and you will understand that a good mind like Ampère, having grown up in such plenitude, can very well amount to something in his twenty-fourth year.

Further on, Goethe says with reference to Mérimée: "In Germany we cannot hope to produce such mature work when still so young. This is not the fault of the individual, but of the cultural state of the nation, and the great difficulty that we all experience in making our way in isolation."

From such statements, which in this introductory context must suffice as documentation, it is very clear how the political fragmentation of Germany was connected to a quite specific structure, both of the German intellectual class and of its social behaviour and way of thinking. In France the members of the intelligentsia were collected in one place, held together within a more or less

unified and central "good society"; in Germany, with its numerous, relatively small capitals, there was no central and unified "good society". Here the intelligentsia was dispersed over the entire country. In France conversation was one of the most important means of communication and, in addition, had been for centuries an art; in Germany the most important means of communication was the book, and it was a unified written language, rather than a unified spoken one, that this German intellectual class developed. In France even young people lived in a milieu of rich and stimulating intellectuality; the young member of the German middle class had to work his way up in relative solitude and isolation. The mechanisms of social advancement were different in both countries. And finally, this statement of Goethe's also shows very clearly what a middle-class intelligentsia without a social hinterland really meant. Earlier a passage was quoted in which he attributed little culture to the courtiers. Here he said the same of the common people. *Kultur* and *Bildung* are the watchwords and characteristics of a thin intermediate stratum that had risen out of the people. Not only the small courtly class above it, but even the broader strata below still showed relatively little understanding for the endeavours of their own élite.

However, precisely this underdevelopment of the broader, professional middle strata was one of the reasons why the struggle of the middle-class vanguard, the bourgeois intelligentsia, against the courtly upper class was waged almost entirely outside the political sphere, and why the attack was directed predominantly against the conduct of the upper class, against general human characteristics like "superficiality", "outward politeness", "insincerity" and so on. Even the few quotations that have been used here show these connections extremely clearly. Admittedly, it is only rarely and without great emphasis that the attack focused on specific concepts antithetical to those which served as self-legitimization for the German intellectual class, concepts such as *Bildung* and *Kultur*. One of the few specific counter-concepts was "civilized-ness" in the Kantian sense.

VI

The Recession of the Social Element and the Advance of the National Element in the Antithesis between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*

17. Whether the antithesis is expressed by these or other concepts, one thing is always clear: the contraposition of particular human characteristics which later came to serve primarily to express a national antithesis appears here primarily as the expression of a social antithesis. As the decisive experience underlying the formulation of pairs of opposites such as "depth" and "superficiality", "honesty" and "falsity", "outward politeness" and "true virtue", and from which, among

other things, the antithesis between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* grew up, we find at a particular phase of German development the tension between the middle-class intelligentsia and the courtly aristocracy. Certainly, there was never a complete lack of awareness that courtliness and French were related entities. G. C. H. Lichtenberg expressed this very clearly in one of his aphorisms, in which he spoke of the difference between the French *promesse* and the German *Versprechung* (Part 3, 1775–1779[24]). "The latter is kept", he said, "and not the former. The usefulness of French words in German. I am surprised that it has not been noticed. The French word gives the German idea with an admixture of humbug, or in its court meaning. . . . A discovery (*Erfindung*) is something new and a *découverte* something old with a new name. Columbus discovered (*entdeckte*) America and it was Americus Vesputius's *découverte*. Indeed, *goût* and taste (*Geschmack*) are almost antithetical, and people of *goût* seldom have much taste."

But it was only after the French Revolution that the idea of the German courtly aristocracy unmistakably receded, and that the idea of France and the Western powers in general moved towards the foreground in the concept of "civilization" and related ideas.

One typical example: in 1797 there appeared a small book by the French émigré Menuret, *Essai sur la ville d'Hambourg*. A citizen of Hamburg, Canon Meyer, wrote the following commentary on it:

> Hamburg is still backward. After a famous epoch (famous enough, when swarms of emigrants are settling here), it has made progress (really?); but to increase, to complete I do not say its happiness (that would be addressing his God) but its civilization, its advance in the career of science and art (in which, as you know, we are still in the North), in that of luxury, comfort, frivolity (his special field!) it still needs a number of years, or events which draw to it new throngs of foreigners (provided they are not more swarms of his civilized compatriots) and an increase of opulence.

Here, therefore, the concepts "civilized" and "civilization" are already linked quite unequivocally with the image of the Frenchman.

With the slow rise of the German bourgeoisie from being a second-rank class to being the bearer of German national consciousness, and finally—very late and conditionally—to being the ruling class, from having been a class which was first obliged to perceive or legitimize itself primarily by contrasting itself to the courtly-aristocratic upper class, and then by defining itself against competing nations, the antithesis between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, with all its accompanying meanings, changed in significance and function: *from being a primarily social antithesis it becomes a primarily national one.*

And a parallel development was undergone by what was thought of as specifically German: here, likewise, many originally middle-class social characteristics, imprinted in people by their social situation, became national character-

istics. Honesty and sincerity, for example, were now contrasted as German characteristics with dissimulating courtesy. But sincerity, as used here, originally emerged as a specific trait of the middle-class person, in contrast to the man of the world or courtier. This, too, can be clearly seen in a conversation between Eckermann and Goethe.

"I usually carry into society", says Eckermann on 2 May 1824, "my personal likes and dislikes and a certain need to love and be loved. I seek a personality conforming to my nature; to that person I should like to give myself entirely and have nothing to do with the others."

"This natural tendency of yours", Goethe answers, "is indeed not of a sociable kind; yet what would all our education be if we were not willing to overcome our natural tendencies. It is a great folly to demand that people should harmonize with us, I have never done so. I have thereby attained the ability to converse with all people, and only thus is knowledge of human character gained, as well as the necessary adroitness in life. For with opposed natures one must take a grip on oneself if one is to get on with them. You ought to do likewise. There's no help for it, you must go into society. No matter what you say."

The sociogenesis and psychogenesis of forms of human behaviour are still not well understood. Even to raise the questions may seem odd. It is nevertheless observable that people from different social units behave differently in quite specific ways. We are accustomed to take this for granted. We speak of the peasant or the courtier, of the Englishman or the German, of the medieval man or the man of the twentieth century, and we mean that the people of the social units indicated by such concepts behave uniformly in a specific manner which transcends all individual differences when measured against the individuals of a contrasting group: for example, the peasant behaves in many respects differently from the courtier, the Englishman or Frenchman from the German, and the medieval man from the man of the twentieth century, no matter how much else they may have in common as human beings.

Different modes of behaviour in this sense are apparent in the conversation just quoted between Eckermann and Goethe. Goethe was certainly a man who was individualized to a particularly high degree. As a result of his social destiny, modes of behaviour with different social origins merged in him into a specific unity. He, his opinions, and his behaviour were certainly never entirely typical of any of the social groups and situations through which he had passed. But in this quotation he spoke quite explicitly as a man of the world, as a courtier, from experiences which were necessarily foreign to Eckermann. He perceived the compulsion to hold back one's own feelings, to suppress antipathies and sympathies, which was inherent in court life, and which was often interpreted by people of a different social situation, and therefore with a different affect structure, as dishonesty or insincerity. And with the consciousness that distinguished him as a relative outsider from all social groups, he emphasized the beneficial, human

aspect of his moderation of individual affects. His comment was one of the few German utterances of this time to acknowledge something of the social value of "courtesy" and to say something positive about social adroitness. In France and England, where "society" played a far greater role in the overall development of the nation, the behavioural tendencies he speaks of also played—though less consciously than in his case—a far more important part. And ideas of a similar kind, including the notion that people should seek to harmonize with and show consideration for each other, that individuals may not always give way to their emotions, recur quite frequently, with the same specifically social meaning as in Goethe, in the court literature of France, for example. As a reflection, these thoughts were the individual property of Goethe. But related social situations, life in the *monde*, led everywhere in Europe to related precepts and modes of behaviour.

Similarly, the behaviour which Eckermann described as his own is—as compared to the outward serenity and amiability concealing opposed feelings that was first developed in this phase in the courtly-aristocratic world—clearly recognizable as originating from the small-town, middle-class sphere of the time. And it was certainly not only in Germany that it was found in this sphere. But in Germany, owing to the particularly pure representation of the middle-class outlook by the intelligentsia, these and related attitudes became visible in literature to an exceptional degree. And they recurred in this relatively pure form produced by the sharper, more rigorous division between courtly and middle-class circles, above all in the national behaviour of the Germans.

The social units that we call nations differ widely in the affect-economies of their members, in the schemata through which the emotional life of individuals is moulded under the pressure of institutionalized tradition and of the present situation. What was typical in the behaviour described by Eckermann was a specific form of "affect-modelling", that open submission of individual inclination which Goethe considers unsociable and contrary to the affect formation necessary for "Society".

For Nietzsche, many decades later, this attitude had long been the typical national attitude of the Germans. Certainly, it had undergone modifications in the course of history, and no longer had the same social meaning as at Eckermann's time. Nietzsche ridiculed it: "The German", he says in *Beyond Good and Evil* (Aphorism 244), "loves 'sincerity' and 'uprightness'. How comforting it is to be sincere and upright. It is today perhaps the most dangerous and deceptive of all the disguises in which the German is expert, this confidential, obliging, German honesty that always shows its cards. The German lets himself go, looking the while with trustful blue empty German eyes—and foreigners immediately mistake him for his nightshirt." Leaving aside the one-sided value judgement, this is one of the many illustrations of how, with the slow rise of the

middle classes, their specific social characteristics gradually become national characteristics.

And the same becomes clear from the following judgement of Fontane on England, to be found in *Ein Sommer in London* (Dessau, 1852):

> England and Germany are related in the same way as form and content, appearance and reality. Unlike things, which in no other country in the world exhibit the same solidity as in England, people are distinguished by form, their most outward packing. You need not be a gentleman, you must only have the means to appear one, and you are one. You need not be right, you must only find yourself within the forms of rightness, and you are right. . . . Everywhere appearance. Nowhere is one more inclined to abandon oneself blindly to the mere lustre of a name. The German lives in order to live, the Englishman to represent. The German lives for his own sake, the Englishman for the sake of others.

It is perhaps necessary to point out how exactly this last idea coincides with the antithesis between Eckermann and Goethe: "I give open expression to my personal likes and dislikes", said Eckermann. "One must seek, even if unwillingly, to harmonize with others", argued Goethe.

"The Englishman", Fontane observes, "has a thousand comforts, but no comfort. The place of comfort is taken by ambition. He is always ready to receive, to give audiences. . . . He changes his suit three times a day; he observes at table—in the sitting room and drawing room—certain prescribed laws of propriety. He is a distinguished man, a phenomenon that impresses us, a teacher from whom we take lessons. But in the midst of our wonderment is mixed an infinite nostalgia for our petty-bourgeois Germany, where people have not the faintest idea how to represent, but are able so splendidly, so comfortably and cozily, to live."

The concept of "civilization" was not mentioned here. And the idea of German *Kultur* appears in this account only from afar. But we see from it, as from all these reflections, that the German antithesis between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* did not stand alone; it was part of a larger context. It was an expression of the German self-image. And it pointed back to differences of self-legitimization, of character and overall behaviour, that first existed preponderantly, even if not exclusively, between particular German classes, and then between the German nation and other nations.

2

Sociogenesis of the Concept of Civilisation *in France*

I

Introduction

1. It would be incomprehensible that, in the German antithesis of genuine *Bildung* and *Kultur* on the one hand and mere outward *Zivilisation* on the other, the internal, social antithesis should have receded and the national one become dominant, had not the development of the French bourgeoisie followed, in certain respects, exactly the opposite course from the German.

In France the bourgeois intelligentsia and the leading groups of the middle class were drawn relatively early into the circle of the court society. The German nobility's old means of distinction, the proof of ancestry—which later, in a bourgeois transformation, took on new life in German racial legislation—was certainly not entirely absent in the French tradition, but particularly after the establishment and consolidation of the "absolute monarchy", it no longer played a very decisive role as a barrier between the classes. The permeation of bourgeois circles by specifically aristocratic traditions (which in Germany, with the stricter separation of classes, had a deep effect only in certain spheres such as the military, being elsewhere very limited) had quite different proportions in France. Here, as early as the eighteenth century, there was no longer any considerable difference of manners between the leading bourgeois groups and the courtly aristocracy. And even if, with the stronger upsurge of the middle class from the mid-

eighteenth century onward—or, stated differently, with the enlargement of the court society through the increased assimilation of leading middle-class groups—behaviour and manners slowly changed, this happened without rupture as a direct continuation of the courtly-aristocratic tradition of the seventeenth century. Both the courtly bourgeoisie and the courtly aristocracy spoke the same language, read the same books and had, with particular gradations, the same manners. And when the social and economic disproportionalities burst the institutional framework of the *ancien régime*, when the bourgeoisie became the nation, much of what had originally been the specific and distinctive social character of the courtly aristocracy and then also of the courtly-bourgeois groups, became, in an ever-widening movement and doubtless with some modification, the national character. Stylistic conventions, the forms of social intercourse, affect-moulding, the high regard for courtesy, the importance of good speech and conversation, articulateness of language and much else—all this was first formed in France within court society, then slowly changed, in a continuous diffusion, from a social into a national character.

Here, too, Nietzsche saw the difference very clearly. "Wherever there was a court", he says in *Beyond Good and Evil* (Aphorism 101), "there was a law of right speaking, and therefore also a law of style for all who wrote. Courtly language, however, is the language of the courtier who has no special subject, and who even in conversation on scholarly matters prohibits all technical expressions because they smack of specialization; this is why, in countries with a courtly culture, the technical term and everything that betrays the specialist is a stylistic blemish. Now that all courts have become caricatures . . . one is surprised to find even Voltaire very particular on this point. The fact is that we are all emancipated from court taste, while Voltaire was its consummation!"

In Germany the aspiring middle-class intelligentsia of the eighteenth century, trained at universities specializing in particular subjects, developed its self-expression, its own specific culture, in the arts and sciences. In France the bourgeoisie was already developed and prosperous to an entirely different degree. The rising intelligentsia had, besides the aristocracy, a broad bourgeois public, too. The intelligentsia itself, like certain other middle-class formations, was assimilated by the courtly circle. And so it came about that the German middle classes, with their very gradual rise to nationhood, increasingly perceived as the national character of their neighbour those modes of behaviour which they had first observed predominantly at their own courts. And, having either judged this behaviour second-rate or rejected it as incompatible with their own affect structure, so they also disapproved of it to a greater or lesser degree in their neighbours.

2. It may seem paradoxical that in Germany, where the social walls between the middle class and the aristocracy were higher, social contacts fewer and differences in manners more considerable, the discrepancies and tensions between

the classes for a long time found no political expression; whereas in France, where the class barriers were lower and social contact between the classes incomparably more intimate, the political activity of the bourgeoisie developed earlier and the tension between the classes reached an early political resolution.

But the paradox is only apparent. The long denial of political functions to the French nobility by royal policy, the early involvement of bourgeois elements in government and administration, their access to even the highest governmental functions, their influence and advancement at the court—all this had two consequences: on the one hand, enduring close social contact between elements of differing social origin; on the other, the opportunity for bourgeois elements to engage in political activity when the social situation was ripe and, prior to this, a strongly political training, a tendency to think in political categories. In the German states, by and large, almost exactly the reverse was the case. The highest government posts were generally reserved for the nobility. At the least, unlike their French counterparts, the German nobility played a decisive role in higher state administration. Its strength as an autonomous class had never been so radically broken as had that of its counterpart in France. In contrast, the class strength of the bourgeoisie, in keeping with its economic power, was relatively low in Germany until well into the nineteenth century. The sharper social severance of German middle-class elements from the courtly aristocracy reflected their relative economic weakness and their exclusion from most key positions in the state.

3. The social structure of France made it possible for the moderate opposition, which had been slowly growing from about the mid-eighteenth century, to be represented with a certain success in the innermost court circles. Its representatives did not yet form a party. Other forms of political struggle fitted the institutional structure of the *ancien régime*. They formed a clique at the court without a definite organization, but were supported by people and groups within the broader court society and in the country at large. The variety of social interests found expression at court in the conflicts between such cliques, admittedly in a somewhat vague form and with a strong admixture of the most diverse personal interests; nevertheless, these conflicts were expressed and resolved.

The French concept of *civilisation*, exactly like the corresponding German concept of *Kultur*, was formed within this opposition movement in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its process of formation, its function and its meaning were as different from those of the German concept as were the circumstances and manners of the middle classes in the two countries.

It is not uninteresting to observe how similar was the French concept of *civilisation*, as first encountered in literature, to the concept to which many years later Kant opposed his concept of *Kultur*. The first literary evidence of the development of the verb *civiliser* into the concept *civilisation* is to be found,

according to present-day findings,[25] in the work of the elder Mirabeau in the 1760s.

"I marvel to see", he says, "how our learned views, false on all points, are wrong on what we take to be civilization. If they were asked what civilization is, most people would answer: softening of manners, urbanity, politeness, and a dissemination of knowledge such that propriety is established in place of laws of detail: all that only presents me with the mask of virtue and not its face, and civilization does nothing for society if it does not give it both the form and the substance of virtue."[26] This sounds very similar to what was also being said in Germany against courtly manners. Mirabeau, too, contrasted what most people, according to him, considered to be civilization (i.e., politeness and good manners) with the ideal in whose name everywhere in Europe the middle classes were aligning themselves against the courtly-aristocratic upper class, and through which they legitimized themselves—the ideal of virtue. He, too, exactly like Kant, linked the concept of civilization to the specific characteristics of the courtly aristocracy, with reason: for the *homme civilisé* was nothing other than a somewhat extended version of that human type which represented the true ideal of court society, the *honnête homme*.

Civilisé was, like *cultivé*, *poli*, or *policé*, one of the many terms, often used almost as synonyms, by which the courtly people wished to designate, in a broad or narrow sense, the specific quality of their own behaviour, and by which they contrasted the refinement of their own social manners, their "standard", to the manners of simpler and socially inferior people.

Concepts such as *politesse* or *civilité* had, before the concept *civilisation* was formed and established, practically the same function as the new concept: to express the self-image of the European upper class in relation to others whom its members considered simpler or more primitive, and at the same time to characterize the specific kind of behaviour through which this upper class felt itself different from all simpler and more primitive people. Mirabeau's statement makes it quite clear to what extent the concept of civilization was at first a direct continuation of other incarnations of courtly self-consciousness: "If they were asked what 'civilization' is, people would answer: softening of manners, politeness, and suchlike." And Mirabeau, like Rousseau, if more moderately, inverted the existing valuations. You and your civilization, he said, all that you are so proud of, believing that it raises you above the simple people, is of very little value: "In all the languages . . . of all ages, the depiction of the love of shepherds for their flocks and their dogs finds its way into our soul, deadened as it is by the pursuit of luxury and a false civilization."[27]

A person's attitude towards the "simple people"—above all, towards the "simple people" in their most extreme form, the "savage"—was everywhere in the second half of the eighteenth century a symbol of his or her position in the

internal, social debate. Rousseau launched the most radical attack on the dominant order of values of his time, and for this very reason his direct importance for the courtly/middle-class reform movement of the French intelligentsia was less than might be suggested by his resonance among the unpolitical yet intellectually more radical middle-class intelligentsia of Germany. But Rousseau, for all the radicalism of his social criticism, had not yet fashioned an inclusive, unified counterconcept against which to hurl the accumulated reproaches. Mirabeau created it, or was at least the first to use it in his writings; perhaps it had previously existed in conversation. From the *homme civilisé* he derived a general characteristic of society: *civilisation*. But his social criticism, like that of the other Physiocrats, was moderate. It remained entirely within the framework of the existing social system. It is, indeed, the criticism of reformers. While members of the German middle-class intelligentsia, at least in the mind, in the daydreams of their books, forged concepts diverging absolutely from the models of the upper class, and thus fought on politically neutral ground all the battles which they were unable to fight on the political and social plane because the existing institutions and power relationships denied them instruments and even targets; while they, in their books, opposed to the human characteristics of the upper class their own new ideals and behavioural models; the courtly-reformist intelligentsia in France remained for a long time within the framework of courtly tradition. These Frenchmen desired to improve, modify, adapt. Apart from a few outsiders like Rousseau, they did not oppose radically different ideals and models to the dominant order, but reformed ideals and models of that order. In the words "false civilization" the whole difference from the German movement was contained. The French writers implied that the false civilization ought to be replaced by a genuine one. They did not oppose to the *homme civilisé* a radically different human model, as did the German bourgeois intelligentsia with the term *gebildeter Mensch* (educated person) and with the idea of the "personality"; instead, they picked up courtly models in order to develop and transform them. They addressed themselves to a critical intelligentsia which, directly or indirectly, was itself writing and struggling within the extensive network of court society.

II

Sociogenesis of Physiocratism and the French Reform Movement

4. Let us recall the situation of France after the middle of the eighteenth century.

The principles by which France was governed and on which, in particular, taxation and customs legislation was based were broadly the same as at Colbert's time. But the internal relationships of power and interest, the social structure of France itself, had shifted in crucial ways. Strict protectionism, the shielding of national manufacturing and commercial activity against foreign competition, had actually contributed decisively to the development of French economic life, and so to furthering what mattered more than anything else to the king and his representatives—the taxable capacity of the country. The barriers in the grain trade, monopolies, the granary system and the customs walls between provinces had partly protected local interests but, above all, had from time to time preserved the district most important to the king's peace and perhaps to that of all France, Paris, from the extreme consequences of bad harvests and rising prices—starvation and revolt.

But in the meantime, the capital and the population of the country had increased. Compared to Colbert's time, the trade network had become denser and more extensive, industrial activity more vigorous, communications better, and the economic integration and interdependence of French territory closer. Sections of the bourgeoisie began to find the traditional taxation and customs systems, under whose protection they had grown up, irksome and absurd. Progressive country gentry and landowners like Mirabeau saw in the mercantilist restraints on the grain economy an impediment rather than an inducement to agricultural production; in this they profited not a little from the lessons of the freer English trading system. And most important of all, a section of the higher administrators themselves recognized the ill effects of the existing system; at their head was their most progressive type, the provincial intendants, the representatives of the single modern form of bureaucracy which the *ancien régime* had produced, the only administrative function which was not, like the others, purchasable and therefore hereditary. These progressive elements in the administration formed one of the most important bridges between the demand for reform that was making itself felt in the country and the court. Directly or indirectly they played, in the struggle of court cliques for key political positions (primarily the ministries), a not inconsiderable part.

That these struggles were not yet the more impersonal, political conflicts they later became, when the various interests would be represented by parties within a parliamentary framework, has already been pointed out. But the courtly groups which, for the most diverse reasons, competed for influence and posts at the court were, at the same time, social nuclei through which the interests of broader groups and classes could find expression at the controlling centre of the country. In this way reformist tendencies, too, were represented at court.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, the kings had long ceased to rule arbitrarily. Far more perceptibly than Louis XIV, for example, they were the

prisoners of social processes and dependent on court cliques and factions, some of which extended far into the country and deep into middle-class circles.

Physiocratism was one of the theoretical expressions of these interfactional struggles. It was by no means confined to economics, being a large-scale system of political and social reform. It contained, in a pointed, abstract and dogmatically hardened form, ideas which—expressed less theoretically, dogmatically and rigorously, i.e., as practical demands for reform—characterized the whole movement of which Turgot, who was for a time in charge of finance, was an exponent. If this tendency (which had neither a name nor a unified organization) is to be given a name, it might be called the reformist bureaucracy. But these reformist administrators doubtless also had sections of the intelligentsia and of the commercial bourgeoisie behind them.

Among those desiring and demanding reform, moreover, there were considerable differences of opinion concerning the kind of reform that was needed. Some were wholly in favour of a reform of the taxation system and the state machinery, yet were, for example, far more protectionist than the Physiocrats. Forbonnais was one of the leading representatives of this tendency, and it is to misunderstand him and like-minded people to include them, on account of their more strongly protectionist attitude, indiscriminately among the "mercantilists". The debate between Forbonnais and the Physiocrats was an early expression of a divergence within modern industrial society which was to lead to ever-recurring conflicts between the exponents of free trade and protectionism. Both sides were part of the middle-class reform movement.

On the other hand, it was by no means the case that the *whole* bourgeoisie desired reform while the aristocracy exclusively opposed it. There were a number of clearly definable middle-class groups which resisted to the utmost any serious attempt at reform, and whose existence was indeed bound up with the conservation of the *ancien régime* in its unreformed state. These groups included the majority of the higher administrators, the *noblesse de robe*, whose offices were family possessions in the same sense that a factory or business today is hereditary property. They also included the craft guilds and a good proportion of the financiers. And if reform failed in France, if the disproportions of society finally burst the institutional structure of the *ancien régime* violently asunder, the opposition of these middle-class groups to reform bore a large measure of responsibility.

This whole survey shows very clearly one thing which is important in this context: whereas the middle classes already played a political role in France at this time, in Germany they did not. In Germany the intellectual stratum was confined to the sphere of the mind and ideas; in France, along with all the other human questions, social, economic, administrative and political issues came within the range of interests of the courtly/middle-class intelligentsia. The German systems of thought, by contrast, were to a far greater extent purely

academic. Their social base was the university. The social base from which Physiocratism emerged was the court and court society, where intellectual effort had specific concrete aims, such as influencing the king or his mistress.

5. The basic ideas of Quesnay and the Physiocrats are well known. In his *Tableau économique* (1758), Quesnay depicted the economic life of society as a more or less autonomous process, a closed cycle of the production, circulation and reproduction of commodities. He spoke of the natural laws of a social life in harmony with reason. Basing his argument on this idea, Quesnay opposed arbitrary intervention by rulers into the economic cycle. He wished them to be aware of its laws in order to guide its processes, instead of issuing uninformed decrees at whim. He demanded freedom of trade, particularly the grain trade, because self-regulation, the free play of forces, creates in his view a more beneficial order for consumers and producers than the traditional regulations from above and the countless trade barriers between province and province, country and country.

But he fully conceded that the self-regulating processes ought to be understood, and guided, by a wise and enlightened bureaucracy. Here, above all, lay the difference between the way in which the French reformers and the English reformers reacted to the discovery of self-regulation in economic life. Quesnay and his fellows remained wholly within the framework of the existing monarchical system. He left the basic elements of the *ancien régime* and its institutional structure untouched. And this applied all the more to the sections of the administration and intelligentsia whose position was close to his, and who, in a less abstract, less extreme and more practically minded form, arrived at results similar to those of the central group of Physiocrats. Fundamentally, the position common to all of them was extremely simple: roughly, they held that it is not true that rulers are almighty and can regulate all human affairs as they think fit. Society and the economy have their own laws, which resist the irrational interference of rulers and force. Therefore an enlightened, rational administration must be created which governs in accordance with the "natural laws" of social processes, and thus in accordance with reason.

6. The term *civilisation* was, at the moment of its formation, a clear reflection of these reformist ideas. If in this term the idea of the *homme civilisé* led to a concept designating the manners and conditions of existing society as a whole, it was first and foremost an expression of insights derived from opposition, from social criticism. To this was added the realization that governments cannot issue decrees at will, but are automatically resisted by anonymous social forces if their ordinances are not guided by an exact knowledge of these forces and laws; the realization that even the most absolute government is helpless in the face of the dynamisms of social development, and that disaster and chaos, misery and distress, are unleashed by arbitrary, "unnatural", "irrational" government. As already stated, this realization found expression in the Physiocratic idea that

social events, like natural phenomena, form part of an ordered process. This same experience manifested itself in the transformation of the earlier *civilisé* into the noun *civilisation*, helping to give it a meaning that transcended individual usage.

The birth pangs of the industrial revolution, which could no longer be understood as the result of government direction, taught people, briefly and for the first time, to think of themselves and their social existence as a process. If we first pursue the use of the term *civilisation* in the work of Mirabeau, we see clearly how this discovery caused him to view the entire morality of his time in a new light. He came to regard this morality, this "civilization" too as a cyclical manifestation, and wanted rulers to perceive its laws in order to use them. That was the meaning of the term *civilisation* at this early stage of its use.

In his *Ami des hommes*, Mirabeau argues in one place that a superfluity of money reduces population, so that consumption by each individual is increased. He considers that this excess of money, should it grow too large, "banishes industry and the arts, so casting states into poverty and depopulation". And he continues: "From this we perceive how the cycle from barbarism to decadence through civilization and wealth might be reversed by an alert and skilful minister, and the machine wound up again before it has run down."[28] This sentence really sums up all that was to become characteristic, in very general terms, of the fundamental standpoint of the Physiocrats: the conception of economy, population, and finally manners as an interrelated whole, developing cyclically; and the reformist political tendency which intended this knowledge finally for the rulers, to enable them, from an understanding of these laws, to guide social processes in a more enlightened and rational way than hitherto.

In Mirabeau's dedication of his *Théorie de l'impôt* to the king in 1760, in which he recommended to the monarch the Physiocratic plan for tax reform, exactly the same idea was still present: "The example of all the empires that have preceded yours, and which have run the circle of civilization, would be detailed evidence of what I have just advanced."

The critical attitude of Mirabeau, the landed nobleman, towards wealth, luxury, and the whole of prevailing manners gave his ideas a special tinge. Genuine civilization, he thought, stands in a cycle between barbarism and a false, "decadent" civilization engendered by a superabundance of money. The task of enlightened government is to steer this automatism so that society can flourish on a middle course between barbarism and decadence. Here, the whole range of problems latent in "civilization" is already discernible at the moment of the concept's formation. Even at this stage it was connected to the idea of decadence or "decline", which has re-emerged again and again, in an open or veiled form, to the rhythm of cyclical crises. But we can also see quite clearly that this desire for reform remained wholly within the framework of the existing social system which was manipulated from above, and that it did not oppose to what it

criticized in present manners an absolutely new image or concept, but instead took its departure from the existing order, desiring to improve it: through skilful and enlightened measures by the government, "false civilization" shall again become a good and true civilization.

7. In this conception of civilization there may at first have been many individual shades of meaning. But it contained elements which corresponded to the general needs and experience of the reformist and progressive circles of Parisian society. And the concept became all the more widely used in these circles the more the reform movement was accelerated by growing commercialization and industrialization.

The last period of Louis XV's reign was a time of visible debility and disorder in the old system. The internal and external tensions grew. The signs of social transformation multiplied.

In 1773 tea chests were thrown into Boston harbour. In 1776 came the Declaration of Independence by England's American colony: the government, it proclaimed, is appointed to ensure the happiness of the people. Should it not succeed in this purpose, a majority of the people has the right to dismiss it.

The French middle-class circles sympathetic to reform observed what was happening across the sea with the utmost attention, and with a sympathy in which their reformist social tendencies mingled with growing national hostility towards England, even though their leading minds were thinking of anything but an overthrow of the monarchy.

At the same time, from 1774 onwards, there was a growing feeling that a confrontation with England was inevitable and that preparations must be made for war. In the same year, 1774, Louis XV died. Under the new king the struggle for the reform of the administrative and taxation systems was immediately renewed with intensified force in both the narrower and the wider court circles. As a result of these conflicts, Turgot was welcomed in the same year as *contrôleur général des finances* by all the reformist and progressive elements in the country.

"At last the belated hour of justice has come", wrote the Physiocrat Baudeau on Turgot's appointment. D'Alembert wrote on the same occasion: "If good does not prevail now, it is because good is impossible." And Voltaire regretted being at the gates of death at the moment when he could observe "virtue and reason in their place".[29]

In the same years, *civilisation* appeared for the first time as a widely used and more or less fixed concept. In the first edition of Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1770) the word does not occur once; in the second (1774) it was "used frequently and without any variation of meaning as an indispensable term that is obviously generally understood".[30]

Holbach's *Système de la nature* of 1770 did not yet contain the word *civilisation*. In his *Système sociale* of 1774, *civilisation* was used frequently. He says, for

example, "There is nothing that places more obstacles in the way of public happiness, of the progress of human reason, of the entire civilization of men than the continual wars into which thoughtless princes are drawn at every moment".[31] Or, in another place: "Human reason is not yet sufficiently exercised; *the civilization of peoples is not yet complete*; obstacles without number have hitherto opposed the progress of useful knowledge, the advance of which can alone contribute to perfecting our government, our laws, our education, our institutions, and our morals."[32]

The concept underlying this enlightened, socially critical reform movement was always the same: that the improvement of institutions, education and law will be brought about by the advance of knowledge. This did not mean *Wissenschaft* in the eighteenth-century German sense, for the speakers were not university people but independent writers, officials, intellectuals, courtly citizens of the most diverse kind united through the medium of "good society", the *salons*. Progress would be achieved, therefore, first by the enlightenment of kings and rulers in conformity with "reason" or "nature", which comes to the same thing, and then by placing in leading positions enlightened (i.e., reform-minded) men. A certain aspect of this whole progressive process of reform, came to be designated by a fixed concept: *civilisation*. What was visible in Mirabeau's individual version of the concept, which had not yet been polished by society, and what is characteristic of any reform movement was to be found here also: a half-affirmation and half-negation of the existing order. Society, from this point of view, had reached a particular stage on the road to civilization. But it was insufficient. Society could not stand still there. The process was continuing and ought to be pushed further: "the civilization of peoples is not yet complete".

Two ideas were fused in the concept of civilization. On the one hand, it constituted a general counterconcept to another stage of society, barbarism. This feeling had long pervaded court society. It had found its courtly-aristocratic expression in terms such as *politesse* or *civilité*.

But the masses were not yet civilized enough, said the men of the courtly/middle-class reform movement. Civilization is not only a state, it is a process which must be taken further. That was the new element expressed in the term *civilisation*. It absorbed much of what had always made court society believe itself to be, as compared with those living in a simpler, more uncivilized or more barbaric way, a higher kind of society: the idea of a level of morals and manners, including social tact, consideration for others and many related complexes. But in the hands of the rising middle class, in the mouth of the reform movement, the idea of what was needed to make a society civilized was extended. The civilizing of the state, the constitution and education, and therefore the liberation of broader sections of the population from all that was still barbaric or irrational in existing conditions, whether it were the legal penalties or the class restrictions on the bourgeoisie or the barriers impeding a freer development of

trade, this civilizing must follow the refinement of manners and the internal pacification of the country by the kings.

"The king succeeded", Voltaire once said of the age of Louis XIV, "in making of a hitherto turbulent nation a peaceful people dangerous only to its enemies. . . . Manners were softened."[53] It will be seen in more detail later how important this internal pacification was for the civilizing process. Condorcet, however, who was by comparison with Voltaire a reformist of the younger generation and already far more inclined to opposition, commented as follows on this reflection of Voltaire's: "Despite the barbarity of some of the laws, despite the faults of the administrative principles, the increase in duties, their burdensome form, the harshness of fiscal laws, despite the pernicious maxims which direct the government's legislation on commerce and manufacture, and finally despite the persecution of the Protestants, one may observe that the peoples within the realm lived in peace under the protection of law."

This enumeration, itself not entirely without affirmation of the existing order, gives a picture of the many things felt to be in need of reform. Whether or not the term *civilisation* was here used explicitly, it related to all this, to everything which was still "barbaric".

This discussion makes very clear the divergence from the course of development in Germany and, with it, from German concepts: it shows how members of the rising middle-class intelligentsia in France stood partly within the court circle, and so within the courtly-aristocratic tradition. They spoke the language of this circle and developed it further. Their behaviour and affects were, with certain modifications, modelled on the pattern of this tradition. Their concepts and ideas were by no means mere antitheses of those of the courtly aristocracy. Around courtly-aristocratic concepts such as the idea of "being civilized", they crystallized, in conformity with their social position within the court circle, further ideas from the area of their political and economic demands, ideas which, owing to the different social situation and range of experience of the German intelligentsia, were largely alien to it and at any rate far less relevant.

The French bourgeoisie—politically active, at least partly eager for reform, and even, for a short period, revolutionary—remained strongly bound to the courtly tradition in its behaviour and its affect-moulding even after the edifice of the old regime had been demolished. For through the close contact between aristocratic and middle-class circles, a great part of courtly manners had long before the revolution become middle-class manners. So it can be understood that the bourgeois revolution in France, though it destroyed the old political structure, did not disrupt the unity of traditional manners.

The German middle-class intelligentsia, politically entirely impotent but intellectually radical, forged a purely bourgeois tradition of its own, diverging widely from the courtly-aristocratic tradition and its models. The German national character which slowly emerged in the nineteenth century was not, to be

sure, entirely lacking in aristocratic elements assimilated by the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, for large areas of the German cultural tradition and German behaviour, the specifically middle-class characteristics were predominant, particularly as the sharper social division between bourgeois and aristocratic circles, and with it a relative heterogeneity of German manners, survived long after the eighteenth century.

The French concept of *civilisation* reflects the specific social fortunes of the French bourgeoisie to exactly the same degree that the concept of *Kultur* reflects the German. The concept of *civilisation* was first, like *Kultur*, an instrument of middle-class circles—above all, the middle-class intelligentsia—in the internal social conflict. With the rise of the bourgeoisie, it too came to epitomize the nation, to express the national self-image. In the Revolution itself *civilisation* (which, of course, referred essentially to a gradual process, an evolution, and had not yet discarded its original meaning as a watchword of reform) did not play any considerable part among the revolutionary slogans. As the Revolution grew more moderate, shortly before the turn of the century, it started on its journey as a rallying cry throughout the world. Even as early as this, it had a level of meaning justifying French aspirations to national expansion and colonization. In 1798, as Napoleon set off for Egypt, he shouted to his troops: "Soldiers, you are undertaking a conquest with incalculable consequences for civilization." Unlike the situation when the concept was formed, from now on nations came to consider the *process* of civilization as completed within their own societies; they came to see themselves as bearers of an existing or finished civilization to others, as standard-bearers of expanding civilization. Of the whole preceding process of civilization nothing remained in their consciousness except a vague residue. Its outcome was taken simply as an expression of their own higher gifts; the fact that, and the question of how, in the course of many centuries, civilized behaviour has been attained is of no interest. And the consciousness of their own superiority, the consciousness of this "civilization", from now on serves at least those nations which have become colonial conquerors, and therefore a kind of upper class to large sections of the non-European world, as a justification of their rule, to the same degree that earlier the ancestors of the concept of civilization, *politesse* and *civilité*, had served the courtly-aristocratic upper class as a justification of theirs.

Indeed, an essential phase of the civilizing process was concluded at exactly the time when the *consciousness* of civilization, the consciousness of the superiority of their own behaviour and its embodiments in science, technology or art began to spread over whole nations of the West.

This earlier phase of the civilizing process, the phase in which the consciousness of the process scarcely existed and the concept of civilization did not exist at all, will be discussed in Part Two.

PART TWO

Civilization as a Specific Transformation of Human Behaviour

I

The History of the Concept of *Civilité*

1. The decisive antithesis expressing the self-image of the West during the Middle Ages was that between Christianity and paganism or, more exactly, between devout, Roman-Latin Christianity, on the one hand, and paganism and heresy, including Greek and Eastern Christianity, on the other.[1]

In the name of the Cross, and later in that of civilization, Western society waged, during the Middle Ages, its wars of colonization and expansion. And for all its secularization, the watchword "civilization" always retained an echo of Latin Christendom and the knightly-feudal crusade. The memory that chivalry and the Roman-Latin faith bear witness to a particular stage of Western society, a stage which all the major Western peoples have passed through, has certainly not disappeared.

The concept of *civilité* acquired its meaning for Western society at a time when knightly society and the unity of the Catholic church were disintegrating. It was the incarnation of a society which, as a specific stage in the formation of Western manners or "civilization", was no less important than the feudal society before it. The concept of *civilité*, too, was an expression and a symbol of a social formation embracing the most diverse nationalities, in which, as in the Church, a common language was spoken, first Italian and then increasingly French. These languages took over the function earlier performed by Latin. They manifested the unity of Europe, and at the same time the new social formation which formed its backbone, court society. The situation, the self-image, and the characteristics of this society found expression in the concept of *civilité*.

2. The concept of *civilité* received the specific stamp and function under discussion here in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Its individual starting-point can be exactly determined. It owes the specific meaning which became socially accepted to a short treatise by Erasmus of Rotterdam, *De civilitate morum puerilium* (On civility in boys), which appeared in 1530. This work clearly treated a theme that was ripe for discussion. It immediately achieved an enormous circulation, going through edition after edition. Even within Erasmus's lifetime—that is, in the first six years after its publication—it was reprinted more than thirty times.[2] In all, more than 130 editions may be counted, 13 of them as late as the eighteenth century. The multitude of translations, imitations and sequels is almost without limit. Two years after the publication of the treatise the first English translation appeared. In 1534 it was published in catechism form, and at this time it was already being introduced as a schoolbook for the education of boys. German and Czech translations followed. In 1537, 1559, 1569 and 1613 it appeared in French, newly translated each time.

As early as the sixteenth century a particular French typeface was given the name *civilité*, after a French work by Mathurin Cordier which combined doctrines from Erasmus's treatise with those of another humanist, Johannes Sulpicius. And a whole genre of books, directly or indirectly influenced by Erasmus's treatise, appeared under the title *Civilité* or *Civilité puérile*; these were printed up to the end of the eighteenth century in this *civilité* type.[5]

3. Here, as so often in the history of words, and as was to happen later in the development of the concept of *civilité* into *civilisation*, an individual was the instigator. By his treatise, Erasmus gave new sharpness and impetus to the long-established and commonplace word *civilitas*. Wittingly or not, he obviously expressed in it something that met a social need of the time. The concept of *civilitas* was henceforth fixed in the consciousness of people with the special sense it received from his treatise. And corresponding words were developed in the various popular languages: the French *civilité*, the English "civility", the Italian *civiltà*, and the German *Zivilität*, which, admittedly, was never so widely adopted as the corresponding words in the other great cultures.

The more or less sudden emergence of words within languages nearly always points to changes in the lives of people themselves, particularly when the new concepts are destined to become as central and long-lived as these.

Erasmus himself may not have attributed any particular importance to his short treatise *De civilitate morum puerilium* within his total *oeuvre*. He says in the introduction that the art of forming young people involves various disciplines, but that the *civilitas morum* is only one of them, and he does not deny that it is *crassissima philosophiae pars* (the grossest part of philosophy). This treatise has its special importance less as an individual phenomenon or work than as a symptom of change, an embodiment of social processes. Above all, it is the resonance, the elevation of the title word to a central expression of the self-interpretation of European society, which draws our attention to this treatise.

4. What is the treatise about? Its theme must explain to us for what purpose and in what sense the new concept was needed. It must contain indications of the social changes and processes which made the word fashionable.

Erasmus's book is about something very simple: the behaviour of people in society—above all, but not solely, "outward bodily propriety". It is dedicated to a noble boy, a prince's son, and written for the instruction of boys. It contains simple thoughts delivered with great seriousness, yet at the same time with much mockery and irony, in clear, polished language and with enviable precision. It can be said that none of its successors ever equalled this treatise in force, clarity and personal character. Looking more closely, one perceives beyond it a world and a pattern of life which in many respects are close to our own, yet in others still quite remote; the treatise points to attitudes that we have lost, that some among us would perhaps call "barbaric" or "uncivilized". It speaks of many

things that have in the meantime become unspeakable, and of many others that are now taken for granted.[4]

Erasmus speaks, for example, of the way people look. Though his comments are meant as instruction, they also bear witness to the direct and lively observation of people of which he was capable. "Sint oculi placidi, verecundi, compositi", he says, "non torvi, quod est truculentiae . . . non vagi ac volubiles, quod est insaniae, non limi quod est suspiciosorum et insidias molentium." This can only with difficulty be translated without an appreciable alteration of tone: a wide-eyed look is a sign of stupidity, staring a sign of inertia; the looks of those prone to anger are too sharp; too lively and eloquent those of the immodest; if your look shows a calm mind and a respectful amiability, that is best. Not by chance do the ancients say: the seat of the soul is in the eyes. "Animi sedem esse in oculis."

Bodily carriage, gestures, dress, facial expressions—this "outward" behaviour with which the treatise concerns itself is the expression of the inner, the whole person. Erasmus knows this and on occasion states it explicitly: "Although this outward bodily propriety proceeds from a well-composed mind, nevertheless we sometimes find that, for want of instruction, such grace is lacking in excellent and learned men."

There should be no snot on the nostrils, he says somewhat later. A peasant wipes his nose on his cap and coat, a sausage maker on his arm and elbow. It does not show much more propriety to use one's hand and then wipe it on one's clothing. It is more decent to take up the snot in a cloth, preferably while turning away. If when blowing the nose with two fingers somethings falls to the ground, it must be immediately trodden away with the foot. The same applies to spittle.

With the same infinite care and matter-of-factness with which these things are said—the mere mention of which shocks the "civilized" person of a later stage with a different affective moulding—we are told how one ought to sit or greet. Gestures are described that have become strange to us, e.g., standing on one leg. And we might reflect that many of the bizarre movements of walkers and dancers that we see in medieval paintings or statues do not only represent the "manner" of the painter or sculptor but also preserve actual gestures and movements that have grown strange to us, embodiments of a different mental and emotional structure.

The more one immerses oneself in the little treatise, the clearer becomes this picture of a society with modes of behaviour in some respects related to ours, and in many ways remote. We see people seated at table: "A dextris sit poculum, et cultellus escarius rite purgatus, ad laevam panis", says Erasmus. The goblet and the well-cleaned knife on the right, on the left the bread. That is how the table is laid. Most people carry a knife, hence the precept to keep it clean. Forks scarcely exist, or at most for taking meat from the dish. Knives and spoons are very often used communally. There is not always a special implement for

everyone: if you are offered something liquid, says Erasmus, taste it and return the spoon after you have wiped it.

When dishes of meat are brought in, usually everyone cuts himself a piece, takes it in his hand, and puts it on his plate if there are plates, otherwise on a thick slice of bread. The expression *quadra* used by Erasmus can clearly mean either a metal plate or a slice of bread.

"Quidam ubi vix bene considerint mox manus in epulas conjiciunt." Some put their hands into the dishes when they are scarcely seated, says Erasmus. Wolves or gluttons do that. Do not be the first to take from a dish that is brought in. Leave dipping your fingers into the broth to the peasants. Do not poke around in the dish but take the first piece that presents itself. And just as it shows a want of forbearance to search the whole dish with one's hand—"in omnes patinae plagas manum mittere"—neither is it very polite to turn the dish round so that a better piece comes to you. What you cannot take with your hands, take on your *quadra*. If someone passes you a piece of cake or pastry with a spoon, either take it with your *quadra* or take the spoon offered to you, put the food on the *quadra* and return the spoon.

As has been mentioned, plates too are uncommon. Paintings of table scenes from this or earlier times always offer the same spectacle, unfamiliar to us, that is indicated by Erasmus's treatise. The table is sometimes covered with rich cloths, sometimes not, but always there is little on it: drinking vessels, salt-cellar, knives, spoons, that is all. Sometimes we see the slices of bread, the *quadrae*, that in French are called *tranchoir* or *tailloir*. Everyone, from the king and queen to the peasant and his wife, eats with the hands. In the upper class there are more refined forms of this. One ought to wash one's hands before a meal, says Erasmus. But there is as yet no soap for this purpose. Usually the guests hold out their hands and a page pours water over them. The water is sometimes slightly scented with chamomile or rosemary.[5] In good society one does not put both hands into the dish. It is most refined to use only three fingers. This is one of the marks of distinction between the upper and lower classes.

The fingers become greasy. "Digitos unctos vel ore praelingere vel ad tunicam extergere . . . incivile est", says Erasmus. It is not polite to lick them or wipe them on one's coat. Often you offer others your glass, or all drink from a communal tankard. Erasmus admonishes: "Wipe your mouth beforehand." You may want to offer someone you like some of the meat you are eating. "Refrain from that", says Erasmus, "it is not very decorous to offer something half-eaten to another." And he says further: "To dip bread you have bitten into the sauce is to behave like a peasant, and it shows little elegance to remove chewed food from the mouth and put it back on the *quadra*. If you cannot swallow a piece of food, turn round discreetly and throw it somewhere."

Then he says again: "It is good if conversation interrupts the meal from time to time. Some people eat and drink without stopping, not because they are

hungry or thirsty, but because they can control their movements in no other way. They have to scratch their heads, poke their teeth, gesticulate with their hands, or play with a knife, or they can't help coughing, snorting, and spitting. All this really comes from a rustic embarrassment and looks like a form of madness."

But it is also necessary, and possible, for Erasmus to say: Do not expose without necessity "the parts to which Nature has attached modesty". Some prescribe, he says, that boys should "retain the wind by compressing the belly". But you can contract an illness that way. And in another place: "Reprimere sonitum, quem natura fert, ineptorum est, qui plus tribuunt civilitati, quam saluti" (Fools who value civility more than health repress natural sounds). Do not be afraid of vomiting if you must; "for it is not vomiting but holding the vomit in your throat that is foul".

5. With great care Erasmus marks out in his treatise the whole range of human conduct, the chief situations of social and convivial life. He speaks with the same matter-of-factness of the most elementary as of the subtlest questions of human intercourse. In the first chapter he treats "the seemly and unseemly condition of the whole body", in the second "bodily culture", in the third "manners at holy places", in the fourth banquets, in the fifth meetings, in the sixth amusement and in the seventh the bedchamber. This is the range of questions in the discussion of which Erasmus gave new impetus to the concept of *civilitas*.

Our consciousness is not always able to recall this other stage of our own history without hesitation. The unconcerned frankness with which Erasmus and his time could discuss all areas of human conduct is lost to us. Much of what he says oversteps our threshold of repugnance.

But precisely this is one of the problems to be considered here. In tracing the transformation of the concepts by which different societies have tried to express themselves, in following back the concept of civilization to its ancestor *civilité*, one finds oneself suddenly on the track of the civilizing process itself, of the actual changes in behaviour that took place in the West. That it is embarrassing for us to speak or even hear of much that Erasmus discusses is one of the symptoms of this civilizing process. The greater or lesser discomfort we feel towards people who discuss or mention their bodily functions more openly, who conceal and restrain these functions less than we do, is one of the dominant feelings expressed in the judgement "barbaric" or "uncivilized". Such, then, is the nature of "barbarism and its discontents" or, in more precise and less evaluative terms, the discontent with the different structure of affects, the different standard of repugnance which is still to be found today in many societies which we term "uncivilized", the standard of repugnance which preceded our own and is its precondition. The question arises as to how and why Western society actually moved from one standard to the other, how it became "civilized". In considering this process of civilization, we cannot avoid arousing feelings of discomfort and embarrassment. It is valuable to be aware of them. It is necessary, at least while considering this

process, to attempt to suspend all the feelings of embarrassment and superiority, all the value judgements and criticisms associated with the concepts "civilization" or "uncivilized". Our kind of behaviour has grown out of that which we call uncivilized. But these concepts grasp the actual change too statically and coarsely. In reality, our terms "civilized" and "uncivilized" do not constitute an antithesis of the kind that exists between "good" and "bad", but represent stages in a development which, moreover, is still continuing. It might well happen that our stage of civilization, our behaviour, will arouse in our descendants feelings of embarrassment similar to those we sometimes feel concerning the behaviour of our ancestors. Social behaviour and the expression of emotions passed from a form and a standard which was not a beginning, which could not in any absolute and undifferentiated sense be designated "uncivilized", to our own, which we denote by the word "civilized". And to understand the latter we must go back in time to that from which it emerged. The "civilization" which we are accustomed to regard as a possession that comes to us apparently ready-made, without our asking how we actually came to possess it, is a process or part of a process in which we are ourselves involved. Every particular characteristic that we attribute to it—machinery, scientific discovery, forms of the state or whatever else—bears witness to a particular structure of human relations, to a particular social structure, and to the corresponding forms of behaviour. The question remains whether the change in behaviour, in the social process of the "civilization" of people, can be understood, at least in isolated phases and in its elementary features, with any degree of precision.

II

On Medieval Manners

1. In Erasmus of Rotterdam's *De civilitate morum puerilium* a particular kind of social behaviour is discernible. Even here, the simple antithesis of "civilized" and "uncivilized" hardly applies.

What came before Erasmus? Was he the first to concern himself with such matters?

By no means. Similar questions occupied the people of the Middle Ages, of Greco-Roman antiquity, and doubtless also of the related, preceding "civilizations".

This process has no beginning, and here we cannot trace it back indefinitely. Wherever we start, there is movement, something that went before. Limits must necessarily be set to a retrospective inquiry, preferably corresponding to the phases of the process itself. Here the medieval standard must suffice as a starting-point, without itself being closely examined, so that the movement, the curve of development joining it to the modern age may be pursued.

The Middle Ages have left us an abundance of information on what was considered socially acceptable behaviour at the time. Here, too, precepts on conduct while eating had a special importance. Eating and drinking then occupied a far more central position in social life than today, when they provide—frequently, not always—rather the framework and introduction for conversation and conviviality.

Learned ecclesiastics sometimes set down, in Latin, precepts for behaviour that testify to the standard of their society. Hugh of St Victor (d. 1141), in his *De institutione novitiarum*, is concerned with these questions among others. The baptized Spanish Jew Petrus Alphonsi deals with them in his *Disciplina clericalis* of the early twelfth century; Johannes von Garland devotes to manners, and particularly to table manners, a number of the 662 Latin verses bearing the title *Morale scolarium* of 1241.

Besides these precepts on behaviour from the Latin-speaking clerical society, there are, from about the thirteenth century on, corresponding documents in the various lay languages—above all, at first, from the courts of the warrior nobility.

The earliest records of the manners prevalent in the secular upper class are doubtless those from Provence and neighbouring, culturally related Italy. The earliest German work on *courtoisie* is also by an Italian, Thomasin von Zirklaria, and is called *The Italian Guest* (*Der wälsche Gast*, put into modern German by Rückert). Another "courtoisie-text" by Thomasin, in Italian, transmits to us in its German title an early form of the concept of "courtesy" (*Höflichkeit*). He refers to this book, which has been lost, as a "buoch von der hüfscheit".

Originating from the same knightly-courtly circle are the fifty *Courtesies* by Bonvicino da Riva and the *Hofzucht* (Courtly manners) attributed to Tannhäuser. Such precepts are also occasionally found in the great epic poems of knightly society, e.g., the *Roman de la rose*[6] of the fourteenth century. John Russell's *Book of Nurture*, written in English verse probably in the fifteenth century, already gives a complete compendium of behaviour for the young nobleman in the service of a great lord, as does more briefly *The Babees Book*.[7]

In addition there is, primarily in fourteenth- or fifteenth-century versions but probably, in part, older in substance, a whole series of poems designed as mnemonics to inculcate table manners, *Tischzuchten* of varying length and in the most diverse languages. Learning by heart as a means of educating or conditioning played a far greater part in medieval society, where books were comparatively rare and expensive, than it does today, and these rhymed precepts were one of the means used to try to impress on people's memories what they should and should not do in society, above all at table.

2. These *Tischzuchten*, or table disciplines, like medieval writings on manners of known authorship, are not individual products in the modern sense, records of the personal ideas of particular people within an extensively individualized society. What has come down to us in writing are fragments of a great oral

tradition, reflections of what actually was customary in that society; these fragments are significant precisely because they transmit not the great or the extraordinary but the typical aspects of society. Even poems handed down under a specific name, like Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht* or John Russell's *Book of Nurture*, are nothing other than individual versions of one of the many strands of tradition corresponding to the structure of this society. Those who wrote them down were not the legislators or creators of these precepts but collectors, arrangers of the commands and taboos customary in their society; for this reason, whether or not there is a literary connection, similar precepts recur in almost all these writings. They are reflections of the same customs, testimonies to a particular standard of behaviour and emotions in the life of society itself.

It is perhaps possible on closer examination to discover certain differences of customs between individual national traditions, and variations in the social standards. Perhaps the material may also reveal certain changes within the same tradition. It appears, for example, that the tenor and perhaps also the customs of society underwent certain changes in the fourteenth or fifteenth century with the rise of guild and burgher elements, much as more recently behavioural models originating in the court aristocracy were adopted in bourgeois circles.

A closer study of these modifications within medieval behaviour remains to be carried out. It must suffice here to note them, bearing in mind that this medieval standard was not without inner movement and certainly was not a beginning or "bottom rung" of the process of civilization; nor does it represent, as has sometimes been asserted, the "stage of barbarism" or that of "primitiveness".

It was a different standard from our own—whether better or worse is not here at issue. And if, in our *recherche du temps perdu*, we have been led back step by step from the eighteenth to the sixteenth and from the sixteenth to the thirteenth and twelfth centuries, this does not imply that we are, as already stated, in anticipation of finding the "beginning" of the process of civilization. It is a sufficient task for present purposes, to take the short journey from the medieval to the early modern stage in an attempt to understand what actually happened to human beings in this transition.

3. The standard of "good behaviour" in the Middle Ages was, like all later standards, represented by a quite definite concept. Through it the secular upper class of the Middle Ages, or at least some of its leading groups, gave expression to their self-image, to what, in their own estimation, made them exceptional. The concept epitomizing aristocratic self-consciousness and socially acceptable behaviour appeared in French as *courtoisie*, in English as "courtesy", in Italian as *cortezia*, along with other related terms, often in divergent forms. In German it was, likewise in different versions, *hövescheit* or *hübescheit* and also *zuht*. All these concepts referred quite directly (and far more overtly than later ones with the same function) to a particular place in society. They say: That is how people behave at court. By these terms certain leading groups in the secular upper

stratum, which does not mean the knightly class as a whole, but primarily the courtly circles around the great feudal lords, designated what distinguished them in their own eyes, namely the specific code of behaviour that first formed at the great feudal courts, then spread to rather broader strata; this process of differentiation may, however, be disregarded here. Measured against later periods, the great uniformity in the good and bad manners referred to—what is called here a particular "standard"—is especially impressive.

What was this standard like? What emerges as typical behaviour, as the pervasive character of its precepts?

Something, in the first place, that in comparison to later times might be called its simplicity, its *naïveté*. There are, as in all societies where the emotions are expressed more violently and directly, fewer psychological nuances and complexities in the general stock of ideas. There are friend and foe, desire and aversion, good and bad people.

> You should follow honourable men and vent your wrath on the wicked.

We read this in a German translation of the *Disticha Catonis*,[8] the code of behaviour encountered throughout the Middle Ages under the name of Cato. Or in another place:

> When your companions anger you, my son, see that you are not so hot-tempered that you regret it afterwards.[9]

In eating, too, everything is simpler, impulses and inclinations are less restrained:

> A man of refinement should not slurp from the same spoon with somebody else; this is the way to behave for people at court who are often confronted with unrefined conduct.

This is from Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht*.[10] *Hübsche Leute* (fine people) were the nobles, the courtly people. The precepts of the *Hofzucht* were meant expressly for the upper class, the knights who lived at court. Noble, courteous behaviour was constantly contrasted to "coarse manners", the conduct of peasants.

> Some people bite a slice and then dunk it in the dish in a coarse way; refined people reject such bad manners.[11]

If you have taken a bite from the bread, do not dip it in the common dish again. Peasants may do that, not "fine people".

> A number of people gnaw a bone and then put it back in the dish—this is a serious offence.[12]

Do not throw gnawed bones back into the communal dish. From other accounts we know that it was customary to drop them on the floor. Another precept reads:

> A man who clears his throat when he eats and one who blows his nose in the tablecloth are both ill-bred, I assure you.[13]

Here is another:

> If a man wipes his nose on his hand at table because he knows no better, then he is a fool, believe me.[14]

To use the hand to wipe one's nose was a matter of course. Handkerchiefs did not yet exist. But at table a certain care should be exercised; and one should on no account blow one's nose into the tablecloth. Avoid lip-smacking and snorting, eaters are further instructed:

> If a man snorts like a seal when he eats, as some people do, and smacks his chops like a Bavarian yokel, he has given up all good breeding.[15]

If you have to scratch yourself, do not do so with your bare hand but use your coat:

> Do not scrape your throat with your bare hand while eating; but if you have to, do it politely with your coat.[16]

Everyone used his hands to take food from the common dish. For this reason one was not to touch one's ears, nose, or eyes:

> It is not decent to poke your fingers into your ears or eyes, as some people do, or to pick your nose while eating. These three habits are bad.[17]

Hands must be washed before meals:

> I hear that some eat unwashed (if it is true, it is a bad sign). May their fingers be palsied![18]

And in *Ein spruch der ze tische kêrt* (A word to those at table)[19], another *Tischzucht* which Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht* has many affinities with and echoes of, it is demanded that one eat with only one hand, and if one is eating from the same plate or slice of bread as another, as often happened, with the outside hand:

> You should always eat with the outside hand; if your companion sits on your right, eat with your left hand. Refrain from eating with both hands.[20]

If you have no towel, we read in the same work, do not wipe your hands on your coat but let the air dry them.[21] Or:

> Take care that, whatever your need, you do not flush with embarrassment.[22]

Nor is it good manners to loosen one's belt at table.[23]

All this was said to adults, not only to children. From the standpoint of our feelings today, these are very elementary precepts to be given to upper-class people, more elementary in many respects than what, at the present stage of behaviour, is generally accepted as the norm in rural-peasant strata. And the same standard emerges with certain variations from the *courtois* writings of other linguistic areas.

4. In the case of one of these different strands of tradition, which leads from certain Latin forms primarily to French, but perhaps also to Italian and to a Provençal code of table manners, a compilation has been made of the rules recurring in most or all of the variants.[24] They are by and large the same as in the German *Tischzuchten*. First there is the instruction to say grace, which is also found in Tannhäuser. Again and again we find the injunctions to take one's allotted place and not to touch one's nose and ears at table. Do not put your elbow on the table, they often say. Show a cheerful countenance. Do not talk too much. There are very frequent reminders not to scratch oneself or fall greedily on the food. Nor should one put a piece that one has had in one's mouth back into the communal dish; this, too, is often repeated. Not less frequent is the instruction to wash one's hands before eating, or not to dip food into the salt-cellar. Then it is repeated over and over again: do not clean your teeth with your knife. Do not spit on or over the table. Do not ask for more from a dish that has already been taken away. Do not let yourself go at table is a frequent command. Wipe your lips before you drink. Say nothing disparaging about the meal nor anything that might irritate others. If you have dipped bread into the wine, drink it up or pour the rest away. Do not clean your teeth with the tablecloth. Do not offer others the remainder of your soup or the bread you have already bitten into. Do not blow your nose too noisily. Do not fall asleep at table. And so on.

Indications of the same code of good and bad manners are also found in other collections of related mnemonic verses on etiquette, in traditions not directly related to the French one just mentioned. All bear witness to a certain standard of relationships between people, to the structure of medieval society and of the medieval psyche. The similarities between these collections are sociogenetic and psychogenetic; there may but need not be a literary relationship between all these French, English, Italian, German and Latin precepts. The differences between them are less significant than the common features, which correspond to the unity of actual behaviour in the medieval upper class, measured against the modern period.

For example, the *Courtesies* of Bonvicino da Riva, one of the most personal and—in keeping with Italian development—most "advanced" of table guides, contains, apart from the precepts mentioned from the French collection, the instructions to turn round when coughing and sneezing, and not to lick one's fingers. One should, he says, refrain from searching out the best pieces in the

dish, and cut the bread decently. One should not touch the rim of the communal glass with one's fingers, and one should hold the glass with both hands. But here, too, the tenor of *courtoisie*, the standard, the customs are by and large the same. And it is not uninteresting that when Bonvicino da Riva's *Courtesies* were revised three centuries after him, of all the rules given by Da Riva only two not very important ones were altered: the editor advises not to touch the edge of the communal glass and to hold it with both hands, and if several are drinking from the same glass, one should refrain altogether from dipping bread into it (Da Riva only required that the wine thus used should be tipped away or drunk).[25]

A similar picture could be drawn from the German tradition. German *Tischzuchten*, of which we have copies from the fifteenth century, are perhaps somewhat coarser in tone than the *Italian Guest* of Thomasin von Zirklaria or Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht* from the thirteenth century. But the standard of good and bad manners seems scarcely to have altered to any considerable extent. It has been pointed out that in one of the later codes which has much in common with the earlier ones already mentioned, the new injunction appears that one should spit not on the table but only under it or against the wall. And this has been interpreted as a symptom of a coarsening of manners. But it is more than questionable whether things were done very differently in the preceding centuries, particularly as similar precepts from earlier periods are transmitted by the French tradition, for example. And what is to be derived from literature in the broadest sense is confirmed by paintings. Here, too, more detailed studies are needed; but compared to the later age, pictures of people at table show, until well into the fifteenth century, very sparse table utensils, even if, in some details, certain changes are undoubtedly present. In the houses of the more wealthy, the platters are usually taken from the sideboard, frequently in no particular order. Everyone takes—or sends for—what he fancies at the moment. People help themselves from communal dishes. Solids (above all, meat) are taken by hand, liquids with ladles or spoons. But soups and sauces are still very frequently drunk. Plates and dishes are lifted to the mouth. For a long period, too, there are no special implements for different foods. The same knife or spoon is used. The same glasses are drunk from. Frequently two diners eat from the same board.

This was, if it may so be called, the standard eating technique during the Middle Ages. It corresponded to a very particular standard of human relationships and structure of feelings. Within this standard there was, as has been said, an abundance of modifications and nuances. If people of different rank were eating at the same time, the person of higher rank was given precedence when washing hands, for example, or when taking from the dish. The forms of utensils varied considerably in the course of centuries. There were fashions, but also a very definite trend that persisted through the fluctuations of fashion. The secular upper class, for example, indulged in extraordinary luxury at table. It was not a poverty of utensils that maintained the standard, it was quite simply that

nothing else was needed. To eat in this fashion was taken for granted. It suited these people. But it also suited them to make visible their wealth and rank by the opulence of their utensils and table decoration. At the rich tables of the thirteenth century the spoons were of gold, crystal, coral, ophite. It was occasionally mentioned that during Lent knives with ebony handles are used, at Easter knives with ivory handles, and inlaid knives at Whitsun. The soup-spoons were round and rather flat to begin with, so that one was forced when using them to open one's mouth wide. From the fourteenth century onwards, soup-spoons took on an oval form.

At the end of the Middle Ages the fork appeared as an instrument for taking food from the common dish. A whole dozen forks are to be found among the valuables of Charles V. The inventory of Charles of Savoy, which is very rich in opulent table utensils, counts only a single fork.[26]

5. It is sometimes said, "How far we have progressed beyond this standard", although it is not usually quite clear who is the "we" with whom the speaker identifies on such occasions, as if he or she deserved part of the credit.

The opposite judgement is also possible: "What has really changed? A few customs, no more." And some observers seem inclined to judge these customs in much the same way as one would today judge children: "If a man of sense had come and told these people that their practices were unappetizing and unhygienic, if they had been taught to eat with knives and forks, these bad manners would rapidly have disappeared."

But forms of conduct while eating cannot be isolated. They are a segment—a very characteristic one—of the totality of socially instilled forms of conduct. Their standard corresponds to a quite definite social structure. It remains to be ascertained what this structure is. The forms of behaviour of medieval people were no less tightly bound to their total way of life, to the whole structure of their existence, than our own behaviour and social code are bound to ours.

At times, some minor statement shows how firmly rooted these customs were, and makes it apparent that they must be understood not merely as something "negative", as a "lack of civilization" or of "knowledge" (as it is easy to suppose from our standpoint), but as something that fitted the needs of these people and that seemed meaningful and necessary to them in exactly this form.

In the eleventh century a Venetian doge married a Greek princess. In her Byzantine circle the fork was clearly in use. At any rate, we hear that she lifted food to her mouth "by means of little golden forks with two prongs".[27]

This gave rise in Venice to a dreadful scandal: "This novelty was regarded as so excessive a sign of refinement that the dogaressa was severely rebuked by the ecclesiastics who called down divine wrath upon her. Shortly afterward she was afflicted by a repulsive illness and St Bonaventure did not hesitate to declare that this was a punishment of God."

Five more centuries were to pass before the structure of human relations had

so changed that the use of this instrument met a more general need. From the sixteenth century on, at least among the upper classes, the fork came into use as an eating instrument, arriving by way of Italy first in France and then in England and Germany, after having served for a time only for taking solid foods from the dish. Henri III brought it to France, probably from Venice. His courtiers were not a little derided for this "affected" manner of eating, and at first they were not very adept in the use of the instrument: at least it was said that half the food fell off the fork as it travelled from plate to mouth. As late as the seventeenth century the fork was still essentially a luxury article of the upper class, usually made of gold or silver. What we take entirely for granted, because we have been adapted and conditioned to this social standard from earliest childhood, had first to be slowly and laboriously acquired and developed by society as a whole. This applies to such a small and seemingly insignificant thing as a fork no less than to forms of behaviour that appear to us larger and more important.[28]

However, the attitude that has just been described towards the "innovation" of the fork shows one thing with special clarity. People who ate together in the way customary in the Middle Ages, taking meat with their fingers from the same dish, wine from the same goblet, soup from the same pot or the same plate, with all the other peculiarities of which examples have been and will further be given—such people stood in a different relationship to one another than we do. And this involves not only the level of clear, rational consciousness; their emotional life also had a different structure and character. Their affects were conditioned to forms of relationship and conduct which, by today's standard of conditioning, are embarrassing or at least unattractive. What was lacking in this *courtois* world, or at least had not been developed to the same degree, was the invisible wall of affects which seems now to rise between one human body and another, repelling and separating, the wall which is often perceptible today at the mere approach of something that has been in contact with the mouth or hands of someone else, and which manifests itself as embarrassment at the mere sight of many bodily functions of others, and often at their mere mention, or as a feeling of shame when one's own functions are exposed to the gaze of others, and by no means only then.

III

The Problem of the Change in Behaviour during the Renaissance

1. Did the thresholds of embarrassment and shame advance at the time of Erasmus? Does his treatise contain indications that the frontiers of sensibility and the reserve which people expected of each other were increasing? There are good reasons for supposing so. The humanists' works on manners form a kind of bridge

between those of the Middle Ages and modern times. Erasmus's treatise, the high point in the succession of humanist writings on manners, also has this double face. In many respects it stands entirely within medieval tradition. A good part of the rules and precepts from the *courtois* writings recur in his treatise. But at the same time, it clearly contains the beginnings of something new. In it a concept was gradually developing which was to force the knightly-feudal concept of courtesy into the background. In the course of the sixteenth century the use of the concept of *courtoisie* slowly receded in the upper class, while *civilité* grew more common and finally gained the upper hand, at least in France, in the seventeenth century.

This is a sign of a behavioural change of considerable proportions. It did not take place, of course, in such a way that one ideal of good behaviour was suddenly opposed by another radically different from it. The *De civilitate morum puerilium* of Erasmus—to confine the discussion to this work for the time being—stood in many respects, as we have said, entirely within medieval tradition. Almost all the rules of *courtois* society reappeared in it. Meat was still eaten with the hand, even if Erasmus stressed that it should be picked up with three fingers, not the whole hand. The precept not to fall upon the meal like a glutton was also repeated, as were the direction to wash one's hands before dining and the strictures on spitting, blowing the nose, the use of the knife, and many others. It may be that Erasmus knew one or another of the rhymed *Tischzuchten* or the clerical writings in which such questions were treated. Many of these writings were no doubt in circulation; it is unlikely that they escaped Erasmus. More precisely demonstrable is his relation to the heritage of antiquity. In the case of this treatise, it was partly shown by the commentaries of his contemporaries. Its place in the rich humanist discussion of these problems of education and propriety remains to be examined in more detail.[29] But whatever the literary interconnections may be, of primary interest in this context are the sociogenetic ones. Erasmus certainly did not merely compile this treatise from other books; like anyone who reflects on such questions, he had a particular social code, a particular standard of manners directly before his eyes. This treatise on manners is a collection of observations from the life of his society. It is, as someone said later, "a little the work of everyone". And if nothing else, its success, its rapid dissemination, and its use as an educational manual for boys show how much it met a social need, and how it recorded the models of behaviour for which the time was ripe, which society—or, more exactly, the upper class first of all—demanded.

2. Society was "in transition". So, too, were works on manners. Even in the tone, the manner of seeing, we feel that despite all their attachment to the Middle Ages something new was on the way. "Simplicity" as we experience it, the simple opposition of "good" and "bad", "pious" and "wicked", had been lost. People saw things with more differentiation, i.e., with a stronger restraint of their emotions.

It is not so much, or at least not exclusively, the rules themselves or the manners to which they refer that distinguish a part of the humanistic writings—above all, the treatise of Erasmus—from the *courtois* codes. It is first of all their tone, their way of seeing. The same social rules which in the Middle Ages were passed impersonally from mouth to mouth were now spoken in the manner and with the emphasis of someone who was not merely passing on tradition, no matter how many medieval and, above all, ancient writings he may have absorbed, but who had observed all this personally, who was recording experience.

Even if this were not seen in *De civilitate morum puerilium* itself, we should know it from Erasmus's earlier writings, in which the permeation of medieval and ancient tradition with his own experience was expressed perhaps more clearly and directly. In his *Colloquies*, which in part certainly draw on ancient models (above all, Lucian), and particularly in the dialogue *Diversoria* (Basel, 1523), Erasmus described directly experiences elaborated in the later treatise.

The *Diversoria* is concerned with the difference between manners at German and French inns. He describes, for example, the interior of a German inn: some eighty or ninety people are sitting together, and it is stressed that they are not only common people but also rich men and nobles, men, women and children, all mixed together. And each is doing what he or she considers necessary. One washes his clothes and hangs the soaking articles on the stove. Another washes his hands. But the bowl is so clean, says the speaker, that one needs a second one to cleanse oneself of the water. Garlic smells and other bad odours rise. People spit everywhere. Someone is cleaning his boots on the table. Then the meal is brought in. Everyone dips their bread into the general dish, bites the bread and dips it in again. The place is dirty, the wine bad. And if one asks for a better wine the innkeeper replies: I have put up enough nobles and counts. If it does not suit you, look for other quarters.

The stranger to the country has a particularly difficult time. The others stare at him fixedly as if he were a fabulous animal from Africa. Moreover, these people acknowledge as human beings only the nobles of their own country.

The room is overheated; everyone is sweating and steaming and wiping themselves. There are doubtless many among them who have some hidden disease: "Probably", says the speaker, "most of them have the Spanish disease, and are thus no less to be feared than lepers."

"Brave people", says the other, "they jest and care nothing for it."

"But this bravery has already cost many lives."

"What are they to do? They are used to it, and a stout-hearted man does not break with his habits."

3. It can be seen that Erasmus, like others who wrote before or after him about conduct, was in the first place a collector of good and bad manners that he found present in social life itself. It is primarily this that explains both the agreement

and the differences between such writers. That their writings do not contain as much as others to which we habitually give more attention, the extraordinary ideas of an outstanding individual, that they are forced by their subject itself to adhere closely to social reality, gives them their special significance as a source of information on social processes.

But the observations of Erasmus on this subject are nevertheless to be numbered, along with a few by other authors from the same phase, among the exceptions in the tradition of writing on manners. For in them the presentation of partly very ancient precepts and commands was permeated by a very individual temperament. And precisely that was, in its turn, a "sign of the times", an expression of a transformation of society, a symptom of what is somewhat misleadingly called "individualization". It also points to something else: the problem of behaviour in society had obviously taken on such importance in this period that even people of extraordinary talent and renown did not disdain to concern themselves with it. Later this task fell back in general to minds of the second and third rank, who imitated, continued, extended, thus giving rise once more, even if not so strongly as in the Middle Ages, to a more impersonal tradition of books on manners.

The social transitions connected with the changes in conduct, manners and feelings of embarrassment will be dealt with more specifically later. However, an indication of them is needed here for an understanding of Erasmus's own position, and therefore of his way of speaking about manners.

Erasmus's treatise came at a time of social restructuring. It is the expression of the fruitful transitional period after the loosening of the medieval social hierarchy and before the stabilizing of the modern one. It belonged to the phase in which the old nobility of feudal knights was still in decline, while the new aristocracy of the absolutist courts was still in the process of formation. This situation gave, among others, the representatives of a small, secular-bourgeois intellectual class, the humanists, and thus Erasmus, not only an opportunity to rise in social station, to gain renown and authority, but also a possibility of candour and detachment that was not present to the same degree either before or afterwards. This chance of distancing themselves, which permitted individual representatives of the intellectual class to identify totally and unconditionally with none of the social groups of their world—though, of course, they always stood closer to one of them, that of the princes and the courts, than to the others—also finds expression in *De civilitate morum puerilium*. Erasmus in no way overlooked or concealed social differences. He saw very exactly that the real nurseries of what was regarded as good manners in his time were the princely courts. He says, for example, to the young prince to whom he dedicated his treatise: "I shall address your youth on the manners fitting to a boy not because you are so greatly in need of these precepts; from childhood you have been educated among courtly people

and you early had an excellent instructor . . . or because all that is said in this treatise applies to you; for you are of princely blood and are born to rule."

But Erasmus also manifested, in a particularly pronounced form, the characteristic self-confidence of the intellectual who has ascended through knowledge and writing, who is legitimized by books, the self-assurance of a member of the humanistic intellectual class who was able to keep his distance even from ruling strata and their opinions, however bound to them he may have been. "Modesty, above all, befits a boy", he says at the close of the dedication to the young prince, "and particularly a noble boy". And he also says: "Let others paint lions, eagles, and other creatures on their coats of arms. More true nobility is possessed by those who can inscribe on their shields all that they have achieved through the cultivation of the arts and sciences."

This was the language, the typical self-image of the intellectual in this phase of social development. The sociogenetic and psychogenetic kinship of such ideas with those of the German intellectual class of the eighteenth century, who legitimized themselves by means of concepts such as *Kultur* and *Bildung*, is immediately visible. But in the period immediately after Erasmus's time, few people would have had the assurance or even the social opportunity to express such thoughts openly in a dedication to a noble. With the increasing stabilization of the social hierarchy, such an utterance would have been increasingly seen as an error of tact, perhaps even as an attack. The most exact observance of differences of rank in behaviour became from now on the essence of courtesy, the basic requirement of *civilité*, at least in France. The aristocracy and the bourgeois intelligentsia mixed socially, but it was an imperative of tact to observe social differences and to give them unambiguous expression in social conduct. In Germany, by contrast, there was always, from the time of the humanists onwards, a bourgeois intelligentsia whose members, with few exceptions, lived more or less in isolation from aristocratic court society, an intellectual class of specifically middle-class character.

4. The development of German writings on manners and the way these writings differed from the French give numerous clear illustrations of this. It would lead too far to pursue this here in detail, but one need only think of a work like Dedekind's *Grobianus*[50] and its widely disseminated and influential German translation by Kaspar Scheidt to be aware of the difference. The whole German *grobianisch* (boorish) literature in which, spiced with mockery and scorn, a very serious need for a "softening of manners" finds expression, shows unambiguously and more purely than any of the corresponding traditions of other nationalities the specifically middle-class character of its writers, who included Protestant clergymen and teachers. And the case is similar with most of what was written in the ensuing period about manners and etiquette in Germany. Certainly, manners here too were stamped primarily at the courts; but since the social walls between the bourgeoisie and the court nobility are

relatively high, the later bourgeois authors of books on manners usually spoke of them as something alien that had to be learned because that was the way things were done at court. However familiar with the subject these authors may have been, they spoke of it as outsiders, very often with noticeable clumsiness. It was a relatively constricted, regional and penurious intellectual stratum which wrote in Germany in the following period, and particularly after the Thirty Years War. And only in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the German bourgeois intelligentsia, as a kind of vanguard of the commercial bourgeoisie, attained new opportunities for social advancement and rather more freedom of movement, do we again hear the language and expression of a self-image related to that of the humanists, especially Erasmus. Even now, however, the nobles were hardly ever told so openly that all their coats of arms were worth less than the cultivation of the *artes liberales*, even if this was often enough what was really meant.

What has been shown in the introductory chapter on the movement of the late eighteenth century goes back to a far older tradition, to a pervasive structural characteristic of German society following the particularly vigorous development of the German cities and burgher class towards the end of the Middle Ages. In France, and periodically in England and Italy also, a proportion of the bourgeois writers felt themselves to belong to the circles of the court aristocracies; in Germany this was far less the case. In the other countries, bourgeois writers did not only write largely for the court-aristocratic circles but also identified extensively with their manners, customs and views. In Germany this identification of members of the intelligentsia with the courtly upper class was much weaker, less taken for granted and far more rare. Their dubious position (along with a certain mistrust of those who legitimized themselves primarily by their manners, courtesy and ease of behaviour) was part of a long tradition, particularly as the values of the German court aristocracy—which was split up into numerous greater or lesser circles, not unified in a large, central "Society", and moreover was bureaucratized at an early stage—could not be as fully cultivated as in the Western countries. Instead, there emerged here more sharply than in the Western countries a split between the university-based cultural-bureaucratic tradition of *Kultur* of the middle class, on the one hand, and the no less bureaucratic military tradition of the nobility, on the other.

5. Erasmus's treatise on manners had an influence both on Germany and on England, France and Italy. What linked his attitude with that of the later German intelligentsia was the lack of identification with the courtly upper class; and his observation that the treatment of "civility" was without doubt *crassissima philosophiae pars* points to a scale of values which was not without a certain kinship to the later evaluation of *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* in the German tradition.

Accordingly, Erasmus did not see his precepts as intended for a particular class. He placed no particular emphasis on social distinctions, if we disregard

occasional criticism of peasants and small tradesmen. It was precisely this lack of a specific social orientation in the precepts, their presentation as general human rules, that distinguishes his treatise from its successors in the Italian and especially the French traditions.

Erasmus simply says, for example, "Incessus nec fractus sit, nec praeceps." (One's step should be neither too slow nor too quick). Shortly afterwards, in his *Galateo*, the Italian Giovanni della Casa says the same thing (ch. VI, 5, pt III). But for him the same precept had a direct and obvious function as a means of social distinction: "Non dee l'huomo nobile correre per via, ne troppo affrettarsi, che cio conviene a palafreniere e non a gentilhuomo. Ne percio si dee andare sì lento, ne sì conregnoso come femmina o come sposa." (The noblemen ought not to run like a lackey, or walk as slowly as women or brides.) It is characteristic, and in agreement with all our other observations, that a German translation of *Galateo*—in a five-language edition of 1609 (Geneva)—regularly sought, like the Latin translation and unlike all the others, to efface the social differentiations in the original. The passage quoted, for example, was translated as follows: "Therefore a noble, or any other *honourable man*, should not run in the street or hurry too much, since this befits a lackey and not a gentleman. . . . Nor should one walk unduly slowly like a stately matron or a young bride" (p. 562).

The words "honourable man" are inserted here, possibly referring to burgher councillors, and similar changes are found in many other places; when the Italian says simply *gentilhuomo* and the French *gentilhomme*, the German speaks of the "virtuous, honourable man" and the Latin of "homo honestus et bene moratus". These examples could be multiplied.

Erasmus proceeded similarly. As a result, the precepts that he gave without any social characterization appeared again and again in the Italian and then in the French traditions with a sharper limitation to the upper class, while in Germany the tendency to obliterate the social characteristics remained, even if for a long period hardly a single writer achieved the degree of social detachment possessed by Erasmus. In this respect he occupied a unique position among all those who wrote on the subject. It stemmed from his personal character. But at the same time, it points beyond his personal character to this relatively brief phase of relaxation between two great epochs that were characterized by more inflexible social hierarchies.

The fertility of this loosening transitional situation is perceptible again and again in Erasmus's way of observing people. It enabled him to criticize "rustic", "vulgar", or "coarse" qualities without accepting unconditionally (as did most who came later) the behaviour of the great courtly lords, whose circle was finally, as he himself put it, the nursery of refined conduct. He saw very exactly the exaggerated, forced nature of many courtly practices, and was not afraid to say so. Speaking of how to hold the lips, for example, he says: "It is still less becoming to purse the lips from time to time as if whistling to oneself. This can be left to

the great lords when they stroll among the crowd." Or he says: "You should leave to a few courtiers the pleasure of squeezing bread in the hand and then breaking it off with the fingertips. You should cut it decently with a knife."

6. But here again we see very clearly the difference between this and the medieval manner of giving directions on behaviour. Earlier, people were simply told, to give one example, "The bread cut fayre and do not breake".[51] Such rules are embedded by Erasmus directly in his experience and observation of people. The traditional precepts, mirrors of ever-recurring customs, awaken in his observations from a kind of petrifaction. An old rule ran: "Do not fall greedily upon the food."

> Do not eat bread before the meat is served, for this would appear greedy.
>
> Remember to empty and wipe your mouth before drinking.[52]

Erasmus gives the same advice, but in so doing he sees people directly before him: some, he says, devour rather than eat, as if they were about to be carried off to prison, or were thieves wolfing down their booty. Others push so much into their mouths that their cheeks bulge like bellows. Others pull their lips apart while eating, so that they make a noise like pigs. And then follows the general rule that was, and obviously had to be, repeated over and again: "Ore pleno vel bibere vel loqui, nec honestum, nec tutum." (To eat or drink with a full mouth is neither becoming nor safe.)

In all this, besides the medieval tradition, there is certainly much from antiquity. But reading has sharpened seeing, and seeing has enriched reading and writing.

Clothing, he says now and again, is in a sense the body of the body. From it we can deduce the attitude of mind. And then Erasmus gives examples of what manner of dress corresponds to this or that mental condition. This is the beginning of the mode of observation that will at a later stage be termed "psychological". The new stage of courtesy and its representation, summed up in the concept of *civilité*, was very closely bound up with this manner of seeing, and gradually became more so. In order to be really "courteous" by the standards of *civilité*, one was to some extent obliged to observe, to look about oneself and pay attention to people and their motives. In this, too, a new relationship of person to person, a new form of integration is announced.

Not quite 150 years later, when *civilité* had become a firm and stable form of behaviour in the courtly upper class of France, in the *monde*, one of its members began his exposition of the *science du monde* with these words: "It seems to me that to acquire what is called the science of the world one must first apply oneself to knowing men as they are in general, and then gain particular knowledge of those with whom we have to live, that is to say, knowledge of their inclinations and their good and bad opinions, of their virtues and their faults."[53]

What is said here with great precision and lucidity was anticipated by Erasmus. But this increased tendency of society and therefore of writers to observe, to connect the particular with the general, seeing with reading, is found not only in Erasmus but also in the other Renaissance books on manners, and certainly not only in these.

7. If one asks, therefore, about the new tendencies[34] that made their appearance in Erasmus's way of observing the behaviour of people—this is one of them. In the process of transformation and innovation that we designate by the term "Renaissance", what was regarded as "fitting" and "unfitting" in human intercourse no doubt changed to a certain degree. But the rupture was not marked by a sudden demand for new modes of behaviour opposed to the old. The tradition of *courtoisie* was continued in many respects by the society which adopted the concept of *civilitas*, as in *Civilitas morum puerilium*, to designate socially "good behaviour".

The increased tendency of people to observe themselves and others is one sign of how the whole question of behaviour was now taking on a different character: people moulded themselves and others more deliberately than in the Middle Ages.

Then they were told, do this and not that; but by and large a great deal was let pass. For centuries roughly the same rules, elementary by our standards, were repeated, obviously without producing firmly established habits. This now changed. The constraint exerted by people on one another increased, the demand for "good behaviour" was raised more emphatically. All problems concerned with behaviour took on new importance. The fact that Erasmus brought together in a prose work rules of conduct that had previously been uttered chiefly in mnemonic verses or scattered in treatises on other subjects, and for the first time devoted a separate book to the whole question of behaviour in society, not only at table, is a clear sign of the growing importance of the question, as is the book's success.[35] And the emergence of related writings, like the *Courtier* of Castiglione or the *Galateo* of Della Casa, to name only the most well known, points in the same direction. The underlying social processes have already been indicated and will be discussed in more detail later: the old social ties were, if not broken, extensively loosened and were in a process of transformation. Individuals of different social origins were thrown together. The social circulation of ascending and descending groups and individuals speeded up.

Then, slowly, in the course of the sixteenth century, earlier here and later there and almost everywhere with numerous reverses until well into the seventeenth century, a more rigid social hierarchy began to establish itself once more, and from elements of diverse social origins a new upper class, a new aristocracy formed. For this very reason the question of uniform good behaviour became increasingly acute, particularly as the changed structure of the new upper class exposed each individual member to an unprecedented extent to the pressure of others and of social control. It was in this context that the writings on manners

of Erasmus, Castiglione, Della Casa, and others were produced. People, forced to live with one another in a new way, became more sensitive to the impulses of others. Not abruptly but very gradually the code of behaviour became stricter and the degree of consideration expected of others became greater. The sense of what to do and what not to do in order not to offend or shock others became subtler, and in conjunction with the new power relationships the social imperative not to offend others became more binding, as compared to the preceding phase.

The rules of *courtoisie* also prescribed, "Say nothing that can arouse conflict, or anger others":

> Non dicas verbum
> cuiquam quod ei sit acerbum.[36]

"Be a good table companion":

> Awayte my chylde, ye be have you manerly,
> When at your mete ye sitte at the table
> In euery prees and in euery company
> Dispose you to be so compenable
> That men may of you reporte for commendable
> For thrusteth wel upon your berynge
> Men wil you blame or gyue preysynge. . . .

So we read in an English *Book of Curtesye*.[37] In purely factual terms, much of what Erasmus said had a similar tendency. But the change of tone, the increased sensitivity, the heightened human observation, and the sharper understanding of what is going on in others are unmistakable. They are particularly clear in a remark at the end of his treatise. There he breaks through the fixed pattern of "good behaviour", together with the arrogance that usually accompanies it, and relates conduct back to a more comprehensive humanity: "Be lenient towards the offences of others. This is the chief virtue of *civilitas*, of courtesy. A companion ought not to be less dear to you because he has worse manners. There are people who make up for the awkwardness of their behaviour by other gifts." And further on he says: "If one of your comrades unknowingly gives offence . . . tell him so alone and say it kindly. That is civility."

But this attitude only expresses again how little Erasmus, for all his closeness to the courtly upper class of his time, identified with it, keeping his distance from its code, too.

Galateo takes its name from an account in which Erasmus's precept "Tell him alone and say it kindly" applied in reality; an offence is corrected in that very way. But here the courtly character of such customs is emphasized as far more self-evident than in Erasmus.

The Bishop of Verona, the Italian work relates,[58] one day received a visit from a Duke Richard. He appeared to the Bishop and his court as "gentilissime cavaliere e di bellissime maniere". The host noted in his guest a single fault. But he said nothing. On the Duke's departure the Bishop sent a man of his court, Galateo, to accompany him. Galateo had particularly good manners, acquired at the courts of the great: "molto havea de' suoi dì usato alle corti de' gran Signori". This is explicitly emphasized.

This Galateo therefore accompanies Duke Richard part of the way, and says the following to him before taking his leave: His master, the Bishop, would like to make the Duke a parting gift. The Bishop has never in his life seen a nobleman with better manners than the Duke. He has discovered in him only a single fault—he smacks his lips too loudly while eating, so making a noise that is unpleasant for others to hear. To inform him of this is the Bishop's parting gift, which he begs will not be ill received.

The precept not to smack the lips while eating is also found frequently in medieval instructions. But its occurrence at the beginning of *Galateo* shows clearly what had changed. It not only demonstrates how much importance was now attached to "good behaviour". It shows, above all, how the pressure people now exerted on one another in this direction had increased. It is immediately apparent that this polite, extremely gentle and comparatively considerate way of correcting was, particularly when exercised by a social superior, much more compelling as a means of social control, much more effective in inculcating lasting habits, than insults, mockery or any threat of outward physical violence.

Internally more pacified societies were in the process of forming. The old code of behaviour was being transformed only step by step. But social control was becoming more binding. And above all, the nature and mechanism of affect-moulding by society were slowly changed. In the course of the Middle Ages the standard of good and bad manners, for all the regional and social differences, clearly did not undergo any decisive change. Over and again, down the centuries, the same good and bad manners were mentioned. The social code hardened into lasting habits only to a limited extent in people themselves. Now, with the structural transformation of society, with the new pattern of human relationships, a change slowly came about: the compulsion to check one's own behaviour increases. In conjunction with this the standard of behaviour was set in motion.

Caxton's *Book of Curtesye*, probably of the late fifteenth century, already gives unambiguous expression to this feeling that habits, customs, and rules of conduct are in flux:[59]

> Thingis whilom used ben now leyd a syde
> And newe feetis, dayly ben contreuide

Mennys actes can in no plyte abyde
They be changeable ande ofte meuide
Thingis somtyme alowed is now repreuid
And after this shal thinges up aryse
That men set now but at lytyl pryse.

This sounds, indeed, like a motto for the whole movement that is now coming: "Thingis somtyme alowed is now repreuid." The sixteenth century was still wholly within the transition. Erasmus and his contemporaries were still permitted to speak about things, functions, and ways of behaving that one or two centuries later were overlaid with feelings of shame and embarrassment, and whose public exposure or mention were proscribed in society. With the same simplicity and clarity with which he and Della Casa discussed questions of the greatest tact and propriety, Erasmus also says: Do not move back and forth on your chair. Whoever does that "speciem habet subinde ventris flatum emittentis ant emittere conantis" (gives the impression of constantly breaking or trying to break wind). This still shows the old unconcern in referring to bodily functions that was characteristic of medieval people, but enriched by observation, by consideration of "what others *might* think". Comments of this kind occur frequently.

Consideration of the behaviour of people in the sixteenth century, and of their code of behaviour, casts the observer back and forth between the impressions "That's still utterly medieval" and "That's exactly the way we feel today". And precisely this apparent contradiction clearly corresponds to reality. The people of this time had a double face. They stood on a bridge. Behaviour and the code of behaviour were in motion, but the movement was quite slow. And above all, in observing a single stage, we lack a sure measure. What is accidental fluctuation? When and where is something advancing? When is something falling behind? Are we really concerned with a change in a definite direction? Was European society really, under the watchword of *civilité*, slowly moving towards that kind of refined behaviour, that standard of conduct, habits and affect formation, which is characteristic in our minds of "civilized" society, of Western "civilization"?

8. It is not very easy to make this movement clearly visible precisely because it takes place so slowly—in very small steps, as it were—and because it also shows manifold fluctuations, following smaller and larger curves. It clearly does not suffice to consider in isolation each single stage to which this or that statement on customs and manners bears witness. We must attempt to see the movement itself, or at least a large segment of it, as a whole, as if speeded up. Images must be placed together in a series to give an overall view, from one particular aspect, of the process: the gradual transformation of behaviour and the emotions, the expanding threshold of repugnance.

The books on manners offer an opportunity for this. On particular aspects of human behaviour, particularly eating habits, they give us detailed information—

always on the same feature of social life—which extends relatively unbroken, even if at rather fortuitous intervals, from at least the thirteenth to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here images can be seen in a series, and segments of the total process can be made visible. And it is perhaps an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, that modes of behaviour of a relatively simple and elementary kind are observed, in which scope for individual variation within the social standard is relatively small.

These *Tischzuchten* and books on manners are a literary genre in their own right. If the written heritage of the past is examined primarily from the point of view of what we are accustomed to call "literary significance", then most of them have no great value. But if we examine the modes of behaviour which in every age a particular society has expected of its members, attempting to condition individuals to them, if we wish to observe changes in habits, social rules and taboos, then these instructions on correct behaviour, though perhaps worthless as literature, take on a special significance. They throw some light on elements in the social process of which we possess, at least from the past, very little direct information. They show precisely what we are seeking—namely, the standard of habits and behaviour to which society at a given time sought to accustom individuals. These poems and treatises were themselves direct instruments of "conditioning" or "fashioning",[40] of the adaptation of individuals to those modes of behaviour which the structure and situation of their society made necessary. And they show at the same time, through what they censure and what they praise, the divergence between what was regarded at different times as good and bad manners.

IV

On Behaviour at Table

Examples

(a) Examples representing upper-class behaviour in a fairly pure form:

A

Thirteenth century

This is Tannhäuser's poem of courtly good manners:[41]

1 I consider a well-bred man to be one who always recognizes good manners and is never ill-mannered.

2 There are many forms of good manners, and they serve many good purposes. The man who adopts them will never err.

25 When you eat do not forget the poor. God will reward you if you treat them kindly.*

33 A man of refinement should not slurp from the same spoon with someone else; that is the way to behave for people at court who are often confronted with unrefined conduct.†

37 It is not polite to drink from the dish, although some who approve of this rude habit insolently pick up the dish and pour it down as if they were mad.

41 Those who fall upon the dishes like swine while eating, snorting disgustingly and smacking their lips . . .

45 Some people bite a slice and then dunk it in the dish in a coarse way; refined people reject such bad manners.‡

49 A number of people gnaw a bone and then put it back in the dish—this is a serious offence.

---

* On v. 25, cf. the first rule in the *Courtesies* of Bonvicino da Riva:

The first is this: when at table, think first of the poor and needy.

† On vv. 33, 37, 41, cf. *Ein spruch der ze tische kêrt* (A word to those at table):[42]

313 You should not drink from the dish, but with a spoon as is proper.

315 Those who stand up and snort disgustingly over the dishes like swine belong with other farmyard beasts.

319 To snort like a salmon, gobble like a badger, and complain while eating—these three things are quite improper.

or

In the *Courtesies* of Bonvicino da Riva:

Do not slurp with your mouth when eating from a spoon. This is a bestial habit.

or

In *The Book of Nurture and School of Good Manners:*[43]

201 And suppe not lowde of thy Pottage
no tyme in all thy lyfe.

‡ On v. 45, cf. *Ein spruch der ze tische kêrt:*

346 May refined people be preserved from those who gnaw their bones and put them back in the dish.

or

from *Quisquis es in mensa* (For those at table):[44]

A morsel that has been tasted should not be returned to the dish.

53 Those who like mustard and salt should take care to avoid the filthy habit of putting their fingers into them.

57 A man who clears his throat when he eats and one who blows his nose in the tablecloth are both ill-bred, I assure you.

65 A man who wants to talk and eat at the same time, and talks in his sleep, will never rest peacefully.§

69 Do not be noisy at table, as some people are. Remember, my friends, that nothing is so ill-mannered.

81 I find it very bad manners whenever I see someone with food in his mouth and drinking at the same time, like an animal.**

85 You should not blow into your drink, as some are fond of doing; this is an ill-mannered habit that should be avoided.††

93 Before drinking, wipe your mouth so that you do not dirty the drink; this act of courtesy should be observed at all times.‡‡

105 It is bad manners to lean against the table while eating, as it is to keep your helmet on when serving the ladies.§§

---

§ On v. 65, cf. *Stans puer in mensam* (The boy at table):[45]

22 Never laugh or talk with a full mouth.

** On v. 81, cf. *Quisquis es in mensa*:

15 If you wish to drink first empty your mouth.

or

from *The Babees' Book*:

149 And withe fulle mouthe drynke in no wyse.

†† On v. 85, cf. *The Book of Curtesye*:[46]

111 Ne blow not on thy drynke ne mete,
Nether for colde, nether for hete.

‡‡ On v. 93, cf. *The Babees Book*:

155 Whanne ye shalle drynke, your mouthe clence withe a clothe.

or

From *La Manière de se Contenir a Table* (Guide to behaviour at table):[47]

Do not slobber while you drink, for this is a shameful habit.

§§ On v. 105, cf. *The Babees Book*:

Nor on the borde lenynge be yee nat sene.

109 Do not scrape your throat with your bare hand while eating; but if you have to, do it politely with your coat.

113 And it is more fitting to scratch with that than to soil your hand; onlookers notice people who behave like this.

117 You should not poke your teeth with your knife, as some do; it is a bad habit.***

125 If anyone is accustomed to loosening his belt at table, take it from me that he is not a true courtier.

129 If a man wipes his nose on his hand at table because he knows no better, then he is a fool, believe me.

141 I hear that some eat unwashed (if it is true, it is a bad sign). May their fingers be palsied!†††

157 It is not decent to poke your fingers into your ears or eyes, as some people do, or to pick your nose while eating. These three habits are bad.‡‡‡

B

Fifteenth century?

From *S'ensuivent les contenances de la table* (These are good table manners):[49]

I

Learn these rules.

II

Take care to cut and clean your nails; dirt under the nails is dangerous when scratching.

III

Wash your hands when you get up and before every meal.

*** On v. 117, cf. *Stans puer in mensam*:[48]

30 Avoid cleaning your teeth with a knife at table.

†††On v. 141, cf. *Stans puer in mensam*:

11 Never pick up food with unwashed hands.

‡‡‡ On v. 157, cf. *Quisquis es in mensa*:

9 Touch neither your ears nor your nostrils with your bare fingers.

This small selection of passages was compiled from a brief perusal of various guides to behaviour at table and court. It is very far from exhaustive. It is intended only to give an impression of how similar in tone and content were the rules in different traditions and in different centuries of the Middle Ages. Originals may be found in Appendix I.

XII

Do not be the first to take from the dish.

XIII

Do not put back on your plate what has been in your mouth.

XIV

Do not offer anyone a piece of food you have bitten into.

XV

Do not chew anything you have to spit out again.

XVII

It is bad manners to dip food into the salt-cellar.

XXIV

Be peaceable, quiet, and courteous at table.

XXVI

If you have crumbled bread into your wineglass, drink up the wine or throw it away.

XXXI

Do not stuff too much into yourself, or you will be obliged to commit a breach of good manners.

XXXIV

Do not scratch at table, with your hands or with the tablecloth.

C

1530

From *De civilitate morum puerilium* (On civility in boys), by Erasmus of Rotterdam, ch. 4:

If a serviette is given, lay it on your left shoulder or arm.

If you are seated with people of rank, take off your hat and see that your hair is well combed.

Your goblet and knife, duly cleansed, should be on the right, your bread on the left.

Some people put their hands in the dishes the moment they have sat down. Wolves do that.

Do not be the first to touch the dish that has been brought in, not only because this shows you greedy, but also because it is dangerous. For someone who puts something hot into his mouth unawares must either spit it out or, if he swallows it, burn his throat. In either case he is as ridiculous as he is pitiable.

It is a good thing to wait a short while before eating, so that the boy grows accustomed to tempering his affects.

To dip the fingers in the sauce is rustic. You should take what you want with your knife and fork; you should not search through the whole dish as epicures are wont to do, but take what happens to be in front of you.

What you cannot take with your fingers should be taken with the *quadra*.

If you are offered a piece of cake or pie on a spoon, hold out your plate or take the spoon that is held out to you, put the food on your plate, and return the spoon.

If you are offered something liquid, taste it and return the spoon, but first wipe it on your serviette.

To lick greasy fingers or to wipe them on your coat is impolite. It is better to use the tablecloth or the serviette.

D

1558

From *Galateo*, by Giovanni della Casa, Archbishop of Benevento, quoted from the five-language edition (Geneva, 1609), p. 68:

What do you think this Bishop and his noble company (*il Vescove e la sua nobile brigata*) would have said to those whom we sometimes see lying like swine with their snouts in the soup, not once lifting their heads and turning their eyes, still less their hands, from the food, puffing out both cheeks as if they were blowing a trumpet or trying to fan a fire, not eating but gorging themselves, dirtying their arms almost to the elbows and then reducing their serviettes to a state that would make a kitchen rag look clean.

Nonetheless, these hogs are not ashamed to use the serviettes thus sullied to wipe away their sweat (which, owing to their hasty and excessive feeding, often runs down their foreheads and faces to their necks), and even to blow their noses into them as often as they please.

E

1560

From a *Civilité* by C. Calviac[50] (based heavily on Erasmus, but with some independent comments):

When the child is seated, if there is a serviette on the plate in front of him, he shall take it and place it on his left arm or shoulder; then he shall place his bread on the left and the knife on the right, like the glass, if he wishes to leave it on the table, and if it can be conveniently left there without annoying anyone. For it might happen that the glass could not be left on the table or on his right without being in someone's way.

The child must have the discretion to understand the needs of the situation he is in.

When eating . . . he should take the first piece that comes to his hand on his cutting board.

If there are sauces, the child may dip into them decently, without turning his food over after having dipped one side. . . .

It is very necessary for a child to learn at an early age how to carve a leg of mutton, a partridge, a rabbit, and such things.

It is a far too dirty thing for a child to offer others something he has gnawed, or something he disdains to eat himself, *unless it be to his servant.* [Author's emphasis]

Nor is it decent to take from the mouth something he has already chewed, and put it on the cutting board, unless it be a small bone from which he has sucked the marrow to pass time while awaiting the dessert; for after sucking it he should put it on his plate, where he should also place the stones of cherries, plums, and suchlike, as it is not good either to swallow them or to drop them on the floor.

The child should not gnaw bones indecently, as dogs do.

When the child would like salt, he shall take it with the point of his knife and not with three fingers.

The child must cut his meat into very small pieces on his cutting board . . . and he must not lift the meat to his mouth now with one hand and now with the other, like little children who are learning to eat; he should always do so with his right hand, taking the bread or meat decently with three fingers only.

As for the manner of chewing, it varies according to the country. The Germans chew with the mouth closed, and find it ugly to do otherwise. The French, on the other hand, half open the mouth, and find the procedure of the Germans rather dirty. The Italians proceed in a very slack manner and the French more roundly, finding the Italian way too delicate and precious.

And so each nation has something of its own, different from the others. So that the child will proceed in accordance with the customs of the place where he is.

Further, the Germans use spoons when eating soup and everything liquid, and the Italians little forks. The French use either, as they think fit and as is most convenient. The Italians generally prefer to have a knife for each person. But the Germans place special importance on this, to the extent that they are greatly displeased if one asks for or takes the knife in front of them. The French way is quite different: a whole table full of people will use two or three knives, without making difficulties in asking for or taking a knife, or passing it if they have it. So that if someone asks the child for his knife, he should pass it after wiping it with his serviette, holding it by the point and offering the handle to the person requesting it: for it would not be polite to do otherwise.

F

Between 1640 and 1680

From a song by the Marquis de Coulanges:[51]

In times past, people ate from the common dish and dipped their bread and fingers in the sauce.

Today everyone eats with spoon and fork from his own plate, and a valet washes the cutlery from time to time at the buffet.

G

1672

From Antoine de Courtin, *Nouveau traité de civilité*, pp. 127, 273:

If everyone is eating from the same dish, you should take care not to put your hand into it *before those of higher rank have done so*, and to take food only from the part of the dish opposite you. Still less should you take the best pieces, even though you might be the last to help yourself.

It must also be pointed out that you should always wipe your spoon when, after using it, you want to take something from another dish, *there being people so delicate that they would not wish to eat soup into which you had dipped it after putting it into your mouth.* [Author's emphasis]

And even, if you are at the table of very refined people, it is not enough to wipe your spoon; you should not use it but ask for another. Also, in many places, spoons are brought in with the dishes, *and these serve only for taking soup and sauce.* [Author's emphasis]

You should not eat soup from the dish, but put it neatly on your plate; if it is too hot, it is impolite to blow on each spoonful; you should wait until it has cooled.

If you have the misfortune to burn your mouth, you should endure it patiently if you can, without showing it; but if the burn is unbearable, as sometimes happens, you should, before the others have noticed, take your plate promptly in one hand and lift it to your mouth and, while covering your mouth with the other hand, return to the plate what you have in your mouth, and quickly pass it to a footman behind you. Civility requires you to be polite, but it does not expect you to be homicidal toward yourself. It is very impolite to touch anything greasy, a sauce or syrup, etc., with your fingers, apart from the fact that it obliges you to commit two or three more improper acts. One is to wipe your hand frequently on your serviette and to soil it like a kitchen cloth, so that those who see you wipe your mouth with it feel nauseated. Another is to wipe your fingers on your bread, which again is very improper. The third is to lick them, which is the height of impropriety.

. . . As there are many [customs] which have already changed, I do not doubt that several of these will likewise change in the future.

Formerly one was permitted . . . to dip one's bread into the sauce, provided only that one had not already bitten it. Nowadays that would be a kind of rusticity.

Formerly one was allowed to take from one's mouth what one could not eat and drop it on the floor, provided it was done skilfully. Now that would be very disgusting. . . .

H

1717

From François de Callières, *De la science du monde et des connoissances utiles à la conduite de la vie*, pp. 97, 101:

In Germany and the Northern Kingdoms it is civil and decent for a prince to drink

first to the health of those he is entertaining, and then to offer them the same glass or goblet usually filled with the same wine; nor is it a lack of politeness in them to drink from the same glass, but a mark of candour and friendship. The women also drink first and then give their glass, or have it taken, to the person they are addressing, with the same wine from which they have drunk his health, *without this being taken as a special favour, as it is among us. . . .* [Author's emphasis]

"I cannot approve", a lady answers "—without offence to the gentlemen from the north—this manner of drinking from the same glass, and still less of drinking what the ladies have left; it has an air of impropriety that makes me wish they might show other marks of their candour."

(b) From books addressed to wider bourgeois strata

The following examples are from books which either, like La Salle's *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne*, represent the spreading of courtly manners and models to broader bourgeois strata, or, like Example I, reflect fairly purely the bourgeois and probably the provincial standard of their time.

In Example I, from about 1714, people still eat from a communal dish. Nothing is said against touching the meat on one's own plate with the hands. And the "bad manners" that are mentioned have largely disappeared from the upper class.

The Civilité of 1780 (Example L) is a little book of forty-eight pages in bad *civilité* type, printed in Caen but undated. The British Museum catalogue has a question mark after the date. In any case, this book is an example of the multitude of cheap books or pamphlets on *civilité* that were disseminated throughout France in the eighteenth century. This one, to judge from its general attitude, was clearly intended for provincial town-dwellers. In no other eighteenth-century work on *civilité* quoted here are bodily functions discussed so openly. The standard the book points to recalls in many respects the one that Erasmus's *De civilitate* had marked for the upper class. It is still a matter of course to take food in the hands. This example seemed useful here to complement the other quotations, and particularly to remind the reader that the movement ought to be seen in its full multilayered polyphony, not as a line but as a kind of fugue with a succession of related movement-motifs on different levels.

Example M from 1786 shows the dissemination from above to below very directly. It is particularly revealing because it contains a large number of customs that have subsequently been adopted by "civilized society" as a whole, but are here clearly visible as specific customs of the courtly upper class which still seem relatively alien to the bourgeoisie. Many customs have been arrested, as "civilized customs", in exactly the form they have here as courtly manners.

The quotation from 1859 (Example N) is meant to remind the reader that in the nineteenth century, as today, the whole movement had already been entirely

forgotten, that the standard of "civilization" which in reality had been attained only quite recently was taken for granted, what preceded it being seen as "barbaric".

I

1714

From an anonymous *Civilité française* (Liège, 1714?), p. 48:

It is not . . . polite to drink your soup from the bowl unless you are in your own family, and only then if you have drunk the most part with your spoon.

If the soup is in a communal dish, take some with your spoon in your turn, without precipitation.

Do not keep your knife always in your hand, as village people do, but take it only when you need it.

When you are being served meat, it is not seemly to take it in your hand. You should hold out your plate in your left hand while holding your fork or knife in your right.

It is against propriety to give people meat to smell, and you should under no circumstances put meat back into the common dish if you have smelled it yourself. If you take meat from a common dish, do not choose the best pieces. Cut with the knife, holding still the piece of meat in the dish with the fork, which you will use to put on your plate the piece you have cut off; do not, therefore, take the meat with your hand [nothing is said here against touching the meat on one's own plate with the hand].

You should not throw bones or eggshells or the skin of any fruit onto the floor.

The same is true of fruit stones. It is more polite to remove them from the mouth with two fingers than to spit them into one's hand.

J

1729

From La Salle, *Les Régles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (Rouen, 1729), p. 87:

On Things to Be Used at Table

At table you should use a serviette, a plate, a knife, a spoon and a fork. It would be entirely contrary to propriety to be without any of these things while eating.

It is for the person of highest rank in the company to unfold his serviette first, and the others should wait until he has done so before unfolding theirs. When the people are approximately equal, all should unfold it together without ceremony. [N.B. With the "democratization" of society and the family, this becomes the rule. The social structure, here still of the hierarchical-aristocratic type, is mirrored in the most elementary human relationships.]

It is improper to use the serviette to wipe your face; it is far more so to rub your teeth with it, and it would be one of the grossest offences against civility to use it to

blow your nose. . . . The use you may and must make of the serviette when at table is for wiping your mouth, lips, and fingers when they are greasy, wiping the knife before cutting bread, and cleaning the spoon and fork after using them. [N.B. This is one of many examples of the extraordinarily exact regulation of behaviour which is embedded in our eating habits. The use of each utensil is limited and defined by a multiplicity of very precise rules. None of them is simply self-evident, as they appear to later generations. Their use is formed very gradually in conjunction with the structure and changes of human relationships.]

When the fingers are very greasy, wipe them first on a piece of bread, which should then be left on the plate, before cleaning them on the serviette, in order not to soil it too much.

When the spoon, fork and knife are dirty or greasy, it is very improper to lick them, and it is not at all decent to wipe them, or anything else, on the tablecloth. On these and similar occasions you should use the serviette, and regarding the tablecloth you should take care to keep it always very clean, and not to drop on it water, wine, or anything that might soil it.

When the plate is dirty, you should be sure not to scrape it with the spoon or fork to clean it, or to clean your plate or the bottom of any dish with your fingers: that is very impolite. Either they should not be touched or, if you have the opportunity of exchanging them, you should ask for another.

When at table you should not keep the knife always in your hand; it is sufficient to pick it up when you wish to use it.

It is also very impolite to put a piece of bread into your mouth while holding the knife in your hand; it is even more so to do this with the point of the knife. The same thing must be observed in eating apples, pears or some other fruits. [N.B. Examples of taboos relating to knives.]

It is against propriety to hold the fork or spoon with the whole hand, like a stick; you should always hold them between your fingers.

You should not use your fork to lift liquids to the mouth . . . it is the spoon that is intended for such uses.

It is polite always to use the fork to put meat into your mouth, for *propriety does not permit the touching of anything greasy with the fingers* [Author's emphasis], neither sauces nor syrups; and if anyone did so, he could not escape subsequently commiting several further incivilities, such as frequently wiping his fingers on his serviette, which would make it very dirty, or on his bread, which would be very impolite, or licking his fingers, which is not permitted to well-born, refined people.

This whole passage, like several others, is taken over from A. de Courtin's *Nouveau traité* of 1672; cf. Example G, p. 75. It also reappears in other eighteenth-century works on *civilité*. The reason given for the prohibition on eating with the fingers is particularly instructive. In Courtin, too, it applies in the first place only to greasy foods, especially those in sauces, since this gives rise to actions that are "distasteful" to behold. In La Salle this is not entirely

consistent with what he says in another place: "If your fingers are greasy . . ." etc. The prohibition is not yet remotely so self-evident as it is today. We see how gradually it was made into an internalized habit, a piece of "self-control".

In the critical period at the end of the reign of Louis XV—during which, as was shown as an outward sign of social changes that were occurring the pressure for reform grew stronger, and in which, among other things, the idea of "civilization" caught on—La Salle's *Civilité*, which had previously passed through several editions largely unchanged, was revised. The changes in the standard are very instructive (Example K, below). They were in some respects very considerable. The difference is partly discernible in what no longer needed to be said. Many chapters are shorter. Many "bad manners" earlier discussed in detail are mentioned only briefly and in passing. The same applies to many bodily functions originally dealt with at length and in great detail. The tone is generally less mild, and often incomparably harsher than in the first version.

K

1774

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (1774 edn), pp. 45ff.:

> The serviette which is placed on the plate, being intended to preserve clothing from spots and other soiling inseparable from meals, should be spread over you so far that it covers the front of your body to the knees, going under the collar and not being passed inside it. The spoon, fork and knife should always be placed on the right.
>
> The spoon is intended for liquids, and the fork for solid meats.
>
> When one or the other is dirty, they can be cleaned with the serviette, if another service cannot be procured. You should avoid wiping them with the tablecloth, which is an unpardonable impropriety.
>
> When the plate is dirty you should ask for another; it would be revoltingly gross to clean spoon, fork or knife with the fingers.
>
> At good tables, attentive servants change plates without being called upon.
>
> Nothing is more improper than to lick your fingers, to touch the meats and put them into your mouth with your hand, to stir sauce with your fingers, or to dip bread into it with your fork and then suck it.
>
> You should never take salt with your fingers. It is very common for children to pile pieces one on top of the other, and even to take out of their mouths something they have chewed, and flick pieces with their fingers. [All these were mentioned earlier as general misdemeanours, but are here mentioned only as the "bad" manners of children. Grown-ups no longer do such things.] Nothing is more impolite [than] to lift meat to your nose to smell it; to let others smell it is a further impoliteness towards the master of the table; if you should happen to find dirt in the food, you should get rid of the food without showing it.

L

1780?

From an anonymous work, *La Civilité honete pour les enfants* (Caen, n.d.), p. 35:

Afterwards, he shall place his serviette on him, his bread on the left and his knife on the right, to cut the meat without breaking it. [The sequence described here is found in many other documents. The most elementary procedure, earlier usual among the upper class as well, is to break up the meat with the hands. Here the next stage is described, when the meat is cut with the knife. The use of the fork is not mentioned. To break off pieces of meat is regarded here as a mark of the peasant, cutting it as clearly the manners of the town.] He will also take care not to put his knife into his mouth. He should not leave his hands on his plate . . . nor rest his elbow on it, for this is done only by the aged and infirm.

The well-behaved child will be the last to help himself if he is with his superiors. . . . next, if it is meat, he will cut it politely with his knife and eat it with his bread. It is a rustic, dirty habit to take chewed meat from your mouth and put it on your plate. Nor should you ever put back into the dish something you have taken from it.

M

1786

From a conversation between the poet Delille and Abbé Cosson:[52]

A short while ago Abbé Cosson, Professor of Belles Lettres at the Collège Mazarin, told me about a dinner he had attended a few days previously with some *court people* . . . at Versailles.

"I'll wager", I told him, "that you perpetrated a hundred incongruities."

"What do you mean?" Abbé Cosson asked quickly, greatly perturbed. "I believe I did everything in the same way as everyone else."

"What presumption! I'll bet you did nothing in the same way as anyone else. But I'll limit myself to the dinner. First, what did you do with your serviette when you sat down?"

"With my serviette? I did the same as everyone else. I unfolded it, spread it out, and fixed it by a corner to my buttonhole."

"Well, my dear fellow, you are the only one who did that. One does not spread out one's serviette, one keeps it on one's knees. And how did you eat your soup?"

"Like everyone else, I think. I took my spoon in one hand and my fork in the other. . . ."

"Your fork? Good heavens! No one uses his fork to eat soup. . . . But tell me how you ate your bread."

"Certainly, like everyone else: I cut it neatly with my knife."

"Oh dear, you break bread, you do not cut it. . . . Let's go on. The coffee—how did you drink it?"

"Like everyone, to be sure. It was boiling hot, so I poured it little by little from my cup into my saucer."

"Well, you certainly did not drink it like anyone else. Everyone drinks coffee from the cup, never from the saucer. . . ."

N

1859

From *The Habits of Good Society* (London, 1859; 2d edn, verbatim, 1889), p. 257:

Forks were undoubtedly a later invention than fingers, but as we are not *cannibals* I am inclined to think they were a good one.

Comments on the Quotations on Table Manners

Group 1:

An Overview of the Societies to which the Texts were Addressed

1. The quotations have been assembled to illustrate a real process, a change in the behaviour of people. In general, the examples have been so selected that they may stand as typical of at least certain social groups or strata. No single person, not even someone with such pronounced individuality as Erasmus, invented the *savoir-vivre* of his time.

We hear people from different periods speaking on roughly the same subject. In this way, the changes become more distinct than if we had described them in our own words. From at least the sixteenth century onwards, the commands and prohibitions by which individuals were shaped (in conformity with the standard of society) were in continuous movement. This movement, to be sure, was not perfectly unilinear, but through all its fluctuations and individual curves a definite overall trend is nevertheless perceptible if one listens to these voices over the centuries together.

Sixteenth-century writings on manners were embodiments of the new court aristocracy that was slowly coalescing from elements of diverse social origin. With it grew the distinguishing code of behaviour.

De Courtin, in the second half of the seventeenth century, spoke from a court society which was consolidated to the highest degree—the court society of Louis XIV. And he spoke primarily to people of rank, people who did not live directly at court but who wished to familiarize themselves with the manners and customs of the court.

He says in his foreword: "This treatise is not intended for printing but only to satisfy a provincial gentleman who had requested the author, as a particular friend, to give some precepts on civility to his son, whom he intended to send to the court on completing his studies. . . . He [the author] undertook this work only for well-bred people; *it is only to them that it is addressed*; and particularly to youths, who might derive some utility from these small pieces of advice, *as not*

everyone has the opportunity nor the means of coming to the court at Paris to learn the fine points of politeness."

People who lived in the example-setting circle did not need books in order to know how "one" behaved. This was obvious; it was therefore important to ascertain with what intentions and for which publics these precepts, originally the distinguishing secret of the narrow circles of the court aristocracy, were written and printed.

The intended public is quite clear. It was stressed that the advice was only for *honnêtes gens*, i.e., by and large for upper-class people. Primarily the book met the need of the provincial nobility to know about behaviour at court, and in addition that of distinguished foreigners. But it may be assumed that the not inconsiderable success of this book resulted, among other things, from the interest of leading bourgeois strata. There is ample evidence to show that in this period customs, behaviour and fashions from the court were continuously penetrating the upper middle classes, where they were imitated and more or less altered in accordance with the different social situation. They thereby lost, to some extent, their character as means of distinguishing the upper class. They were somewhat devalued. This compelled those above to further refinement and elaboration of behaviour. And from this mechanism—the development of court customs, their dissemination downwards, their slight social deformation, their devaluation as marks of distinction—the perpetual movement in behaviour patterns through the upper class received part of its momentum. What is important was that in this change, in the inventions and fashions of courtly behaviour, which are at first sight perhaps irregular and accidental, over extended time spans certain directions or lines of development emerge. These include, for example, what may be described as an advance in the threshold of repugnance and the frontier of shame, or as a process of "refinement" or "civilization". A particular social dynamism triggered a particular psychological one, which had its own regularities.

2. In the eighteenth century wealth increased, and with it the upward pressure of the bourgeois classes. The court circle now included, directly alongside aristocratic elements, a larger number of bourgeois elements than in the preceding century, without the differences in social rank ever being lost. Shortly before the French Revolution the self-isolating tendencies of the socially weakening aristocracy were intensified once more.

Nevertheless, this extended court society, in which aristocratic and bourgeois elements intermingled, and which had no distinct boundaries barring entry from below must be envisaged as a whole. It comprised the hierarchically structured élite of the country. The compulsion to penetrate or at least to imitate it became stronger and stronger with the growing interdependence and prosperity of broader strata. Clerical circles, above all, became popularizers of the courtly customs. The moderated restraint of the emotions and the disciplined shaping of behaviour as a whole, which under the name of *civilité* had been developed in the

upper class as a purely secular and social phenomenon, a consequence of certain forms of social life, have affinities with particular tendencies in traditional ecclesiastical behaviour. *Civilité* was given a new Christian religious foundation. The Church proved, as so often, one of the most important organs of the downwards diffusion of behavioural models.

"It is a surprising thing", says the venerable Father La Salle at the beginning of the preface to his rules of Christian *civilité*, "that the majority of Christians regard decency and civility only as a *purely human and worldly quality* and, not thinking to elevate their minds more highly, do not consider it a virtue related to God, our neighbour and ourselves. This well shows how little Christianity there is in the world." And as a good deal of the education in France lay in the hands of ecclesiastical bodies, it was above all, if not exclusively, through their mediation that a growing flood of *civilité* tracts now inundated the country. They were used as manuals in the elementary education of children, and were often printed and distributed together with the first instructions on reading and writing.

Particularly through this the concept of *civilité* was increasingly devalued for the social élite. It began to undergo a process similar to that which earlier overtook the concept of *courtoisie*.

Excursus on the Rise and Decline of the Concepts of *Courtoisie* and *Civilité*

3. *Courtoisie* originally referred to the forms of behaviour that developed at the courts of the great feudal lords. Even during the Middle Ages the meaning of the word clearly lost much of its original social restriction to the "court", coming into use in bourgeois circles as well. With the slow extinction of the knightly-feudal warrior nobility and the formation of a new absolute court aristocracy in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the concept of *civilité* was slowly elevated as the expression of socially acceptable behaviour. *Courtoisie* and *civilité* existed side by side during the French transitional society of the sixteenth century, with its half knightly-feudal, half absolute court character. In the course of the seventeenth century, however, the concept of *courtoisie* gradually went out of fashion in France.

"The words *courtois* and *courtoisie*", says a French writer in 1675,[53] "are beginning to age and are no longer good usage. We say *civil*, *honneste*; *civilité*, *honnesteté*."

Indeed, the word *courtoisie* now actually came to appear a bourgeois concept. "My neighbour, the Bourgeois, . . . says, following the language of the bourgeoisie of Paris 'affable' and 'courteous' (*courtois*) . . . he does not express himself politely because the words 'courteous' and 'affable' are scarcely in use among people of the world, and the words 'civil' and 'decent' (*honnête*) have taken their place, just as 'civility' and 'decency' have taken the place of 'courtesy' and

'affability'." So we read in a conversation with the title *On Good and Bad Usage in Expressing Oneself: On Bourgeois Manners of Speaking*, by F. de Callières (1694; pp. 110ff.).

In a very similar way in the course of the eighteenth century, the concept of *civilité* slowly lost its hold among the upper class of the absolutist court. This class was now for its part undergoing a fairly slow process of transformation, of bourgeoisification, which, at least up to 1750, went hand in hand with a simultaneous courtization of bourgeois elements. Something of the resultant problem is perceptible, for example, when in 1745 Abbé Gedoyn, in an essay "De l'urbanité romaine" (*Oeuvres diverses*, p. 173), discusses the question of why, in his own society, the expression *urbanité*, though it referred to something very fine, had never come into use as much as *civilité*, *humanité*, *politesse* or *galanterie*, and he replies: "*Urbanitas* signified that *politesse* of language, mind, and manners attached singularly to the city of Rome, which was called par excellence *Urbs*, the city, whereas among us, where this politeness is not the privilege of any city in particular, not even of the capital, but solely of the court, the term urbanity becomes a term . . . with which we may dispense."

If one realizes that "city" at this time referred more or less to "bourgeois good society" as against the narrower court society, one readily perceives the topical importance of the question raised here.

In most of the statements from this period, the use of *civilité* had receded, as here, in the face of *politesse*, and the identification of this whole complex of ideas with *humanité* had emerged more sharply.

As early as 1733, Voltaire, in the dedication of his *Zaïre* to a bourgeois, A. M. Faulkner, an English merchant, expressed these tendencies very clearly: "Since the regency of Anne of Austria the French have been the most sociable and the most polite people in the world . . . and *this politeness is not in the least an arbitrary matter. like that which is called* civilité, *but is a law of nature* which they have happily cultivated more than other peoples."

Like the concept of *courtoisie* earlier, *civilité* was now slowly beginning to sink. Shortly afterwards, the content of this and related terms was taken up and extended in a new concept, the expression of a new form of self-consciousness, the concept of *civilisation*. *Courtoisie*, *civilité* and *civilisation* mark three stages of a social development. They indicate which society is speaking and being addressed at a given time. However, the actual change in the behaviour of the upper classes, the development of the models of behaviour which would henceforth be called "civilized", took place—at least so far as it is visible in the areas discussed here—in the middle phase. The concept of *civilisation* indicates quite clearly in its nineteenth-century usage that the *process* of civilization—or, more strictly speaking, a phase of this *process*—had been completed and forgotten. People only wanted to accomplish this process for other nations, and also, for a period, for the lower classes of their own society. To the upper and middle classes of their own

society, civilization appeared as a firm possession. They wished above all to disseminate it, and at most to develop it within the framework of the standard already reached.

The examples quoted clearly express the movement towards this standard in the preceding stage of the absolute courts.

A Review of the Curve Marking the "Civilizing" of Eating Habits

4. At the end of the eighteenth century, shortly before the Revolution, the French upper class attained approximately the standard of eating manners, and certainly not only of eating manners, that was gradually to be taken for granted in the whole of civilized society. Example M from the year 1786 is instructive enough: it shows as still a decidedly courtly custom exactly the same use of the serviette which in the meantime has become customary in the whole of civilized bourgeois society. It shows the exclusion of the fork from the eating of soup, the need for which, certainly, is only understandable if we recall that soup often used to contain—and in France still contains—more solid content than it does now. It further shows as a courtly demand the requirement not to cut but to break one's bread at table, a requirement that has in the meantime been democratized. And the same applies to the way in which one drinks coffee.

These are a few examples of how our everyday ritual was formed. If this series were continued up to the present day, further changes of detail would be seen: new imperatives have been added, old ones are relaxed; a wealth of national and social variations on table manners has emerged; the penetration of the middle classes, the working class, the peasantry by the uniform ritual of civilization, and by the regulation of drives that its acquisition requires, is of varying strength. But the essential basis of what is required and what is forbidden in civilized society—the standard technique of eating, the manner of using knife, fork, spoon, plate, serviette and other eating utensils—these remain in their essential features unchanged. Even the development of technology in all areas—even that of cooking—through the introduction of new sources of energy has left the techniques of eating and other forms of behaviour essentially unchanged. Only on very close inspection does one observe traces of a trend that is continuing to occur.

What is still changing now is, above all, the technology of production. The technology of consumption was developed and kept in motion by social formations which were, to a degree never since equalled, consumption classes. With their social decline, the rapid and intensive elaboration of consumption techniques ceased and has been relegated into what have now become the private (in contrast to the occupational) sphere of life. Correspondingly, the tempo of

movement and change in these spheres which was relatively fast during the stage of the absolute courts, has slowed down once again.

Even the shape of eating utensils—plates, dishes, knives, forks and spoons—has from now on become no more than variations on themes of the *dix-huitième* and preceding centuries. Certainly there are still very many changes of detail. One example is the differentiation of utensils. On many occasions, not only are the plates changed after each course but the eating utensils, too. It is not enough to eat simply with knife, fork and spoon instead of with one's hands. In the upper class more and more, a special implement is used for each kind of food. Soup-spoons, fish knives, and meat knives are on one side of the plate. Forks for the hors d'oeuvre, fish and meat on the other. Above the plate are fork, spoon or knife—according to the custom of the country—for sweet foods. And for the dessert and fruit yet another implement is brought in. All these utensils are differently shaped and equipped. They are now larger, now smaller, now more round, now more pointed. But on closer consideration they do not represent anything actually new. They, too, are variations on the same theme, differentiations within the same standard. And only on a few points—above all, in the use of the knife—do slow movements begin to show themselves that lead beyond the standard already attained. Later there will be more to say on this.

5. In a sense, something similar was true of the period up to the fifteenth century. Up to then—for very different reasons—the standard eating technique, the basic stock of what was socially prohibited and permitted, like the behaviour of people towards one another and towards themselves (of which these prohibitions and commands are expressions), remained fairly constant in its essential features, even if here too fashions, fluctuations, regional and social variations and a slow movement in a particular direction were by no means entirely absent.

Nor can the transitions from one phase to another be ascertained with complete precision. The more rapid movement begins later here, earlier there, and everywhere one finds slight preparatory shifts. Nevertheless, the overall shape of the curve was everywhere broadly the same: first the medieval phase, with a certain climax in the flowering of knightly-courtly society, marked by eating with the hands. Then a phase of relatively rapid movement and change, embracing roughly the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which the compulsions to elaborate eating behaviour pressed constantly in one direction, towards a new standard of table manners.

From then on, one again observes a phase which remained within the framework of the standard already reached, though with a very slow movement in a particular direction. The elaboration of everyday conduct never entirely lost, in this period either, its importance as an instrument of social distinction. But from now on, it no longer played the same role as in the preceding phase. More exclusively than before, money has become the basis of social differences. And

what people actually achieve and produce has become more important than their manners.

6. Taken together, the examples show very clearly how this movement advanced. The prohibitions of medieval society, even at the feudal courts did not yet impose any very great restraint on the play of emotions. Compared with later eras, social control was mild. Manners, measured against later ones, were relaxed in all senses of the word. One ought not to snort or smack one's lips while eating. One ought not to spit across the table or blow one's nose on the tablecloth (for this was used for wiping greasy fingers) or into the fingers (with which one held the common dish). Eating from the same dish or plate as others was taken for granted. One had only to refrain from falling on the dish like a pig, and from dipping bitten food into the communal sauce.

Many of these customs are still mentioned in Erasmus's treatise and in its adaptation by Calviac. More clearly than by inspecting particular accounts of contemporary manners, by surveying the whole movement one sees how it advanced. Table utensils were still limited; on the left the bread, on the right the glass and knife. That was all. The fork was already mentioned, although with a limited function as an instrument for lifting food from the common dish. And, like the handkerchief, the napkin had also appeared already, both still—a symbol of transition—as optional rather than necessary implements: if you have a handkerchief, the precepts say, use it rather than your fingers. If a napkin is provided, lay it over your left shoulder. One hundred and fifty years later both napkin and handkerchief had, like the fork, become more or less indispensable utensils in the courtly class.

The curve followed by other habits and customs was similar. First the soup was often drunk, whether from the common dish or from ladles used by several people. In the *courtois* writings the use of the spoon was prescribed. It, too, would first of all have served several together. A further step is shown by the quotation from Calviac of 1560. He mentions that it was customary among Germans to allow each guest his own spoon. The next step is shown by Courtin's text from the year 1672. Now one no longer ate the soup directly from the common dish, but poured some into one's own plate, first of all using one's own spoon; but there were even people, we read here, who were so *delicate* that they did not wish to eat from a dish into which others had dipped an already used spoon. It was therefore necessary to wipe one's spoon with the serviette before dipping it into the dish. And some people were not satisfied even with this. For them, one was not allowed to dip a used spoon back into the common dish at all; instead, one had to ask for a clean one for this purpose.

Statements like these show not only how the whole ritual of living together was in flux, but also how people themselves were aware of this change.

Here, step by step, the now accepted way of taking soup was being established: everyone had their own plate and own spoon, and the soup was

distributed with a specialized implement. Eating had acquired a new style corresponding to the new necessities of social life.

Nothing in table manners is self-evident or the product, as it were, of a "natural" feeling of delicacy. The spoon, fork and napkin were not invented one day by a single individual as technical implements with obvious purposes and clear directions for use. Over centuries, in direct social intercourse and use, their functions became gradually defined, their forms sought and consolidated. Each custom in the changing ritual, however minute, was established infinitely slowly, even forms of behaviour that to us seem quite elementary or simply "rational", such as the custom of taking liquid only with the spoon. Every movement of the hand—for example, the way in which one holds and moves knife, spoon or fork—was standardized only step by step. And the social mechanism of standardization can itself be seen in outline if the series of images is surveyed as a whole. There was a more or less limited courtly circle which first stamped the models only for the needs of its own social situation and in conformity with the psychological condition corresponding to it. But clearly the structure and development of French society as a whole gradually made ever broader strata willing and anxious to adopt the models developed above them: they spread, likewise very gradually, throughout the whole of society, certainly not without undergoing some modification in the process.

The takeover, the passage of models from one social unit to another, now from the centres of a society to its outposts (e.g., from the Parisian court to other courts), now within the same socio-political unit (e.g., within France or Saxony, from above to below or from below to above), is to be counted, in the civilizing process as a whole, as among the most important individual movements. What the examples show is only a limited segment of these. Not only the eating manners but also forms of thinking or speaking, in short, of behaviour in general, were moulded in a similar way throughout France, even if there were significant differences in the timing and structure of their patterns of development. The elaboration of a particular ritual of human relations in the course of a change in social and psychological structures is not something that can be treated in isolation, even if here, as a first attempt, it has only been possible to follow a single strand. A short example from the process of the "civilizing" of speech may serve as a reminder that the observation of manners and their transformation exposes to view only a very simple and easily accessible segment of a much more far-reaching process of social change.

Excursus on the Modelling of Speech at Court

7. For speech, too, a limited circle first developed certain standards.

As in Germany, though to a far lesser extent, the language spoken in court society was different from the language spoken by the bourgeoisie.

"You know", we read in a little work which in its time was much read, *Mots à la mode* by Callières, in the edition of 1693 (p. 46), "that the bourgeois speak very differently from us."

If we examine more closely what is termed "bourgeois" speech, and what is referred to as the expression of the courtly upper class, we encounter the same phenomenon that can be observed in eating-customs and manners in general: much of what in the seventeenth and to some extent the eighteenth century was the distinguishing form of expression and language of court society gradually became the French national language.

The young son of bourgeois parents, M. Thibault, is presented to us visiting a small aristocratic gathering. The lady of the house asks after his father. "He is your very humble servant, Madame", Thibault answers, "and he is still poorly, as you well know, since you have graciously sent oftentimes to inquire about the state of his health."

The situation is clear. A certain social contact exists between the aristocratic circle and the bourgeois family. The lady of the house has mentioned it previously. She also says that the elder Thibault is a very nice man, not without adding that such acquaintances are sometimes quite useful to the aristocracy because these people, after all, have money.[54] And at this point one is reminded of the very different structure of German society.

But social contacts at this time were clearly not close enough, leaving aside the bourgeois intelligentsia, to have effaced the linguistic differences between the classes. Every other word the young Thibault uttered was, by the standards of court society, awkward and gross, smelling—as the courtiers put it—"bourgeois from the mouth". In court society one did not say "as you well know" or "oftentimes" or "poorly" (*comme bien sçavez, souventes fois, maladif*).

One did not say, like M. Thibault in the ensuing conversation, "Je vous demande excuse" (I beg to be excused). In the court society one said, as today in bourgeois society, "Je vous demande pardon" (I beg your pardon).

M. Thibault said: "Un mien ami, un mien parent, un mien cousin" (A friend of mine, etc.), instead of the courtly "un de mes amis, un de mes parents" (p. 20). He said "deffunct mon père, le pauvre deffunct" (deceased). And he was instructed that that too was not one of the expressions "which civility has introduced among well-spoken people. People of the world do not say that a man is deceased when they mean that he is dead" (p. 22). The word can be used at most when saying "we must pray to God for the soul of the deceased . . . but those who speak well say rather: my late father, the late Mr such and such, the late Duke, etc." (*feu mon père*, etc.). And it was pointed out that "for the poor deceased" was "a very bourgeois turn of phrase".

8. Here, too, as with manners, there was a kind of double movement: a courtization of bourgeois people and a bourgeoisification of courtly people. Or, to put it more precisely: bourgeois people were influenced by the behaviour of

courtly people, and vice versa. The influence from below on those above was certainly very much weaker in the seventeenth century in France than in the eighteenth. But it was not entirely absent: the château Vaux-le Vicomte of the bourgeois intendant of finances, Nicolas Fouquet, antedates the royal Versailles, and was in many ways its model. That is a clear example. The wealth of leading bourgeois strata compelled those above to compete. And the incessant influx of bourgeois people to the circle of the court also produced a specific movement in speech: with the new human material it brought new linguistic material, the "slang" of the bourgeoisie, into the circle of the court. Elements of it were constantly being processed into courtly language, polished, refined, transformed; they were made, in a word, "courtly", i.e., adapted to the standard of sensibility or affect of the court circles. They were thereby turned into means of distinguishing the *gens de la cour* from the bourgeoisie, and then perhaps—thus refined and modified—after some time penetrated the bourgeoisie once more and became "specifically bourgeois".

There is, says the Duke in one of the conversations quoted from Callières (*Du bon et du mauvais usage*, p. 98), a manner of speaking "most common among the bourgeois of Paris and even among some courtiers raised among the bourgeoisie. It is to say 'Let us look and see' (*voyons voir*), instead of saying 'Let us see' (*voyons*), and avoiding the word 'look', which is perfectly useless and disagreeable in this place."

But there has recently come into use, the Duke continues, "another bad turn of phrase, which began among the lowest people and made its fortune at the court, like those favourites without merit who got themselves elevated there in the old days. It is 'il en sçait bien long', meaning that someone is subtle and clever. The ladies of the court are beginning to use it, too."

So it went on. The bourgeois and even some court people said "il faut que nous faisions cela" instead of "il faut que nous fassions cela". Some said "l'on za" and "l'on zest" instead of the courtly "l'on a" and "l'on est". They said "Je le l'ai" instead of "Je l'ai".

In almost all these cases the linguistic form which here appears as courtly has in fact become the national usage. But there were also examples of courtly linguistic formations being gradually discarded as "too refined", "too affected".

9. All this elucidates at the same time what was said earlier about the sociogenetic differences between the German and French national characters. Language is one of the most accessible manifestations of what we experience as "national character". Here one can see from a single concrete example how this peculiar and typical character has been elaborated in conjunction with specific social formations. The French language was decisively stamped by the court and court society. For the German language the Imperial Chamber and Chancellery for a time played a similar role, even if they did not have remotely the same influence as the French court. As late as 1643, someone claimed his language to

be exemplary "because it is modelled on writings from the Chamber at Speyer".[55] Then it was the universities that attained almost the same importance for German culture and language as the court in France. But these two socially closely related entities, Chancellery and university, influenced speech less than writing; they formed the German written language not through conversation but through documents, letters and books. And if Nietzsche observes that even the German drinking song is erudite, or if he contrasted the elimination of specialist terms by the courtly Voltaire to the practice of the Germans, he saw very clearly the results of these different historical developments.

10. If in France the *gens de la cour* said "This is spoken well and this badly", a question is raised that opens up a wide field for reflection and which must be at least touched on here in passing: "By what standards were they actually judging what was good and bad in language? What were their criteria for selecting, polishing and modifying expressions?"

Sometimes they reflected on this themselves. What they said on the subject is at first sight rather surprising, and at any rate significant beyond the area of language. Phrases, words and nuances were good *because* they, the members of the social élite, used them; and they were bad *because* social inferiors spoke in this way.

M. Thibault sometimes defends himself when he is told that this or that turn of phrase was bad. "I am much obliged to you, Madame", he says (*Du bon et mauvais usage*, p. 23), "for the trouble you are taking to instruct me, yet it seems to me that the term 'deceased' is a well-established word used by a great many well-bred people (*honnête gens*)."

"It is very possible", the lady answers, "that there are many well-bred people who are insufficiently familiar with the delicacy of our language . . . a delicacy which is known to only a small number of well-spoken people and causes them not to say that a man is deceased in order to say that he is dead."

A small circle of people were versed in this delicacy of language; to speak as they did was to speak correctly. What the others said did not count. The judgements were apodictic. A reason other than that "We, the élite, speak thus, and only we have sensitivity to language" was neither needed nor known. "With regard to errors committed against good usage", it is expressly stated in another place, "as there are no definite rules it depends only on the consent of a certain number of élite people whose ears are accustomed to certain ways of speaking and to preferring them to others" (p. 98). And then the words were listed that should be avoided.

Antiquated words were unsuited to ordinary, serious speech. Very new words must arouse the suspicion of affectation or posing—we might perhaps say, of snobbery. Learned words that smack of Latin and Greek must be suspect to all *gens du monde*. They surrounded anyone using them with an atmosphere of pedantry, if other words were known that expressed the same thing simply.

Low words used by the common people must be carefully avoided, for those who used them showed that they had had a "low education". "And it is of these words, that is, low words", said the courtly speaker, "that we are speaking in this connection"—he meant in the contraposition of courtly and bourgeois language.

The reason given for the expurgation of "bad" words from language was the refinement of feeling that has played no small role in the whole civilizing process. But this refinement was the possession of a relatively small group. Either one had this sensitivity or one had not—that, roughly, was the speaker's attitude. The people who possessed this delicacy, a small circle, determined by their consensus what was held to be good or bad.

In other words, of all the rational grounds that might be put forward for the selection of expressions, the social argument, that something was better because it was the usage of the upper class, or even of only an élite within the upper class, was by far the most prominent.

"Antiquated words", words that had gone out of fashion, were used by the older generation or by those who were not permanently involved directly in court life, the déclassé. "Too-new words" were used by the clique of young people who had yet to be accepted, who spoke their special "slang", a part of which would perhaps be tomorrow's fashion. "Learned words" were used, as in Germany, by those educated at the universities, especially lawyers and the higher administrators, i.e., in France, the *noblesse de robe*. "Low expressions" were all those words used by the bourgeoisie down to the common people. The linguistic polemic corresponded to a quite specific, very characteristic social formation. It showed and delimited the group which at a given moment exerted control over language: in a broader sense they were the *gens de la cour*, but in a narrower sense they were a smaller, especially aristocratic circle of people who at the time had influence at court, and who carefully distinguished themselves from the social climbers, the courtiers with a bourgeois upbringing, the "antiquated" and the "young people", and from the "snobbish" competitors of the rising generation, and last but not least, from the specialized officials who came from the university. This circle was the primary model-making centre for the language at this time. How the members of these narrower and broader court circles spoke was "how one must speak", to speak *comme il faut*. Here the models of speech were formed that subsequently spread out in longer or shorter waves. The manner in which the language developed and was stamped corresponded to a specific social structure. Accordingly, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, bourgeois influences on the French language slowly gained in strength. But this long passage through a stage dominated by the court aristocracy remains perceptible in the French language today, as does the passage of German through a stage of dominance by a learned middle-class intelligentsia. And wherever élites or pseudo-élites have formed within French bourgeois society, they have

attached themselves to these older, distinguishing tendencies in their language.

Reasons Given by People for Distinguishing Between "Good" and "Bad" Behaviour

11. Language is one of the embodiments of social or mental life. Much that can be observed in the way language is moulded also becomes evident through the investigation of other embodiments of society. For example, the grounds on which people argue that this behaviour or that custom at table is better than another, are scarcely distinguishable from the way they establish such claims with regard to linguistic expressions.

This does not entirely correspond to the expectation that twentieth-century observers may have. For example, they expect to find the elimination of "eating with the hands", the introduction of the fork, individual cutlery and crockery, and all the other rituals of their own standard explained on "hygienic grounds". For that is the way in which they themselves in general explain these customs. But as late as the second half of the eighteenth century, hardly anything of this kind is found as a motivation for the greater restraint that people impose upon themselves. At any rate, the so-called "rational explanations" are very far in the background compared to others.

In the earliest stages the need for restraint was usually explained by saying: Do this and not that, for it is not *courtois*, not "courtly"; a "noble" man does not do such things. At most, the reason given is consideration for the embarrassment of others, as in Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht*, where it says, in effect, "Do not scratch yourself with your hand, with which you also hold the common dish; your table companions might notice it, so use your coat to scratch yourself" (Example A, v. 109ff.). And clearly here the threshold of repugnance differed from that of the following period.

Later on, a similar rationale was used above all: Do not do that, for it is not "*civil*" or "*bienséant*". Or such an argument was used to establish the respect due to those of higher social rank.

As in the moulding of speech, so too in the moulding of other aspects of behaviour in society, social motivations, adaptations of behaviour to the models of influential circles, were by far the most important. Even the expressions used in motivating "good behaviour" at table were very frequently exactly the same as those used in motivating "good speech".

In Callières's *Du bon et du mauvais usage dans les manières de s'exprimer*, reference is made, for example, to this or that expression "which civility has introduced among people who speak well" (p. 22).

Exactly the same concept of *civilité* is also used again and again by Courtin or La Salle to express what was good and bad in manners. And just as Callières here

spoke simply of the people "*qui parlent bien*", so Courtin (at the end of Example G) said, in effect, "Formerly one was allowed to do this or that, but today one is no longer allowed to". Callières says in 1694 that there are a great many people who are not sufficiently conversant with the *délicatesse* of our language: "C'est cette délicatesse qui n'est connu que d'une petite nombre de gens." Courtin used the same expression in 1672 when he said that it was necessary always to wipe one's spoon before dipping it into the common dish if one had already used it, "there being people so *delicate* that they would not wish to eat soup in which you had dipped it after putting it into your mouth" (Example G).

This *délicatesse*, this sensibility and a highly developed feeling for what was "embarrassing", was at first a distinguishing feature of small courtly circles, then of court society as a whole. This applies to language in exactly the same way as to eating habits. On what this delicacy was based, and why it demanded that this be done and not that, was not said and not asked. What can be observed is simply that "delicacy"—or, rather, the threshold of repugnance—was advancing. In conjunction with a quite specific social situation, the structure of feelings and affects was first transformed in the upper class, and the structure of society as a whole permitted this changed affect-standard to spread slowly. There is nothing which suggests that the structure of affects, the degree of sensitivity, changed for reasons that we would describe as "clearly rational", i.e. from a demonstrable understanding of specific causal connections. Courtin did not say, as would be said later, that some people felt it to be "unhygienic" or "detrimental to health" to take soup from the same dish as others. It is, of course, the case that delicacy of feeling was heightened under the pressure of the courtly situation in ways which were later justified partly by scientific investigations, even though a major part of the taboos that people gradually imposed on themselves in their dealings with each other, a far larger part than is usually thought, has not the slightest connection with "hygiene" but is concerned even today merely with "delicacy of feeling". At any rate, the process has moved in some respects in a way that is exactly opposite to what is commonly assumed today. First, over a long period and in conjunction with a specific change in human relationships, that is in society, the threshold of repugnance was raised. The affect-structure, the sensitivity, and the behaviour of people change, despite all sorts of fluctuations, in a quite specific direction. Then, at a certain point, this behaviour came to be recognized as "hygienically correct", i.e., it was justified by a clearer insight into causal connections and taken further in the same direction or consolidated. The advance of the threshold of repugnance may have been connected at specific points with more or less indeterminate and, at first, in no way rationally explicable experiences of the way in which certain diseases are passed on or, expressed more precisely, with indeterminate and therefore rationally unlimited fears and anxieties which pointed vaguely in the direction subsequently con-

firmed by clear understanding. But "rational understanding" is not the motor of the "civilizing" of eating or of other ways of behaving.

The close parallel between the "civilizing" of eating and that of speech is in this respect highly instructive. It makes it clear that the change in behaviour at table was part of a much larger transformation of human feelings and attitudes. It also illuminates the degree to which the motors of this development came from the social structure, from the way in which people were related to or integrated with each other. We see more clearly how relatively small circles at first formed the centre of the movement and how the process then gradually passed to broader strata. But this diffusion itself presupposed very specific contacts, and therefore a quite definite structure of society. Moreover, it could certainly not have taken place had there not been established, not only for the model-forming circles but also for broader strata, conditions of life—or, in other words, a social situation—that made both possible and necessary a gradual transformation of the emotions and behaviour, an advance in the threshold of repugnance.

The process that emerges resembles in form—though not in substance—those chemical processes in which a liquid, the whole of which is subjected to conditions of chemical change (e.g., crystallization), first takes on crystalline form at a small nucleus, while the rest then gradually crystallizes around this core. Nothing would be more erroneous than to take the core of the crystallization for the cause of the transformation.

The fact that a particular social stratum in one or another phase of social development formed the centre of a process and thus elaborated models for others, and that these models were diffused to other strata and received by them, itself presupposed a social situation and a particular structure of society as a whole, by virtue of which the function of creating models fell to one circle and that of spreading and assimilating them fell to another. The kinds of changes in the integration of society that set these behavioural changes in motion will be discussed in greater detail later.

Group 2:

On the Eating of Meat

1. Although human phenomena—whether attitudes, wishes or structures—may be looked at on their own, independently of their connections with the social life of people, they are by nature nothing but substantializations of human relations and of human behaviour, embodiments of social and mental life. This is true of speech, which is nothing other than human relations turned into sound; it is true of art, science, economics and politics; it is true both of phenomena which rank high on our scale of values and of others which seem trivial or

worthless. But it is often precisely these latter, apparently trivial phenomena that give us clear and simple insights into the structure and development of the psyche and its relations which are at first denied us by the former. People's attitudes to meat-eating, for example, are highly illuminating with regard to the dynamics of human relationships and personality structures.

In the Middle Ages, people moved between at least three different sets of behaviour towards the consumption of meat. Here, as with a hundred other phenomena, we see the extreme diversity of behaviour characteristic of medieval society as compared with its modern counterpart. The medieval social structure was far less conducive to the slow permeation of models developed in a specific social centre through the society as a whole. Certain modes of behaviour often predominated in a particular social stratum throughout the Western world, while in a different stratum or estate behaviour was very different. For this reason, the behavioural differences between different estates in the same region were often greater than those between regionally separate representatives of the same social stratum. And if modes of behaviour passed from one stratum to another, as happened again and again, they changed their face more radically in correspondence with the greater self-containment of the estates.

The relation to meat-eating moved in the medieval world between the following poles. In the secular upper class the consumption of meat was extraordinarily high, compared to the standard of our own times. A tendency prevailed then to devour quantities of meat that to us seem fantastic. In the monasteries an ascetic abstention from all meat-eating in part prevailed, an absention resulting more or less from self-denial, not from shortage, and often accompanied by a radical disdain for or restriction of eating. From these circles came expressions of strong aversion to the "gluttony" among the secular upper-classes.

The meat consumption of the lower class, the peasants, was also often extremely limited—not from a spiritual need, a more or less freely chosen renunciation with regard to God and the next world, but from shortage. Cattle were expensive and therefore destined, for a long period, essentially for the rulers' tables. "If the peasant reared cattle", it has been said,[56] "it was largely for the privileged, the nobility, and the burghers", not forgetting the clerics, who ranged in varying degrees from asceticism to approximately the behaviour of the secular upper class. Exact data on the meat consumption of the upper classes in the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modem age are sparse. There were, no doubt, considerable differences between the lesser, poorer knights and the great feudal lords. The standards of the poor knights must frequently have been scarcely removed from those of the peasants.

A calculation of the meat consumption of a north German court from relatively recent times, the seventeenth century, indicates a consumption of two pounds per head per day, in addition to large quantities of venison, birds and

fish.[57] Spices played a major, vegetables a relatively minor role. Other information points fairly unanimously in the same direction. The details remain to be tested further.

2. Another change can be documented more precisely. The manner in which meat is served has changed considerably from the Middle Ages to modern times. The curve of this change is very instructive. In the upper class of medieval society, the dead animal or large parts of it were often brought to the table whole. Not only whole fish and whole birds (sometimes with their feathers) but also whole rabbits, lambs, and quarters of veal appeared on the table, not to mention the larger venison or the spit-roasted pigs and oxen.[58]

The animal was carved on the table. This is why the books on manners repeat, up to the seventeenth and sometimes even the eighteenth century, how important it is for a well-bred man to be good at carving meat. "Discenda a primis statim annis secandi ratio . . ." (The correct way to carve should be taught from the first years) says Erasmus in 1530.

"When serving," says Courtin in 1672,

> one must always give away the best portion and keep the smallest, and touch nothing except with the fork; this is why, if a person of rank asks you for something that is in front of you, it is important to know how to cut meat with propriety and method, and to know the best portions, in order to be able to serve them with civility.
>
> The way to cut them is not prescribed here, because it is a subject on which special books have been written, in which all the pieces are illustrated to show where the meat must first be held with a fork to cut it, for as we have just said, *the meat must never be touched . . . by hand, not even while eating*; then where the knife must be placed to cut it; what must be lifted first . . . what is the best piece, and the piece of honour that must be served to the person of highest rank. It is easy to learn how to carve when one has eaten three or four times at a good table, and for the same reason it is no disgrace to excuse oneself and leave to another what one cannot do oneself.

And the German parallel, the *New vermehrtes Trincier-Büchlein* (New, enlarged carving manual), printed in Rintelen in 1650, says:

> Because the office of carver at princely courts is not reckoned as the lowest but among the most honourable, the same must therefore be either of the nobility or other good descent, of straight and well-proportioned body, good straight arms and nimble hands. In all public cutting he should . . . abstain from large movements and useless and foolish ceremonies . . . and make quite sure that he is not nervous, *so that he does not bring dishonour through trembling of the body and hands* and because in any case this does not befit those at princely tables.

Both carving and distributing the meat were particular honours. It usually fell to the master of the house or to distinguished guests whom he requested to perform the office. "The young and those of lower rank should not interfere in

serving, but only take for themselves in their turn," says the anonymous *Civilité françoise* of 1715.

In the seventeenth century the carving of meat at table gradually ceased, in the French upper class, to be an indispensable accomplishment of the man of the world, such as hunting, fencing, and dancing. The passage quoted from Courtin points to this.

3. That the serving of large parts of the animal to be carved at table gradually went out of use was connected with many factors. One of the most important may be the gradual reduction in the size of the household[59] as part of the movement from larger to smaller family units; then comes the removal of production and processing activities like weaving, spinning and slaughtering from the household, and their gradual transference to specialists, craftsmen, merchants and manufacturers, who practice them professionally while the household becomes essentially a consumption unit.

Here, too, the psychological tendency matches the overall social process: today it would arouse rather uneasy feelings in many people if they or others had to carve half a calf or pig at table or cut meat from a pheasant still adorned with its feathers.

There are even *des gens si délicats*—to repeat the phrase of Courtin, which referred to a related process—to whom the sight of butchers' shops with the bodies of dead animals is distasteful, and others who from more or less rationally disguised feelings of disgust refuse to eat meat altogether. But these are forward thrusts in the threshold of repugnance that go beyond the standard of civilized society in the twentieth century, and are therefore considered "abnormal". Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that it was advances of this kind (if they coincided with the direction of social development in general) that led in the past to changes of standards, and that this particular advance in the threshold of repugnance is proceeding in the same direction that has been followed thus far.

This direction is quite clear. From a standard of feeling by which the sight and carving of a dead animal on the table are actually experrienced as pleasurable, or at least as not at all unpleasant, the development leads to another standard by which reminders that the meat dish has something to do with the killing of an animal are avoided to the utmost. In many of our meat dishes the animal form is so concealed and changed by the art of its preparation and carving that, while eating, one is scarcely reminded of its origin.

It remains to be shown how people, in the course of the civilizing process, have sought to suppress in themselves everything that they feel to be of an "animalic character". They have likewise suppressed such characteristics in their food.

In this area, too, the development has certainly not been uniform everywhere. In England, for example, where in many aspects of life older forms are more

prominently preserved than on the continent, the serving of large portions of meat (and with it the task, which falls to the master of the house, of carving and distributing it) survives in the form of the "joint" to a greater extent than in the urban society of Germany and France. However, quite apart from the fact that the present-day joint is itself a very reduced form of the serving of large pieces of meat, there has been no lack of reactions to it that mark the advance in the threshold of repugnance. The adoption of *service à la russe* at the tables of good society about the middle of the last century acted in this direction. "Our chief thanks to the new system", says an English book on manners, *The Habits of Good Society* (1859), "are due for its ostracising that unwieldy barbarism—the joint. Nothing can make a joint look elegant, while it hides the master of the house, and condemns him into the misery of carving. . . . The truth is, *that unless our appetites are very keen, the sight of much meat reeking in its gravy is sufficient to destroy them entirely*, and a huge joint especially is calculated to disgust the epicure. If joints are eaten at all, they should be placed on the side-table, *where they will be out of sight*" (p. 314).

The increasingly strong tendency to remove the distasteful from the sight of society clearly applies, with few exceptions, to the carving of the whole animal.

This carving, as the examples show, was formerly a direct part of social life in the upper class. Then the spectacle was felt more and more to be distasteful. Carving itself did not disappear, since the animal must, of course, be cut when being eaten. But the distasteful was *removed behind the scenes of social life.* Specialists take care of it in the shop or the kitchen. It will be seen again and again how characteristic of the whole process that we call civilization is this movement of segregation, this hiding "behind the scenes" of what has become distasteful. The curve running from the carving of a large part of the animal or even the whole animal at table, through the advance in the threshold of repugnance at the sight of dead animals, to the removal of carving to specialized enclaves behind the scenes is a typical civilization-curve.

It remains to be investigated how far similar processes underlie similar phenomena in other societies. In the older civilization of China, above all, the concealment of carving behind the scenes was effected much earlier and more radically than in the West. There the process came to be taken so far that the meat is carved and cut up entirely behind the scenes, and the knife is banished altogether from use at table.

Use of the Knife at Table

4. The knife, too, by the nature of its social use, reflects changes in the human personality with its changing drives and wishes. It is an embodiment of historical situations and the structural regularities of society.

One thing above all is characteristic of its use as an eating implement in

present-day Western society: the innumerable prohibitions and taboos surrounding it.

Certainly the knife is a dangerous instrument in what may be called a rational sense. It is a weapon of attack. It inflicts wounds and cuts up animals that have been killed.

But this obviously dangerous quality is beset with affects. The knife becomes a symbol of the most diverse feelings, which are connected to its function and shape but are not deduced "logically" from its purpose. The fear it awakens goes beyond what is rational and is greater than the "calculable", probable danger. And the same is true of the pleasure its use and appearance arouse, even if this aspect is less evident today. In keeping with the structure of our society, the everyday ritual of its use is today determined more by the displeasure and fear than by the pleasure surrounding it. Therefore its use even while eating is restricted by a multitude of prohibitions. These, we have said, extend far beyond the "purely instrumental"; but for every one of them a rational explanation, usually vague and not easily proved, is in everyone's mouth. Only when these taboos are considered together does the supposition arise that the social attitude towards the knife and the rules governing its use while eating—and, above all, the taboos surrounding it—are primarily emotional in nature. Fear, distaste, guilt, associations and emotions of the most disparate kinds exaggerate the probable danger. It is precisely this which anchors such prohibitions so firmly and deeply in the personality and which gives them their taboo character.

5. In the Middle Ages, with their upper class of warriors and the constant readiness of people to fight, and in keeping with the stage of affect control and the relatively low degree of binding or regulation imposed on drives, the prohibitions concerning knives were correspondingly few. "Do not clean your teeth with your knife" was a frequent demand. This was the chief prohibition, but it does indicate the direction of future restrictions on the implement. Moreover, the knife was by far the most important eating utensil. That it would be lifted to the mouth was taken for granted.

But there are indications in the late Middle Ages, even more direct ones than in any later period, that the caution required in using a knife results not only from the rational consideration that one might cut or harm oneself, but above all from the emotion aroused by the sight or the idea of a knife pointed at one's own face.

> Bere not your knyf to warde your visage
> For therein is parelle and mykyl drede

we read in Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* (v. 28). Here, as everywhere later, an element of rationally calculable danger was indeed present, and the warning refers to this. But it is the general memory of and association with death and danger, it is the *symbolic* meaning of the instrument that leads, with the advancing internal

pacification of society, to the preponderance of feelings of displeasure at the sight of it, and to the limitation and final exclusion of its use in society. The mere sight of a knife pointed at the face arouses fear: "Bear not your knife toward your face, for therein is peril and much dread." This is the emotional basis of the powerful taboo of a later phase, which forbids the lifting of the knife to the mouth.

The case is similar with the prohibition which in our series of examples was mentioned first by Calviac in 1560 (at the end of Example E): If you pass someone a knife, take the point in your hand and offer him the handle, "for it would not be polite to do otherwise".

Here, as so often until the later stage when the child is given a "rational" explanation for every prohibition, no reason was given for the social ritual except that "it would not be polite to do otherwise". But it is not difficult to see the emotional meaning of this command: one should not move the point of the knife towards someone as in an attack. The mere symbolic meaning of this act, the memory of the warlike threat, is unpleasant. Here, too, the knife ritual contained a rational element. Someone might use the passing of the knife in order suddenly to stab someone. But a social ritual was formed from this danger because the dangerous gesture established itself on an emotional level as a general source of displeasure, a symbol of death and danger. Society, which was beginning at this time more and more to limit the real dangers threatening people, and consequently to remodel the affective life of individuals, increasingly placed a barrier around the symbols as well, the gestures and instruments of danger. Thus the restrictions and prohibitions on the use of the knife increased, along with the restraints imposed on individuals.

6. If we leave aside the details of this development and only consider the result, the present form of the knife ritual, we find an astonishing abundance of taboos of varying severity. The imperative never to put a knife to one's mouth is one of the gravest and best known. That it greatly exaggerates the actual, probable danger scarcely needs to be said; for social groups accustomed to using knives and eating with them hardly ever injure their mouths with them. The prohibition has become a means of social distinction. In the uneasy feeling that comes over us at the mere sight of someone putting a knife into the mouth, all this is present at once: the general fear that the dangerous symbol arouses, and the more specific fear of social degradation which parents and educators have from early on awakened in us in relation to this practice with their admonitions that "it is not done".

But there are other prohibitions surrounding the knife that have little or nothing to do with a direct danger to the body, and which seem to point to symbolic values of the knife other than the association with war. The fairly strict prohibition on eating fish with a knife-circumvented and modified today by the introduction of a special fish knife—seems at first sight rather obscure in its

emotional meaning, though psychoanalytical theory points at least in the direction of an explanation. There is a well-known prohibition on holding cutlery, particularly knives, with the whole hand, "like a stick", as La Salle put it, though he was at that time referring only to fork and spoon (Example J). Then there is obviously a general tendency to eliminate or at least restrict the contact of the knife with round or egg-shaped objects. The best-known and one of the gravest of such prohibitions is on cutting potatoes with a knife. But the rather less strict prohibition on cutting dumplings with a knife or opening boiled eggs with one also point in the same direction, and occasionally, in especially sensitive circles, one finds a tendency to avoid cutting apples or even oranges with a knife. "I may hint that no epicure ever yet put knife to apple, and that an orange should be peeled with a spoon", says *The Habits of Good Society* of 1859 and 1890.

7. But these more or less strict particular prohibitions, the list of which could certainly be extended, are in a sense only examples of a general line of development in the use of the knife that is fairly distinct. There is a tendency that has slowly permeated civilized society, with pressure from the top to the bottom, to restrict the use of the knife (within the framework of prevailing techniques of eating) and wherever possible not to use the instrument at all.

This tendency made its first appearance in a precept as apparently trivial and obvious as that quoted in Example I: "Do not keep your knife always in your hand, as village people do, but take it only when you need it." It was clearly very strong in the middle of the last century, when the English book on manners just quoted, *The Habits of Good Society*, said: "Let me give you a rule—everything that can be cut without a knife, should be cut with fork alone." And one need only observe present-day usage to find this tendency confirmed. This is one of the few distinct cases of a development which is beginning to go beyond the standard of eating technique and ritual attained by court society. But this is not, of course, in the least to say that the "civilization" of the West will actually continue in this direction. It is a beginning, a possibility like many others that exist in every society. All the same, it is not inconceivable that the preparation of food in the kitchen will develop in a direction that restricts the use of the knife at table still further, displacing it even more than hitherto to specialized enclaves behind the scenes.

Strong regressive movements are certainly not inconceivable either. It is sufficiently well known that, for example, the conditions of life in World War I automatically enforced a breakdown of some of the taboos of peacetime civilization. In the trenches, officers and soldiers again ate when necessary with knives and hands. The threshold of repugnance shrank rather rapidly under the pressure of the inescapable situation.

Apart from such breaches, which are always possible and can also lead to new consolidations, the line of development in the use of the knife is quite clear.[60] The regulation and binding of the emotional economy have been sharpened. The

commands and prohibitions which surround the menacing instrument became ever more numerous and differentiated. Finally, the use of the threatening symbol has been limited as far as possible.

One cannot avoid comparing the direction of this civilizing-curve with the custom long practised in China. There, as has been said, the knife disappeared many centuries ago from use at table. According to the feelings of many Chinese, the manner in which Europeans eat is "uncivilized". "The Europeans are barbarians", people say there now and again, "they eat with swords". One may surmise that this custom is connected with the fact that for a long time in China the model-making upper class was not a warrior class but a class of scholarly officials pacified to a particularly high degree.

On the Use of the Fork at Table

8. What is the real use of the fork? It serves to lift food that has been cut up to the mouth. Why do we need a fork for this? Why do we not use our fingers? Because it is "cannibal", as the "Man in the Club-Window", the anonymous author of *The Habits of Good Society* said in 1859. Why is it "cannibal" to eat with one's fingers? That is not a question; it is self-evidently cannibal, barbaric, uncivilized or whatever else it is called.

But that is precisely the question. Why is it more civilized to eat with a fork?

"Because it is unhygienic to eat with one's fingers." That sounds convincing. To our sensibility it is unhygienic if different people put their fingers into the same dish, because there is a danger of contracting disease through contact with others. Each of us seems to fear that the others are diseased.

But this explanation is not entirely satisfactory. Nowadays we do not eat from common dishes. Everyone puts food into their mouth from their own plate. To pick it up from one's own plate with one's fingers cannot be more "unhygienic" than to put cake, bread, chocolate or anything else into one's mouth with one's own fingers.

So why does one really need a fork? Why is it "barbaric" and "uncivilized" to put food into one's mouth by hand from one's own plate? Because it is distasteful to dirty one's fingers, or at least to be seen in society with dirty fingers. The suppression of eating by hand from one's own plate has very little to do with the danger of illness, the so-called "rational" explanation. In observing our feelings towards the fork ritual, we can see with particular clarity that the first authority in our decision between whether behaviour at table is "civilized" or "uncivilized" is our feeling of distaste. The fork is nothing other than the embodiment of a specific standard of emotions and a specific level of revulsion. Behind the change in eating techniques between the Middle Ages and modern times appears the same process that emerged in the analysis of other incarnations of this kind: a change in the economy of drives and emotions.

Modes of behaviour which in the Middle Ages were not felt to be in the least distasteful have increasingly become surrounded by feelings of distaste. The standard of delicacy finds expression in corresponding social prohibitions. These taboos, so far as can be ascertained, are nothing other than ritualized or institutionalized feelings of displeasure, distaste, disgust, fear or shame, feelings which have been socially nurtured under quite specific conditions and which are constantly reproduced, not solely but mainly because they have become institutionally firmly embedded in a particular ritual, in particular forms of conduct.

The examples show—certainly only in a narrow cross-section and in the relatively randomly selected statements of individuals—how, in a phase of development in which the use of the fork was not yet taken for granted, the feeling of distaste that first formed within a narrow circle was slowly extended. "It is very impolite", says Courtin in 1672 (Example G), "to touch anything greasy, a sauce or syrup, etc., with your fingers, apart from the fact that it obliges you to commit two or three more improper acts. One is to wipe your hand frequently on your serviette and to soil it like a kitchen cloth, so that those who see you wipe your mouth with it feel nauseated. Another is to wipe your fingers on your bread, which again is very improper. [N.B. The French terms *propre* and *malpropre* used by Courtin and explained in one of his chapters coincide less with the German terms for clean and unclean (*sauber* and *unsauber*) than with the word frequently used earlier, "proper".] The third is to lick them, which is the height of impropriety."

The *Civilité* of 1729 by La Salle (Example J), which transmitted the behaviour of the upper class to broader circles, says on one page: "When the fingers are very greasy, wipe them first on a piece of bread." This shows how far from general acceptance, even at this time, was the standard of delicacy that Courtin had already represented decades earlier. On the other hand, La Salle took over fairly literally Courtin's precept that "*Bienséance* does not permit anything greasy, a sauce or a syrup, to be touched with the fingers." And, exactly like Courtin, he mentioned among the ensuing *incivilités* wiping the hands on bread and licking the fingers, as well as soiling the napkin.

It can be seen that manners were here still in the process of formation. The new standard did not appear suddenly. Certain forms of behaviour were placed under prohibition, not because they were unhealthy but because they led to an offensive sight and disagreeable associations; shame at offering such a spectacle, originally absent, and fear of arousing such associations were gradually spread from the standard setting circles to larger circles by numerous authorities and institutions. However, once such feelings had been aroused and firmly established in society by means of certain rituals like that involving the fork, they were constantly reproduced so long as the structure of human relations was not fundamentally altered. The older generation, for whom such a standard of conduct is accepted as a matter of course, urges the children, who do not come into the world already equipped

with these feelings and this standard, to control themselves more or less rigorously in accordance with it, and to restrain their drives and inclinations. If children tried to touch something sticky, wet or greasy with their fingers they were told, "You must not do that, people do not do things like that". And the displeasure towards such conduct which is thus aroused by the adult finally arises through habit, without being induced by another person.

To a large extent, however, the conduct and drives of the child are forced even without words into the same mould and in the same direction by the fact that a particular use of knife and fork, for example, is completely established in adult society—that is, by the example of the surrounding world. Since the pressure or coercion of individual adults is allied to the pressure and example of the whole surrounding world, most children, as they grow up, forget or repress relatively early the fact that their feelings of shame and embarrassment, of pleasure and displeasure, were moulded into conformity with a certain standard by external pressure and compulsion. All this appears to them as highly personal, something "inside", implanted in them by nature. While it is still directly visible in the writings of Courtin and La Salle that adults, too, were at first dissuaded from eating with their fingers by consideration for each other, by "politeness", to spare others a distasteful spectacle and themselves the shame of being seen with soiled hands, later it became more and more an inner automatism, the imprint of society on the inner self, the superego, that forbade the individual to eat in any other way than with a fork. The social standard to which the individual was first made to conform from outside by external restraint is finally reproduced more or less smoothly within him or her, through a self-restraint which operates to a certain degree even against his or her conscious wishes.

Thus the socio-historical process of centuries, in the course of which the standard of what is felt to be shameful and offensive has been slowly raised, is re-enacted in abbreviated form in the life of the individual human being. If one wished to express recurrent processes of this kind in the form of laws, one could speak, as a parallel to the laws of biogenesis, of a fundamental law of sociogenesis and psychogenesis.

V

Changes in Attitudes Towards the Natural Functions

Examples

Fifteenth century?

A

From *S'ensuivent les contenances de la table*:

VIII

Before you sit down, make sure your seat has not been fouled.

B

From *Ein spruch der ze tische kêrt:*[61]

329 Do not touch yourself under your clothes with your bare hands.

C

1530

From *De civilitate morum puerilium*, by Erasmus. The glosses are taken from a Cologne edition of 1530 which was probably already intended for educational purposes. Under the title is the following note: "Recognized by the author, and elucidated with new scholia by Gisbertus Longolius Ultratraiectinus, Cologne, in the year XXX." The fact that these questions were discussed in such a way in schoolbooks makes the difference from later attitudes particularly clear:

It is impolite to greet someone who is urinating or defecating. . . .

A well-bred person should always avoid exposing without necessity the parts to which nature has attached modesty. If necessity compels this, it should be done with decency and reserve, even if no witness is present. For angels are always present, and nothing is more welcome to them in a boy than modesty, the companion and guardian of decency. If it arouses shame to show them to the eyes of others, still less should they be exposed to their touch.

To hold back urine is harmful to health, to pass it in secret betokens modesty. There are those who teach that the boy should retain wind by compressing the belly. Yet it is not pleasing, while striving to appear urbane, to contract an illness. If it is possible to withdraw, it should be done alone. But if not, in accordance with the ancient proverb, let a cough hide the sound. Moreover, why do not the same works teach that boys should not defecate, since it is more dangerous to hold back wind than to constrict the bowel?

[This is glossed as follows in the scholia, p. 33:]

To contract an illness: Listen to the old maxim about the sound of wind. If it can be purged without a noise that is best. But it is better that it be emitted with a noise than that it be held back.

At this point, however, it would have been useful to suppress the feeling of embarrassment so as to either calm your body or, following the advice of all doctors, to press your buttocks together and to act according to the suggestions in Aethon's epigrams: Even though he had to be careful not to fart explosively in the holy place, he nevertheless prayed to Zeus, though with compressed buttocks. The sound of farting, especially of those who stand on elevated ground, is horrible. One should make sacrifices with the buttocks firmly pressed together.

To let a cough hide the explosive sound: Those who, because they are embarrassed, want the explosive wind to be heard, simulate a cough. Follow the law of Chiliades: Replace farts with coughs.

Regarding the unhealthiness of retaining the wind: There are some verses in volume two of Nicharchos' epigrams where he describes the illness-bearing power of the retained fart, but since these lines are quoted by everybody I will not comment on them here.

The thoroughness, the extraordinary seriousness, and the complete freedom with which questions are publicly discussed here that have subsequently become privatized to a high degree and overlain in social life with strong prohibitions shows particularly clearly the shift of the frontier of embarrassment and its advance in a specific direction. That feelings of shame are frequently mentioned explicitly in the discussion underlines the difference in the shame standard.

D

1558

From *Galateo*, by Della Casa, quoted from the five-language edition (Geneva, 1609), p. 32:

Moreover, it does not befit a modest, honourable man to prepare to relieve nature in the presence of other people, nor to do up his clothes afterward in their presence. Similarly, he will not wash his hands on returning to decent society from private places, as the reason for his washing will arouse disagreeable thoughts in people. For the same reason it is not a refined habit, when coming across something disgusting in the sheet, as sometimes happens, to turn at once to one's companion and point it out to him.

It is far less proper to hold out the stinking thing for the other to smell, as some are wont, who even urge the other to do so, lifting the foul-smelling thing to his nostrils and saying, "I should like to know how much that stinks", when it would be better to say, "Because it stinks do not smell it".

E

1570

From the Wernigerode Court Regulations of 1570:[62]

One should not, like rustics who have not been to court or lived among refined and honourable people, relieve oneself without shame or reserve in front of ladies, or before the doors or windows of court chambers or other rooms. Rather, everyone ought at all times and in all places to show himself reasonable, courteous and respectful in word and gesture.

F

1589

From the Brunswick Court Regulations of 1589:[63]

Let no one, whoever he may be, before, at, or after meals, early or late, foul the

staircases, corridors or closets with urine or other filth, but go to suitable, prescribed places for such relief.

G

c. 1619

Richard Weste, *The Booke of Demeanor and the Allowance and Disallowance of Certaine Misdemeanors in Companie*:[64]

143 Let not thy privy members be
layd open to be view'd,
it is most shameful and abhord,
detestable and rude.
Retaine not urine nor the winde
which doth thy body vex
so it be done with secresie
let that not thee perplex.

H

1694

From the correspondence of the Duchess of Orléans (October 9, 1694; date also given as August 25, 1718):

> The smell of the mire is horrible. Paris is a dreadful place. The streets smell so badly that you cannot go out. The extreme heat is causing large quantities of meat and fish to rot in them, and this, coupled to the multitude of people who . . . in the street, produces a smell so detestable that it cannot be endured.

I

1729

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (Rouen, 1729), pp. 45ff.:

> It is a part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and hands. You should care, so far as you can, not to touch with your bare hand any part of the body that is not normally uncovered. And if you are obliged to do so, it should be done with great precaution. You should get used to suffering small discomforts without twisting, rubbing or scratching. . . .
>
> It is far more contrary to decency and propriety to touch or see in another person, particularly of the other sex, that which Heaven forbids you to look at in yourself. When you need to pass water, you should always withdraw to some unfrequented place. And it is proper (even for children) to perform other natural functions where you cannot be seen.
>
> *It is very impolite to emit wind from your body when in company, either from above or from below, even if it is done without noise* [This rule, in line with more recent custom, is the

exact opposite of what is prescribed in Examples C and G]; and it is shameful and indecent to do it in a way that can be heard by others.

It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should be hidden, nor of certain bodily necessities to which Nature has subjected us, nor even to mention them.

J

1731

From Johann Christian Barth, *The Gallant Ethic, in which it is shown how a young man should commend himself to polite society through refined acts and complaisant words. Prepared for the special advantage and pleasure of all amateurs of present-day good manners*, 4th edn (Dresden and Leipzig, 1731), p. 288:

German developments were somewhat slower than French. As the following excerpt shows, as late as the first half of the eighteenth century a courtesy precept is given which represents the same standard of manners as that found in the passage by Erasmus quoted above: "It is impolite to greet someone who is urinating or defecating".

> If you pass a person who is relieving himself you should act as if you had not seen him, and so it is impolite to greet him.

K

1774

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (1774 edn), p. 24. The chapter "On the Parts of the Body That Should Be Hidden, and on Natural Necessities" covers a good two and one-half pages in the earlier edition and scarcely one and one-half in that of 1774. The passage "You should take care . . . not to touch, etc." is missing. Much that could be and had to be expressed earlier is no longer spoken of:

> It is a part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and hands.
>
> As far as natural needs are concerned, it is proper (even for children) to satisfy them only where one cannot be seen.
>
> It is never proper to speak of the parts of the body that should always be hidden, or of certain bodily necessities to which nature has subjected us, or even to mention them.

L

1768

Letter from Madame du Deffand to Madame de Choiseul, 9 May 1768;[65] quoted as an example of the prestige value of the utensil

> I should like to tell you, dear Grandmother, as I told the Grand-Abbé, how great was

my surprise when a large bag from you was brought to me at my bed yesterday morning. I hastened to open it, put in my hand, and found some green peas . . . and then a vase . . . that I quickly pulled out: it was a chamber pot. But of such beauty and magnificence that my people say in unison *that it ought to be used as a sauce boat. The chamber pot was on display the whole of yesterday evening and was admired by everyone.* The peas . . . were eaten till not one was left.

Some Remarks on the Examples and on these Changes in General

1. The *courtois* verses say little on this subject. The social commands and prohibitions surrounding this area of life were relatively few. In this respect, too, at least in secular society, everything was far more lax. Neither the functions themselves, nor speaking about them or associations with them, were so intimate and private, so invested with feelings of shame and embarrassment, as they later became.

Erasmus's treatise marks, for these areas too, a point on the curve of civilization which represents, on the one hand, a notable rise of the shame threshold, compared to the preceding epoch; and on the other, compared to more recent times, a freedom in speaking of natural functions, a "lack of shame", which to most people adhering to the present-day standard may at first appear incomprehensible and often "embarrassing".

But at the same time, it is quite clear that this treatise had precisely the function of cultivating feelings of shame. Reference to the omnipresence of angels, used to justify the restraint on impulses to which the child was to be accustomed, is very characteristic. The foundations for the anxiety which was aroused in young people, in order to compel them to suppress the display of pleasure in accordance with the standard of social conduct, changed in the course of centuries. Here, the anxiety aroused in connection with the renunciation of drive gratification was explained and given substance to oneself and others in terms of external spirits. Somewhat later, the restraint which people had to impose upon themselves, along with the fear, shame and distaste towards any infringement, often appeared very clearly, at least in the upper class, in the courtly-aristocratic circle itself, as social pressure, as shame and fear of other people. In the wider society, though, reference to the guardian angel clearly remained very long in use as an instrument for conditioning children. It receded somewhat when damage to health and "hygienic reasons" were given more emphasis in bringing about a certain degree of restraint of impulses and a specific modelling of emotions. These hygienic reasons then played an important role in adult thinking about civilization, usually without their relation to the arsenal of childhood conditioning being realized. It is only from such a realization, however, that what is rational in them can be distinguished from

what is only seemingly rational, i.e., founded primarily on the disgust and shame feelings of adults.

2. As already mentioned, Erasmus in his treatise acted as the forerunner of a new standard of shame and repugnance which first began to form slowly in the secular upper class. Yet he also spoke as a matter of course about things which it has since become embarrassing to mention. He, whose delicacy of feeling is demonstrated again and again by this very treatise, found nothing amiss in calling by their names bodily functions which, by our present standards, may not be even mentioned in company, and still less in books on etiquette. But between this delicacy and this lack of inhibition there was no contradiction. He spoke from another stage of control and restraint of emotions.

The different standard of society in Erasmus's time becomes clear if one reads how commonplace it was to meet someone "qui urinam reddit aut alvum exonerat" (urinating or defecating). And the greater freedom with which people were able at this time to perform and speak about their bodily functions before others recalls the behaviour that can still be encountered, for example, throughout the Orient today. But delicacy forbids that one greet anyone encountered in this position.

The different standard is also visible when Era mus says it is not civil to require that the young man "ventris flatum retineat" (hold back his wind), for in doing so he might, under the appearance of urbanity, contract an illness; and Erasmus comments similarly on sneezing and related acts.

Health considerations are not found very frequently in this treatise. When they do occur it is almost always, as here, to oppose demands for the restraint of natural functions; whereas later, above all in the nineteenth century, they nearly always serve as instruments to compel restraint and renunciation of the gratification of drives. It is only in the twentieth century that a slight relaxation appears.

3. The examples from La Salle must suffice to indicate how the feeling of delicacy was advancing. Again the difference between the editions of 1729 and 1774 is very instructive. Certainly, even the earlier edition already embodied a quite different standard of delicacy than Erasmus's treatise. The demand that all natural functions should be removed from the view of other people was raised quite unequivocally, even if the uttering of this demand indicates that the actual behaviour of people—both adults and children—did not yet conform to it. Although La Salle said that it is not very polite even to speak of such functions or the parts of the body concerned, he himself still spoke of them with a minuteness of detail astonishing to us; he called things by their names, whereas the corresponding terms are missing in Courtin's *Civilité* of 1672, which was intended for the upper classes.

In the later edition of La Salle, too, all detailed references were avoided. More and more these necessities were "passed over in silence". The mere reminder of

them had become embarrassing to people in the presence of others who were not close acquaintances, and in society everything that might even remotely or associatively recall such necessities was avoided.

At the same time, the examples make it apparent how slowly the real process of suppressing these functions from social life took place. Sufficient material[66] has been passed down to us precisely because the silence on these subjects did not exist earlier, or was less strictly observed. What is usually lacking is the idea that information of this kind has more than curiosity value, so that it is seldom synthesized into a picture of the overall line of development. However, if one takes an overall view, a typical civilizing curve is again revealed.

4. At first these functions and the sight of them were invested only slightly with feelings of shame and repugnance, and were therefore subjected only mildly to isolation and restraint. They were taken as much for granted as combing one's hair or putting on one's shoes. Children were conditioned accordingly.

"Tell me in exact sequence", says the teacher to a pupil in a schoolbook of 1568, Mathurin Cordier's dialogues for schoolboys,[67] "what you did between getting up and having your breakfast. Listen carefully, boys, so that you learn to imitate your fellow pupil." "I woke up," says the pupil, "got out of bed, put on my shirt, stockings and shoes, buckled my belt, urinated against the courtyard wall, took fresh water from the bucket, washed my hands and face and dried them on the cloth, etc."

In later times the action in the courtyard, at least in a book written like this one expressly as a manual of instruction and example, would have been simply passed over as "unimportant". Here it is neither particularly "unimportant" nor particularly "important". It is taken for granted as much as anything else.

A pupil who wished to report on this necessity today would do so either as a kind of joke, taking the invitation of the teacher "too literally", or would speak of it in circumlocutions. But most probably he would conceal his embarrassment with a smile, and a "complicit" smile from the others, the expression of a more or less minor infringement of a taboo, would be the response.

The conduct of adults corresponded to these different kinds of conditioning. For a long period the street, and almost any place one happened to be, served the same and related purposes as the courtyard wall above. It was not even unusual to turn to the staircase, the corners of rooms, or the hangings on the walls of a castle if one were overtaken by such a need. Examples E and F make this clear. But they also show how, given the specific and permanent interdependence of many people living together at the courts, the pressure exerted from above towards a stricter regulation of impulses, and therefore towards greater restraint, grew in strength.

Stricter control of impulses and emotions was first imposed by those of high social rank on their social inferiors or, at most, their social equals. It was only comparatively late, when bourgeois strata with relatively large numbers of social

equals had become the upper, ruling class, that the family became the only—or, more exactly, the primary and dominant—institution with the function of instilling drive control. Only then did the social dependence of children on their parents become particularly important as a leverage for the socially required regulation and moulding of impulses and emotions.

In the stage of the feudal courts, and still more in that of the absolute courts, the courts themselves largely fulfilled this function for the upper class. In the latter stage, much of what has been made "second nature" in us had not yet been inculcated in this form, as an automatically functioning self-restraint, a habit that, within certain limits, also functions when a person is alone. Rather, restraint on the drives was at first imposed only in the company of others, i.e., more consciously on social grounds. And both the kind and the degree of restraint corresponded to the social position of the person imposing them, relative to the position of those in whose company he or she was. This slowly changes as the social distance between people is reduced and as the gradations of dependency relations, the hierarchical character of society lose their sharpness of outline. As the interdependence of people increases with the increasing division of labour, everyone becomes increasingly dependent on everyone else, even those of high social rank on those people who are socially inferior and weaker. The latter become so much the equals of the former that they, the socially superior people, can experience shame-feelings even in the presence of their social inferiors. It is only in this connection that the armour of restraints is fastened to the degree which is gradually taken for granted by people in democratic industrial societies.

To take from the wealth of examples one instance which shows the contrast particularly clearly and which, correctly understood, throws light on the whole development, Della Casa gives in his *Galateo* a list of malpractices to be avoided. One should not fall asleep in company, he says; one should not take out letters and read them; one should not pare or clean one's fingernails. "Furthermore", he continues (p. 92), "one should not sit with one's back or posterior turned towards another, nor raise a thigh so high that the members of the human body, which should properly be covered with clothing at all times, might be exposed to view. *For this and similar things are not done, except among people before whom one is not ashamed* (se non tra quelle persone, che l'huom non riverisce). *It is true that a great lord might do so before one of his servants or in the presence of a friend of lower rank; for in this he would not show him arrogance but rather a particular affection and friendship.*"

There were people before whom one was ashamed, and others before whom one was not. The feeling of shame was clearly a social function moulded according to the social structure. This was perhaps not often *expressed* so clearly. But the corresponding *behaviour* is amply documented. In France,[68] as late as the seventeenth century, kings and great lords received specially favoured inferiors on occasions on which, a German saying was later to run, even the emperor should

be alone. To receive inferiors when getting up and being dressed, or on going to bed, was for a whole period a matter of course. And it shows exactly the same stage of the shame-feelings when Voltaire's mistress, the Marquise de Châtelet, shows herself naked to her servant while bathing in a way that casts him into confusion, and then with total unconcern scolds him because he is not pouring in the hot water properly.[69]

Behaviour which in more democratized industrial societies has become surrounded on all sides with taboos, with learned feelings of shame or embarrassment of varying degrees, was at this earlier period only partially so surrounded. It was omitted in the company of those of higher or equal rank. In this area, too, coercion and restraint were self-imposed on the same pattern as was visible earlier in table manners. "Nor do I believe", we read in *Galateo* (p. 580), "that it is fitting to serve from the common dish intended for all guests, unless the server is of higher rank so that the other, who is served, is thereby especially honoured. For when this is done among equals, it appears as if the server is partly placing himself above the others."

In this hierarchically structured society, every act performed in the presence of many people took on prestige value. For this reason the restraint of the emotions, that we call "politeness", also had a different form from what it became later, when outward differences of rank had been partly levelled. What is mentioned here as a special case in intercourse between equals, that one should not serve another, later became a general practice. In company everyone helps themselves, and everyone begins eating at the same time.

The situation was similar with the exposure of the body. First it became a distasteful offence to show oneself exposed in any way before those of higher or equal rank; with inferiors it could even be a sign of good will. Then, as all become socially more equal, it slowly became a general offence. The social determination of shame and embarrassment-feelings receded more and more from consciousness. Precisely because the social command not to expose oneself or be seen performing natural functions now operates with regard to everyone and is imprinted in this form in children, it seems to adults to be a command of their own inner selves and takes on the form of a more or less total and automatic self–restraint.

5. But this weeding out of the natural functions from public life, and the corresponding regulation or moulding of drives, was only possible because, together with growing sensitivity, a technical apparatus was developed which solved fairly satisfactorily the problem of eliminating these functions from social life and displacing them behind the scenes. The situation was not unlike that regarding table manners. The process of social change, the advance in the frontiers of shame and the threshold of repugnance, cannot be explained by any one thing, and certainly not by the development of technology or by scientific

discoveries. On the contrary, it would not be very difficult to demonstrate the sociogenesis and psychogenesis of these inventions and discoveries.

But once, in conjunction with a general transformation of human relations, a reshaping of human needs was set in motion, the development of a technical apparatus corresponding to the changed standard consolidated the changed habits to an extraordinary degree. This apparatus served both the constant reproduction of the standard and its dissemination.

It is not uninteresting to observe that today [in the 1930s, the translator], when this standard of conduct has been so heavily consolidated that it is taken for granted, a certain relaxation is setting in, particularly in comparison to the nineteenth century, at least with regard to talk about the natural functions. The freedom and lack of inhibition with which people say what has to be said without embarrassment, without the forced smile and laughter of a taboo infringement, has clearly increased in the post-war period. But this, like modern bathing and dancing practices, is only possible because the level of habitual, technically and institutionally consolidated self-control, the individual capacity to restrain one's urges and behaviour in correspondence with the more advanced feelings for what is offensive, has been on the whole secured. It is a relaxation within the framework of an already established standard.

6. The standard which is emerging in our phase of the civilizing process is characterized by a profound distance between the behaviour of so-called "adults" and children. The children have in the space of a few years to attain the advanced level of shame and revulsion that has developed over many centuries. Their drives must be rapidly subjected to the strict control and specific moulding that gives our societies their stamp, and which developed very slowly over centuries. In this the parents are only the (often inadequate) instruments, the primary agents of the conditioning; through them and thousands of other instruments it is always society as a whole, the entire figuration of human beings, that exerts its pressure on the new generation, forming them more or less perfectly.

In the Middle Ages, too, it was the society as a whole which exerted this formative pressure, even if—it remains to show this more exactly—the mechanisms and organs of conditioning, particularly in the upper class, were in large part different from those of today. But above all, the control and restraint to which the drive life of adults was subjected was considerably less than in the following phase of civilization, as consequently was the difference in behaviour between adults and children.

The individual inclinations and tendencies which medieval writings on etiquette were concerned to control were often the same as can be frequently observed in children today. However, they are now dealt with so early that certain kinds of "bad habit" which were quite commonplace in the medieval world scarcely manifest themselves in present-day social life.

Children today are admonished not to snatch whatever they want from the

table, and not to scratch themselves or touch their noses, ears, eyes or other parts of their bodies at table. The child is instructed not to speak or drink with a full mouth, or to sprawl on the table, and so on. Many of these precepts are also to be found in Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht*, for example, but there they are addressed not to children but unequivocally to adults. This becomes still more apparent if one considers the way in which adults earlier satisfied their natural needs. This very often happened—as the examples show—in a manner that would be just tolerated in children today. Often enough, needs were satisfied where and when they happened to be felt. The degree of restraint and control over drives expected by adults of each other was not much greater than that imposed on children. The distance between adults and children, measured by that of today, was slight.

Today the ring of precepts and regulations is drawn so tightly about people, the censorship and pressure of social life which forms their habits are so strong, that young people have only two alternatives: to submit to the pattern of behaviour demanded by society, or to be excluded from life in "decent society". A child that does not attain the level of affect-moulding demanded by society is regarded in varying gradations from the standpoint of a particular caste or class, as "ill", "abnormal", "criminal", or just "impossible", and is accordingly excluded from the life of that class. Indeed, from a psychological point of view, the terms "sick", "abnormal", "criminal", and "impossible" have, up to a certain point, no other meaning; how they are understood varies with the historically mutable models of affect formation.

Very instructive in this regard is the conclusion of Example D: "It is far less proper to hold out the stinking thing for the other to smell, etc." A drive-formation and behaviour of this kind would, by today's standard of shame and revulsion, simply exclude a person as "sick", "pathological", or "perverse" from mixing with others. If the inclination to such behaviour were manifested publicly, the person would, depending on his or her social position, be confined indoors or in a mental institution. At best, if this tendency were only manifested behind the scenes, a specialist in nervous disorders would be assigned the task of correcting this person's unsuccessful conditioning. In general, impulses of this kind have disappeared from the waking consciousness of adults under the pressure of conditioning. Only psychoanalysis uncovers them in the form of unsatisfied and unsatisfiable desires which can be described as the unconscious or the dream level of the mind. And these desires have indeed in our society the character of an "infantile" residue, because the social standard of adults makes a complete suppression and transformation of such tendencies necessary, so that they appear, when they occur in adults, as a "remnant" from childhood.

The standard of delicacy represented by *Galateo* also demanded a detachment from these instinctual tendencies. But the pressure to transform such inclinations exerted on individuals by society was minimal compared to that of today. The feeling of revulsion, distaste or disgust aroused by such behaviour was, in

keeping with the earlier standard, incomparably weaker than ours. Consequently, the social prohibition on the expression of such feelings was much less grave. This behaviour was not regarded as a "pathological anomaly" or a "perversion", but rather as an offence against tact, courtesy or good form.

Della Casa spoke of this "bad habit" with scarcely more emphasis than we might today speak of someone biting his or her nails in public. The very fact that he speaks of "such things" at all shows how harmless this practice then still appeared.

Nevertheless, in one way this example marks a turning-point. It may be supposed that affect-expressions of this sort were not lacking in the preceding period. But only now did they begin to attract attention. Society was gradually beginning to suppress the positive pleasure component in certain functions more and more strongly by the arousal of anxiety. Or more exactly, it was beginning to "privatize" them, to force them into the "inside" of individuals, into "secrecy", and to allow the negatively-charged affects—displeasure, revulsion and repugnance—to be the only socially allowed feelings that are developed through socialization. But precisely by this increased social proscription of many impulses, by their "repression" from the surface both of social life and of consciousness, the distance between the personality structure and behaviour of adults and children was necessarily increased.

VI

On Blowing One's Nose

Examples

A

Thirteenth century

From Bonvesin de la Riva (Bonvicino da Riva), *De la zinquanta cortexie da tavola* (Fifty table courtesies):

(a) Precept for gentlemen:

> When you blow your nose or cough, turn round so that nothing falls on the table.

(b) Precept for pages or servants:

> Pox la trentena è questa:
> zaschun cortese donzello
> Che se vore mondà lo naxo,
> con li drapi se faza bello;
> Chi mangia, over chi menestra,

no de'sofià con le die;
Con li drapi da pey se monda
vostra cortexia.*

B

Fifteenth century?

From *Ein spruch der ze tische kêrt:*

It is unseemly to blow your nose into the tablecloth.

C

From *S'ensuivent les contenances de la table:*

XXXIII

Do not blow your nose with the same hand that you use to hold the meat.**

D

From A. Cabanès, *Moeurs intimes du temps passé* (Paris, 1910), 1st series, p. 101:

In the fifteenth century people blew their noses into their fingers, and the sculptors of the age were not afraid to reproduce the gesture, in a passably realistic form, in their monuments.

Among the knights, the plourans, at the grave of Philip the Bold at Dijon, one is seen blowing his nose into his coat, another into his fingers.

E

Sixteenth century

From *De civilitate morum puerilium*, by Erasmus, ch. 1:

To blow your nose on your hat or clothing is rustic, and to do so with the arm or elbow befits a tradesman; nor is it much more polite to use the hand, if you immediately smear the snot on your garment. It is proper to wipe the nostrils with a handkerchief, and to do this while turning away, *if more honourable people are present.*

If anything falls to the ground when blowing the nose with two fingers, it should immediately be trodden away.

---

* The meaning of passage (b) is not entirely clear. What is apparent is that it was addressed especially to people who served at table. A commentator, Uguccione Pisano, says: "Those are called *donizelli* who are handsome, young, and the servants of great lords. . . ." These *donizelli* were not allowed to sit at the same table as the knights; or, if this was permitted, they had to sit on a lower chair. They, pages of a kind and at any rate social inferiors, were told: The thirty-first courtesy is this—every *courtois* "donzel" who wishes to blow his nose should beautify himself with a cloth. When he is eating or serving he should not blow (his nose?) through his fingers. It is *courtois* to use the foot bandage.

** According to an editor's note (*The Babees Book*, vol. 2, p. 14), courtesy consisted in blowing the nose with the fingers of the left hand if one ate and took meat from the common dish with the right.

[From the scholia on this passage:]

Between snot and spit there is little difference, except that the former fluid is to be interpreted as coarser and the latter more unclean. The Latin writers constantly confuse a breastband, a napkin or any piece of linen with a handkerchief.

F

1558

From *Galateo*, by Della Casa, quoted from the five-language edition (Geneva, 1609), pp. 72, 44, 618:

> You should not offer your handkerchief to anyone unless it has been freshly washed. . . .
>
> Nor is it seemly, after wiping your nose, to spread out your handkerchief and peer into it as if pearls and rubies might have fallen out of your head.
>
> . . . What, then, shall I say of those . . . who carry their handkerchiefs about in their mouths? . . .

G

From Cabanès, *Moeurs intimes*, pp. 103, 168, 102:

> [From Martial d'Auvergne, "Love decrees"] . . . in order that she might remember him, he decided to have one of the most beautiful and sumptuous handkerchiefs made for her, in which his name was in letters entwined in the prettiest fashion, for it was joined to a fine golden heart bordered with tiny heart's eases.***
>
> [From Lestoil, *Journal d'Henri IV*] In 1594, Henri IV asked his valet how many shirts he [the King] had, and the latter replied: "A dozen, sire, and some torn ones." "And how many handkerchiefs?" asked the king. "Have I not eight?" "For the moment there are only five," he said.
>
> In 1599, after her death, the inventory of Henri IV's mistress is found to contain "five handkerchiefs worked in gold, silver and silk, worth 100 crowns".
>
> In the sixteenth century, Monteil tells us, in France as everywhere else, *the common people blow their noses without a handkerchief, but among the bourgeoisie it is accepted practice to use the sleeve. As for the rich, they carry a handkerchief in their pockets: therefore, to say that a man has wealth, one says that he does not blow his nose on his sleeve.*

H

Late seventeenth century

The Peak of Refinement
First Highpoint of Consolidation and Restrictions

*** This cloth was intended to be hung from the lady's girdle, with her keys. Like the fork, night-commode, etc., the handkerchief is first an expensive luxury article.

1672

From Courtin, *Nouveau traité de civilité*:

> [At table] to blow your nose openly into your handkerchief, without concealing yourself with your serviette, and to wipe away your sweat with it . . . are filthy habits fit to make everyone's gorge rise. . . .
>
> You should avoid yawning, blowing your nose and spitting. If you are obliged to do so in places that are kept clean, do it in your handkerchief, while turning your face away and shielding yourself with your left hand, and do not look into your handkerchief afterwards.

I

1694

From Ménage, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*:

> Handkerchief for blowing the nose.
>
> As this expression "blowing the nose" gives a very disagreeable impression, ladies ought to call this a pocket handkerchief, as one says neckerchief, rather than a handkerchief for blowing the nose. [N.B. *Mouchoir de poche*, *Taschentuch*, handkerchief as more polite expressions; the word for functions that have become distasteful is suppressed.]

Eighteenth century

Note the increasing distance between adults and children. Only children were still allowed, at least in the middle classes, to behave as adults did in the Middle Ages.

J

1714

From an anonymous *Civilité française* (Liège, 1714), p. 141:

> Take good care not to blow your nose with your fingers or on your sleeve *like children*; use your handkerchief and do not look into it afterwards.

K

1729

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (Rouen, 1729), in a chapter called "On the Nose, and the Manner of Blowing the Nose and Sneezing", p. 23:

> It is very impolite to keep poking your finger into your nostrils, and still more insupportable to put what you have pulled from your nose into your mouth. . . .
>
> It is vile to wipe your nose with your bare hand, or to blow it on your sleeve or your clothes. It is very contrary to decency to blow your nose with two fingers and then to throw the filth onto the ground and wipe your fingers on your clothes. It is well known

how improper it is to see such uncleanliness on clothes, which should always be very clean, no matter how poor they may be.

There are some who put a finger on one nostril and by blowing through their nose cast onto the ground the filth inside; those who act thus are people who do not know what decency is.

You should always use your handkerchief to blow your nose, and never anything else, and in doing so usually hide your face with your hat. [A particularly clear example of the dissemination of courtly customs through this work.]

You should avoid making a noise when blowing your nose. . . . Before blowing it, it is impolite to spend a long time taking out your handkerchief. *It shows a lack of respect towards the people you are with* to unfold it in different places to see where you are to use it. You should take your handkerchief from your pocket and use it quickly in such a way that you are scarcely noticed by others.

After blowing your nose you should take care not to look into your handkerchief. It is correct to fold it immediately and replace it in your pocket.

L

1774

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (1774 ed), pp. 14f. The chapter is now called only "On the Nose" and is shortened:

> Every voluntary movement of the nose, whether caused by the hand or otherwise, is impolite and childish. To put your fingers into your nose is a revolting impropriety, and from touching it too often *discomforts may arise which are felt for a long time.** Children are sufficiently in the habit of committing this lapse; *parents should correct them carefully.*
>
> You should observe, in blowing your nose, all the rules of propriety and cleanliness.

All details are avoided. The "conspiracy of silence" is spreading. It is based on the presupposition—which evidently could not be made at the time of the earlier edition—that all the details are known to adults and can be controlled within the family.

M

1797

From La Mésangère, *Le voyageur de Paris* (1797), vol. 2, p. 95. This is probably seen, to a greater extent than the preceding eighteenth-century examples, from the point of view of the younger members of "good society":

> Some years ago people made an art of blowing the nose. One imitated the sound of the

* This argument, absent in the earlier edition, shows clearly how the reference to damage to health was gradually beginning to emerge as an instrument of conditioning, often in place of the reminder about the respect due to social superiors.

trumpet, another the screech of a cat. Perfection lay in making neither too much noise nor too little.

Comments on the Quotations on Nose-Blowing

1. In medieval society people generally blew their noses into their hands, just as they ate with their hands. That necessitated special precepts for nose-cleaning at table. Politeness, *courtoisie*, required that one blow one's nose with the left hand if one took meat with the right. But this precept was in fact restricted to the table. It arose solely out of consideration for others. The distasteful feeling frequently aroused today by the mere thought of soiling the fingers in this way was at first entirely absent.

Again the examples show very clearly how slowly the seemingly simplest instruments of civilization have developed. They also illustrate to a certain degree the particular social and psychological preconditions that were required to make the need for and use of so simple an instrument general. The use of the handkerchief—like that of the fork—first established itself in Italy, and was diffused on account of its prestige value. The ladies hung the precious, richly embroidered cloth from their girdles. The young "snobs" of the Renaissance offer it to others or carried it about in their mouths. And since it was precious and relatively expensive, at first there were not many of them even among the upper class. Henri IV, at the end of the sixteenth century, possessed (as we hear in Example G) five handkerchiefs. And it was generally taken as a sign of wealth not to blow one's nose into one's hand or sleeve but into a handkerchief. Louis XIV was the first to have an abundant supply of handkerchiefs, and under him the use of them became general, at least in courtly circles.

2. Here, as so often, the transitional situation is clearly visible in Erasmus. It is proper to use a handkerchief, he says, and if people of a higher social position are present, turn away when blowing your nose. But he also says: If you blow your nose with two fingers and something falls to the ground, tread on it. The use of the handkerchief was known but not yet widely disseminated, even in the upper class for which Erasmus primarily wrote.

Two centuries later, the situation was almost reversed. The use of the handkerchief had become general, at least among people who lay claim to "good behaviour". But the use of the hands had by no means disappeared. Seen from above, it had become a "bad habit", or at any rate common and vulgar. One reads with amusement La Salle's gradations between *vilain*, for certain very coarse ways of blowing the nose with the hand, and *très contraire à la bienséance*, for the better manner of doing so with two fingers (Examples H, J, K, L).

Once the handkerchief began to come into use, there constantly recurred a prohibition on a new form of "bad habit" that emerged at the same time as the new practice—the prohibition on looking into one's handkerchief when one had

used it (Examples F, H, I, K, L). It almost seems as if inclinations which had been subjected to a certain control and restraint by the introduction of the handkerchief were seeking a new outlet in this way. At any rate, a drive which today appears at most in the unconscious, in dreams, in the sphere of secrecy, or more consciously only "behind the scenes", the interest in bodily secretions, here shows itself at an earlier stage of the historical process more clearly and openly, and so in a form in which today it is only "normally" visible in children.

In the later edition of La Salle, as in other cases, the major part of the very detailed precepts from the earlier one were omitted. The use of the handkerchief had become more general and self-evident. It was no longer necessary to be so explicit. Moreover, there was less and less inclination to speak about these details that La Salle originally discussed without inhibition and at length without embarrassment. More stress, on the other hand, was laid on children's bad habit of putting the fingers in the nose. And, as with other childish habits, the health warning now appeared alongside or in place of the social one as an instrument of conditioning, in the reference to the harm that could be done by doing "such a thing" too often. This was an expression of a change in the manner of conditioning that has already been considered from other aspects. Up to this time, habits were almost always judged expressly in their relation to other people, and they are forbidden, at least in the secular upper class, because they might be troublesome or embarrassing to others, or because they betrayed a "lack of respect". Now habits were condemned more and more as such, not in regard to others. In this way, socially undesirable impulses or inclinations become more radically suppressed. They become associated with embarrassment, fear, shame or guilt, even when one is alone. Much of what we call "morality" or "moral" reasons has the same function as "hygiene" or "hygienic" reasons: to condition children to a certain social standard. Moulding by such means aims at making socially desirable behaviour automatic, a matter of self-control, causing it to appear in the consciousness of individuals as the result of their own free will, and in the interests of their own health or human dignity. And it was only with the advent of this way of consolidating habits, or conditioning, which gained predominance with the rise of the middle classes, that conflict between the socially inadmissible impulses and tendencies, on the one hand, and the pattern of social demands anchored in individuals, on the other, took on the sharply defined form central to the psychological theories of modern times—above all, to psychoanalysis. It may be "that there have always been" "neuroses". But the "neuroses" we see about us today are a specific historical form of psychic conflict which needs psychogenetic and sociogenetic illumination.

3. An indication of the mechanisms of suppression may already be contained in the two verses quoted from Bonvicino da Riva (Example A). The difference between what was expected of knights and lords, on the one hand, and of the *donizelli*, pages, or servants, on the other, calls to mind a much documented social

phenomenon. The masters found the sight of the bodily functions of their servants distasteful; they compelled them, the social inferiors in their immediate surroundings, to control and restrain these functions in a way that they did not at first impose on themselves. The verse addressed to the masters says simply: If you blow your nose, turn round so that nothing falls on the table. There is no mention of using a cloth. Should we believe that the use of cloths for cleaning the nose was already taken so much for granted in this society that it was no longer thought necessary to mention it in a book on manners? That is highly improbable. The servants, on the other hand, were expressly instructed to use not their fingers but their foot bandages if they had to blow their noses. To be sure, this interpretation of the two verses cannot be considered absolutely certain. But the fact can be frequently demonstrated that functions were found distasteful and disrespectful in inferiors which superiors were not ashamed of in themselves. This fact takes on special significance when, with the emergence of absolutism, that is at the absolute courts, the aristocracy as a whole had become a hierarchically graded and simultaneously a serving and socially dependent stratum. This at first sight highly paradoxical phenomenon of an upper class that was socially extremely dependent will be discussed later in another context. Here we can only point out that this social dependence and its structure had decisive importance for the structure and pattern of affect restrictions. The examples contain numerous indications of how these restrictions were intensified with the growing dependence of the upper class. It is no accident that the first "peak of refinement" or "delicacy" in the manner of blowing the nose—and not only here—came in the phase when the dependence and subservience of the aristocratic upper class was at its height, the period of Louis XIV (Examples H and I).

The dependency of the upper class also explains the dual aspect which behaviour-patterns and instruments of civilization had at least in their formative phase: they expressed a certain measure of compulsion and renunciation, but they always also serve as a weapon against social inferiors, a means of distinction. Handkerchief, fork, plates and all related implements were at first luxury articles with a particular social prestige value (Example G).

The social dependence in which the succeeding upper class, the bourgeoisie, lives, is of a different kind, certainly, from that of the court aristocracy, but tends to be rather greater and more compelling.

In general, we scarcely realize today what a unique and astonishing phenomenon a "working" upper class is. Why does it work? Why submit itself to this compulsion even though it is the "ruling" class and is therefore not commanded by a superior to do so? The question demands a more detailed answer than is possible in this context. What is clear, however, is the parallel to what has been said on the change in the instruments and forms of conditioning. During the stage of the court aristocracy, the restraint imposed on inclinations and emotions

was based primarily on consideration and respect due to others and above all to social superiors. In the subsequent stage, renunciation and restraint of impulses were compelled far less by particular persons; expressed provisionally and approximately, it was now, more directly than before, the less visible and more impersonal compulsions of social interdependence, the division of labour, the market and competition that imposed restraint and control on the impulses and emotions. It is these pressures, and the manner of conditioning and instilling controls mentioned above which correspond to them, that make it appear that socially desirable behaviour is voluntarily produced by the individual him or herself, on his or her own initiative. This applies to the regulation and restraint of drives necessary for "work"; it also applies to the whole pattern according to which drives are modelled in bourgeois industrial societies. The pattern of affect control, of what must and what must not be restrained, regulated and transformed, is certainly not the same in this stage as in the preceding one of the court aristocracy. In keeping with its different interdependencies, bourgeois society applies stronger restrictions to certain impulses, while in the case of others aristocratic restrictions are simply continued and transformed to suit the changed situation. In addition, more clearly distinct national patterns of affect control are formed from the various elements. In both cases, in aristocratic court society as well as in the bourgeois societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the upper classes are socially constrained to a particularly high degree. The central role played by this increasing dependency of the upper classes as a motor of civilization will be shown later.

VII

On Spitting

Examples

Middle Ages

A

From *Stans puer ad mensam*:[70]

27 Do not spit over or on the table.

37 Do not spit into the bowl when washing your hands.

B

From a *Contenence de table*:[71]

29 Do not spit on the table.

51 Do not spit into the basin when you wash your hands, but beside it.

C

From *The Book of Curtesye*:[72]

85 If thou spitt over the borde, or elles opon,
thou schalle be holden an uncurtayse mon.

133 After mete when thou shall wasshe,
spitt not in basyn, ne water thou dasshe.

D

From Zarncke, *Der deutsche Cato*, p. 137:

276 Do not spit across the table in the manner of hunters.

E

1530

From *De civilitate morum puerilium*, by Erasmus:

Turn away when spitting, lest your saliva fall on someone. If anything purulent falls to the ground, it should be trodden upon, lest it nauseate someone. If you are not at liberty to do this, catch the sputum in a small cloth. It is unmannerly to suck back saliva, as equally are those whom we see spitting at every third word not from necessity but from habit.

F

1558

From *Galateo*, by Della Casa, quoted from the five-language edition (Geneva, 1609), p. 570:

It is also unseemly for someone sitting at table to scratch himself. At such a time and place you should also abstain as far as possible from spitting, and if it cannot be completely avoided it should be done politely and unnoticed.

I have often heard that whole peoples have sometimes lived so moderately and conducted themselves so honourably that they found spitting quite unnecessary. Why, therefore, should not we too be able to refrain from it just for a short time? [That is, during meals; the restriction on the habit applied only to mealtimes.]

G

1672

From Courtin, *Nouveau traité de civilité*, p. 273:

The custom we have just mentioned does not mean that most laws of this kind are immutable. And just as there are many that have already changed, I have no doubt that many of these will likewise change in the future.

Formerly, for example, it was permitted to spit on the ground before people of rank, and was sufficient to put one's foot on the sputum. Today that is an indecency.

In the old days you could yawn, provided you did not speak while doing so; today, a person of rank would be shocked by this.

H

1714

From an anonymous *Civilité française* (Liège, 1714), pp. 67, 41:

Frequent spitting is disagreeable. When it is necessary you should conceal it as much as possible, and avoid soiling either persons or their clothes, no matter who they are, nor even the embers beside the fire. And wherever you spit, you should put your foot on the saliva.

At the houses of the great, one spits into one's handkerchief. . . .

It ill becomes you to spit out of the window or onto the fire.

Do not spit so far that you have to look for the saliva to put your foot on it.

I

1729

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (Rouen, 1729), p. 35:

You should not abstain from spitting, and it is very ill-mannered to swallow what should be spat. This can nauseate others.

Nevertheless, you should not become accustomed to spitting too often, and without need. This is not only unmannerly, but disgusts and annoys everyone. *When you are with well-born people*, and when you are in places that are kept clean, it is polite to spit into your handkerchief while turning slightly aside.

It is even good manners for everyone to get used to spitting into a handkerchief when in the houses of the great and in all places with waxed or parquet floors. But it is far more necessary to acquire the habit of doing so when in church, as far as is possible. . . . It often happens, however, that no kitchen or even stable floor is dirtier . . . than that of the church.

After spitting into your handkerchief, you should fold it at once, without looking at it, and put it into your pocket. You should take great care never to spit on your clothes, or those of others. . . . If you notice saliva on the ground, you should immediately put your foot adroitly on it. If you notice any on someone's coat, it is not polite to make it known; you should instruct a servant to remove it. If no servant is present, you should remove it yourself without being noticed. For good breeding consists in not bringing to people's attention anything that might offend or confuse them.

J

1774

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (1774 edn), p. 20. In this edition the chapter "On Yawning, Spitting, and Coughing," which covers four pages in the earlier editions, has shrunk to one page:

> In church, in the houses of the great, and in all places where cleanliness reigns, you should spit into your handkerchief. It is an unpardonably gross habit of children to spit in the faces of their playmates. Such bad manners cannot be punished too severely; nor are those who spit out of windows, on walls and on furniture to be excused. . . .

K

1859

From *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 256:

> Spitting is at all times a disgusting habit. I need say nothing more than—never indulge in it. Besides being coarse and atrocious, *it is very bad for the health.*

L

1910

From Cabanès, *Moeurs intimes*, p. 264:

> Have you noticed that today we relegate to some discreet corner what our fathers did not hesitate to display quite openly?
>
> Thus a certain intimate article of furniture had a place of honour . . . no one thought of concealing it from view.
>
> The same is true of another piece of furniture no longer found in modern households, whose disappearance some will perhaps regret in this age of "bacillophobia": I am referring to the spittoon.

Comments on the Quotations on Spitting

1. Like the other groups of examples, the series of quotations about spitting shows very clearly that, since the Middle Ages, behaviour has changed in a particular direction. In the case of spitting, the movement is unmistakably of the kind that we call "progress". Frequent spitting is even today one of the experiences that many Europeans find particularly unpleasant when travelling in the East or in Africa, together with the lack of "cleanliness". If they started out with idealized preconceptions, they call the experience disappointing, and find their feelings on the "progress" of Western civilization confirmed. No more than four centuries ago, this custom was no less widespread and commonplace in the West, as the examples show. Taken together, they give a particularly clear demonstration of the way in which the civilizing process took place.

2. The examples show a movement with the following stages: The Latin as well as the English, French and German guides to table manners bear witness to the fact that in the Middle Ages it was not only a custom but also clearly a generally felt need to spit frequently. It was also entirely commonplace in the courts of the feudal lords. The only major restraint imposed was that one should not spit on or over the table but under it. Nor should one spit into the washbasin

when cleaning mouth or hands, but beside it. These prohibitions were repeated in so stereotyped a fashion in the *courtois* codes of manners that one can imagine the frequency of this instance of "bad manners". The pressure of medieval society on this practice never became so strong, nor the conditioning so compelling, that it disappeared from social life. Here again we see the difference between social controls in the medieval and the subsequent stages.

In the sixteenth century, social pressure grew stronger. It was demanded that sputum be trodden upon—at least if it contained purulence, said Erasmus, who here as always marked the transitional situation. And here again the use of a cloth was mentioned as a possible, not a necessary, way of controlling this habit, which was slowly becoming more distasteful.

The next step is shown clearly by Courtin's comment of 1672: "Formerly . . . it was permitted to spit on the ground before people of rank, and was sufficient to put one's foot on the sputum. Today that is an indecency."

Similarly, we find in the *Civilité* of 1714, intended for a wider audience: "Conceal it as much as possible, and avoid soiling either persons or their clothes. . . . At the houses of the great, one spits into one's handkerchief."

In 1729, La Salle extended the same precept to all places "that are kept clean". And he added that in church, too, people ought to get used to using their handkerchiefs and not the floor.

By 1774 the whole practice, and even speaking about it, had become considerably more distasteful. By 1859 "spitting is at all times a disgusting habit". All the same, at least within the house, the spittoon, as a technical implement for controlling this habit in keeping with the advancing standard of delicacy, still had considerable importance in the nineteenth century. Cabanès, in 1910, reminds us that, like other implements (cf. Example L), it had slowly evolved from a prestige object to a private utensil.

Gradually this utensil too became dispensable. In large sections of Western society, even the need to spit from time to time seems to have disappeared completely. A standard of delicacy and restraint similar to that which Della Casa knew only from his reading of ancient writers, where "whole peoples . . . lived so moderately and . . . so honorably that they found spitting quite unnecessary" (Example F), had been attained once more.

3. Taboos and restrictions of various kinds surrounded the ejection of saliva, like other natural functions, in very many societies, both "primitive" and "civilized". What distinguishes such prohibitions is the fact that in the former they were always maintained by fear of other beings, even if only imaginary ones—that is, by external constraints—whereas in the latter they were transformed more or less completely into internal constraints. The prohibited tendencies (e.g., the tendency to spit) partly disappeared from consciousness under the pressure of this internal restraint or, as it may also be called, the pressure from the "superego" and the "habit of foresight". And what remained in the consciousness as

motivation was anxiety in relation to some long-term consideration. So in our time the fear of spitting, and the feelings of shame and repugnance in which it is expressed, take the form not of magical influences, of gods, spirits or demons but of the more exactly circumscribed, more clearly transparent and law-like picture of specific diseases and their "pathogens". But the series of examples also shows very clearly that rational understanding of the origins of certain diseases, of the danger of sputum as a carrier of illness, was neither the primary cause of fear and repugnance nor the motor of civilization, the driving force of the changes in behaviour with regard to spitting.

At first, and for a long period, the retention of spittle was expressly discouraged. To suck back saliva is "unmannerly", says Erasmus (Example E). And as late as 1729, La Salle says: "You should not abstain from spitting" (Example I). For centuries there was not the faintest indication of "hygienic reasons" for the prohibitions and restrictions with which the expression of the drive to spit was surrounded. Rational understanding of the danger of saliva was attained only at a very late stage of the change in behaviour, and thus in a sense retrospectively, in the nineteenth century. And even then, the reference to what is indelicate and disgusting in such behaviour still appeared separately, alongside the reference to its ill effects on health: "Besides being coarse and atrocious, it is very bad for the health", says Example K of spitting.

It is well to establish once and for all that something which we know to be harmful to health by no means necessarily arouses feelings of distaste or shame. And conversely, something that arouses these feelings need not be at all detrimental to health. People who eat noisily or with their hands nowadays arouses feelings of extreme distaste without there being the slightest fear for their health. But neither the thought of someone reading by bad light nor the idea of poison gas, for example, arouses remotely similar feelings of distaste or shame, although the harmful consequences for health are obvious. Thus, disgust and nausea at the ejection of saliva intensified, and the taboos surrounding it increased, long before people had a clear idea of the transmission of certain germs by saliva. What first aroused and increased the distasteful feelings and restrictions was a transformation of human relationships and dependencies. "Earlier it was permitted to yawn or spit openly; today, a person of rank would be shocked by it", Example G says, in effect. That is the kind of reason that people first gave for increased restraint. Motivation from social consideration existed long before motivation from scientific insight. The king required this restraint as a "mark of respect" from his courtiers. In court circles this sign of their dependence, the growing compulsion to be restrained and self-controlled, became also a "mark of distinction" that was immediately imitated below and disseminated with the rise of broader strata. And here, as in the preceding civilization-curves, the admonition "That is not done", with which restraint, fear, shame and repugnance were inculcated, was connected only very late, as a result of a certain "democratiza-

tion", to a scientific theory, to an argument that applies to all people equally, regardless of their rank and status. The primary impulse for this slow repression of an inclination that was formerly strong and widespread does not come from rational understanding of the causes of illness, but—as will be discussed in more detail later—from changes in the way people live together, in the structure of society.

4. The modification of the manner of spitting, and finally the more or less complete elimination of the need for it, is a good example of the malleability of the psychic economy of humans. It may be that this need has been compensated by others (e.g., the need to smoke) or weakened by certain changes of diet. But it is certain that the degree of suppression which has been possible in this case is not possible with regard to many other drives. The inclination to spit, like that of looking at the sputum, mentioned in the examples, is replaceable; it now manifests itself clearly only in children or in dream analyses, and its suppression is seen in the specific form of laughter that overcomes us when "such things" are spoken of openly.

Other needs are not replaceable or malleable to the same extent. And this raises the question of the limit of the transformability of the psychic economy. Without doubt, it possesses specific regularities that may be called "natural". The historical process modifies it within these limits. The degree to which human life and behaviour can be moulded by historical processes remains to be determined in detail. At any rate, all this shows once again how natural and historical processes interact almost inseparably. The formation of feelings of shame and revulsion and advances in the threshold of repugnance are both at once natural and historical processes. These forms of feeling are manifestations of human nature under specific social conditions, and they react in their turn on the socio-historical process as one of its elements.

It is difficult to see whether the radical contraposition of "civilization" and "nature" is more than an expression of the tensions of the "civilized" psyche itself, of a specific imbalance within psychic life produced in the recent stage of Western civilization. At any rate, the psychic life of "primitive" peoples is no less historically (i.e., socially) stamped than that of "civilized" peoples, even if the former are scarcely aware of their own history. There is no zero point in the historicity of human development, just as there is none in the sociality, the social interdependence among people. In both "primitive" and "civilized" peoples, there are socially induced prohibitions and restrictions, together with their psychological counterparts, socially induced anxieties, pleasure and displeasure, distaste and delight. It is, therefore, at least not entirely clear what is meant when the former standard, that of so-called "primitives", is contrasted simply as "natural" to the historical-social standard of "civilised" people. So far as the psychological functions of humans are concerned, natural and historical processes work indissolubly together.

VIII

On Behaviour in the Bedroom

Examples

A

Fifteenth century

From *Stans puer in mensam*, an English book of table manners from the period 1463–83 (*A Book of Precedence*, London, 1869, p. 63):

215 And if that it forten so by
nyght or Any tyme
That you schall lye with Any man
that is better than you
Spyre hym what syde of the bedd
that most best will ples hym,
And lye you on thi tother syde,
for that is thi prow;
Ne go you not to bede before bot
thi better cause the,
For that is no curtasy, thus seys
doctour paler.

223 And when you arte in thi bed,
this is curtasy,
Stryght downe that you lye with
fote and hond.
When ze have talkyd what ze
wyll, byd hym gode nyght in hye
For that is gret curtasy so schall
thou understand.*

If you share your bed with a man of higher rank, ask him which side he prefers. Do not go to bed before your superior invites you; that is not courteous, says Dr Paler.
Then lie down straight and bid him goodnight.

B

1530

From *De civilitate morum puerilium*, by Erasmus, ch. 12, "On the Bedchamber":

When you undress, when you get up, be mindful of modesty, and take care not to expose to the eyes of others anything that morality and nature require to be concealed.

* To facilitate comprehension, the old spelling is not reproduced exactly. The philologically accurate text can be found in *A Booke of Precedence*, p. 63.

If you share a bed with a comrade, lie quietly; do not toss with your body, for this can lay yourself bare or inconvenience your companion by pulling away the blankets.

C

1555

From *Des bonnes moeurs et honnestes contenances*, by Pierre Broë (Lyons, 1555):

> If you share a bed with another man, keep still.
>
> Take care not to annoy him or expose yourself by abrupt movements.
>
> And if he is asleep, see that you do not wake him.

D

1729

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (Rouen, 1729), p. 55:

> You ought . . . neither to undress nor go to bed in the presence of any other person. Above all, unless you are married, you should not go to bed in the presence of anyone of the other sex.
>
> It is still less permissible for people of opposite sexes to sleep in the same bed, unless they are very young children. . . .
>
> If you are forced by unavoidable necessity to share a bed with another person of the same sex on a journey, it is not proper to lie so near him that you disturb or even touch him; and it is still less decent to put your legs between those of the other. . . .
>
> It is also very improper and impolite to amuse yourself with talk and chatter. . . .
>
> When you get up you should not leave the bed uncovered, nor put your nightcap on a chair or anywhere else where it can be seen.

E

1774

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (1774 edn) p. 31:

> It is a strange abuse to make two people of different sex sleep in the same room. And if necessity demands it, you should make sure that the beds are apart, and that modesty does not suffer in any way from this commingling. Only extreme indigence can excuse this practice. . . .
>
> If you are forced to share a bed with a person of the same sex, which seldom happens, you should maintain a strict and vigilant modesty. . . .
>
> When you have awakened and had sufficient time to rest, you should get out of bed with fitting modesty and never stay in bed holding conversations or concerning yourself with other matters . . . nothing more clearly indicates indolence and frivolity; the bed is intended for bodily rest and for nothing else.

Comments on the Examples

1. The bedroom has become one of the most "private" and "intimate" areas of human life. Like most other bodily functions, sleeping has been increasingly shifted behind the scenes of social life. The nuclear family remains as the only legitimate, socially sanctioned enclave for this and many other human functions. Its visible and invisible walls withdraw the most "private", "intimate", unsuppressibly "animal" aspects of human existence from the sight of others.

In medieval society this function, too, had not been thus privatized and separated from the rest of social life. It was quite normal to receive visitors in rooms with beds, and the beds themselves had a prestige value related to their opulence. It was very common for many people to spend the night in the same room: in the upper class, the master with his servant, the mistress with her maid or maids; in other classes, even men and women in the same room,[73] and often guests who were staying overnight.[74]

2. Those who did not sleep in their clothes undressed completely. In general, people in lay society slept naked, and in the monastic orders either fully dressed or fully undressed according to the strictness of the rules. The rule of St Benedict—dating back at least to the sixth century—required members of the order to sleep in their clothes and even to keep their belts on.[75] In the twelfth century, when their order became more prosperous and powerful and the ascetic constraints less severe, the Cluniac monks were permitted to sleep without clothes. The Cistercians, when striving for reform, returned to the old Benedictine rule. Special nightclothes are never mentioned in the monastic rules of this period, still less in the documents, epics or illustrations left behind by secular society. This is also true for women. If anything, it was unusual to keep clothing on in bed. It aroused suspicion that one might have some bodily defect—for what other reason should the body be hidden?—and in fact this usually was the case. In the *Roman de la violette*, for example, we hear the servant ask her mistress in surprise why she is going to bed in her chemise, and the latter explains it is because of a mark on her body.[76]

This greater lack of inhibition in showing the naked body, and the position of the shame frontier represented by it, are seen particularly clearly in bathing manners. It has been noted with surprise in later ages that knights were waited on in their baths by women; likewise, their night drink was often brought to their beds by women. It seems to have been common practice, at least in the towns, to undress at home before going to the bathhouse. "How often", says an observer, "the father, wearing nothing but his breeches, with his naked wife and children, runs through the streets from his house to the baths. . . . How many times have I seen girls of ten, twelve, fourteen, sixteen and eighteen years entirely naked except for a short smock, often torn, and a ragged bathing gown at front and back! With this open at the feet and with their hands held

decorously around their behinds, running from their houses through the long streets at midday to the baths. How many completely naked boys of ten, twelve, fourteen and sixteen run beside them. . . ."[77]

This lack of inhibition disappeared slowly in the sixteenth and more rapidly in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, first in the higher classes and much more slowly in the lower. Up to then, the whole mode of life, with its greater closeness of individuals, made the sight of the naked body, at least in the proper place, incomparably more commonplace than in the first stages of the modern age. "We reach the surprising conclusion", it has been said with reference to Germany, "that . . . the sight of total nakedness was the everyday rule up to the sixteenth century. Everyone undressed completely each evening before going to bed, and likewise no clothing was worn in the steambaths."[78] And this certainly applied not only to Germany. People had a less inhibited—one might say a more childish—attitude towards the body, and to many of its functions. Sleeping customs show this no less than bathing habits.

3. A special nightdress slowly came into use at roughly the same time as the fork and the handkerchief. Like the other "tools of civilization", it made its way through Europe quite gradually. And like them it is a symbol of the decisive change taking place at this time in human beings. Sensitivity towards everything that came into contact with the body increased. Shame became attached to behaviour that had previously been free of such feelings. That psychological process which is already described in the Bible: "and they saw that they were naked and were ashamed"—that is, an advance of the shame frontier, a thrust towards greater restraint—was repeated here, as so often in the course of history. The lack of inhibition in showing oneself naked disappeared, as did that in performing bodily functions before others. And as this sight became less commonplace in social life, the depiction of the naked body in art took on a new significance. More than hitherto it became a dream image, an emblem of wish-fulfilment. To use Schiller's terms, it became "sentimental", as against the "naïve" form of earlier phases.

In the court society of France—where getting up and going to bed, at least in the case of great lords and ladies, was incorporated directly into social life—nightdress, like every other form of clothing appearing in the communal life of people, took on representational functions as it developed. This changed when, with the rise of broader classes, getting up and going to bed became more intimate and were displaced from life in the wider society into the interior of the nuclear family.

The generations following World War I, in their books on etiquette, looked back with a certain irony—and not without a faint shudder—at this period, when the exclusion of such functions as sleeping, undressing and dressing was enforced with special severity, the mere mention of them being blocked by relatively heavy prohibitions. An English book on manners of 1936 says, perhaps

with slight exaggeration, but certainly not entirely without justification: "During the Genteel Era before the War, camping was the only way by which respectable writers might approach the subject of sleep. In those days ladies and gentlemen did not go to bed at night—they retired. How they did it was nobody's business. An author who thought differently would have found himself excluded from the circulating library."[79] Here, too, there had been a certain reaction and relaxation since the war. It was clearly connected with the growing mobility of society, with the spread of sport, hiking and travel, and also with the relatively early separation of young people from the family community. The transition from the nightshirt to pyjamas—that is, to a more "socially presentable" sleeping costume—was a symptom of this. This change was not, as is sometimes supposed, simply a retrogressive movement, a recession of the feelings of shame or delicacy, or a release and decontrolling of drives, but the development of a form that fits both our advanced standard of shame and the specific situation in which present-day social life places individuals. Sleep is no longer so intimate and segregated as in the preceding stage. There are more situations in which people are exposed to the sight of strangers sleeping, undressing or dressing. As a result, nightclothes (like underwear) have been developed and transformed in such a way that the wearer need not be "ashamed" when seen in such situations by others. The nightclothes of the preceding phase aroused feelings of shame and embarrassment precisely because they were relatively formless. They were not intended to be seen by people outside the family circle. On the one hand, the nightshirt of the nineteenth century marked an epoch in which shame and embarrassment with regard to the exposure of one's own body were so advanced and internalized that bodily forms had to be entirely covered even when alone or in the closest family circle; on the other hand, it characterized an epoch in which the "intimate" and "private" sphere, because it was so sharply severed from the rest of social life, had not to any great extent been socially articulated and patterned. This peculiar combination of strongly internalized, compulsive feelings of repugnance, or morality, with a far-reaching lack of social patterning with respect to the "spheres of intimacy" was characteristic of nineteenth-century society and not a little of our own.[80]

4. The examples give a rough idea of how sleep, becoming slowly more intimate and private, was separated from most other social relations, and how the precepts given to young people took on a specifically moralistic undertone with the advance of feelings of shame. In the medieval quotation (Example A) the restraint demanded of young people was explained by consideration due to others, respect for social superiors. It says, in effect, "If you share your bed with a better man, ask him which side he prefers, and do not go to bed before he invites you, for that is not courteous." And in the French imitation of Johannes Sulpicius by Pierre Broë (Example C), the same attitude prevailed: "Do not annoy your neighbour when he has fallen asleep; see that you do not wake him up, etc." In Erasmus we

begin to hear a moral demand, which required certain behaviour not out of consideration for others but for its own sake: "When you undress, when you get up, be mindful of modesty." But the idea of social custom, of consideration for others, was still predominant. The contrast to the later period is particularly clear if we remember that these precepts, even those of Dr Paler (Example A), were clearly directed to people who went to bed undressed. That strangers should sleep in the same bed appeared, to judge by the manner in which the question was discussed, neither unusual nor in any way improper even at the time of Erasmus.

In the quotations from the eighteenth century this tendency was not continued in a straight line, partly because it was no longer confined predominantly to the upper stratum. But in the meantime, even in other strata, it had clearly become less commonplace for a young person to share his bed with another: "If you are forced by unavoidable necessity to share a bed with another person . . . on a journey, it is not proper to lie so near him that you disturb or even touch him", writes La Salle (Example D). And: "You ought neither to undress nor go to bed in the presence of any other person."

In the 1774 edition, details were again avoided wherever possible. And the tone is appreciably stronger. "If you are forced to share a bed with a person of the same sex, which seldom happens, you should maintain a strict and vigilant modesty" (Example E). This was the tone of moral injunction. Even to give a reason had become distasteful to the adult. The child was made by the threatening tone to associate this situation with danger. The more "natural" the standard of delicacy and shame appeared to adults and the more the civilized restraint of bodily urges was taken for granted, the more incomprehensible it became to adults that children do not have this delicacy and shame by "nature". The children necessarily encroach again and again on the adult threshold of repugnance, and—since they are not yet adapted—they infringe the taboos of society, cross the adult shame frontier, and penetrate emotional danger zones which the adults themselves can only control with difficulty. In this situation the adults do not explain the demands they make on behaviour. They are unable to do so adequately. They are so conditioned that they conform to the social standard more or less automatically. Any other behaviour, any breach of the prohibitions or restraints prevailing in their society means danger, and a devaluation of the restraints imposed upon themselves. And the peculiarly emotional undertone so often associated with moral demands, the aggressive and threatening severity with which they are frequently upheld, reflects the danger in which any breach of the prohibitions places the unstable balance of all those for whom the standard behaviour of society has become more or less "second nature". These attitudes are symptoms of the anxiety aroused in adults whenever the structure of their own drives, and with it their own social existence and the social order in which it is anchored, is even remotely threatened.

A whole series of specific conflicts between adults—above all parents who are for the most part little prepared for the tasks of conditioning—and children, conflicts which appear with the advance of the shame-frontier and the growing distance between adults and children, and which are therefore largely founded on the structure of civilized society itself, are explained by this situation. The situation itself has been understood only relatively recently, first of all within small circles, especially among professional educators. And only now, in the age that has been called the "century of the child", is the realization that, in view of the increased distance between them, children cannot behave like adults slowly penetrating the family circle with appropriate educational advice and instructions. In the long preceding period, the more severe attitude prevailed that morality and respect for taboos should be present in children from the first. This attitude certainly cannot be said to have disappeared today.

The examples on behaviour in the bedroom give, for a limited segment, a certain impression of how late it really was that the tendency to adopt such attitudes reached its full development in secular education.

The line of this development scarcely needs further elucidation. Here, too, in much the same way as with eating, the wall between people, the reserve, the emotional barrier erected by conditioning between one body and another, has grown continuously. To share a bed with people outside the family circle, with strangers, is made more and more embarrassing. Unless necessity dictates otherwise, it becomes usual even within the family for every person to have their own bed and finally—in the middle and upper classes—their own bedroom. Children are trained early in this distancing, this isolation from others, with all the habits and experiences that this brings with it. Only if we see how natural it seemed in the Middle Ages for strangers and for children and adults to share a bed can we appreciate what a fundamental change in interpersonal relationships and behaviour is expressed in our manner of living. And we recognize how far from self-evident it is that bed and body should form such psychological danger zones as they do in the most recent phase of civilization.

IX

Changes in Attitude towards the Relations between Men and Women

1. The feeling of shame surrounding human sexual relations has changed and become noticeably stronger in the civilizing process.[81] This manifests itself particularly clearly in the difficulty experienced by adults in the more recent stages of civilization in talking about these relations to children. But today this difficulty appears almost natural. It seems to be explained almost by biological reasons alone that a child knows nothing of the relations of the sexes, and that

it is an extremely delicate and difficult task to enlighten growing girls and boys about themselves and what goes on around them. The extent to which this situation, far from being self-evident, is a further result of the civilizing process is only perceived if the behaviour of people in a different stage is observed. The fate of Erasmus's renowned *Colloquies* is a good example.

Erasmus discovered that one of the works of his youth had been published without his permission in a corrupt form, with additions by others and partly in a bad style. He revised it and published it himself under a new title in 1522, calling it *Familiarum colloquiorum formulae non tantum ad linguam puerilem expoliandam, verum etiam ad vitam instituendam.*

He worked on this text, augmenting and improving it, until shortly before his death. It became what he had desired, not only a book from which boys could learn a good Latin style, but one which could serve, as he says in the title, to introduce them to life. The *Colloquies* became one of the most famous and widely read works of their time. As his treatise *De civilitate morum puerilium* did later, they went through numerous editions and translations. And like it, they became a schoolbook, a standard work from which boys were educated. Hardly anything gives a more immediate impression of the change in Western society in the process of civilization than the criticism to which this work was subjected by those who still found themselves obliged to concern themselves with it in the nineteenth century. An influential German pedagogue, Von Raumer, comments on it as follows in his *Geschichte der Pädagogik* (History of pedagogy):[82]

> How could such a book be introduced in countless schools? What had boys to do with these satyrs? Reform is a matter for mature men. What sense were boys supposed to make of dialogues on so many subjects of which they understand nothing; conversations in which teachers are ridiculed, or between two women about their husbands, between a suitor and a girl he is wooing, or the colloquy "Adolescentis et Scorti" (Young men and prostitutes). This last dialogue recalls Schiller's distich entitled "Kunstgriff" (The knack): "If you would please both the worldly and godly alike, paint them the joys of the flesh, but paint them the devil as well." Erasmus here paints fleshly lust in the basest way and then adds something which is supposed to edify. Such a book is recommended by the Doctor Theologiae to an eight-year-old boy, that he might be improved by reading it.

The work was indeed dedicated to the young son of Erasmus's publisher, and the father clearly felt no qualms at printing it.

2. The book met with harsh criticism as soon as it appeared. But this was not directed chiefly at its moral qualities. The primary target was the "intellectual", the man who was neither an orthodox Protestant nor an orthodox Catholic. The Catholic Church, above all, fought against the *Colloquies*, which certainly contain occasional virulent attacks on Church institutions and orders, and soon placed it on the Index.

But against this must be set the extraordinary success of the *Colloquies* and, above all, their introduction as a schoolbook. "From 1526 on", says Huizinga in his *Erasmus* (London, 1924, p. 199), "there was for two centuries an almost uninterrupted stream of editions and translations."

In this period, therefore, Erasmus's treatise must have remained a kind of standard work for a very considerable number of people. How is the difference between its viewpoint and that of the nineteenth-century critic to be understood?

In this work Erasmus does indeed speak of many things which with the advance of civilization have been increasingly concealed from the eyes of children, and which in the nineteenth century would under no circumstances have been used as reading matter for children in the way Erasmus desired and expressly affirmed in the dedication to his six- or eight-year-old godson. As the nineteenth-century critic stressed, Erasmus presents in the dialogues a young man wooing a girl. He shows a woman complaining about the bad behaviour of her husband. And there is even a conversation between a young man and a prostitute.

Nevertheless, these dialogues bear witness, in exactly the same way as *De civilitate morum puerilium*, to Erasmus's delicacy in all questions relating to the regulation of the life of drives, even if they do not entirely correspond to our own standard. Measured by the standard of medieval secular society, and even by that of the secular society of his own time, they even embody a very considerable shift in the direction of the kind of restraint of drive impulses which the nineteenth century was to justify above all in the form of morality.

Certainly, the young man who woos the girl in the colloquy "Proci et puellae" (Courtship) expresses very openly what he wants of her. He speaks of his love for her. When she resists, he tells her that she has drawn his soul half out of his body. He tells her that it is permissible and right to conceive children. He asks her to imagine how fine it will be when he as king and she as queen rule over their children and servants. (This idea shows very clearly how the lesser psychological distance between adults and children very often went hand in hand with a greater social distance.) Finally the girl gives way to his suit. She agrees to become his wife. But she preserves, as she says, the honour of her maidenhood. She keeps it for him, she says. She even refuses him a kiss. But when he does not desist from asking for one, she laughingly tells him that as she has, in his own words, drawn his soul half out of his body, so that he is almost dead, she is afraid that with a kiss she might draw his soul completely out of his body and kill him.

3. As has been mentioned, Erasmus was occasionally reproached by the Church, even in his own lifetime, with the "indecent character" of the *Colloquies*. But, one should not be misled by this into drawing false conclusions about the actual standard, particularly of secular society. A treatise directed against Erasmus's *Colloquies* from a consciously Catholic position, about which more will be said later, does not differ in the least from the *Colloquies* so far as unveiled references to sexual matters are concerned. Its author, too, was a humanist. The

novelty of the humanists' writings, and particularly of those of Erasmus, is precisely that they do not conform to the standard of clerical society but are written from the standpoint of, and for, secular society.

The humanists were representatives of a movement which sought to release the Latin language from its confinement within the ecclesiastical tradition and sphere, and make it a language of secular society, at least of the secular upper class. Not the least important sign of the change in the structure of Western society, which has already been seen from so many other aspects in this study, was the fact that its secular constituents now felt an increasing need for a secular, scholarly literature. The humanists were the executors of this change, the functionaries of this need of the secular upper class. In their works the written word once again drew close to worldly social life. Experiences from this life found direct access to scholarly literature. This, too, was a line in the great movement of "civilization". And it is here that one of the keys to the "revival" of antiquity will have to be sought.

Erasmus once gave very trenchant expression to this process precisely in defending the *Colloquies*: "As Socrates brought philosophy from heaven to earth, so I have led philosophy to games and banquets," he says in the notes *De utilitate colloquiorum* that he appended to the *Colloquies* (1655 edn, p. 668). For this reason these writings may be correctly regarded as representing the standard of behaviour of secular society, no matter how much their particular demands for a restraint of drives and moderation of behaviour may have transcended this standard and, represented in anticipation of the future, an ideal.

In *De utilitate colloquiorum*, Erasmus says with regard to the dialogue "Proci et puellae" mentioned above: "I wish that all suitors were like the one I depict and conversed in no other way when entering marriage."

What appears to the nineteenth-century observer as the "basest depiction of lust", what even by the present standard of shame must be veiled in silence particularly before children, appeared to Erasmus and his contemporaries who helped to disseminate this work as a model conversation, ideally suited to set an example for the young, and still largely an ideal when compared with what was actually going on around them.[83]

4. The other dialogues mentioned by Von Raumer in his polemic present similar cases. The woman who complains about her husband is instructed that she will have to change her own behaviour, then her husband's will change. And the conversation of the young man with the prostitute ends with his rejection of her disreputable mode of life. One must hear this conversation oneself to understand what Erasmus wishes to set up as an example for boys. The girl, Lucretia, has not seen the youth, Sophronius, for a long time. And she clearly invites him to do what he has come to the house to do. But he asks whether she is sure that they cannot be seen, whether she has not a darker room. And when she leads him to a darker room he again has scruples. Is she really sure that no

one can see them? "No one can see or hear us, not even a fly," she says. "Why do you hesitate?" But the young man asks: "Not even God? Not even the angels?"* And then he begins to convert her with all the arts of dialectics. He asks whether she has many enemies, whether it would not please her to annoy her enemies. Would she not annoy her enemies by giving up her life in this house and becoming an honourable woman? And finally he convinces her. He will secretly take a room for her in the house of a respectable woman, he will find a pretext for her to leave the house unseen. And at first he will look after her.

However "immoral" the presentation of such a situation (in a "children's book", of all places) must appear to an observer from a later period, it is not difficult to understand that, from the standpoint of a different social standard and a different structure of feelings, it could appear highly "moral" and exemplary.

The same line of development, the same difference in standards, could be demonstrated by any number of examples. The observer of the nineteenth and, to some extent, even of the twentieth century confronts the models and conditioning precepts of the past with a certain helplessness. And until we come to see that our own threshold of repugnance, our own structure of feelings, have developed—in a quite specific order—and are continuing to develop, it remains indeed almost incomprehensible from the present standpoint how such dialogues could be included in a schoolbook or deliberately produced as reading matter for children. But this is precisely why our own standard, including our attitude to children, should be understood as something which has developed.

More orthodox men than Erasmus did the same as he. To replace the *Colloquies*, which were suspected of heresy, other dialogues were written, as already mentioned, by a strict Catholic. They bear the title *Johannis Morisoti medici colloquiorum libri quatuor, ad Constantinum filium* (Basel, 1549). They are likewise written as a schoolbook for boys, since, as the author Morisotus says, one is often

---

* The text of this excerpt from the dialogue is as follows:

SOPHRONIUS: Nondum hic locus mihi videtur satis secretus.
LUCRETIA: Unde iste novus pudor? Est mihi museion,[81] ubi repono mundum meum, locus adeo obscurus, ut vix ego te visura sim, aut te me.
SOPH.: Circumspice rimas omnes.
LUC.: Ne musca quidem, mea lux. Quid cunctaris?
SOPH.: Fallemus heic oculos Dei?
LUC.: Nequaquam: ille perspicit omnia.
SOPH.: Et angelorum?

SOPH: This place doesn't seem secret enough to me. LUC.: How come you're so bashful all at once? Well, come to my private dressing room. It's so dark we shall scarcely see each other there. SOPH.: Examine every chink. LUC.: There's not a single chink. SOPH.: Is there nobody near to hear us? LUC.: Not so much as a fly, my dearest. Why are you hesitating? SOPH.: Can we escape the eye of God here? LUC.: Of course not: he sees everything. SOPH.: And the angels?

uncertain, in Erasmus's *Colloquies*, "whether one is listening to a Christian or a heathen". And in later evaluations of this opposing work from a strictly Catholic camp the same phenomenon appears.[85] It will suffice to introduce the work as it was reflected in a judgement from 1911.[86]

> In Morisotus girls, maidens, and women play a still greater role than in Erasmus. In a large number of dialogues they are the sole speakers, and their conversations, which even in the first and second books are by no means always quite harmless, often revolve in the last two.[87] . . . around such risky matters that we can only shake our heads and ask: Did the stern Morisotus write this for his son? Could he be so sure that the boy would really only read and study the later books when he had reached the age for which they were intended? Admittedly, we should not forget that the sixteenth century knew little of prudery, and frequently enough presented its scholars with material in their exercise books that our pedagogues would gladly do without. But another question! How did Morisotus imagine the use of such dialogues in practice? Boys, youths and men could never use as a model for speaking Latin such a conversation in which there are only female speakers. Therefore has not Morisotus, no better than the despised Erasmus, lost sight of the didactic purpose of the book?

The question is not difficult to answer.

5. Erasmus himself never "lost sight of his didactic purpose". His commentary *De utilitate colloquiorum* shows this quite unequivocally. In it he makes explicit what kind of didactic purpose was attached to his "conversations" or, more exactly, what he wanted to convey to the young man. On the conversation of the young man with the prostitute, for example, he says: "What could I have said that would have been more effective in bringing home to the young man the need for modesty, and in bringing girls out of such dangerous and infamous houses?" No, he never lost sight of his pedagogical purpose; he merely had a different standard of shame. He wanted to show the young man the world as in a mirror; he wanted to teach him what must be avoided and what was conducive to a tranquil life: "In senili colloquio quam multa velut in speculo exhibentur, quae, vel fugienda sunt in vita, vel vitam reddunt tranquillam!"

The same intention undoubtedly also underlay the conversations of Morisotus, and a similar attitude appeared in many other educational writings of the time. They all set out to "introduce the boy to life", as Erasmus put it.[88] But by this they meant the life of adults. In later periods there was an increasing tendency to tell and show children how they ought and ought not to behave. Here they were shown, by introducing them to life, how adults ought and ought not to behave. This was the difference. And one did not behave here in this way, there in that, as a result of theoretical reflection. For Erasmus and his contemporaries it was a matter of course to speak to children in this way. Even though subservient and socially dependent, boys lived from an early age in the same social sphere as adults. And adults did not impose upon themselves either in action or in words the same degree of restraint with regard to the sexual life as

later. In keeping with the different state of restraint of feelings produced in the individual by the structure of human relations, the idea of strictly concealing these drives in secrecy and intimacy was largely alien to adults themselves. All this made the distance between the behavioural and emotional standards of adults and children smaller from the outset. We see again and again how important it is for an understanding of the earlier psychic constitution and our own to observe the increase of this distance, the gradual formation of the peculiar segregated area in which people gradually came to spend the first twelve, fifteen, and now almost twenty years of their lives. The biological development of humans in earlier times will not have taken a very different course from today. Only in relation to this social change can we better understand the whole problem of "growing up" as it appears today, and with it such special problems as that of the "infantile residues" in the personality structure of grown-ups. The more pronounced difference between the dress of children and adults in our time is only a particularly visible expression of this development. It, too, was minimal at Erasmus's time and for a long period thereafter.

6. To an observer from more recent times, it seems surprising that Erasmus in his *Colloquies* should speak at all to a child of prostitutes and the houses in which they lived. In our phase of a civilizing process it seems immoral even to acknowledge the existence of such institutions in a schoolbook. They certainly exist as enclaves even in the society of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But the fear and shame with which the sexual area of the life of drives, like many others, is surrounded from the earliest years, the "conspiracy of silence" observed on such matters in social relations, are as good as complete. The mere mention of such opinions and institutions in social life is forbidden, and references to them in the presence of children are a crime, a soiling of the childish mind, or at least a conditioning error of the gravest kind.

In Erasmus's time it was taken equally for granted that children knew of the existence of these institutions. No one concealed them. At most they were warned about them. Erasmus did just that. If we read only the pedagogical books of the time, the mention of such social institutions can easily appear as an idea emanating from an individual. If we see how the children actually lived with adults, and how small was the wall of secrecy between adults themselves and therefore also between adults and children, we comprehend that conversations like those of Erasmus and Morisotus relate directly to the standard of their times. They could reckon with the fact that children knew about all this; it was taken for granted. They saw it as their task as educators to show children how they ought to conduct themselves in the face of such institutions.

It may not seem to amount to very much to say that such houses were spoken about quite openly at the universities. All the same, people generally went to university a good deal younger than today. And it illustrates the theme of this whole chapter to point out that the prostitute was a topic even of comic public

speeches at universities. In 1500 a Master of Arts at Heidelberg spoke "De fide meretricum in suos amatores" (On the fidelity of courtesans to their paramours), another "De fide concubinarum" (On the fidelity of concubines), a third "On the monopoly of the guild of swine", or "De generibus ebriosorum et ebrietate vitanda".[89]

And exactly the same phenomenon is apparent in many sermons of the time; there is no indication that children were excluded from them. This form of extramarital relationship was certainly disapproved of in ecclesiastical and many secular circles. But the social prohibition was not yet imprinted as a self restraint in individuals to the extent that it was embarrassing even to speak about it in public. Society had not yet outlawed every utterance that showed that one knew anything about such things.

This difference becomes even clearer if one considers the position of prostitutes in medieval towns. As is the case today in many societies outside Europe, they had their own very definite place in the public life of the medieval town. There were towns in which they ran races on festival days.[90] They were frequently sent to welcome distinguished visitors. In 1438, for example, the protocols of the city accounts of Vienna read: "For the wine for the common women 96 Kreutzers. Item, for the women who went to meet the king, 96 Kreutzers for wine."[91] Or the mayor and council gave distinguished visitors free access to the brothel. In 1434 the Emperor Sigismund publicly thanked the city magistrate of Bern for putting the brothel freely at the disposal of himself and his attendants for three days.[92] This, like a banquet, formed part of the hospitality offered to high-ranking guests.

The venal women formed within city life a corporation with certain rights and obligations, like any other professional body. And like any other professional group, they occasionally defended themselves against unfair competition. In 1500, for example, a number of them went to the mayor of a German town and complained about another house in which the profession to which their house had the sole public rights was practised. The mayor gave them permission to enter this house; they smashed everything and beat the landlady. On another occasion they dragged a competitor from her house and forced her to live in theirs.

In a word, their social position was similar to that of the executioner, lowly and despised, but entirely public and not surrounded with secrecy. This form of extramarital relationship between man and woman had not yet been removed "behind the scenes".

7. To a certain extent, this also applied to sexual relations in general, even marital ones. Wedding customs alone give us an idea of this. The procession into the bridal chamber was led by the best men. The bride was undressed by the bridesmaids; she had to take off all finery. The bridal bed had to be mounted in the presence of witnesses if the marriage was to be valid. They were "laid

together".[95] "Once in bed you are rightly wed", the saying went. In the later Middle Ages this custom gradually changed to the extent that the couple was allowed to lie on the bed in their clothes. No doubt these customs varied somewhat between classes and countries. All the same, the old form was retained in Lübeck, for example, up to the first decade of the seventeenth century.[94] Even in the absolutist society of France, bride and bridegroom were taken to bed by the guests, undressed, and given their nightdress. All this is symptomatic of a different standard of shame concerning the relations of the sexes. And through these examples one gains a clearer perception of the specific standard of shame which slowly became predominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this period, even among adults, everything pertaining to sexual life was concealed to a high degree and dismissed behind the scenes. This is why it is possible, and also necessary, to conceal this side of life for a long period from children. In the preceding phases the relations between the sexes, together with the institutions embracing them, were far more directly incorporated into public life. Hence it was more natural for children to be familiar with this side of life from an early age. From the point of view of conditioning, there was no need to burden this sphere with taboos and secrecy to the extent that became necessary in the later stage of civilization, with its different standard of behaviour.

In court-aristocratic society, sexual life was certainly a good deal more concealed than in medieval society. What the observer from a bourgeois-industrial society often interprets as the "frivolity" of court society was nothing other than this shift toward concealment. Nevertheless, measured by the standard of control of the impulses in bourgeois society itself, the concealment and segregation of sexuality in social life, as in consciousness, was relatively slight in this phase. Here too, the judgement of people in a later phase often goes astray, because they set their own standards against courtly–aristocratic ones, seeing both as something absolute, rather than as interlinking phases in a movement, and they make their own standards the measure of all others.

In court society, too, the relative openness with which the natural functions were discussed among adults, corresponded to a greater lack of inhibition in speech and action in the presence of children. There are numerous examples of this. To take a particularly illustrative one, there lived at the court in the seventeenth century a little Mlle de Bouillon who was six years old. The ladies of the court were wont to converse with her, and one day they played a joke on her: they tried to persuade the young lady she was pregnant. The little girl denied it. She defended herself. It was absolutely impossible, she said, and they argued back and forth. But then one day on waking up she found a newborn child in her bed. She was amazed; and she said in her innocence, "So this has happened only to the Holy Virgin and me; for I did not feel any pain". Her words were passed round, and then the little affair became a diversion for the whole court. The child received visits, as was customary on such occasions. The

Queen herself came to console her and to offer herself as godmother to the baby. And the game went further: the little girl was pressed to say who was the father of the child. Finally, after a period of strenuous reflection, she reached the conclusion that it could only be the King or the Count de Guiche, since they were the only two men who had given her a kiss.[95] Nobody took this joke amiss. It fell entirely within the existing standard. No one saw in it a danger to the adaptation of the child to this standard, or to her spiritual purity, and it was clearly not seen as in any way contradicting her religious education.

8. Only very gradually, subsequently, did a stronger association of sexuality with shame and embarrassment, and a corresponding restraint of behaviour, spread more or less evenly over the whole of society. And only when the distance between adults and children grew did "sex education" become an "acute problem".

Above, the criticism of Erasmus's *Colloquies* by the well-known pedagogue Von Raumer was quoted. The picture of this whole curve of development becomes even clearer if we see how the problem of sexual education, the adaptation of the child to the standard of his own [Raumer's] society, posed itself to this educator. In 1857, Von Raumer published a short work called *The Education of Girls.* What he prescribed in it (p. 72) as a behavioural model for adults in answering the sexual questions of their children was certainly not the only possible form of behaviour at his time; nevertheless, it was highly characteristic of the standard of the nineteenth century, in the instruction of both girls and boys:

> Some mothers are of the opinion, fundamentally perverse in my view, that daughters should be given insight into all family circumstances, even into the relations of the sexes, and initiated into things that will fall to their lot in the event that they should marry. Following the example of Rousseau, this view degenerated to the coarsest and most repulsive caricature in the philanthropist of Dessau. Other mothers exaggerate in the opposite direction by telling girls things which, as soon as they grow older, must reveal themselves as totally false. As in all other cases, this is reprehensible. *These things should not be touched upon at all in the presence of children,* least of all in a secretive way which is liable to arouse curiosity. Children should be left for as long as is at all possible in the belief that an angel brings the mother her little children. This legend, customary in some regions, is far better than the story of the stork common elsewhere. Children, if they really grow up under their mother's eyes, will seldom ask forward questions on this point . . . not even if the mother is prevented by a childbirth from having them about her. . . . If girls should later ask how little children really come into the world, they should be told that the good Lord gives the mother her child, who has a guardian angel in heaven who certainly played an invisible part in bringing us this great joy. "You do not need to know nor could you understand how God gives children." Girls must be satisfied with such answers in a hundred cases, and it is the mother's task to occupy her daughters' thoughts so incessantly with the good and beautiful that they are left no time to brood on such matters. . . . A mother . . . ought only once to say seriously: "It would not be good for you to know such a thing, and you

should take care not to listen to anything said about it." A truly well-brought-up girl will from then on feel shame at hearing things of this kind spoken of.

Between the manner of speaking about sexual relations represented by Erasmus and that represented here by Von Raumer, a civilization-curve is visible which is similar to that shown in more detail in the expression of other impulses. In the civilizing process, sexuality, too, has been increasingly removed behind the scenes of social life and enclosed in a particular enclave, the nuclear family. Likewise, the relations between the sexes have been hemmed in, placed behind walls in consciousness. An aura of embarrassment, the expression of a sociogenetic fear, came to surround this sphere of life. Even among adults it was referred to officially only with caution and circumlocutions. And with children, particularly girls, such things were, as far as possible, not referred to at all. Von Raumer gave no reason why one ought not to speak of them with children. He could have said it was desirable to preserve the spiritual purity of girls for as long as possible. But even this reason was only another expression of how far the gradual submergence of these impulses in shame and embarrassment had advanced by this time. It was now as natural not to speak of these matters as it was to speak of them in Erasmus's time. And the fact that both the witnesses invoked here, Erasmus and Von Raumer, were serious Christians who took their authority from God further underlines the difference.

It is clearly not "rational" motives that underlay the model put forward by Von Raumer. Considered rationally, the problem confronting him seems unsolved, and what he said appears contradictory. He did not explain how and when the young girl should be made to understand what was happening and would happen to her. The primary concern was the necessity of instilling "modesty" (i e., feelings of shame, fear, embarrassment and guilt) or, more precisely, behaviour conforming to the social standard. And one feels how infinitely difficult it was for the educator himself to overcome the resistance of the shame and embarrassment which surrounded this sphere for him. One detects something of the deep confusion in which this social development had placed people; the only advice that the educator was able to give mothers was to avoid contact with these things wherever possible. What is involved here is not the lack of insight or the inhibition of a particular person; it is a social, not an individual problem. Only gradually, as if through insight gained retrospectively, were better methods evolved for adapting the child to the high degree of sexual restraint, to the control, transformation and inhibition of these drives that were totally indispensable for life in this society.

Von Raumer himself in a sense saw that this area of life ought not to be surrounded with an aura of secrecy "which is liable to arouse curiosity". But as this had become a "secret" area in his society, he could not escape the necessity of secrecy in his own precepts: "A mother . . . ought only once to say seriously:

'It would not be good for you to know such a thing. . . .' " Neither "rational" motives nor practical reasons primarily determined this attitude, but rather the shame of adults themselves, which had become compulsive. It was the social prohibitions and resistances within themselves, their own "superego", that made them keep silent.

For Erasmus and his contemporaries, as we have seen, the problem was not that of enlightening the child on the relations of men and women. Children found out about this of their own accord through the kind of social institutions and social life in which they grew up. As the reserve of adults was less, so too was the discrepancy between what was permitted openly and what took place behind the scenes. Here the chief task of the educator was to guide the child, within what it already knew, in the correct direction—or, more precisely, the direction desired by the educator. This was what Erasmus sought to do through conversations like that of the girl with her suitor or the youth with the prostitute. And the success of the book shows that Erasmus struck the right note for many of his contemporaries.

As in the course of the civilizing process the sexual drive, like many others, has been subjected to ever stricter control and re-modelling, the problem it poses changes. The pressure placed on adults to privatize all their impulses (particularly sexual ones), the "conspiracy of silence", the socially generated restrictions on speech, the emotionally charged character of most words relating to sexual urges—all this builds a thick wall of secrecy around the growing child. What makes sexual enlightenment—the breaching of this wall, which will one day be necessary—so difficult is not only the need to make the growing child conform to the same standard of restraint and control over drives as the adult. It is, above all, the mental structure of the adults themselves that makes speaking about these secret things difficult. Very often adults have neither the tone nor the words. The "dirty" words they know are out of the question. The medical words are unfamiliar to many. Theoretical considerations in themselves do not help. It is the sociogenetic repressions in them that lead to resistance to speaking. Hence the advice given by Von Raumer to speak on these matters as little as possible. And this situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the tasks of conditioning and "enlightenment" fall more and more exclusively to parents. The many-sided love relationships between mother, father and child tend to increase resistance to speaking about these questions, not only on the part of the child but also on that of the father or mother.

It is clear from this how the question of childhood is to be posed. The psychological problems of the growing person cannot be understood if individuals are regarded as developing uniformly in all historical epochs. The problems relating to the child's consciousness and drive-economy vary with the nature of the relations of children to adults. These relations have in each society a specific form corresponding to the peculiarities of its structure. They are different in

knightly society from those in urban bourgeois society; they are different in the whole secular society of the Middle Ages from those of modern times. Therefore, the problems arising from the adaptation and moulding of growing children to the standard of adults—for example, the specific problems of puberty in our civilized society—can only be understood in relation to the historical phase, the structure of society as a whole, which demands and maintains this standard of adult behaviour and this special form of relationship between adults and children.

9. A civilizing curve analogous to that which appears through the question of "sex education" could also be shown in relation to marriage and its development in Western society. That monogamous marriage is the predominant institution regulating sexual relations in the West is undoubtedly correct in general terms. Nevertheless, the actual control and moulding of sexual relations has changed considerably in the course of Western history. The Church certainly fought early for monogamous marriage. But marriage took on this strict form as a social institution binding on both sexes only at a late stage, when drives and impulses came under firmer and stricter control. For only then were extramarital relationships for men really ostracized socially, or at least subjected to absolute secrecy. In earlier phases, depending on the balance of social power between the sexes, extramarital relationships for men and sometimes also for women were taken more or less for granted by secular society. Up to the sixteenth century we hear often enough that in the families of the most honourable citizens the legitimate and illegitimate children of the husband were brought up together; nor was any secret made of the difference before the children themselves. The man was not yet forced socially to feel ashamed of his extramarital relationships. Despite all the countervailing tendencies that undoubtedly already existed, it was very often taken for granted that the bastard children were a part of the family, that the father should provide for their future and, in the case of daughters, arrange an honourable wedding. But no doubt this led more than once to serious "misunderstanding"[96] between the married couples.

The situation of the illegitimate child was not always and everywhere the same throughout the Middle Ages. For a long time, nevertheless, there was no trace of the tendency towards secrecy which corresponds later, in professional-bourgeois society, to the tendency towards a stricter confinement of sexuality to the relationship of one man to one woman, to the stricter control of sexual impulses, and to the stronger pressure of social prohibitions. Here, too, the demands of the Church cannot be taken as a measure of the real standard of secular society. In reality, if not always in law, the situation of the illegitimate children in a family differed from that of the legitimate children only in that the former did not inherit the status of the father nor in general his wealth, or at least not the same part of it as the legitimate children. That people in the upper

class often called themselves "bastard" expressly and proudly is well enough known.[97]

Marriage in the absolutist court societies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries derived its special character from the fact that, through the structure of these societies, the dominance of the husband over the wife was broken for the first time. The social power of the wife was almost equal to that of the husband. Social opinion was determined to a high degree by women. And whereas society had hitherto acknowledged only the extramarital relationships of men, regarding those of the socially "weaker sex" as more or less reprehensible, the extramarital relationships of women now appeared, in keeping with the transformation of the balance of social power between the sexes, as legitimate within certain limits.

It remains to be shown in greater detail how decisive this first power-gain or, if one likes, this first wave of emancipation of women in absolutist court society was for the civilizing process, for the advance of the frontier of shame and embarrassment and for the strengthening of social control over individuals. Along with this power-gain, the social ascent of other social groups necessitated new forms of drive control for all at a level midway between those previously imposed on the rulers and the ruled respectively, so this strengthening of the social position of women signified (to express the point schematically) a decrease in the restrictions on their drives for women and an increase in the restrictions on their drives for men. At the same time, it forced both men and women to adopt a new and a stricter self-discipline in their relations with one another.

In the famous novel *La Princesse de Clèves*, by Madame de la Fayette, the Princess's husband, who knew his wife to be in love with the Duc de Nemours, says: "I shall trust only in you; it is the path my heart counsels me to take, and also my reason. With a temperament like yours, *by leaving you your liberty I set you narrower limits* than I could enforce."[98]

This is an example of the characteristic pressure toward self-discipline imposed on the sexes by this situation. The husband knows that he cannot hold his wife by force. He does not rant or expostulate because his wife loves another, nor does he appeal to his rights as a husband. Public opinion would support none of this. He restrains himself. But in doing so he expects from her the same self-discipline as he imposes on himself. This is a very characteristic example of the new constellation that comes into being with the lessening of social inequality between the sexes. Fundamentally, it is not the individual husband who gives his wife this freedom. It is founded in the structure of society itself. But it also demands a new kind of behaviour. It produces very specific conflicts. And there are certainly enough women in this society who make use of this freedom. There is plentiful evidence that in this court aristocracy the restriction of sexual relationships to marriage was very often regarded as bourgeois and as not in keeping with their estate. Nevertheless, all this gives an idea of how directly a

specific kind of freedom corresponds to particular forms and stages of social interdependence among human beings.

The non-dynamic linguistic forms to which we are still bound today oppose freedom and constraint like heaven and hell. From a short-term point of view, this thinking in absolute opposites is often reasonably adequate. For someone in prison the world outside the prison walls is a world of freedom. But considered more precisely, there is, contrary to what antitheses such as this one suggest, no such thing as "absolute" freedom, if this means a total independence and absence of social constraint. There is a liberation from one form of constraint that is oppressive or intolerable to another which is less burdensome. Thus the civilizing process, despite the transformation and increased constraint that it imposes on the emotions, goes hand in hand with liberations of the most diverse kinds. The form of marriage at the absolutist courts, symbolized by the same arrangement of living rooms and bedrooms for men and women in the mansions of the court aristocracy, is one of many examples of this. The woman was more free from external constraints than in feudal society. But the inner constraint, the self-control which she had to impose on herself in accordance with the form of integration and the code of behaviour of court society, and which stemmed from the same structural features of this society as her "liberation", had increased for women as for men in comparison to knightly society.

The case is similar if the bourgeois form of marriage of the nineteenth century is compared with that of the court aristocracy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this later period, the bourgeoisie as a whole became freed from the pressures of the absolutist-estates social structure. Both bourgeois men and bourgeois women were now relieved of the external constraints to which they were subjected as second-rate people in the hierarchy of estates. But the interweaving of trade and money, the growth of which had given them the social power to liberate themselves, had increased. In this respect, the social constraints on individuals were also stronger than before. The pattern of self-restraint imposed on the people of bourgeois society through their occupational work was in many respects different from the pattern imposed on the emotional life by the functions of court society. For many aspects of the "emotional economy", bourgeois functions—above all, business life—demand and produce greater self-restraint than courtly functions. Why the level of development, why—to express it more precisely—the occupational work that became a general way of life with the rise of the bourgeoisie should necessitate a particularly strict disciplining of sexuality is a question in its own right. The lines of connection between the modelling of the drive-economy and the social structure of the nineteenth century cannot be considered here. However, by the standard of bourgeois society, the control of sexuality and the form of marriage prevalent in court society appear extremely lax. Social opinion now severely condemned all extramarital relations between the sexes, though here, unlike the situation in

court society, the social power of the husband was again greater than that of the wife, so that violation of the taboo on extramarital relationships by the husband was usually judged more leniently than the same offence by women. But both breaches now had to be entirely excluded from official social life. Unlike those in court society, they had to be removed strictly behind the scenes, banished to the realm of secrecy. This is only one of many examples of the increase in inhibition and self-restraint which individuals now had to impose on themselves.

10. The civilizing process does not follow a straight line. The general trend of change can be determined, as has been done here. On a smaller scale there are the most diverse criss-cross movements, shifts and spurts in this or that direction. But if we consider the movement over large time spans, we see clearly how the compulsions arising directly from the threat of weapons and physical force have gradually diminished, and how those forms of dependency which lead to the regulation of the affects in the form of self-control, gradually increased. This change appears at its most unilinear if we observe the men of the upper class of any given time—that is, the class composed first of warriors or knights, then of courtiers, and then of professional bourgeois. If the whole many-layered fabric of historical development is considered, however, the movement is seen to be infinitely more complex. In each phase there are numerous fluctuations, frequent advances or recessions of the internal and external constraints. An observation of such fluctuations, particularly those close to us in time, can easily obscure the general trend. One such fluctuation is present today in the memories of all: in the period following World War I, as compared to the pre-war period, a "relaxation of morals" appears to have occurred. A number of constraints imposed on behaviour before the war have weakened or disappeared entirely. Many things forbidden earlier are now permitted. And, seen at close quarters, the movement seems to be proceeding in the direction opposite to that shown here; it seems to lead to a relaxation of the constraints imposed on individuals by social life. But on closer examination it is not difficult to perceive that this is merely a very slight recession, one of the fluctuations that constantly arise from the complexity of the historical movement within each phase of the total process.

One example is bathing manners. It would have meant social ostracism in the nineteenth century for a woman to wear in public one of the bathing costumes commonplace today. But this change, and with it the whole spread of sports for men and women, presupposes a very high standard of drive control. Only in a society in which a high degree of restraint is taken for granted, and in which women are, like men, absolutely sure that each individual is curbed by self-control and a strict code of etiquette, can bathing and sporting customs having this relative degree of freedom develop. It is a relaxation which remains within the framework of a particular "civilized" standard of behaviour involving a very high degree of automatic constraint and affect transformation, conditioned to become a habit.

At the same time, however, we also find in our own time the precursors of a shift towards the cultivation of new and stricter constraints. In a number of societies there are attempts to establish a social regulation and management of the emotions far stronger and more conscious than the standard prevalent hitherto, a pattern of moulding that imposes renunciations and transformation of drives on individuals with vast consequences for human life which are scarcely foreseeable as yet.

11. Regardless, therefore, of how much the tendencies may criss-cross, advance and recede, relax or tighten in matters of detail and from a short-term perspective, the direction of the main movement—as far as it is visible up to now—has been the same for the expression of all kinds of drive. The process of civilization of the sex drive, seen on a large scale, has run parallel to those of other drives, no matter what sociogenetic differences of detail may always be present. Here, too, measured in terms of the standards of the men of successive upper classes, control has grown ever stricter. The drive has been slowly but progressively suppressed from the public life of society. The reserve that must be exercised in speaking of it has also increased.[99] And this restraint, like all others, is enforced less and less by direct physical force. It is cultivated in individuals from an early age as habitual self-restraint by the structure of social life, by the pressure of social institutions in general, and by certain executive organs of society (above all, the family) in particular. Correspondingly, the social commands and prohibitions become increasingly a part of the self, a strictly regulated superego.

Like many other drives, sexuality is confined more and more exclusively, not only for women but for men as well, to a particular enclave, socially legitimized marriage. Social tolerance of other relationships, for both husband and wife, which was by no means lacking earlier, is suppressed increasingly, if with fluctuations. Every violation of these restrictions, and everything conducive to one, is therefore relegated to the realm of secrecy, of what may not be mentioned without loss of prestige or social position.

And just as the nuclear family only very gradually became, so exclusively, the sole legitimate enclave of sexuality and of all intimate functions for men and women, so it was only at a recent stage that it became so decisively the primary organ for cultivating the socially required control over impulses and behaviour in young people. Before this degree of restraint and intimacy was reached, and until the separation of the life of drives from public view was strictly enforced, the task of early conditioning did not fall so heavily on father and mother. All the people with whom the child came into contact—and when intimization was less advanced and the interior of the house less isolated, they were often quite numerous—played a part. In addition, the family itself was usually larger and—in the upper classes—the servants more numerous in earlier times. People in general spoke more openly about the various aspects of the life of drives, and gave way more freely in speech and action to their own impulses. The shame

associated with sexuality was less. This is what makes Erasmus's educational work quoted above so difficult for pedagogues of a later phase to understand. And so conditioning, the reproduction of social habits in the child, did not take place so exclusively behind closed doors, as it were, but far more directly in the presence of other people. A by no means untypical picture of this kind of conditioning in the upper class can be found, for example, in the diary of the doctor Jean Héroard, which records day by day and almost hour by hour the childhood of Louis XIII, what he did and said as he grew up.

It is not without a touch of paradox that the greater the transformation, control, restraint and concealment of drives and impulses that is demanded of individuals by society, and therefore the more difficult the conditioning of young becomes, the more the task of first instilling socially required habits is concentrated within the nuclear family, on the father and mother. The mechanism of conditioning, however, is still scarcely different than in earlier times. For it does not involve a closer supervision of the task, or more exact planning that takes account of the special circumstances of the child, but is effected primarily by automatic means and to some extent through reflexes. The socially patterned constellation of habits and impulses of the parents gives rise to a constellation of habits and impulses in the child; these may operate either in the same direction or in one entirely different from that desired or expected by the parents on the basis of their own conditioning. The interweaving of the habits of parents and children, through which the drive economy of the child is slowly moulded and given its character is, in other words, only to a slight extent determined by "reason". Behaviour and words associated by the parent with shame and repugnance are very soon associated in the same way by the children, through the parents' expressions of displeasure, their more or less gentle pressure; in this way the social standard of shame and repugnance is gradually reproduced in the children. But such a standard forms at the same time the basis and framework of the most diverse individual drive formations. How the growing personality is fashioned in particular cases by this incessant social interaction between the parents' and children's feelings, habits and reactions is at present largely unforeseeable and incalculable to parents.

12. The trend of the civilizing movement towards the stronger and stronger and more complete "intimization" of all bodily functions, towards their enclosure in particular enclaves, to put them "behind closed doors", has diverse consequences. One of the most important, which has already been observed in connection with various other forms of drives, is seen particularly clearly in the case of the development of civilizing restraints on sexuality. It is the peculiar division in human beings which becomes more pronounced the more sharply those aspects of human life that may be publicly displayed are divided from those that may not, and which must remain "intimate" or "secret". Sexuality, like all

the other natural human functions, is a phenomenon known to everyone and a part of each human life. We have seen how all these functions have gradually become charged with sociogenetic shame and embarrassment, so that the mere mention of them in public is increasingly restricted by a multitude of controls and prohibitions. More and more, people keep the functions themselves, and all reminders of them, concealed from one another. Where this is not possible—as in weddings, for example—shame, embarrassment, fear and all the other emotions associated with these driving forces of human life are mastered by a precisely regulated social ritual and by certain concealing formulas that preserve the standard of shame. In other words, with the advance of civilization the lives of human beings are increasingly split between an intimate and a public sphere, between private and public behaviour. And this split is taken so much for granted, becomes so compulsive a habit, that it is hardly perceived in consciousness.

In conjunction with this growing division of behaviour into what is and what is not publicly permitted, the psychic structure of people is also transformed. The prohibitions supported by social sanctions are reproduced in individuals as self-controls. The pressure to restrain impulses and the sociogenetic shame surrounding them—these are turned so completely into habits that we cannot resist them even when alone, in the intimate sphere. Pleasure-promising drives and pleasure-denying taboos and prohibitions, socially generated feelings of shame and repugnance, come to battle within the self. This, as has been mentioned, is clearly the state of affairs which Freud tried to express by concepts such as the "superego" and the "unconscious" or, as it is not unfruitfully called in everyday speech, the "subconscious". But however it is expressed, the social code of conduct so imprints itself in one form or another on human beings that it becomes a constituent element of their individual selves. And this element, the superego, like the personality structure as a whole of individual people, necessarily changes constantly with the social code of behaviour and the structure of society. The pronounced division in the "ego" or consciousness characteristic of people in our phase of civilization, which finds expression in such terms as "superego" and "unconscious", corresponds to the specific split in the behaviour which civilized society demands of its members. It matches the degree of regulation and restraint imposed on the expression of drives and impulses. Tendencies in this direction may develop in any form of human society, even in those which we call "primitive". But the strength attained in societies such as ours by this differentiation and the form in which it appears are reflections of a particular historical development, the results of a civilizing process.

This is what is meant when we refer here to the continuous correspondence between the social structure and the structure of the personality, of the individual self.

X

On Changes in Aggressiveness

The affect-structure of human beings is a whole. We may call particular drives by different names according to their different directions and functions. We may speak of hunger and the need to spit, of the sexual drive and of aggressive impulses, but in life these different drives are no more separable than the heart from the stomach or the blood in the brain from the blood in the genitalia. They complement and in part supersede each other, transform themselves within certain limits and compensate for each other; a disturbance here manifests itself there. In short, they form a kind of circuit in the human being, a partial unit within the total unity of the organism. Their structure is still opaque in many respects, but their socially imprinted form is of decisive importance for the functioning of a society as of the individuals within it.

The manner in which impulses or emotional expressions are spoken of today sometimes leads one to surmise that we have within us a whole bundle of different drives. A "death instinct" or a "need for recognition" are referred to as if they were different chemical substances. This is not to deny that observations of these different drives in individuals may be extremely fruitful and instructive. But the categories by which these observations are classified must remain powerless in the face of their living objects if they fail to express the unity and totality of the life of drives, and the connection of each particular drive to this totality. Accordingly, aggressiveness, which will be the subject of this chapter, is not a separable species of drive. At most, one may speak of the "aggressive impulse" only if one remains aware that it refers to a particular bodily function within the totality of an organism, and that changes in this function indicate changes in the personality structure as a whole.

1. The standard of aggressiveness, its tone and intensity, is not at present exactly uniform among the different nations of the West. But these differences, which from close up often appear quite considerable, disappear if the aggressiveness of the "civilized" nations is compared to that of societies at a different stage of affect control. Compared to the battle fury of the Abyssinian warriors—admittedly powerless against the technical apparatus of the civilized army—or to the frenzy of the different tribes at the time of the Great Migrations, the aggressiveness of even the most warlike nations of the civilized world appears subdued. Like all other instincts, it is bound, even in directly warlike actions, by the advanced state of the division of functions, and by the resulting greater dependence of individuals on each other and on the technical apparatus. It is confined and tamed by innumerable rules and prohibitions that have become self-constraints. It is as much transformed, "refined", "civilized", as all the other

forms of pleasure, and it is only in dreams or in isolated outbursts that we account for as pathological that something of its immediate and unregulated force appears.

In this area of the affects, the theatre of hostile collisions between people, the same historical transformation has taken place as in all others. No matter at what point the Middle Ages stand in this transformation, it will again suffice here to take the standard of their secular ruling class, the warriors, as a starting-point, to illustrate the overall pattern of this development. The release of the affects in battle in the Middle Ages was no longer, perhaps, quite so uninhibited as in the early period of the Great Migrations. But it was open and uninhibited enough compared to the standard of modern times. In the latter, cruelty and joy in the destruction and torment of others, like the proof of physical superiority, are placed under an increasingly strong social control anchored in the state organization. All these forms of pleasure, hemmed in by threats of displeasure, have gradually come to express themselves only indirectly, in a "refined" form. And only at times of social upheaval or where social control is looser (e.g., in colonial regions) do they break out more directly, uninhibitedly, less impeded by shame and repugnance.

2. Life in medieval society tended in the opposite direction. Rapine, battle, hunting of people and animals—all these were vital necessities which, in accordance with the structure of society, were visible to all. And thus, for the mighty and strong, they formed part of the pleasures of life.

"I tell you", says a war hymn attributed to the minstrel Bertran de Born,[100] "that neither eating, drinking, nor sleep has as much savour for me as when I hear the cry 'Forwards!' from both sides, and horses without riders shying and whinnying, and the cry 'Help! Help!', and to see the small and the great fall to the grass at the ditches and the dead pierced by the wood of the lances decked with banners."

Even the literary formulation gives an impression of the original savagery of feeling. In another place Bertran de Born sings: "The pleasant season is drawing nigh when our ships shall land, when King Richard shall come, merry and proud as he never was before. Now we shall see gold and silver spent; the newly built stonework will crack to the heart's desire, walls crumble, towers topple and collapse, our enemies taste prison and chains. I love the mêlée of blue and vermilion shields, the many-coloured ensigns and the banners, the tents and rich pavilions spread out on the plain, the breaking lances, the pierced shields, the gleaming helmets that are split, the blows given and received."

War, one of the *chansons de geste* declared, was to descend as the stronger on the enemy, to hack down his vines, uproot his trees, lay waste his land, take his castles by storm, fill in his wells, and kill his people. . . .

A particular pleasure was taken in mutilating prisoners: "By my troth," said the king in the same *chanson*, "I laugh at what you say. I care not a fig for your

threats. I shall shame every knight I have taken, cut off his nose or his ears. If he is a sergeant or a merchant he will lose a foot or an arm."[101]

Such things were not only said in song. These epics were an integral part of social life. And they expressed the feelings of the listeners for whom they were intended far more directly than many parts of our literature. They may have exaggerated the details. Even in the age of knights money already had, on occasions, some power to subdue and transform the affects. Usually only the poor and lowly, for whom no considerable ransom could be expected, were mutilated, and the knights who commanded ransoms were spared. The chronicles which directly document social life bear ample witness to these attitudes.

They were mostly written by clerics. The value judgements they contain are therefore often those of the weaker group threatened by the warrior class. Nevertheless, the picture they transmit to us is quite genuine. "He spends his life", we read of a knight, "in plundering, destroying churches, falling upon pilgrims, oppressing widows and orphans. He takes particular pleasure in mutilating the innocent. In a single monastery, that of the black monks of Sarlat, there are 150 men and women whose hands he has cut off or whose eyes he has put out. And his wife is just as cruel. She helps him with his executions. It even gives her pleasure to torture the poor women. She had their breasts hacked off or their nails torn off so that they were incapable of work."[102]

Such affective outbursts may still occur as exceptional phenomena, as a "pathological" degeneration, in later phases of social development. But here no punitive social power existed. The only threat, the only danger that could instil fear was that of being overpowered in battle by a stronger opponent. Leaving aside a small élite, rapine, pillage and murder were standard practice in the warrior society of this time, as is noted by Luchaire, the historian of thirteenth-century French society. There is little evidence that things were different in other countries or in the centuries that followed. Outbursts of cruelty did not exclude one from social life. They were not outlawed. The pleasure in killing and torturing others was great, and it was a socially permitted pleasure. To a certain extent, the social structure even pushed its members in this direction, making it seem necessary and practically advantageous to behave in this way.

What, for example, ought to be done with prisoners? There was little money in this society. With regard to prisoners who could pay and who, moreover, were members of one's own class, one exercised some degree of restraint. But the others? To keep them meant to feed them. To return them meant to enhance the wealth and fighting power of the enemy. For subjects (i.e., working, serving and fighting hands) were a part of the wealth of the ruling class of that time. So prisoners were killed or sent back so mutilated that they were unfitted for war service and work. The same applied to destroying fields, filling in wells and cutting down trees. In a predominantly agrarian society, in which immobile possessions represented the major part of property, this too served to weaken the

enemy. The stronger affectivity of behaviour was to a certain degree socially necessary. People behaved in a socially useful way and took pleasure in doing so. And it was entirely in keeping with the lesser degree of social control and constraint of the life of drives that this joy in destruction could sometimes give way, through a sudden identification with the victim, and doubtless also as an expression of the fear and guilt produced by the permanent precariousness of this life, to extremes of pity. The victor of today was defeated tomorrow by some accident, captured and imperilled. In the midst of these perpetual ups and downs, this alternation of the human hunts of wartime with the animal hunts or tournaments that were the diversions of "peacetime", little could be predicted. The future was relatively uncertain even for those who had fled the "world"; only God and the loyalty of a few people who held together had any permanence. Fear reigned everywhere; one had to be on one's guard all the time. And just as people's fate could change abruptly, so their joy could turn into fear and this fear, in its turn, could give way, equally abruptly, to submission to some new pleasure.

The majority of the secular ruling class of the Middle Ages led the life of leaders of armed bands. This formed the taste and habits of individuals. Reports left to us by that society yield, by and large, a picture similar to those of feudal societies in our own times; and they show a comparable standard of behaviour. Only a small élite, of which more will be said later, stood out to some extent from this norm.

The warrior of the Middle Ages not only loved battle, he lived for it. He spent his youth preparing for battle. When he came of age he was knighted, and waged war as long as his strength permitted, into old age. His life had no other function. His dwelling-place was a watchtower, a fortress, at once a weapon of attack and defence. If by accident, by exception, he lived in peace, he needed at least the illusion of war. He fought in tournaments, and these tournaments often differed little from real battles.[103]

"For the society of that time war was the normal state," says Luchaire of the thirteenth century. And Huizinga says of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: "The chronic form which war was wont to take, the continuous disruption of town and country by every kind of dangerous rabble, the permanent threat of harsh and unreliable law enforcement ... nourished a feeling of universal uncertainty."[104]

In the fifteenth century, as in the ninth or thirteenth, the knight still gave expression to his joy in war, even if it were no longer so uninhibited and intact as earlier.

"War is a joyous thing."[105] It was Jean de Bueil who said this. He had fallen into disfavour with the king. And now he dictated his life story to his servant. This was in the year 1465. It was no longer the completely free, independent knight who spoke, the little king in his domain. It was someone who was

himself in service: "War is a joyous thing. We love each other so much in war. If we see that our cause is just and our kinsmen fight boldly, tears come to our eyes. A sweet joy rises in our hearts, in the feeling of our honest loyalty to each other; and seeing our friend so bravely exposing his body to danger in order to keep and fulfil the commandment of our Creator, we resolve to go forward and die or live with him and never leave him on account of love. This brings such delight that anyone who has not felt it cannot say how wonderful it is. Do you think that someone who feels this is afraid of death? Not in the least! He is so strengthened, so delighted, that he does not know where he is. Truly he fears nothing in the world!"

This was the joy of battle, certainly, but it was no longer the direct pleasure in the human hunt, in the flashing of swords, in the neighing of steeds, in the fear and death of the enemy—how fine it is to hear them cry "Help, help!" or see them lying with their bodies torn open![106] Now the pleasure lay in the closeness to one's friends, the enthusiasm for a just cause, and more than earlier we find the joy of battle serving as an intoxicant to overcome fear.

Very simple and powerful feelings speak here. One killed, gave oneself up wholly to the fight, saw one's friend fight. One fought at his side. One forgot where one was. One forgot death itself. It was splendid. What more?

3. There is abundant evidence that the attitude towards life and death in the secular upper class of the Middle Ages by no means always accords with the attitude prevalent in the books of the ecclesiastical upper class, which we usually consider "typical" of the Middle Ages. For the clerical upper class, or at least for its spokesmen, the conduct of life was determined by the thought of death and of what comes after, the next world.

In the secular upper class this was by no means so exclusively the case. However frequent moods and phases of this kind may have been in the life of every knight, there is recurrent evidence of a quite different attitude. Again and again we hear an admonition that does not quite accord with the standard picture of the Middle Ages today: do not let your life be governed by the thought of death. Love the joys of this life.

"Nul courtois ne doit blâmer joie, mais toujours joie aimer." (No *courtois* man should revile joy, he should love joy.)[107] This was a command of *courtoisie* from a romance of the early thirteenth century. Or from a rather later period: "A young man should be gay and lead a joyous life. It does not befit a young man to be mournful and pensive."[108] In these statements the knightly people, who certainly did not need to be "pensive", clearly contrasted themselves to the clerics, who no doubt were frequently "mournful and pensive".

This far from life-denying attitude was expressed particularly earnestly and explicitly with regard to death in some verses in the *Distiche Catonis*, which were passed from generation to generation throughout the Middle Ages. That life is

uncertain was one of the fundamental themes which recurred in these verses:[109]

> To us all a hard uncertain life is given.

But this did not lead to the conclusion that one should think of death and what comes afterward, but rather:

> If you fear death you will live in misery.

Or in another place, expressed with particular clarity and beauty:[110]

> We well know that death shall come
> and our future is unknown:
> stealthy as a thief he comes,
> and body and soul he does part.
> So be of trust and confidence:
> be not too much afraid of death,
> for if you fear him overmuch
> joy you nevermore shall touch.

Nothing of the next life. He who allowed his life to be determined by thoughts of death no longer had joy in life. Certainly, the knights felt themselves strongly to be Christians, and their lives were permeated by the traditional ideas and rituals of the Christian faith; but Christianity was linked in their minds, in accordance with their different social and psychological situation, with an entirely different scale of values from that existing in the minds of the clerics who wrote and read books. Their faith had a markedly different tenor and tone. It did not prevent them from savouring to the full the joys of the world; it did not hinder them from killing and plundering. This was part of their social function, an attribute of their class, a source of pride. Not to fear death was a vital necessity for the knight. He had to fight. The structure and tensions of this society made this an inescapable condition for individuals.

4. But in medieval society this permanent readiness to fight, weapon in hand, was a vital necessity not only for the warriors, the knightly upper class. The life of the burghers in the towns was characterized by greater and lesser feuds to a far higher degree than in later times; here, too, belligerence, hatred and joy in tormenting others were more uninhibited than in the subsequent phase.

With the slow rise of a Third Estate, the tensions in medieval society were increased. And it was not only the weapon of money that carried the burgher upward. Robbery, fighting, pillage, family feuds—all this played a hardly less important role in the life of the town population than in that of the warrior class itself.

There is—to take one example—the fate of Mathieu d'Escouchy. He was a Picard, and one of the numerous men of the fifteenth century who wrote a "Chronicle".[111] From this "Chronicle" we would suppose him to have been a modest man of letters who devoted his time to meticulous historical work. But if we try to find out something of his life from the documents, a totally different picture emerges.[112]

Mathieu d'Escouchy begins his career as magistrate as a councillor, juror and mayor (prévot) of the town of Péronne between 1440 and 1450. From the beginning we find him in a kind of feud with the family of the procurator of the town, Jean Froment, a feud that is fought out in lawsuits. First it is the procurator who accuses d'Escouchy of forgery and murder, or of "excès et attemptaz". The mayor for his part threatens the widow of his enemy with investigation for magical practices. The woman obtains a mandate compelling d'Escouchy to place the investigation in the hands of the judiciary. The affair comes before the parliament in Paris, and d'Escouchy goes to prison for the first time. We find him under arrest six times subsequently, partly as defendant and once as a prisoner of war. Each time there is a serious criminal case, and more than once he sits in heavy chains. The contest of reciprocal accusations between the Froment and d'Escouchy families is interrupted by a violent clash in which Froment's son wounds d'Escouchy. Both engage cutthroats to take each other's lives. When this lengthy feud passes from our view, it is replaced by new attacks. This time the mayor is wounded by a monk. New accusations, then in 1461 d'Escouchy's removal to Nesle, apparently under suspicion of criminal acts. Yet this does not prevent him from having a successful career. He becomes a bailiff, mayor of Ribemont, procurator to the king at Saint Quintin, and is raised to the nobility. After new woundings, incarcerations and expiation we find him in war service. He is made a prisoner of war; from a later campaign he returns home crippled. Then he marries, but this does not mean the beginning of a quiet life. We find him transported as a prisoner to Paris "like a criminal and murderer", accused of forging seals, again in feud with a magistrate in Compiègne, brought to an admission of his guilt by torture and denied promotion, condemned, rehabilitated, condemned once again, until the trace of his existence vanishes from the documents.

This is one of innumerable examples. The well-known miniatures from the "book of hours" of the Duc de Berry[113] are another. "People long believed," says its editor, "and some are still convinced today, that the miniatures of the fifteenth century are the work of earnest monks or pious nuns working in the peace of their monasteries. That is possible in certain cases. But, generally speaking, the situation was quite different. It was worldly people, master craftsmen, who executed these beautiful works, and the life of these secular artists was very far from being edifying." We hear repeatedly of actions which by the present standards of society would be branded as criminal and made socially "impossible". For example, the painters accused each other of theft; then one of them, with his kinsmen, stabbed the other to death in the street. And the Duc de Berry, who needed the murderer, had to request an amnesty, a *lettre de rémission*

for him. Yet another abducted an eight-year-old girl in order to marry her, naturally against the will of her parents. These *lettres de rémission* show us such bloody feuds taking place everywhere, often lasting for many years, and sometimes leading to wild battles in public places or in the countryside. And this applied to knights as much to merchants or craftsmen. As in all other countries with related social forms—for example, Ethiopia or Afghanistan today—the noble had bands of followers who were ready for anything. ". . . During the day he is constantly accompanied by servants and arms bearers in pursuit of his 'feuds'. . . . The *roturiers*, the citizens, cannot afford this luxury, but they have their 'relatives and friends' who come to their help, often in great numbers, equipped with every kind of awesome weapon that the local *coutumes*, the civic ordinances, prohibit in vain. And these burghers, too, when they have to avenge themselves, are *de guerre*, in a state of feud."[114]

The civic authorities sought in vain to pacify these family feuds. The magistrates call people before them, order a cessation of strife, issue commands and decrees. For a time, all is well; then a new feud breaks out, an old one is rekindled. Two *associés* fall out over business; they quarrel, the conflict grows violent; one day they meet in a public place and one of them strikes the other dead.[115] An innkeeper accuses another of stealing his clients; they become mortal enemies. Someone says a few malicious words about another; a family war develops.

Not only among the nobility were there family vengeance, private feuds, vendettas. The fifteenth-century towns were no less rife with wars between families and cliques. The little people, too—the hatters, the tailors, the shepherds—were all quick to draw their knives. "It is well known how violent manners were in the fifteenth century, with what brutality passions were assuaged, despite the fear of hell, despite the restraints of class distinctions and the chivalrous sentiment of honour, *despite the bonhomie and gaiety of social relations*."[116]

Not that people were always going around with fierce looks, drawn brows and martial countenances as the clearly visible symbols of their warlike prowess. On the contrary, a moment ago they were joking, now they mock each other, one word leads to another, and suddenly from the midst of laughter they find themselves in the fiercest feud. Much of what appears contradictory to us—the intensity of their piety, the violence of their fear of hell, their guilt feelings, their penitence, the immense outbursts of joy and gaiety, the sudden flaring and the uncontrollable force of their hatred and belligerence—all these, like the rapid changes of mood, are in reality symptoms of one and the same structuring of the emotional life. The drives, the emotions were vented more freely, more directly, more openly than later. It is only to us, in whom everything is more subdued, moderate and calculated, and in whom social taboos are built much more deeply into the fabric of our drive-economy as self-restraints, that the unveiled intensity

of this piety, belligerence or cruelty appears to be contradictory. Religion, the belief in the punishing or rewarding omnipotence of God, never has in itself a "civilizing" or affect-subduing effect. On the contrary, religion is always exactly as "civilized" as the society or class which upholds it. And because emotions were here expressed in a manner that in our own world is generally observed only in children, we call these expressions and forms of behaviour "childish".

Wherever one opens the documents of this time, one finds the same: a life where the structure of affects was different from our own, an existence without security, with only minimal thought for the future. Whoever did not love or hate to the utmost in this society, whoever could not stand their ground in the play of passions, could go into a monastery; in worldly life they were just as lost as were, conversely, in later society, and particularly at court, persons who could not curb their passions, could not conceal and "civilize" their affects.

5. In both cases it was the structure of society that required and generated a specific standard of emotional control. "We," says Luchaire, "with our peaceful manners and habits, with the care and protection that the modern state lavishes on the property and person of each individual", can scarcely form an idea of this other society.

> At that time the country had disintegrated into provinces, and the inhabitants of each province formed a kind of little nation that abhorred all the others. The provinces were in turn divided into a multitude of feudal estates whose owners fought each other incessantly. Not only the great lords, the barons, but also the smaller lords of the manor lived in desolate isolation and were uninterruptedly occupied in waging war against their "sovereigns", their equals or their subjects. In addition, there was constant rivalry between town and town, village and village, valley and valley, and constant wars between neighbours that seemed to arise from the very multiplicity of these territorial units.[117]

This description helps us to see more precisely something which so far has been stated mainly in general terms, namely, the connection between the social structure and the structure of affects. In this society there was no central power strong enough to compel people to exercise restraint. But if in this or that region the power of a central authority grows, if over a larger or smaller area the people are forced to live in peace with each other, the moulding of affects and the standards of the drive-economy are very gradually changed as well. As will be discussed in more detail later, the reserve and "mutual consideration" of people increase, first in normal everyday social life. And the discharge of affects in physical attack is limited to certain temporal and spatial enclaves. Once the monopoly of physical power has passed to central authorities, not every strong man can afford the pleasure of physical attack. This is now reserved to those few legitimized by the central authority (e g., the police against the criminal), and to

larger numbers only in exceptional times of war or revolution, in the socially legitimized struggle against internal or external enemies.

But even these temporal or spatial enclaves within civilized society in which aggressiveness is allowed freer play—above all, wars between nations—have become more impersonal, and lead less and less to affective discharges as strong and intense as in the medieval phase. The necessary restraint and transformation of aggression cultivated in the everyday life of civilized society cannot be simply reversed, even in these enclaves. All the same, this could happen more quickly than we might suppose, had not the direct physical combat between a man and his hated adversary given way to a mechanized struggle which required a strict control of the affects. In the civilized world, even in war individuals can no longer give free rein to their pleasure, spurred on by the sight of the enemy, but must fight, no matter how they may feel, according to the commands of invisible or only indirectly visible leaders, against a frequently invisible or only indirectly visible enemy. And immense social upheaval and urgency, heightened by carefully concerted propaganda, are needed to reawaken and legitimize in large masses of people the socially outlawed drives, the joy in killing and destruction that have been repressed from everyday civilized life.

6. Admittedly, these affects do have, in a "refined" and more rationalized form, their legitimate and exactly defined place in the everyday life of civilized society. And this is very characteristic of the kind of transformation through which the civilization of the affects takes place. For example, belligerence and aggression find socially permitted expression in sporting contests. And they are expressed especially in "spectating" (e.g., at boxing matches), in the imaginary identification with a small number of combatants to whom moderate and precisely regulated scope is granted for the release of such affects. And this living-out of affects in spectating or even in merely listening (e.g., to a radio commentary) is a particularly characteristic feature of civilized society. It partly determines the development of books and the theatre, and decisively influences the role of the cinema in our world. This transformation of what manifested itself originally as an active, often aggressive expression of pleasure, into the passive, more ordered pleasure of spectating (i.e., a mere pleasure of the eye) is already initiated in education, in the conditioning precepts for young people.

In the 1774 edition of La Salle's *Civilité*, for example, we read (p. 23): "Children like to touch clothes and other things that please them with their hands. This urge must be corrected, and they must be taught to touch all they see only with their eyes."

By now this precept is taken almost for granted. It is highly characteristic of civilized people that they are denied by socially instilled self-controls from spontaneously touching what they desire, love or hate. The whole moulding of their gestures—no matter how its pattern may differ among Western nations with regard to particulars—is decisively influenced by this necessity. It has been

shown elsewhere how the use of the sense of smell, the tendency to sniff at food or other things, has come to be restricted as something animal-like. Here we see one of the interconnections through which a different sense organ, the eye, has taken on a very specific significance in civilized society. In a similar way to the ear, and perhaps even more so, it has become a mediator of pleasure, precisely because the direct satisfaction of the desire for pleasure has been hemmed in by a multitude of barriers and prohibitions.

But even within this transfer of emotions from direct action to spectating, there has been a distinct curve of moderation and "humanization" in the transformation of affects. The boxing match, to mention only one example, represents a strongly tempered form of the impulses of aggressiveness and cruelty, compared with the visual pleasures of earlier stages.

An example from the sixteenth century may serve as an illustration. It has been chosen from a multitude of others because it shows an institution in which the visual satisfaction of the urge to cruelty, the joy in watching pain inflicted, emerges in a particularly pure form, without any rational justification or disguise as a punishment or means of discipline.

In Paris during the sixteenth century it was one of the festive pleasures of Midsummer Day to burn alive one or two dozen cats. This ceremony was very famous. The populace assembled. Solemn music was played. Under a kind of scaffold an enormous pyre was erected. Then a sack or basket containing the cats was hung from the scaffold. The sack or basket began to smoulder. The cats fell into the fire and were burned to death, while the crowd revelled in their caterwauling. Usually the king and queen were present. Sometimes the king or the dauphin was given the honour of lighting the pyre. And we hear that once, at the special request of King Charles IX, a fox was caught and burned as well.[118]

This was not by any means really a worse spectacle than the burning of heretics, or the torturings and public executions of every kind. It only appears worse because the joy in torturing living creatures is revealed so nakedly and purposelessly, without any excuse before reason. The revulsion aroused in us by the mere report of the institution, a reaction which must be taken as "normal" for the present-day standard of affect control, demonstrates once again the long-term change of the affect-economy. At the same time, it enables us to see one aspect of this change particularly clearly: much of what earlier aroused pleasure arouses displeasure today. Now, as then, it is not merely individual feelings that are involved. The cat-burning on Midsummer Day was a social institution, like boxing or horse-racing in present-day society. And in both cases the amusements created by society for itself, are embodiments of a social standard of affects within the framework of which all individual patterns of affect regulation, however varied they may be, are contained; anyone who steps outside the bounds of this social standard is considered "abnormal". Thus, someone who wished to gratify his or her pleasure in the manner of the sixteenth century by burning cats

would be seen today as "abnormal", simply because normal conditioning in our stage of civilization restrains the expression of pleasure in such actions through anxiety instilled as self-control. Here, obviously, the simple psychological mechanism is at work on the basis of which the long-term change of personality structure has taken place: socially undesirable expressions of drives and pleasure are threatened and punished with measures that generate displeasure and anxiety or allow them to become dominant. In the constant recurrence of displeasure aroused by threats, and in the habituation to this rhythm, the dominant displeasure is compulsorily associated even with behaviour which at root may be pleasurable. In this manner, socially aroused displeasure and anxiety—nowadays represented, though by no means always and by no means solely, by the parents—fight with hidden desires. What has been shown here from different angles as an advance in the frontiers of shame, in the threshold of repugnance, in the standards of affect, has probably been set in motion by mechanisms such as these.

It remains to be considered in greater detail what changes in the social structure actually triggered these psychological mechanisms, what changes in the constraints people impose on each other set this "civilization" of affects and behaviour in motion.

XI

Scenes from the Life of a Knight

The question why people's behaviour and emotions change is really the same as the question why their forms of living change. In medieval society certain forms of life had been developed, and individuals were bound to live within them, as knights, craftsmen or bondsmen. In more recent society different opportunities, different forms of living came to be pre-given, to which individuals had to adapt. If they were of the nobility they could lead the life of a courtier. But they could no longer, even if they so desired (and many did), lead the less constrained life of a knight. From a particular time on, this function, this way of life was no longer present in the structure of society. Other functions, such as those of the guild craftsman and the priest, which played an extraordinary part in the medieval phase, largely lost their significance in the total structure of social relations. Why do these functions and forms of life, to which individuals must adapt themselves as to more or less fixed moulds, change in the course of history? As has been mentioned, this is really the same question as why feelings and emotions, the structure of drives and impulses, and everything connected with them change.

A good deal has been said here about the emotional standards of the medieval

upper class. To complement this, and at the same time to provide a link with the question of the causes of the change these standards underwent, we shall now add a short impression of the way in which knights lived, and thus of the "social space" which society opened to individuals of noble birth, and within which it also confined them. The picture of this "social space", the image of the knight in general, became clouded in obscurity quite soon after what is called their "decline". Whether the medieval warrior came to be seen as the "noble knight" (only the grand, beautiful, adventurous and moving aspects of his life being remembered) or as the "feudal lord", the oppressor of peasants (only the savage, cruel, barbaric aspects of his life being emphasized), the simple picture of the actual life of this class is usually distorted by values and nostalgia from the period of the observer. A few drawings, or at least descriptions of them, may help to restore this picture. Apart from a few writings, the works of sculptors and painters of the period convey particularly strongly the special quality of its atmosphere or, as we may call it, its emotional character, and the way it differes from our own, though only a few works reflect the life of a knight in its real context. One of the few picture-books of this kind, admittedly from a relatively late period, between 1475 and 1480, is the sequence of drawings that became known under the not very appropriate title *Medieval House-Book* (see Appendix II). The name of the artist who drew them is unknown, but he must have been very familiar with the knightly life of his time; moreover, unlike many of his fellow craftsmen, he must have seen the world with the eyes of a knight and largely identified with their social values. A not insignificant indication of this is his depiction on one sheet of a man of his own craft as the only craftsmen in courtly dress, as is the girl behind him, who places her arm on his shoulder and for whom he clearly expresses his feelings. Perhaps it is a self-portrait.[119]

These drawings (see Appendix II) are from the late knightly period, the time of Charles the Bold and Maximilian, the last knight. We may conclude from the coats of arms that these two, or knights close to them, are themselves represented in one or another of the pictures. "There is no doubt," it has been said, "that we have . . . Charles the Bold himself or a Burgundian knight from his entourage before us."[120] Perhaps a number of the pictures of tournaments directly depict the jousting following the Feud of Neuss (1475), at the betrothal of Maximilian to Charles the Bold's daughter, Marie of Burgundy. At any rate, those we see before us are already people of the transitional age in which the knightly aristocracy was being gradually replaced by a courtly one. And a good deal that is reminiscent of the courtier is also present in these pictures. Nevertheless, they give, on the whole, a very good idea of the social space of a knight, of how he filled his days, of what he saw around him and how he saw it.

What do we see? Nearly always open country, hardly anything recalling the town. Small villages, fields, trees, meadows, hills, short stretches of river and, frequently, the castle. But there is nothing in these pictures of the nostalgic

mood, the "sentimental" attitude to "nature" that slowly became perceptible not very long afterwards, as the leading nobles had to forgo more and more frequently the relatively unbridled life at their ancestral seats, and were bound increasingly tightly to the semi-urban court and to dependence on kings or princes. This is one of the most important differences in emotional tone that these pictures convey. In later periods the artist's consciousness sifts the material available to him in a very strict and specific way which directly expresses his taste or, more precisely, his affective structure. "Nature", the open country, shown first of all as merely a background to human figures, took on a nostalgic glow, as the confinement of the upper class to the towns and courts increased and the rift between town and country life grew more perceptible. Or nature took on, like the human figures it surrounded in the picture, a sublime, representative character. At any rate, there was a change in the *selection by feeling*, in what appealed to feeling in the representation of nature, and in what was felt as unpleasant or painful. And the same is true of the people depicted. For the public in the absolute court, much that really existed in the country, in "nature", was no longer portrayed. The hill was shown, but not the gallows on it, nor the corpse hanging from the gallows. The field was shown, but no longer the ragged peasant laboriously driving his horses. Just as everything "common" or "vulgar" disappeared from courtly language, so it vanished also from the pictures and drawings intended for the courtly upper class.

In the drawings of the *House-Book*, which give an idea of the feeling-structure of the late medieval upper class, this is not so. Here, all these things—gallows, ragged servants, labouring peasants—are to be seen in drawings as in real life. They are not emphasized in a spirit of protest, in the manner of later times, but shown as something very matter-of-fact, part of one's daily surroundings, like the stork's nest or the church tower. One is no more painful in life than the other, and so is not more painful in the picture. On the contrary, as everywhere in the Middle Ages, it was an inseparable part of the existence of the rich and noble that there also existed peasants and craftsmen working for them, and beggars and cripples with open hands. There was no threat to the noble in this, nor did he identify in any way with them; the spectacle evoked no painful feeling. And often enough the yokel and peasant were the objects of pleasantries.

The pictures reveal the same attitude. First there is a sequence of drawings showing people under particular constellations. They are not grouped directly around the knight, but they make clear how and what he saw around him. Then comes a series of pages showing how a knight spends his life, his occupations and his pleasures. Measured by later times, they all bear witness to the same standard of repugnance and the same social attitudes.

At the beginning, for example, we see people born under Saturn. In the foreground a poor fellow is disembowelling a dead horse or perhaps cutting off the usable meat. His trousers have slipped down somewhat as he bends; part of

his posterior is visible, and a pig behind him is sniffing at it. A frail old woman, half in rags, limps by supported on a crutch. In a small cave beside the road sits a wretch with his hands and feet in the stocks, and beside him a woman with one hand in the stocks, the other in fetters. A farm worker is toiling at a watercourse that vanishes between trees and hills. In the distance we see the farmer and his young son laboriously ploughing the hilly field with a horse. Still further back a man in rags is being led to the gallows, an armed man with a feather in his cap marching proudly beside him; at his other side a monk in his cowl holds out a large crucifix to him. Behind him ride the knight and two of his men. On the top of the hill stands the gallows with a body hanging from it, and the wheel with a corpse on it. Dark birds fly around; one of them pecks at the corpse.

The gallows is not in the least emphasized. It is there like the stream or a tree; and it is seen in just the same way when the knight goes hunting. A whole company rides past, the lord and lady often on the same horse. The deer vanish into a little wood; a stag seems to be wounded. Further in the background one sees a little village or perhaps the yard of a household—well, mill wheel, windmill, a few buildings. The farmer is seen ploughing a field; he looks round at the deer, which are just running across his field. High up to one side is the castle; on the other, smaller hill opposite, wheel and gallows with a body, and birds circling.

The gallows, the symbol of the knight's judicial power, is part of the background of his life. It may not be very important, but at any rate, it is not a particularly painful sight. Sentence, execution, death—all these are immediately present in this life. They, too, have not yet been removed behind the scenes.

And the same is true of the poor and the labourers. "Who would plough our fields for us if you were all lords", asks Berthold von Regensburg in one of his sermons in the thirteenth century.[121] And elsewhere he says even more clearly: I shall tell you Christian folk how Almighty God has ordered Christendom, dividing it into ten kinds of people, "and what kinds of services the lower owe the higher as their rulers. The first three are the highest and most exalted whom Almighty God himself chose and ordained, so that the other seven should all be subject to them and serve them".[122] The same attitude to life is still found in these pictures from the fifteenth century. It is not distasteful, it is part of the natural and unquestioned order of the world that warriors and nobles have leisure to amuse themselves, while the others work for them. There is no identification of person with person. Not even on the horizon of this life is there an idea that all people are "equal". But perhaps for that very reason the sight of the labourers has about it nothing shameful or embarrassing.

A picture of the manor shows the pleasures of the lords. A young lady of the nobility crowns her young friend with a wreath; he draws her to him. Another pair go walking in a close embrace. The old servant woman pulls an angry face at the love games of the young people. Nearby the servants are working. One of

them sweeps the yard, another grooms the horse, a third scatters food for the ducks, but the maid waves to him from the window; he turns round, soon he will disappear into the house. Noble ladies at play. Peasant antics behind them. On the roof the stork clatters.

Then there is a small courtyard by a lake. On the bridge stands a young nobleman with his wife. Leaning on the balustrade they watch the servants in the water catching fish and ducks. Three young ladies are in a boat. Rushes, bushes, in the distance the walls of a small town.

Or we see workmen building a house in front of a wooded hill. The lord and lady of the castle look on. Tunnels have been driven into the little hill to quarry stones. Workmen are seen hewing the stones; others cart them away. Nearer to us, men are working on the half-finished building. In the foreground workmen are quarrelling; they are about to stab and strike each other down. The lord of the castle stands not far from them. He shows his wife the angry scene; the complete calm of the lord and his wife is placed in sharp contrast to the excited gestures of the disputants. The rabble fight, the lord has nothing to do with it. He lives in another sphere.

It is not the events themselves, which in part are no different today, but above all the fact and the manner of their portrayal that underline the changed emotional structure. The upper classes of later phases did not have such things drawn. Such drawings did not appeal to their feelings. They were not "beautiful". They did not form part of "art". In later periods it is at most among the Dutch (who depict middle-class, specifically uncourtly strata) that we find, for example, in the work of Breughel a standard of repugnance that permits him to bring cripples, peasants, gallows or people relieving themselves into his pictures. But the standard there is linked with very different social feelings than in these pictures of the late medieval upper class.

Here, it is a matter of course that the labouring classes exist. They are even indispensable figures in the landscape of knightly existence. The lord lives in their midst. It does not shock him to see the servant working beside him. Nor does it shock him if the latter amuses himself in his own way. On the contrary, it is an integral part of his self-esteem to have these other people moving about him who are not like him, whose master he is. This feeling is expressed again and again in the drawings. There is scarcely one of them in which *courtois* occupations and gestures are not contrasted to the vulgar ones of the lower classes. Whether he rides, hunts, loves or dances, whatever the lord does is noble and *courtois*, whatever the servants and peasants do coarse and uncouth. The feelings of the medieval upper class did not yet demand that everything vulgar should be suppressed from life and therefore from pictures. It was gratifying for the nobles to know themselves different from others. *The sight of contrasts heightened joy in living*; and we should remember that, in a milder form, something of the pleasure taken in such contrasts is still to be found, for example, in Shakespeare.

Wherever one looks at the heritage of the medieval upper class, one finds this same attitude in an unrestrained form. The further interdependence and the division of labour in society advance, the more dependent the upper classes become on the other classes, and the greater, therefore, becomes the social strength of these classes, at least potentially. Even when the upper class was still primarily a warrior class, when it kept the other classes dependent chiefly through the sword and the monopoly of weapons, some degree of dependence on these other classes was certainly not entirely absent. But it was incomparably less; and less, too—as will be seen in greater detail later—was the pressure from below. Accordingly, the sense of mastery of the upper class, its contempt for other classes, was far more open, and the pressure on upper-class people to exercise restraint and to control their drives, was far less strong.

Seldom has the matter-of-fact sense of mastery of this class, and its self-confident, patriarchal contempt of others, been so vividly conveyed as in these drawings. This is expressed not only in the gesture with which the nobleman shows his wife the quarrelling craftsmen and the workers in a kind of foundry who are holding their noses to ward off the foul vapours; not only where the lord watches his servants catching fish, or in the repeated depiction of the gallows with a corpse hanging from it; but also in the matter-of-fact and casual way in which the nobler gestures of the knight are juxtaposed to the coarse ones of the people.

There is a picture of a tournament. Musicians play. Fools cut clumsy capers. The noble spectators on their horses, often the lord and lady on the same horse, are conversing. The peasants, the citizens, the doctor, all recognizable by their dress, look on. The two knights, somewhat helpless in their heavy armour, wait at the centre. Friends advise them. One of them is just being handed the long lance. Then the herald blows his trumpet. The knights charge at each other with their lances levelled. And in the background, contrasting to the *courtois* activities of the masters, we see the vulgar pastimes of the people, a horse race accompanied by all kinds of nonsense. A man hangs on to the tail of one of the horses. The rider is furious. The others whip their horses and make off at a somewhat grotesque gallop.

We see a military camp. A circular barricade has been made with the gun carriages. Within it stand resplendent tents with their different coats of arms and banners, among them the imperial banner. At the centre, surrounded by his knights, we see the king or even the emperor himself. A messenger on horseback is just bringing him a message. But at the gate of the camp, beggar women sit with their children, wringing their hands, while a man in armour on horseback brings in a fettered prisoner. Further back we see a peasant ploughing his field. Outside the rampart, bones lie about, animal skeletons, a dead horse with a crow and a wild dog eating it. Close to a wagon a crouching servant relieves himself.

Or we see knights attacking a village under the sign of Mars. In the

foreground, one of the soldiers is stabbing a prostrate peasant; on the right, apparently in a chapel, a second man is stabbed and his possessions are dragged away. On the roof the storks sit peacefully in their nest. Further back a peasant is trying to escape over the fence, but a knight on his horse holds him by the protruding tail of his shirt. A peasant woman cries out, wringing her hands. A peasant in fetters, doleful and wretched, is being beaten over the head by a knight on horseback. Further back horsemen are setting fire to a house; one of them drives off the cattle and strikes at the farmer's wife, who is trying to stop him; above, in the little tower of the village church, the peasants huddle together, and frightened faces look out of the window. In the far distance, on a small hill, stands a fortified monastery; behind the high walls one sees the church roof with a cross on it. Somewhat higher up, on a hill, a castle or another part of the monastery.

These are the ideas suggested to the artist by the sign of the god of war. The picture is wonderfully full of life. As in a number of the other drawings, one feels that something that has been really experienced is before one's eyes. One has this feeling because these pictures are not yet "sentimental", because they do not express the greater restraint of the emotions which from now on, for a long period, caused the art of the upper class to express more and more exclusively its wishful fantasies, and compelled it to suppress everything that conflicted with this advancing standard of repugnance. These pictures simply narrate how the knight sees and feels the world. The sifting of feeling, the grid placed on the affects which admits to the picture what is pleasurable and excludes what is painful or embarrassing, allows many facts to pass unimpeded which later attain expression only when a conscious or unconscious protest against the upper class censoring of drives is being expressed, and are then somewhat overemphasized. Here the peasant is neither pitiable nor a representative of virtue. Nor is he a representative of ugly vice. He is simply miserable and somewhat ridiculous, exactly as the knight sees him. The world revolves around the knight. Hungry dogs, begging women, rotting horses, servants crouching against the ramparts, villages in flames, peasants being plundered and killed—all this is as much a part of the landscape of these people as are tournaments and hunts. So God made the world: some are rulers, the others bondsmen. There is nothing embarrassing about all this.

And the same difference in standards of feeling between even this late knightly society and the subsequent society of the absolute courts is also shown in the representation of love. There is a picture of people under the sign of Venus. Again we look far into the open country. There are little hills, a meandering river, bushes and a small wood. In the foreground three or four pairs of young nobles, always a young lord and a young lady together; they walk in a circle to the sound of music, ceremoniously, elegantly, all with the long-toed, fashionable shoes. Their movements are measured and rounded; one noble has a

large feather in his hat; others have garlands in their hair. Perhaps we are looking at a kind of slow dance. Behind stand three boys making music; there is a table with fruits and drink and a young fellow leaning against it, who is to serve.

At the opposite side, enclosed by a fence and gate, is a little garden. Trees form a kind of bower, beneath which is an oval bathtub. In it sits a young man, naked, who grabs eagerly at a naked girl who is just climbing into the bath with him. As above, an old female servant who is bringing fruits and drinks surveys the love game of the young people with an angry face. And as the masters arouse themselves in the foreground, so do the servants in the background. One of them falls upon a maid who lies on the ground with her skirts already pulled up. He looks round once more to see whether there is anyone nearby. On the other side, two young fellows of the common people are dancing around, flinging their arms and legs like Morisco dancers; a third plays for them.

Or we see, likewise in the open country, a small stone bathhouse with a small yard in front of it surrounded by a stone wall. We can see a little beyond it. A path is indicated, bushes, a row of trees leading into the distance. In the yard young couples are sitting and walking about; one of them admires the fashionable fountains, others converse, one of the young men with a falcon on his hand. Dogs, a little monkey. Potted plants.

We can see into the bathhouse through a large, open, arched window. Two young men and a girl sit naked in the water, side by side, and talk. A second girl, already undressed, is just opening the door to climb into the water with them. In the large open vault of the bathhouse a boy sits playing something to the bathers on his guitar. Under the arch is a tap from which the water runs. In front of the little house, drinks are placed to cool in a small tub of water. On a table next to it are fruits and a goblet; at the table is a young man, a wreath in his hair and his head supported elegantly on his hands. Above, from the second floor of the bathhouse, a maid and a servant watch the masters enjoying themselves.

In this picture, as one can see, the erotic relation between men and women is much more open than in the later phase, where it is hinted at in social life, as in pictures, in a way that is comprehensible to all but nevertheless half-concealed. Nakedness is not yet associated with shame to the extent that, to circumvent internal and external social controls, it can only appear in pictures sentimentally, as the costume, so to speak, of the Greeks and Romans.

But neither is the naked body depicted here in the way it sometimes appeared in later times, in "private drawings" passed secretly from hand to hand. These love scenes are anything but "obscene". Love is presented here like anything else in the life of the knight, tournaments, hunts, campaigns or plunderings. The scenes are not particularly stressed; one does not feel in their representation anything of the violence, the tendency to excite or gratify a wish-fulfilment denied in life that is characteristic of everything "obscene". This picture does not come from a repressed mind; it does not reveal something "secret" by violating

taboos. It seems quite carefree. Here, too, the artist drew what he must have seen himself often enough in life. And on account of this unconcern, this matter of factness with which, compared to our standard of shame and embarrassment, the relations between the sexes are presented, we call this attitude "naïve". Even in the *House-Book* we occasionally find a joke which is (to our taste) thoroughly coarse, as also in other artists of this phase—for example, Master E. F. and, perhaps copied from him, even in the popularizing "Master with the Banderoles".[125] And the adoption of such motifs by a popularizing copyist, who was possibly even a monk, indicates how different was the social standard of shame. These things are depicted with the same matter of factness as some detail of clothing. It is a joke, certainly a coarse one, if we like to call it that, but really no coarser than the joke the artist permits himself when he makes the shirt-tail of the plundered and fleeing peasant stick out so that the knight can catch hold of it, or when he gives the old servant surveying the love games of the young people an angry expression, as if mocking her for being too old for such dalliance.

All these were expressions of a society in which people gave way to drives and feelings incomparably more easily, quickly, spontaneously and openly than today, in which the emotions were less restrained and, as a consequence, less evenly regulated and more liable to oscillate more violently between extremes. Within this standard of regulation of the emotions, which was characteristic of the whole secular society of the Middle Ages, of peasants as of knights, there were certainly considerable variations. And the people conforming to this standard were subjected to a large number of drive controls. But these were in a different direction; they were not of the same degree as in later periods, and they did not take the form of a constant, even, and almost automatic self-control. The kind of integration and interdependence in which these people lived did not compel them to restrain their bodily functions before each other or to curb their aggressive impulses to the same extent as in the following phase. This applied to everyone. But of course, for the peasants the scope for aggression was more restricted than for the knights—restricted, that is, to their own kind. For the knights, by contrast, aggression was less restricted outside their own class than within it, for here it came to be regulated by the code of chivalry. A socially generated restraint was at times imposed on peasants by the simple fact that they did not have enough to eat. This certainly represents a restriction of drives of the highest degree, which expressed itself in the whole behaviour of a human being. But no one paid attention to this, and their social situation scarcely made it necessary for them to impose constraint on themselves when blowing their noses or spitting or snatching food at table. In this direction, coercion in the knightly class was stronger. However uniform, therefore, the medieval standard of control of emotions appears in comparison to later developments, it contained considerable differences corresponding to the stratification of secular society itself, not to

mention clerical society; these differences remain to be examined in detail. They are visible in these pictures, if the measured and sometimes even affected gestures of the nobles are compared to the clumsy movements of the servants and peasants.

The expressions of feeling of medieval people were, on the whole, more spontaneous and unrestrained than in the following period. But they were not unrestrained or without social moulding in any *absolute* sense. In this respect there is no zero point. The person without restrictions is a phantom. Admittedly, the nature, strength, and elaboration of the prohibitions, controls and dependencies change in a hundred ways, and with them the tension and equilibrium of the emotions, and likewise the degree and kind of gratification that individuals seek and find.

Taken together, these pictures give a certain impression of where the knights sought and found gratification. At this time they may already have lived more frequently at court than earlier. But castle and manor, hill, stream, fields and villages, trees and woods still formed the background of their lives; they were taken for granted and regarded quite without sentimentality. Here they were at home, and here they were the masters. Their lives were characteristically divided between war, tournaments, hunts and love.

But in the fifteenth century itself, and more so in the sixteenth, this changed. At the semi-urban courts of princes and kings, partly from elements of the old nobility and partly from new rising elements, a new aristocracy formed with a new social space, new functions, and accordingly a different emotional structure.

People felt this difference themselves and expressed it. In 1562 a man named Jean du Peyrat translated Della Casa's book on manners into French. He gave it the title *Galatée ou la maniere et fasson comme le gentilhomme se doit gouverner en toute compagnie* (Galateo, or the manner in which the gentleman should conduct himself in all company). And even in this title the increased compulsion now imposed on the nobles was clearly expressed. But Peyrat himself, in his introduction, explicitly stressed the difference between the demands that life used to make on the knight and those which were now made on the noblemen by life in court:

> The entire virtue and perfection of the gentleman, your lordship, does not consist in correctly spurring a horse, handling a lance, sitting straight in one's armour, using every kind of weapon, behaving modestly among ladies, or in the pursuit of love: for this is another of the exercises attributed to the gentleman. There is, in addition, service at table before kings and princes, the manner of adjusting one's language towards people according to their rank and quality, their glances, gestures and even the smallest signs or winks they might give.

Here, exactly the same things were enumerated as constituting the customary virtue, perfection, and activities of the noble as in the pictures of the *House-Book*:

feats of arms and love. Contrasted to them were the additional perfections and the new sphere of life of the nobleman in the service of a prince. A new constraint, a new, more extensive control and regulation of behaviour than the old knightly life made either necessary or possible, was now demanded of the nobleman. These were consequences of the new, increased dependence in which the noble was now placed. He is no longer the relatively free man, the master in his own castle, whose castle is his homeland. He now lives at court. He serves the prince. He waits on him at table. And at court he lives surrounded by people. He must behave towards each of them in exact accordance with their rank and his own. He must learn to adjust his gestures exactly to the different ranks and standing of the people at court, to measure his language exactly, and even to control his eyes exactly. It is a new self-discipline, an incomparably stronger reserve that is imposed on people by this new social space and the new ties of interdependence.

The attitude whose ideal form was expressed by the concept of *courtoisie* was giving way to another expressed more and more by the concept of *civilité*.

The translation of *Galateo* by Jean du Peyrat represents this transitional period linguistically as well. Up to 1530 or 1535 the concept of *courtoisie* predominated more or less exclusively in France. Towards the end of the century the concept of *civilité* slowly gained precedence, without the other being lost. Here, about the year 1562, the two were used together without any noticeable precedence of one or the other. In his dedication Peyrat says: "Let this book, which treats the instruction of a young courtier and gentleman, be protected by him who is as the paragon and mirror of others in *courtesy, civility*, good manners and praiseworthy customs."

The man to whom these words were addressed was that very Henri de Bourbon, Prince of Navarre, whose life most visibly symbolizes this transition from the chivalrous to the courtly man and who, as Henri IV, was to be the direct executor of this change in France, being obliged, often against his will, to compel or even condemn to death those who resisted, those who did not understand that from being free lords and knights they were to become dependent servants of the king.[124]