Norbert Elias

THE CIVILIZING PROCESS

Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations

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with some notes and corrections by the author

Revised Edition

edited by
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Dedicated to the Memory of My Parents
Hermann Elias, d. Breslau 1940
Sophie Elias, d. Auschwitz 1941(?)

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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 *Tischbuchten* 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", 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. 5

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 *Cortesia* of Bonvicino da Riva:

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

1 On vv. 33, 37, 41, cf. *Ein spruch der zu tische kör (*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 vulture, and complain while eating—these three things are quite improper.

In the *Cortesia* of Bonvicino da Riva:

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

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

201 And suppe nor lowde of thy Portage
    no tyme in all thy lyfe.

1 On v. 45, cf. *Ein spruch der zu tische kör:*

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

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.

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22 Never laugh or talk with a full mouth.

** On v. 81, cf. "Quisquis est in mensa:

15 If you wish to drink first empty your mouth.

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from The Babes Book:

149 And with the full mouth dry neke in no wyse.

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On v. 85, cf. "The book of Catreye:

111 Ne blow not on thy drinkne ne mete,
Neither for colde, neither for hete.

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On v. 93, cf. "The Babes Book:

155 Whan pe ye shalle dryneke, your mouth cleene with a clothe.

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From La Maniere de est Contenances de la Table (Guide to behaviour at table):

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

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On v. 103, cf. "The Babes Book:

Not on the borde lenynghe be yee nat sene.

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Changes in the Behaviour of the Secular Upper Classes in the West

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 truecourter.
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 punished!
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.

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B

Fifteenth century?
From S'envisent les contenance de la table (These are good table manners):

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.

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*** On v. 117, cf. "Stanc pur in mensam:

30 Avoid cleaning your teeth with a knife at table.

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On v. 141, cf. "Stanc pur in mensam:

11 Never pick up food with unwashed hands.

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On v. 157, cf. "Quisquis est 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.
The Civilizing Process

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.

1530
From De civilitate morum puellarum (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 garter 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 affections.

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 Vespro 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.

1560
From a Civilité by C. Calviac (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 he 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 Germans 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.

Between 1640 and 1680
From a song by the Marquis de Coulanges.

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.

1672
From Antoine de Courton, *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 in 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 skillfully. Now that would be very disgusting. ...
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 biénance 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 bourgeois. 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".

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 pat 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.

1729
From La Salle, *Les Règles de la biénance 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 reflected 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 committing 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 impropriety 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.
Changes in the Behaviour of the Secular Upper Classes in the West

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

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 now 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 public 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 bonnes 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, the inventions and fashions of courtly behaviour, which are at first sight perhaps irregular and accidental, over 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 it went up with 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 elite 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 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 traits 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 1575, "are beginning to age and are no longer good usage. We say civil, bonniste, civilité, bonniste."

Indeed, the word courtoisie now actually came to appear a bourgeois concept. "My neighbour, the Bourgeois, . . . says, following the language of the bourgeois 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' (bonniste) have taken their place, just as 'civility' and 'decency' have taken the place of 'courtesy' and
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 decided strict custom exactly the same use of the servite 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 cur 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, servite 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 equaled, 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 disc-huitime 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’œuvre, 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 Calvian. 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 courtesan’s writing the use of the spoon was prescribed. It, too, would of all have served several together. A further step is shown by the quotation from Calvian 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 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 over 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, Note à la mode by Callières, in the edition of 1693 (p. 46), "that the bourgeoisie 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.59 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 bourgeoisie 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 will know" or "oftentimes" or "poorly" (comme bien savez, souvent fois, maladroit).

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 defunct" (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 bourgeoisie 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 squat 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 bourgeoisie and even some court people said “il faut que nous fassions cela” instead of “il faut que nous fassions cela”. Some said “I’on za” and “I’on zest” instead of the courtly “I’on a” and “I’on est”. They said “Je le fai” instead of “Je faiz”.

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.” 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 nor 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 elite, 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 (bonnes 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 elite, 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 elite 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 delimitated 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 intelligensia. And wherever élites or pseudo-élites have formed within French bourgeois society, they have attached themselves to these older, distinguishing tendencies in their language.

Reactions 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 courtly; not "courteous"; 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 'bienfaisant'. Or such an argument was used to establish the respect due to those of higher social rank.

As in the moulding of speech, 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
The Civilizing Process

The Civilizing Process

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 delicatesse 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 delicatesse, 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 rational 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 abstention resulting more or less from self-denial, not from shortage, and often accompanied by a radical disdain or in 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, 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 modern 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. 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.

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 secundi 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 vernehmtes Trincker-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 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 to 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 experienced 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 one appetite 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. 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, disgust, 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 paerde and mykyl drede

we read in Caxton's Book of Garteye (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 Calvici 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—ritually 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
graves 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 very clearly
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 civiliza-
tion. 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:
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.

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 distressing
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 (sauhre and ansauhre) 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 Courtin that had already represented the earlier decades. On the other hand, La Salle took over fairly literally Courtin's precept that "Bienvenue 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 inexcusables 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 societly 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 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 super ego, 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 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?

From S'en vient les contemtures de la table.
VIII

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

B

From Ein spruch der ze tische kere.⁶¹

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

C

1530

From De civitate 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 Ultrasnaeticinus, 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 constrain 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 Aetna'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 Chilides: Replace farts with coughs.

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 street, 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

143 Let not thy privy members be laid open to be view'd, it is most shameful and abhorred, detestable and rude. Retaine not urine nor the wind which doth thy body vex so it be done with secrerie lest 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 bonté 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 bonté 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,
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
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 exonereat" (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 Erasmus says it is not civil to require that the young man "ventris flatum reticeat" (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 quite different, even more delicate employ of natural functions 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 Courton'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 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, Martin Cordier's dialogues for schoolboys, "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'hanno non riveriscio). 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, 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 Galatea (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 Hofbucht, 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 unsatisifed 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 zinzanta cortesia 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:

Pos la trentena è questa:

Zascun cortese donzello
Che se vore mondo lo naxo,
Con li drapi se faza bello;
Chi mangia, over chi menestra,
no de'sofà con le die;
Con li dazi da pey se monda
vostra corexia.*

B

Fifteenth century?
From Ein spruch der ze tische könt:

It is unseemly to blow your nose into the tablecloth.

C

From S'ensuivrent les contenance 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 plouans, 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 poerulium, 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, Uguzzione Pisano, says: "Those are called doncoli
who are handsome, young, and the servants of great lords..." These doncoli 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
courteis "doncoli" 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 Babes 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,

[F]rom the scholia on this passage:
Between snout 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 Mariol 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 encircled in the prettiest fashion, for it was joined
to a fine golden heart bordered with tiny heart's cases.**

[From Lettol, 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. "I have not one." "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 blew 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 Éymologique 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, Tischentuch, 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 bonté 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 bonté 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 impertinence, 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 laps; 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 gradually begins to emerge as an instrument of conditioning, often in place of the reminder about the respect due to social superiors.
trumpet, another the scratch 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, *courtis*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 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 beautifully 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 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 *violence* for certain very coarse ways of blowing the nose with the hand, and *très contraire à la bienveillance*, 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 recur 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 secularities, 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 Bonvivino da Riva (Example A). The difference between what was expected of knights and lords, on the one hand, and of the *domini*, 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 by 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 himself 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 Sts. puer ad mensam.76
27 Do not spit over or on the table.
37 Do not spit into the bowl when washing your hands.

B
From a Contenence du table.71
29 Do not spit on the table.
51 Do not spit into the basin when you wash your hands, but beside it.
From The Book of Courtesye:  

85 If thou spitt over the bord by, or elles open,  
thou shalle be helden an uncourtayse men.

133 After mete when thou shalt washe,  
spitt not in basyn, ne water thou dasshe.

From Zurnke, Der deutsche Casto, p. 137:

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

From De civilitate morum puellarum, by Erasmus:

Turn away when spitting, lest your saliva falls 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 spurt in a small cloth. It is unmanly to suck back saliva, as equally are those whom we see spitting at every third word not from necessity but from habit.

From Galaten, 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 modestly and conducted themselves so honourably that they were often not unclean. Why, therefore, should we not be able to refrain from it just for a short time? [That is, during meals; the restriction on the habit applied only to mealtimes.]

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 spurt. Today that is an indecency.

Changes in the Behaviour of the Secular Upper Classes in the West

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.

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 clothes 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.

From La Salle, Les Règles de la biensance 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 unmanly, but disgusting and annoying 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.

From La Salle, Les Règles de la biensance 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.

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.

1910

From Cabanès, Maîtres 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 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 Célibat 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 prohibitions (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 origin of certain diseases, of the danger of spitting 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 "unnatural", 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 spittle 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 indecent 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 which we know to be harmful to health by no means necessarily arouses feelings of disgust 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 arouse feelings of extreme disgust 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 disgust 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 distressful 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 "democratization", 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 may be moulded by historical processes remains to be determined in detail. At any rate, 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, disgust 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

215 And if that it be too hot by
nyght or any tyme
That ye schal yke with any man
That is better than you
Spyre hym what sylde of the bedd
That most best wilt plese hym,
And lye you on thi tother sylde,
For that is the prow;
Ne go you not to bede before bot
Thi better cause the,
For that is no curtasy, thus seys
doctor paler.

223 And when you are in thi bed,
this is curtasy,
Stright downe that you lye with
fote and bende.
When ye have taked wha ye
weyl, byd hym gode nyght in yhe
For that is geet 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 Pale.
Then lie down straight and bid him goodnight.

B

1530
From *De civilitate morum puellium*, 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 mortality 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 Book of Precedence, p. 63.

C

1555
From *Des bonnes moeurs et honnestes contenance*, by Pierre Broë (Lyons, 1555):

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.

D

1729
From La Salle, *Les Règles de la biensance 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 biensance 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 indulgence 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 awoken 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, and often guests who were staying overnight.

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. 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, 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.

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." 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 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 other 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. 

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 Bré (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 Pater (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 a 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 watch" (Example E). This was the tone of moral injunction. Even to give a moon 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 taboo on 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 value of the restraints imposed on 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 mixture 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, which are therefore largely founded in the structure of civilized society itself, are explained by this situation. The situation itself has been understood only relatively recently, first of all in 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 preceeding 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, is much the same way as with eating, the wall between people, the reserve, the emotional barrier erected by conditioning between one body and another, is grown continuously. To share a bed with people outside the family circle, with strangers, is more and more embarrassing. Unless necessity 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 relations 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. 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 the

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 colloquentium formae non tantum ad linguam puerilium equivocam, sed etiam ad virum institutam.

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 its 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):

How could such a book be introduced in countless schools? What had boys to do with these sayings? 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 Socii" (Young men and prostitutes). This last dialogue recalls Schiller's diatribe entitled "Kunstgeflétt" (The braid): "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 Theologicus 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 civitate morum paucilum*, to Erasmus's delicacy in all questions relating to the regulation of the life of drivers, 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 wooed 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 burned 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 is king and she is 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 *Colloquia*. 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 *Colloquia": "As Socrates brought philosophy from heaven to earth, so I have led philosophy to games and banquets," he says in the notes *De utilitate colloquiiorum* that he appended to the *Colloquias* (1655 ed., 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 colloquiiorum*, 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 love", 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.  

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 his 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 she 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
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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 sixteenth and, to some extent, even of the eighteenth 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 Johannes Morisotus: ad colloquium libri quattuor, et Constantium 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:

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 child. LUC: There's not a single child. 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?

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...

...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 prudence, 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 semini colloquio quam multa velut in speculo exhibentur, quae, vel fugiendae sunt in vita, vel vitam redunt tranquillum!"

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 remote 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 stoning 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 Moricius 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 suo 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 ebrisorium et ebriate vitanda”.

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. 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 Kreuzers. Item, for the women who went to meet the king, 96 Kreuzers for wine.” 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. 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
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. 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 Rauzer 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 (Rauzer’s) society, posed itself to this educator. In 1857, von Rauzer 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 seriatim way in 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 stock common elsewhere. Children, if they really grow up under their mother’s eyes, will seldom ask forward questions on this point: ... or 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 socio-genetic fear, came to surround this sphere of life. Even among adults it was referred officially to 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 breaking 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 social-genetic 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" 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.

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 temperment 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 extortulate 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 knighthood society.

The case is similar if the bourgeoise 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 bourgeoise as a whole became freed from the pressures of the absolutist estates social structure. Both bourgeoise men and bourgeoise 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 bourgeoise 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”, bourgeoise 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 bourgeoise 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 bourgeoise 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 crisis-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 bourgeoisie. 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 regressions 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. 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 super ego.

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. 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 Hérod, 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 with 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 sociogenic shame and embarrassment, so that the mere mention of them in public is increasingly restricted by a multitude of regulations 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 behavior 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 sociogenic 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 behavior 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 behavior 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.

Changes in the Behaviour of the Secular Upper Classes in the West

10

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 from 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, "that neither eating, drinking nor sleep has such 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, mercy 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-colored 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 130 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 unfit 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 imdermiled. In the midst of these perpetual ups and downs, this alternation of the human hunts of wartime with the animal hunts of 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.

“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.”

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.” 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! 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 cortois ne doit blamer joie, mais toujours joie aimer.” (No cortois man should revile joy, he should love joy.) This was a command of cortois 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.” 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 Distichs 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: 199

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.

But in medieval society this permanence readiness to fight, weapon in hand, was a vital necessity not only for the warriors, the knightly upper class. The life of the burgheurs 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 burghe upward. Robbery, fighting, pilage, family feud—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 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 (pevost) 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 atemptations". 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 cut-throats 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 Quentin, and is raised to the nobility. After new wounding, incarcerations and expropriation 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 transposed as a prisoner to Paris “like a criminal and murderer”, accused of forging seals, again in feud with a magistrate in Compiegne, 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 minatures from the "book of hours" of the Duc de Berry 113 are another. "People long believed," says in 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 Lucchare, "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 free 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 requires 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 identifica-
tion 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.119

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
aures 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
ruled 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
enjoy 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 knights"
(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 differs
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, admitted 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
case 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