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Also by Norbert Elias

POWER AND CIVILITY  
THE COURT SOCIETY

# THE HISTORY OF MANNERS

THE CIVILIZING PROCESS:  
VOLUME I

BY  
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Reasons Given by People for Distinguishing  
Between "Good" and "Bad" Behavior

11. Language is one of the embodiments of social or mental life. Much that can be observed in the way language is molded is also evident in other embodiments of society. For example, the way people argue that this behavior or this custom at table is better than that, is scarcely distinguishable from the way they claim one linguistic expression to be preferable to another.

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

In the earliest stages the need for restraint was usually explained by saying: Do this and not that, for it is not *courtois*, not "courtly"; a "noble" man does not do such things. At most, the reason given is consideration for the embarrassment of others, as in Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht*, where he 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 embarrassment differs from that of the following period.

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

As in the molding of speech, so too in the molding of other aspects of behavior in society, social motivations, adaptations of behavior to the models of influential circles, are by far the most important. Even the expressions used in motivating "good behavior" at table are 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 and La Salle to express what is good and bad in manners. And exactly as Callières here speaks simply of the people *qui parlent bien*, Courtin (at the end of Example G) says, in effect, "Formerly one was allowed to do this or that, but today one is no longer allowed to." Callières says in 1694 that there are a great many people who are not sufficiently conversant with the *délicatesse* of the language: "C'est cette délicatesse qui n'est connue que d'une petite nombre de gens." Courtin uses the same expression in 1672 when he says that it is necessary always to wipe one's spoon before dipping it into the common dish if one has already used it, "there being people so *delicate* that they would not wish to eat soup in which you had dipped it after putting it into your mouth" (Example G).

This *délicatesse*, this sensibility and a highly developed feeling for the "embarrassing," is at first all 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 is based, and why it demands that this be done and not that, is not said and not asked. What is observed is simply that "delicacy"—or, rather, the embarrassment threshold—is advancing. In conjunction with a very specific social situation, the feelings and affects are first transformed in the upper class, and the structure of society as a whole permits this changed affect standard to spread slowly throughout society. Nothing indicates that the affective condition, the degree of sensitivity, is changed for reasons that we describe as "clearly rational" from a demonstrable understanding of particular causal connections. Courtin does not say, as would be said later, that some people feel it to be "unhygienic" or "detrimental to health" to take soup from the same dish as others. Certainly, delicacy of feeling is heightened under the pressure of the courtly situation in a way which is later justified partly by scientific investigations, even though a major part of the taboos that people gradually impose 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 moves 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 embarrassment threshold is raised. The structure of emotions, the sensitivity, and the behavior of people change, despite fluctuations, in a quite definite direction. Then, at a certain point, this behavior is recognized as "hygienically correct," i.e., it is justified by clear insight into causal connections and taken further in the same direction or consolidated. The expansion of the threshold of embarrassment may be connected at some points with more or less indefinite and, at first, rationally inexplicable experiences of the way in which certain diseases are passed on or, more precisely, with indefinite and therefore rationally undefined fears and anxieties which point vaguely in the direction subsequently confirmed by clear understanding. But "rational understanding" is not the motor of the "civilizing" of eating or of other behavior.

The close parallel between the "civilizing" of eating and that of speech is highly instructive in this context. It makes clear that the change in behavior at table is part of a very extensive transformation of human feelings and attitudes. It also illustrates to what degree the motive forces of this development come from the social structure, from the way in which people are connected to each other. We see more clearly how relatively small circles first form the center of the movement and how the process then gradually passes to broader sections. But this diffusion presupposes very specific contacts, and therefore a quite definite structure of society. Moreover, it could certainly not have taken place had there not been established for larger classes, as well as for the model-forming circles, conditions of life—or, in other words, a social situation—that made both possible and necessary a gradual transformation of the emotions and behavior, an advance in the threshold of embarrassment.

The process that emerges resembles in form—though not in substance—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 crystallization for the cause of the transformation.

The fact that a particular class in one or another phase of social development forms the center of a process and thus supplies models for other classes, and that these models are diffused to other classes and received by them, itself presupposes a social situation and a

special structure of society as a whole, by virtue of which one circle is allotted the function of creating models and the other that of spreading and assimilating them. What kinds of change in the integration of society set these behavioral changes in motion will be discussed in detail later.

## *Group 2:*

### *On the Eating of Meat*

1. Although human phenomena—whether attitudes, wishes, or products of human action may be looked at on their own, independently of their connections with the social life of men, they are by nature nothing but substantializations of human relations and of human behavior, 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. Often it is precisely these latter, trivial phenomena that give us clear and simple insights into the structure and development of the psyche and its relations which are denied us by the former. The attitudes of men to meat-eating, for example, is highly illuminating with regard to the dynamics of human relationships and personality structures.

In the Middle Ages, people move between at least three different sets of behavior toward meat. Here, as with a hundred other phenomena, we see the extreme diversity of behavior characteristic of medieval society as compared with its modern counterpart. The medieval social structure is far less conducive to the permeation of models developed in a specific social center through the society as a whole. Certain modes of behavior often predominate in a particular social class throughout the Western world, while in a different class or estate behavior is very different. For this reason, the behavioral differences between different classes in the same region are often greater than those between regionally separate representatives of the same social class. And if modes of behavior pass from one class to another, which certainly happens, they change their face more radically in accordance with the greater isolation of the classes.

The relation to meat-eating moves in the medieval world between the following poles. On the one hand, in the secular upper class the consumption of meat is extraordinarily high, compared to the standard of our own times. A tendency prevails to devour quantities of meat that to us seem fantastic. On the other hand, in the monasteries an ascetic abstention from all meat-eating largely prevails, an abstention resulting from self-denial, not from shortage, and often accompanied by a radical depreciation or restriction of eating. From these circles come expressions of strong aversion to the "gluttony" among the upper-class laymen.

The meat consumption of the lowest class, the peasants, is also frequently extremely limited—not from a spiritual need, a voluntary renunciation with regard to God and the next world, but from shortage. Cattle are expensive and therefore destined, for a long period, essentially for the rulers' tables. "If the peasant reared cattle," it has been said,<sup>56</sup> "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 behavior 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 knights will 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.<sup>57</sup> Spices play a major, vegetables a relatively minor role. Other information points fairly unanimously in the same direction. The subject remains to be investigated in detail.

2. Another change can be documented more exactly. The manner in which meat is served changes 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 are often brought whole to the table. Not only whole fish and whole birds (sometimes with their feathers) but also whole rabbits, lambs, and quarters of veal appear on the table, not to mention the larger venison or the pigs and oxen roasted on the spit.<sup>58</sup>

The animal is carved on the table. This is why the books on manners

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

"When serving," says Courtin in 1672,

one must always give away the best portion and keep the smallest, and touch nothing except with the fork; this is why, if a person of rank asks you for something that is in front of you, it is important to know how to cut meat with propriety and method, and to know the best portions, in order to be able to serve them with civility. The way to cut them is not prescribed here, because it is a subject on which special books have been written, in which all the pieces are illustrated to show where the meat must first be held with a fork to cut it, for as we have just said, *the meat must never be touched . . . by hand, not even while eating*; then where the knife must be placed to cut it; what must be lifted first . . . what is the best piece, and the piece of honor 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 vermehrte Trincier-Büchlein* (New, enlarged carving manual), printed in Rintelen in 1650, says:

Because the office of carver at princely courts is not reckoned as the lowest but among the most honorable, the same must therefore be either of the nobility or other good origin, 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 dishonor 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 are particular honors. It usually falls to the master of the house or to distinguished guests whom he requests 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 française* of 1714.

In the seventeenth century the carving of meat at table gradually ceases, in the French upper class, to be an indispensable accomplishment—

ment of the man of the world, like 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 slowly goes out of use is connected with many factors. One of the most important may be the gradual reduction in the size of the household<sup>9</sup> 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 large 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 refers to a related process—to whom the sight of butchers' shops with the bodies of dead animals is distasteful, and others who from more or less rationally disguised feelings of disgust refuse to eat meat altogether. But these are forward thrusts in the threshold of repugnance that go beyond the standard of civilized society in the twentieth century, and are therefore considered "abnormal." Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that it was advances of this kind (if they coincided with the direction of social development in general) that led in the past to changes of standards, and that this particular advance in the threshold of repugnance is proceeding in the same direction that has been followed thus far.

This direction is quite clear. From a standard of feeling by which the sight and carving of a dead animal on the table are actually pleasurable, or at least 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 will be shown how people, in the course of the civilizing process, seek to suppress in themselves every characteristic that they feel to be "animal." They likewise suppress such characteristics in their food.

In this area, too, the development is certainly not uniform every-

where. 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 the "Russian system" of table manners in 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 to the misery of carving. . . . The truth is, *that unless our appetites are very keen, the sight of much meat reeking in its gravy is sufficient to destroy them entirely*, and a huge joint especially is calculated to disgust the epicure. If joints are eaten at all, they should be placed on the side-table, *where they will be out of sight*" (p. 314).

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

This carving, as the examples show, was formerly a direct part of social life in the upper class. Then the spectacle is felt more and more to be distasteful. Carving itself does not disappear, since the animal must, of course, be cut when being eaten. But the distasteful is *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 earlier Chinese civilisation, above all, the concealment of carving behind the scenes was effected

much earlier and more radically than in the West. There the process is 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 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 emotions. The knife becomes a symbol of the most diverse feelings, which are connected to its function and shape but are not deduced "logically" from its purpose. The fear it awakens goes beyond what is rational and is greater than the "calculable," probable danger. And the same is true of the pleasure its use and appearance arouse, even if this aspect is less evident today. In keeping with the structure of our society, the everyday ritual of its use is today determined more by the displeasure and fear than by the pleasure surrounding it. Therefore its use even while eating is restricted by a multitude of prohibitions. These, we have said, extend far beyond the "purely functional"; 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 toward the knife and the rules governing its use while eating—and, above all, the taboos surrounding it—are primarily emotional in nature. Fear, distaste, guilt, associations and emotions of the most disparate kinds exaggerate the real 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 lenient regulations imposed on drives, the prohibitions concerning knives are quite few. "Do not clean your teeth with your knife" is a frequent demand. This is the chief prohibition, but it does indicate the direction of future restrictions on the implement. Moreover, the knife is by far the most important eating utensil. That it is lifted to the mouth is 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 knyfe to warde your visage  
For therein is parelle and mykyl drede

we read in Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* (v. 28). Here, as everywhere later, an element of rationally calculable danger is 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 lies much dread." This is the emotional basis of the powerful taboo of a later phase, which forbids the lifting of the knife to the mouth.

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

Here, as so often until the later stage when the child is given a "rational" explanation for every prohibition, no reason is 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 toward 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 contains a rational element. Someone might use the passing of the knife in order suddenly to stab someone. But a social ritual is formed from this

danger because the dangerous gesture establishes itself on an emotional level as a general source of displeasure, a symbol of death and danger. Society, which is beginning at this time more and more to limit the real dangers threatening men, and consequently to remodel the affective life of the individual, increasingly places a barrier around the symbols as well, the gestures and instruments of danger. Thus the restrictions and prohibitions on the use of the knife increase, along with the restraints imposed on the individual.

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 his knife into his 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 linked 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 meanings of the knife other than the association with war. The fairly strict prohibition on eating fish with a knife—circumvented and modified today by the introduction of a special fish knife—seems at first sight rather obscure in its emotional meaning, though psychoanalytical theory points at least in the direction of an explanation. There is a well-known prohibition on holding cutlery, particularly knives, with the whole hand, "like a stick," as La Salle put it, though he was only at that time referring to fork and spoon (Example J). Then there is obviously a general tendency to eliminate or at least restrict the contact of the knife with round or egg-shaped objects. The best-known and one of the gravest of such prohibitions is on cutting potatoes with a knife. But the rather less strict prohibition on cutting dumplings with a knife or opening boiled eggs with one also point in the same direction, and occasionally, in especially sensitive circles, one finds a tendency to avoid cutting apples or even oranges with a knife. "I may hint that no epicure ever yet put knife to apple, and that

an orange should be peeled with a spoon," says *The Habits of Good Society* of 1859 and 1889.

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 slowly permeates civilized society, from the top to the bottom, to restrict the use of the knife (within the framework of existing eating techniques) and wherever possible not to use the instrument at all.

This tendency makes 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 is clearly very strong in the middle of the last century, when the English book on manners just quoted, *The Habits of Good Society*, says: "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, 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 any 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 retroactive movements are certainly not inconceivable. It is sufficiently known that the conditions of life in the World War I automatically enforced a breakdown of some of the taboos of peacetime civilization. In the trenches, officers and soldiers again ate when necessary with knives and hands. The threshold of delicacy 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.<sup>60</sup> The regulation and control of emotions intensifies. The commands and prohibitions surrounding the menacing instrument become ever more numerous and differentiated. Finally, the use of the threatening symbol is limited as far as possible.

One cannot avoid comparing the direction of this civilization-curve



with the custom long practiced in China. There, as has been said, the knife disappeared many centuries ago from use at table. To many Chinese the manner in which Europeans eat is quite uncivilized. "The Europeans are barbarians," people say there, "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 has not been a warrior class but a class pacified to a particularly high degree, a society of scholarly officials.

### On the Use of the Fork at Table

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

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

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

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

So why does one really need a fork? Why is it "barbaric" and "uncivilized" to put food into one's mouth by hand from one's own plate? Because it is distasteful to dirty one's fingers, or at least to be seen in society with dirty fingers. The suppression of eating by hand from one's own plate has very little to do with the danger of illness, the so-called "rational" explanation. In observing our feelings toward the fork ritual, we can see with particular clarity that the first authority in our decision between "civilized" and "uncivilized" behavior at

table 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 structure of drives and emotions.

Modes of behavior which in the Middle Ages were not felt to be in the least distasteful are increasingly surrounded by unpleasurable feelings. The standard of delicacy finds expression in corresponding social prohibitions. These taboos, so far as one 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 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 is slowly extended. "It is very impolite," says Courtin in 1672 (Example G), "to touch anything greasy, a sauce or syrup, etc., with your fingers, apart from the fact that it obliges you to commit two or three more improper acts. One is to wipe your hand frequently on your serviette and to soil it like a kitchen cloth, so that those who see you wipe your mouth with it feel nauseated. Another is to wipe your fingers on your bread, which again is very improper. [N.B. The French terms *propre* and *malpropre* used by Courtin and explained in one of his chapters coincide less with the German terms for clean and unclean (*sauber* and *unsauber*) than with the word frequently used earlier, *proper*.] The third is to lick them, which is the height of impropriety."

The *Civilité* of 1729 by La Salle (Example J), which transmits the behavior of the upper class to broader circles, says on one page: "When the fingers are very greasy, wipe them first on a piece of bread." This shows how far from general acceptance, even at this time, was the standard of delicacy that Courtin had already represented decades earlier. On the other hand, La Salle takes over fairly literally Courtin's precept that "*Bienséance* does not permit anything

greasy, a sauce or a syrup, to be touched with the fingers." And, exactly like Courtin, he mentions among the ensuing *incivilités* wiping the hands on bread and licking the fingers, as well as soiling the napkin.

It can be seen that manners are here still in the process of formation. The new standard does not appear suddenly. Certain forms of behavior are placed under prohibition, not because they are unhealthy but because they lead to an offensive sight and disagreeable associations; shame at offering such a spectacle, originally absent, and fear of arousing such associations are gradually spread from the standard setting circles to larger circles by numerous authorities and institutions. However, once such feelings are aroused and firmly established in society by means of certain rituals like that involving the fork, they are constantly reproduced so long as the structure of human relations is 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 a child tries to touch something sticky, wet, or greasy with his fingers, he is told, "You must not do that, people do not do things like that." And the displeasure toward such conduct which is thus aroused by the adult finally arises through habit, without being induced by another person.

To a large extent, however, the conduct and instinctual life of the child are forced even without words into the same mold and in the same direction by the fact that a particular use of knife and fork, for example, is completely established in the adult world—that is, by the example of the environment. 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, are molded into conformity with a certain standard by external pressure and compulsion. All this appears to them as highly personal, something "inward," 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 becomes more and more an inner automatism, the imprint of society on the inner self, the superego, that forbids the individual to eat in any other way than with a fork. The social standard to which the individual was first made to conform by external restraint is finally reproduced more or less smoothly within him, through a self-restraint which may operate even against his conscious wishes.

Thus the sociohistorical process of centuries, in the course of which the standard of what is felt to be shameful and offensive is slowly raised, is reenacted 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 Attitude Toward the Natural Functions

#### Examples

##### Fifteenth century?

###### A

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

###### VIII

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

###### B

From *Ein spruch der ze tische kêrt*:<sup>61</sup>

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

###### C

##### 1530

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The unabashed care and seriousness with which questions are publicly discussed here that have subsequently become highly private and strictly prohibited in society emphasizes the shift of the frontier of embarrassment. That feelings of shame are frequently mentioned explicitly in the discussion underlines the difference in the shame standard.

## D

1558

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

Moreover, it does not befit a modest, honorable 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:<sup>62</sup>

One should not, like rustics who have not been to court or lived among refined and honorable 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:<sup>63</sup>

Let no one, whoever he may be, before, at, or after meals, early or late, foul the staircases, corridors, or closets with urine or other filth, but go to suitable, prescribed places for such relief.

## G

c. 1619

Richard Weste, *The Booke of Demeanor and the Allowance and Disallowance of Certain Misdemeanors in Companie*:<sup>64</sup>

143 Let not thy privy members be  
layd open to be view'd,

it is most shameful and abhord,  
detestable and rude.

Retaine not urine nor the winde  
which doth thy body vex  
so it be done with secresie  
let that not thee perplex.

## H

1694

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

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

## I

1729

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

It is a part of decency and modesty to cover all parts of the body except the head and hands. You should take 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.

German developments were somewhat slower than French. As the following selection shows, as late as the first half of the eighteenth century a 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 defacating."

## 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 ed. (Dresden and Leipzig, 1731), p. 288:

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

## K

1774

From La Salle, *Les Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (1774 ed.), 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, May 9, 1768;<sup>55</sup> quoted as an example of the prestige value of the utensil

I should like to tell you, dear Grandmother, as I told the Grand-Abbé, how great was my surprise when a large bag from you was brought to me at my bed yesterday morning. I hasten to open it, put in my hand, and find some green peas . . . and then a vase . . . that I quickly pull out: it is a chamber pot. But of such beauty and magnificence that my people say in unison *that it ought to be used as a sauce boat. The chamber pot was on display the whole of yesterday evening and was admired by everyone. The peas . . . were eaten till not one was left.*

### Some Remarks on the Examples and on These Changes in General

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

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 has 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 is to be accustomed, is very characteristic. The manner in which anxiety is aroused in young people, in order to force them to repress display of pleasure in accordance with the standard of social conduct, changes in the course of centuries. Here, the anxiety aroused in connection with the renunciation of instinctual gratification is explained to oneself and others in terms of external spirits. Somewhat later, the restraint imposed on oneself, along with the fear, shame, and distaste toward any infringement, often appears, at least in the upper class, in courtly-aristocratic society, as social restraint, as shame and fear of men. In wider circles, admittedly, reference to the guardian angel clearly remains very long in use as an instrument for condition-

ing children. It recedes somewhat when health and "hygienic reasons" are given more emphasis in bringing about a certain degree of restraint of impulses and emotions. These hygienic reasons then play an important role in adult ideas on 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 acts as a cursor of a new standard of shame and repugnance which first begins to form slowly in the secular upper class. Yet he also speaks 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, finds 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 unconcern there is no contradiction. He speaks from another stage of control and restraint of emotions.

The different standard of society at Erasmus's time becomes clear if one reads how commonplace it is to meet someone "*qui urinam reddit aut alvum exonerat*" (urinating or defecating). And the greater freedom with which people were able at this time to perform and speak about their bodily functions before others recalls the behavior that can still be encountered 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 retineat*" (hold back his wind), for in doing so he might, under the appearance of urbanity, contract an illness; and Erasmus comments similarly on sneezing and related acts.

Medical arguments are not found very frequently in this treatise. When they 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 instinctual gratification. 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 is advancing. Again the difference between the editions of 1729 and 1774 is very instructive. Certainly, even the

earlier edition already embodies a quite different standard of delicacy than Erasmus's treatise. The demand that all natural functions be removed from the view of other people is raised quite unequivocally, even if the uttering of this demand indicates that the actual behavior of people—both adults and children—did not yet conform to it. Although La Salle says that it is not very polite even to speak of such functions or the parts of the body concerned, he himself still speaks of them with a minuteness of detail astonishing to us; he calls things by their names, whereas the corresponding terms are missing in Courtin's *Civilité* of 1672, which was intended for the upper classes.

In the later edition of La Salle, too, all detailed references are avoided. More and more these necessities are "passed over in silence." The mere reminder of them becomes embarrassing to people in the presence of others who are not close acquaintances, and in society everything that might even remotely or associatively recall such necessities is 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<sup>66</sup> 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 synthesised into a picture of the overall line of development. However, if one takes a comprehensive view, a pattern emerges that is typical of the civilizing process.

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

"Tell me in exact sequence," says the teacher to a pupil in a schoolbook of 1568, Mathurin 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.

The 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 an "understanding" smile of the others, the expression of minor infringement of a taboo, would be the response.

The conduct of adults corresponds 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 is not even unusual to turn to the staircase, the corners of rooms, or the hangings on the walls of a castle if one is overtaken by 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 toward a stricter regulation of impulses, and therefore toward greater restraint.

Stricter control of impulses and emotions is first imposed by those of high social rank on their social inferiors or, at most, their social equals. It is only comparatively late, when bourgeois classes comprising a large number of social equals have become the upper, ruling class, that the family becomes the only—or, more exactly, the primary and dominant—institution with the function of installing drive control. Only then does the social dependence of the child on its parents become particularly important as a leverage for the socially required regulation and molding 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" to us has not yet been inculcated in this form, as an automatic self-restraint, a habit that, within certain limits, also functions when a person is alone. Rather, restraint on the instincts is at first imposed only in the company of others, i.e., more consciously for social reasons. And both the kind and the degree of restraint correspond to the social position of the person imposing them, relative to the position of those in whose company he is. This slowly changes as

people move closer together socially and as the hierarchical character of society becomes less rigid. As the interdependence of men increases with the increasing division of labor, everyone becomes increasingly dependent on everyone else, those of high social rank on those socially inferior and weaker. The latter become so much the equals of the former that they, the socially superior, feel shame even before their inferiors. It is only now that the armor 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 society, 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 toward another, nor raise a thigh so high that the members of the human body, which should properly be covered with clothing at all times, might be exposed to view. *For this and similar things are not done, except among people before whom one is not ashamed* (se non tra quelle persone, che l'huom non riverisce). *It is true that a great lord might do so before one of his servants or in the presence of a friend of lower rank; for in this he would not show him arrogance but rather a particular affection and friendship.*"

There are people before whom one is ashamed, and others before whom one is not. The feeling of shame is clearly a social function molded according to the social structure. This is perhaps not often expressed so clearly. But the corresponding behavior is amply documented. In France,<sup>68</sup> as late as the seventeenth century, kings and great lords receive specially favored 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-feeling 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.<sup>69</sup>

Behavior which in more democratized industrial societies is sur-

rounded on all sides with taboos, with trained feelings of shame or embarrassment of varying degrees, is here only partially affected. It is omitted in the company of those of higher or equal rank. In this area, too, coercion and restraint are self-imposed on the same pattern as was visible earlier in table manners. "Nor do I believe," we read in *Galateo* (p. 580), "that it is fitting to serve from the common dish intended for all guests, unless the server is of higher rank so that the other, who is served, is thereby especially honored. 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 than later, when outward differences of rank had been partly leveled. What is mentioned here as a special case in intercourse between equals, that one should not serve another, later becomes a general practice. In society everyone helps himself, and everyone begins eating at the same time.

The situation is similar with the exposure of the body. First it becomes a distasteful offense to show oneself exposed in any way before those of higher or equal rank; with inferiors it can even be a sign of benevolence. Then, as all become socially more equal, it slowly becomes a general offense. The social reference of shame and embarrassment recedes more and more from consciousness. Precisely because the social command not to show oneself exposed or performing natural functions now operates with regard to everyone and is imprinted in this form on the child, it seems to the adult a command of his own inner self and takes on the form of a more or less total and automatic self-restraint.

5. But this isolation of the natural functions from public life, and the corresponding regulation or molding of instinctual urges, 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 difficult to

demonstrate the sociogenetic and psychogenetic bases of these inventions and discoveries.

After a reshaping of human needs had once been set in motion with the general transformation of human relations, 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 speech about the natural functions. The freedom and unconcern 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 postwar 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 behavior 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 civilization is characterized by a profound discrepancy between the behavior 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 instinctual life must be rapidly subjected to the strict control and specific molding 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 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, bending them more or less perfectly to its purpose.

In the Middle Ages, too, it was society as a whole that exerted this formative pressure, even if—as will be shown in more detail—the mechanisms and organs of conditioning, particularly in the upper class, were largely different from those of today. But above all, the control and restraint to which the instinctual life of adults was subject-

ed was considerably less than in the following phase of civilization, as consequently was the difference in behavior 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 "misbehavior" which were quite commonplace in the medieval world scarcely manifest themselves in present-day social life.

Children today are admonished not to snatch whatever they want from the table, and not to scratch themselves or touch their noses, ears, eyes, or other parts of their bodies at table. The child is instructed not to speak or drink with a full mouth, or to sprawl on the table, and so on. Many of these precepts are also to be found in Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht*, for example, but there they are addressed not to children but unequivocally to adults. This becomes still more apparent if one considers the way in which adults earlier satisfied their natural needs. This very often happened—as the examples show—in a manner that would be just tolerated in children today. Often enough, needs were satisfied where and when they happened to be felt. The degree of instinctual restraint and control 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 circle of precepts and regulations is drawn so tightly about people, the censorship and pressure of social life forming their habits are so strong, that young people have only two alternatives: to submit to the pattern of behavior demanded by society, or to be excluded from life in "decent society." A child that does not attain the level of control of emotions demanded by society is regarded in varying gradations as "ill," "abnormal," "criminal," or just "impossible" from the point of view of a particular caste or class, and is accordingly excluded from the life of that class. Indeed, from the psychological point of view, the terms "sick," "abnormal," "criminal," and "impossible" have, within certain limits, 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." Instinctual tendencies and behavior 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 behavior were manifested publicly, he would, depending on his social position, be confined indoors or in an institution. At best, if this tendency were only manifested behind the scenes, a specialist in nervous disorders would be assigned the task of correcting this person's unsuccessful conditioning. In general, impulses of this kind have disappeared from the waking consciousness of adults under the pressure of conditioning. Only psychoanalysis uncovers them in the form of unsatisfied and unsatisfiable desires which can be described as the unconscious or the dream level of the mind. And these desires have indeed in our society the character of an "infantile" residue, because the social standard of adults makes a complete suppression and transformation of such tendencies necessary, so that they appear, when occurring in adults, as a "remnant" from childhood.

The standard of delicacy represented by *Galateo* also demands a detachment from these instinctual tendencies. But the pressure to transform such inclinations exerted on the individual by society is minimal compared to that of today. The feeling of revulsion, distaste, or disgust aroused by such behavior is, in keeping with the earlier standard, incomparably weaker than ours. Consequently, the social prohibition on the expression of such feelings is much less grave. This behavior is not regarded as a "pathological anomaly" or a "perversion," but rather as an offense against tact, politeness, or good form.

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

Nevertheless, in one way this example marks a turning point. It may be supposed that the expression of these feelings was not lacking in the preceding period. But only now does it begin to attract attention. Society is gradually beginning to suppress the positive pleasure component in certain functions more and more strongly by the arousal of anxiety; or, more exactly, it is rendering this pleasure "private" and "secret" (i.e., suppressing it within the individual), while fostering the negatively charged affects—displeasure, revulsion, distaste—as the only feelings customary in society. 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 behavior of adults and children is necessarily increased.

## VI

### On Blowing One's Nose

#### Examples

##### A

#### Thirteenth century

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

(a) Precept for gentlemen:

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

(b) Precept for pages or servants:

Pox la trentena è questa:  
 zaschun cortese donzello  
 Che se vore mondà lo naxo,  
 con li drapi se faza bello;  
 Chi mangia, over chi menestra,  
 no de'sofià con le die;  
 Con li drapi da pey se monda  
 vostra cortexia.\*

##### B

#### Fifteenth century

From *Ein spruch der ze tische kêrt*:

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