ON STATUS COMPETITION AND EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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The study of emotions is booming. In the 1970s, attention was already moving in this direction, for instance in studies of 'mentalities' and 'everyday life', but on the whole a rather personal and involved version of this field of study was dominant: the 'sensitivity' and 'encounter' movement. In the 1980s, interest in the subject of emotions and emotion management has found expression in rapidly increasing numbers of comparatively detached psychological, sociological and historical studies, and in the formation of study groups within official associations. The American and the British Sociological Associations have both established 'sociology of emotions' study groups. This development may be viewed as an 'integration spurt' within the social sciences, particularly among sociology, psychology and history, but also between these social scientists and novelists. In the 1970s, a Dutch sociologist interested in the American 'small town' compared sociological studies with novels on that subject. He remarked that "in general, sociologists pay little attention to the emotions of the people they study, whereas emotions are quite central for the novelist;"[1] that may still be true, but the recent attention paid to the social aspects of emotions and emotion management suggests that this difference is at least diminishing.

In most countries of the Third World, status criteria like 'birth' and wealth – referring to *groups* and their proximity to the centres of controlling the dangers of violence and poverty – strongly dominate over other criteria, because physical safety and material security are less stable conditions of life than in the industrialized West. Especially since World War II, increasing numbers of people in Western societies have experienced rising degrees of physical safety and material security, and focusing on emotions and emotion management seems to have spread in those parts of the world where the style of emotion management has gained importance in the struggle for status and power, as a criterion in the process of ranking. The search for regularities and spurts in individual and collective processes of emotion management may therefore be directed at changes in dominant ideals and codes of behaviour and feeling – that is, in the standards, functioning as dominant criteria for evaluating or ranking each other.[2]

Expanding political, economical and cultural networks of interdependency, and their growing density, have allowed a wide range of emancipation movements and ideals of equality to spread. Succeeding waves of democratization and the redistribution of economic surpluses according to welfare state principles have resulted in the depletion or disappearance of the groups at either end of the social ladder, with a sharp increase of the jostling and status struggle in the middle. Inequalities have diminished without losing importance, and ranking criteria like *individual* merit and achievement, lifestyle and style of emotion management have gained in importance, whereas traditional status criteria like 'birth' and wealth have lost some weight, without becoming unimportant.

An example of this trend towards increasing style competition is the multitude of rapidly changing terms and expressions that the young use today for classifying each other according to their own style and taste in clothing, music and behaviour – terms and expressions like 'disco,' 'house,' 'hip-hop' and 'punk.' To some extent, this kind of classification disguises the style and taste of their parents – that is, their class origin. In the days of 'cap in hand,' the characteristics of social class were much more obvious and uniform.

On the whole, these movements and ideals have limited power to express social distance and distinction, or feelings of superiority and inferiority. Not only transgressions like outbursts of physical – and sexual – violence, but also other ways of inflicting humiliation have come to be viewed more and more as intolerable displays of arrogance or self-aggrandizement, especially if based on biologically or socially inherited possessions and positions. They meet with stronger individual and collective moral indignation. As subordinate social groups were emancipated, references to 'better' and 'inferior' kinds of people, to hierarchical group differences, were increasingly tabooed.

In this social and psychological condition, the insight that feelings of superiority and inferiority are inherently provoked by any status competition is often concealed by status fears – fear of loss of face and status – because displaying these feelings has become so strongly disapproved of. *Taste* and *style* may be widely debated – in processes of informalization the connected fears seem to have been brought under firm enough control for these debates even to be enjoyed – but such debates turn sour when related *status* aspects are touched upon. This is 'not done,' these aspects are generally denied, repressed and rejected as a tasteless and cynical reduction of the level of debate. Therefore, as status competition has intensified, strategies to achieve a gratifying degree of self-respect and social respect or status have not only become a more important and intense part of 'impression management' and the presentation of self,[3] but partly also a more hidden or 'secret' part:

> What the world needs now is a manual for artistic codes in theatre, concert halls and museums. First lesson: conceal such a need completely, for the right stuff and the right tone come naturally, don't they?[4]

On the one hand, contrasts in emotion management have diminished in contexts where feelings and displays of superiority and inferiority have become tabooed, repressed and denied, while on the other hand varieties in ways of managing emotions have increased in contexts where creating a particular impression, 'styling' or 'image building' within these borderlines has gained importance. Impression management has even become a specialty, the job of an increasing number of emotional labour specialists,[5] working in advertising bureaus, departments of Public Relations, and in an enormously expanding service industry. In general, emotion management has gained considerable importance, and this in turn has stimulated an awareness of this management as well as curiosity about what exactly is managed, how it is done, and why.[6]

In the process of social equalization, in which people have increasingly exerted pressure upon each other more often to take more of each other more into account, the wish to defy this pressure – that is, the ideal of being able to articulate oneself as an authentic individual, not just a group specimen – has simultaneously

been stimulated and strengthened. In this way, the development towards increasingly dense interdependency networks has not only exerted pressure towards a further curbing of displays of superiority and inferiority (a diminishing of contrasts), but also towards an increase in socially accepted emotional and behavioural alternatives, and in attempts to release this pressure (an increase in varieties). Attempts to experiment with new, and new combinations of, alternatives and lifestyles form one of the ways in which individuals are able to distinguish themselves from others, and this gives value and meaning to one's *own* life – taste and style have become more important as beacons. They have intensified the quest for behaviour that is experienced as 'natural,' 'real,' 'unconstrained,' 'relaxed,' 'spontaneous,' 'authentic' and 'informal' – behaviour which at the same time has to avoid any trace of violence, aggrandizement or other humiliation. Avoidance of these traits should come 'naturally' or as the product of 'second nature,' which means that it is done either unconsciously and automatically, or secretly.[7] The complexity of this ideal may explain why references to the 'secret' part of emotion management are soon felt to discredit the credibility or authenticity of individuals, and why 'exposures' offer a view into the kitchen of emotion management that is often experienced as 'treacherous:'

> We are in an age when people will sooner confess their sexual secrets – much sooner in many cases – than their status secrets, whether in the sense of longings and triumphs or humiliations and defeats.[8]

In the Western societies of our time, discussing the importance of status for someone's identity has become increasingly embarrassing and difficult. However, no matter how people try to keep their status secrets, even to intimates, a trained ear detects expressions of inferiority and superiority every day, whether in guarded terms or

> in indirect and seemingly colourless terms which lacked the emotional directness with which people of higher status in less democratic ages spoke of their own superior status, but which, nevertheless, was quite unambiguous...The [status] yardsticks are almost always implied as part of an axiomatic communal belief system and the ranking is usually expressed by means of simple value terms which have the character of communal code words, such as 'better' or 'not quite nice,' 'all right' or 'okay'...No individual grows up without this anchorage of his personal identity in the identification with a group or groups even though it may remain tenuous and may be forgotten in later life, and without some knowledge of the terms of praise and abuse, of the praise gossip and blame gossip, of the group superiority and group inferiority which go with it.[9]

In this article, the increased competition in style and status will be connected to the tension-balance of, on the one hand, a trend towards diminishing contrasts (convergence or homogenization) in feelings and displays of superiority and inferiority, and on the other hand, a trend towards increasing varieties (diversification or heterogenization) in the rest of behaviour and feeling, in combination with an increased intensity of the wish to defy this competition.[10] Focussing on physical and sexual violence as examples, an attempt will be made to demonstrate

that, since the end of last century, changes in this tension-balance – that is, in the paradoxical trends of convergence *and* divergence – have moved in the direction of informalization, and that the rising popularity of the study of emotions is part of this trend.

Management of Sexual and Violent Emotions

The main contrasts that have been diminishing are those in displays of superiority and inferiority as expressed in the use of physical and sexual violence. In the long period of peace and prosperity after the last World War, political emancipation and the presence of nuclear weapons have created a situation *between* states that has been summed up as Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), in which states have exerted pressure on each other towards higher levels of Mutually Expected Self-Restraints (MES).[11] Particularly *within* industrialized Western states the use of violence has become increasingly tabooed and constraints on violent impulses and emotions have expanded to all walks of life; even in the realm where until recently men as 'heads of the family' could let themselves go and behave relatively passionately and unrestrainedly towards their 'own' wife and children, they have come to be both morally and legally constrained to curb their violent and sexual impulses. The recent wave of collective moral indignation about sexual harassment, rape in marriage, incest or other forms of lack of control in this context, reinforces this constraint.

Also outside the family, on the streets, changes have taken place in the same direction. Street fights, the most basic expression of ongoing struggles between families, neighbourhoods or classes, have become relatively scarce.[12] The stage at which children and adults are overwhelmed by violent emotions and *have* to give in to them, seems to have receded. Now, most people are able to restrain themselves in more drastic and more automatic ways. From others they expect the same: Mutually Expected Self-Control of violent emotions and impulses has increased. This rising level of Mutually Expected Self-Restraints has allowed an 'emancipation of emotions' that destroyed the old conviction, incorporated in the traditional mode of emotion management, that being open to such emotions would almost irrevocably be followed by acting upon them. When violent impulses and emotions came to be more and more recognized as regular and normal aspects of emotional life they not only became accepted as conversation topics but more and more people also took the liberty to vent these feelings, accepting that they 'come up for air' every now and then. In this movement, cursing, calling each other all sorts of names, and making allusions to violence all seem to have spread.[13] In this way people provoke and test their own and each other's emotion management. This kind of behaviour signifies an experimenting with emotions and impulses that until recently were more rigidly denied and repressed. Increasing numbers of people became aware of emotions and temptations in circumstances where fears and dangers had been dominant before – the temptations of 'sex, drugs and rock and roll,' of tax evasion, shoplifting, swearing, etc. This provocative and experimenting attitude can be understood as the direct counterpart of what has been called the 'equanimity of the welfare state'.[14] This equanimity refers to the strong decline in the fear of poverty resulting from the

welfare state system. In the long period of peace and prosperity after World War II, physical safety and, through the spreading of wealth according to the principles of the welfare state, material security have become much less problematic. A change in the structure of the state is mirrored in a change in the structure of fears and anxieties: 'social security' generated a personal security.[15] This 'peace' in material respects functioned as a breeding ground in which much relational unrest took root: men found themselves in a sense competing with the state, as the welfare system weakened the traditional dependence of women on men. But this 'equanimity of the welfare state' was also soon accompanied by an increasingly intense competition in emotion management, as expressed in displays of confidence and in a 'quest for risks.'

In this way too, people have pressured each other to greater awareness and knowledge of emotions and emotion management. This knowledge creates the feeling of a distance from these emotions themselves, and this feeling in turn creates a nostalgic yearning for the experience of (non-violent) emotions of an intensity that completely takes up the self and consciousness. To lose oneself in making love and in orgasm, called 'little death' for this reason,[16] seems to be the more highly valued as this form of status competition intensifies. It is more strongly experienced as a road to uncomplicated and unreflected existence, the sublime romance of naturalness. The same goes for other arts and sports, and this may partly explain why in this century these activities have gained considerable mass following.

Not only violent impulses, but also sexual impulses and emotions have been collectively brought under firmer individual control, and in this process the fear of sexual passions has diminished. How intense this anxiety has been may be inferred from the reactions of established groups in the 1920s, when the old tradition of chaperonage came to an end in the historical novelty of 'free' social intercourse between the sexes, particularly in dance halls and cinemas. The government of The Netherlands, for example, was worried enough to establish a government committee with the task of investigating the 'problem of dancing.' The committee's report[17] recommends the appointment of 'dancing masters' in charge of surveillance in dance halls. It displayed hardly any confidence in the 'self-surveillance' of both sexes and was written on the implicit assumption that both men and women would give in to their sexual desires if social control was lacking. Exclamations from that period like 'if the bridle is removed, sexuality gallops' clearly demonstrate this view.[18] In contrast, the current collectively expected mode of emotion management implies that even when 'surveillance' (this social constraint) is absent, self-constraint will be strong enough to prevent sexual impulses from giving way to sexual violence. A stronger control over these impulses and emotions, along with the fear of losing this control and of losing face, function as a basic condition for enabling people to experiment with their impulses and emotions more frankly, provided this experimenting is done with mutual consent. This means that, by analogy with contests in which allusion is made to violence, in sexual encounters too an increasing number of people is sooner and more often able to provoke and challenge, while avoiding humiliation. To challenge, provoke, conquer fears and search for limits has become a popular kind of sport. This 'sport' is expressed not only in all sorts of social

relationships, also in ways of clothing: the warlike punk outfit and 'hot pants,' for example, demonstrate provocative fantasies. And it is particularly prevalent in the realm of imagination and amusement: both sexual and violent emotions and impulses are more or less expressed in a wide variety of pornography – Tom Wolfe speaks of 'pornoviolence:'

> Violence is the simple, ultimate solution for problems of status competition, just as gambling is the simple, ultimate solution for economic competition. The old pornography was the fantasy of easy sexual delights in a world where sex was kept unavailable. The new pornography is the fantasy of easy triumph in a world where status competition has become so complicated and frustrating.[19]

The search for the limits of emotion management in mutual contests and provocations, and the pleasure of sniffing the dangers on the other side of the borderlines, may satisfy the yearning for risks and the quest for excitement in welfare states. This 'sniffing of dangers' sometimes can be taken quite literally, as is demonstrated by the words of a 23 year-old cocaine user: "The first time you try some coke you're afraid because you don't know what it is. But you want to conquer that fear."[20] It seems that this yearning for risks has become just as typical of welfare states as its equanimity. Moreover, it seems likely that the slight upturn in violent offences registered by the police in many Western countries since the end of the 1970s,[21] can be understood in terms of this yearning for risks and the 'quest for excitement in welfare states'[22] – through running amok in these risky provocations to one's own and other people's emotion management.

Irritation and Nostalgia; Vanguards and Rearguards

From the perspective of emotion management, two other interconnected reactions to the increased status and style competition can be observed: irritation and idealization, romantization or nostalgia. Quite often both feelings occur as a pair – no nostalgia without irritation and vice versa – and, depending upon the balance between the two, the reaction may be called irritated nostalgia or nostalgic irritation. The tradition of cultural criticism in the social sciences provides many examples. For instance in Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* irritation with the present 'culture of narcissism' is combined with a nostalgia for some past in which fathers were still righteous and demanding.[23] And in Philippe Ariès's work on attitudes toward dying, irritation with the present 'taboo' on death is combined with a nostalgia for some past in which "death was both familiar and near, evoking no great fear or awe".[24] Irritation may well dominate the relationship between particular groups of the established and outsiders, such as Old Rich and *nouveau riche*, cosmopolitans and provincials, older brothers and sisters and younger ones. In their irritation, but also in their nostalgic longing for 'better days,' they often show that the balance of power and the social distance between them – as vanguards and rearguards in relation to the dominant code – is diminishing or, anyway, changing. They show, in other words, the degree of integration of these groups within their society. The irritation or moral indignation of people in a rearguard often betrays their lack of confidence and fear of losing self-control if they admitted, even to themselves, being tempted

by what they see as 'dangerous behaviour'. They are afraid to set the fox – in themselves – to watch the geese, afraid opportunity makes them a thief. The presence of such a temptation indicates that the rearguard they represent is not very far removed from the dominant standard. By analogy, the feelings of superiority and the inclination to boast of those in a vanguard often demonstrate that they too are not very different from the people in a rearguard. Displays of superiority often show how small and tentative the lead in emotion management is. Through earlier experiments and experiences, people representing a vanguard may have succeeded in overcoming their 'tyro-fears' and in bringing the chances and dangers of a particular form of behaviour under stronger control, while 'regression-fears' may still be prominent. For example as a boy I was often impatiently irritated by the 'clumsy' progress of my brother, eighteen months younger than myself, in a new phase or a new field in his life, exactly because I was painfully reminded of my own clumsiness in a very recent past. Quite often I would have simply preferred to deny that I had been just like him. The same regularity in the development of emotion management can be discerned in the relationship between groups of people. The irritated moral indignation of Europeans about the burning of Salmon Rushdie's book and the threat to kill the author may serve as an example. Many of these Europeans have in their own lifetime experienced the burning of books and large-scale killing, but they prefer not to be reminded of all that by an outsider and a representative of a rearguard like Khomeini, and they react with revulsion if they – as Europeans – are identified with all this killing and burning. But exactly for that reason the feeling of irritation is so strong.[25]

Nostalgia: Tom Wolfe's Interpretation

An example of irritation with nostalgic yearning, as expressed in some of the informal clothing of the 1960s, is presented by Tom Wolfe. In his essay "Funky Chic," he describes how "well-to-do whites in America began to discover the raw-vital reverse-spin funk thrill of jeans in the early sixties." These feelings and behaviour were not shared by whites and blacks who were less well off,

> so that somehow the sons of the slums have become the Brummels and Gentlemen of Leisure, the true fashion plates of the 1970s, and the Sons of Eli dress like the working class of 1934.[26]

In his interpretation of this observation, Wolfe shows sociological imagination. To him, this

> is highly redolent of London during the Regency period (roughly, 1800 to 1830)...Both young men and women of the upper classes were swept by *nostalgie de la boue* – a longing to recapture the raw and elemental vitality of the lower orders. They took on the manners and dress of the more dashing lower-class types as a fashion...The Regency was a period of unparalleled affluence in England. The middle classes had so much new money they threw traditional social lines into great confusion in London...The various modes of *nostalgie de la boue* were in large part the young aristocrats' means of setting themselves apart from the middle classes. Wealth was no longer a buffer between the classes; but the old aristocratic manner of *confidence* was. The

> middle classes had money but lacked the confidence to be anything but ever more ornately respectable.[27]

Indeed, in recent decades wealth has spread almost explosively to many more classes than during the Regency Period, the importance of emotion management (of confidence) has increased, and the spectrum of socially accepted modes of expression has become much more colourful and varied. The social and psychological distance between vanguards and rearguards in society has greatly diminished, as have the contrasts in their behaviour and feeling. This may illustrate the increased importance of the competition in taste and style of behaviour and emotion management as a form of status competition. Style competition has become an everyday routine in the struggle for status and power, and style a kind of shorthand for status and distinction.

Long-term developments in emotion management: the example of nostalgia

The following excursus on nostalgia or romantization may serve to illustrate the relationship between constraints and dreams: as the social and individual pressures that people exert upon themselves and each other increases, the wish to be liberated from this compulsion has intensified.[28] As a first example, the process in which knights lost their domains and became courtiers may be mentioned. In this process, the imaginative form of literature called romances was born. Owing to the monopoly of force, the direct use of violence

> is now largely excluded from the competition among the nobility for the opportunities the prince has to allocate. The means of struggle have been refined or sublimated. The restraint of the affects imposed on the individual by his dependence on the monopoly ruler has increased. And individuals now waver between resistance to the compulsion to which they had been subjected, hatred of their dependence and unfreedom, nostalgia for free knightly rivalry, on the one hand, and pride in the self-control they have acquired, or delight in the new possibilities of pleasure that it opens, on the other.[29]

Courtiers found an outlet for the social and psychological tensions of living at court in the dreamworld of Arcadia; in pastoral romance and play, an unrestrained simplicity and relaxed directness of country-life was romanticized.[30]

A further example of nostalgia or romantization is taken from the sixteenth and seventeenth century. At that time, in spurts of state-formation and commercialization, demands on emotion management of adults expanded and became more strict; the length of time children needed to bring their emotion management up to the newly required adult level expanded, and with it childhood.[31] Children, including those of an older age than before, could behave so unrestrainedly as to damage the calculated effect of adult behaviour. Thus, to some extent, they displayed a new kind of 'dangerous behaviour'; and they became a threat to adult planning and were therefore disciplined and controlled longer and more strictly in a segregated childhood. At the same time, adults were increasingly moved by the 'unrestrained' behaviour that is typical of children: it

had the relaxed simplicity and naturalness that adults themselves could no longer display. Therefore, they came to evaluate much of a child's behaviour as 'honest' and 'spontaneous,' and this collective emotional movement expressed itself in a new practice: in the sixteenth and seventeenth century parents started to cuddle their children, and the cuddling expanded to older children. From the seventeenth century onwards adults increasingly viewed children as innocent, and this notion of innocence was clearly related to the rising demands of the adult standard of behaviour and feeling. In the case of children, the fear of dangerous behaviour and transgressions – that is, according to the adult standard of behaviour – did not provoke much irritation or moral indignation, because it was covered by segregation and romantization or nostalgia.

In industrializing societies, this romantization process has continued. When social functions and networks differentiated and integrated, social and psychological tensions mounted, and this pressure is the cradle of many dreams, i.e. the dream image of a tensionless, classless, harmonious and integrated *Gemeinschaft*. This dream of an egalitarian society expresses a nostalgic longing for a simpler and more natural life than the anxiety-prone one in the present *Gesellschaft*, in many moments and respects experienced as 'needlessly repressive' or a 'decadent'[32] Although Tönnies himself defined the historical process as an irreversible movement from associational to contractual societies in which mechanistic and instrumental human relationships dominate, his *Gemeinschaft* was very often taken as a model for the future, demonstrating a 'nostalgia for the future' – more often than not, conceptions of history and future ideals relate to each other like communicating vessels. Durkheim's dichotomy of 'organic solidarity' and 'mechanical solidarity' has functioned in a similar manner. Referring to Lepenies, Joe Bailey comments on this romantization: "When sociology claimed to replace metaphysics and faith it only heightened 'the longing for real beliefs which are to be felt, not known.'"[33] Max Weber also presents an example of this tendency in his nostalgic expression 'Entzauberung der Welt' ('disenchantment of the world').

Not only the past, but also areas outside the industrializing West were romanticized; in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, any attention paid to Arabs or Islam, for instance, was usually mixed with

> a romantic-mystical vision of an endless sand desert from which monotheism arose like a hurricane. The desert nomads figured as noble creatures, living on the edge of thirst, heat and death, constantly afraid of and waiting for a jealous but saving God.[34]

Whatever kind of utopia and no matter where it was located, it was always pictured as a simple society; only 'dystopias' like Orwell's *1984* were imagined as being complex: 'It remains a fundamental error of utopians to imagine that the just or decent society must or will be a simple one...'[35] In 'the Introspective Revolution,' a term referring to the writings of people like Freud, Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Schnitzler, Woolf and Bergson, who "consistently invested themselves in precisely that mode of thought which the French Enlightment and Revolution had repressed," there was a change toward an "implicit awareness that emotional gratification is linked to dependence and that rational control of affect is linked to independence and autonomy," and it was in this Revolution that "Proust

concluded, in contradiction to generations of utopian aspiration, that the only paradise is a paradise lost."[36]

Utopian aspiration did not end here, of course, as was demonstrated, among others, by the romantic idealization of the political systems of countries like the USSR, Cuba and China. In the 1960s and 1970s this aspiration was very strong again, as can be illustrated from idealizations of workers, women and children, 'nature'[37] and also from the anti-psychiatry movement. At least to some extent, this movement was based on an idealization of the relatively unrestrained and direct behaviour of people who 'refused' to be put in the straitjacket of the social standard of behaviour and feeling, and who were therefore confined to psychiatric asylums. As in Arcadia or in the romanization of Noble Savages, almost every romantization – whether of children, women,[38] blacks, gypsies, workers or other groups of outsiders who are idealized for living with many fewer constraints and for thus being more free – neglects their standing in greater risk of social destruction and humiliation. In his use of the expression 'nostalgia for the mud' Tom Wolfe focuses on this neglect. This nostalgia typifies people living in relatively dense networks of interdependency, who are compelled to regulate their conduct in an increasingly differentiated, more even and stable manner, but whose lives are far less threatened by social destruction and humiliation.

This excursus on the history of utopias and romantic ideals may illustrate the connection between increased status competition, rising demands on emotion management and attempts to escape from these demands. Increasing demands on emotion management stimulate both awareness of those demands *and* appreciation of the kind of behaviour that seems to surmount or surpass them: relaxed and informal behaviour. In this way, anxieties and passions, utopias and 'dystopias,' ideals and spectres mirror each other. Whether projected into the past or into the future, they always betray the social and individual tensions of the figuration in which they were created. In the style of behaviour and emotion management the passions and ideals of the stylists are recognizable, as are their fears and anxieties.

Increasing ambivalence

When more and more people were drawn into increasingly dense interdependency networks, people who first avoided each other later had to, even wished to, relate. In this process, the groups about which individuals had learned to say 'we,' – we-groups – went through changes that forced them to adjust their we-identities and we-feelings. This kind of change, in many respects similar to the changes inherent to the process of growing up, affects different layers of personality and often creates an ambivalence, sometimes conceptualized as 'estrangement.' Entangled in these changes, people are easily drawn into a tug-of-war between old and new we-feelings. This pendulum sometimes swings heavily towards romanticizing old feelings and memories, even towards inventing them.[39] If this ambivalence finds expression in the romantic way, the changes in groups and in society at large are easily interpreted as predominantly oppressive, and irritation dominates. In these cases, the changes seem to have robbed individuals of their we-feelings or identification with some cohesive we-group. In their nostalgia, that "melancoly yearning for a sense of belonging which is often seen as being in the past,"[40] the

emphasis is on the loss of we-feelings and on the oppression of a particular kind of intense I-feelings, while the other side of the coin, namely increasing possibilities of expressing I-feelings of another kind – more managed ones, but still relaxed and informal – is neglected. When we-groups lose their cohesion and grip on individuals, directly exerted group pressures and group constraints diminish. This opens new possibilities for individual initiative and for asserting oneself as an individual – that is, to claim the right to be evaluated on the basis of individual achievement and personality. 'Pessimists of the mind' tend to underestimate the fact that in this century, chances for I-feelings to find expression have increased, while related dangers – like being expelled from the old-we-group and having to suffer their they-feelings and punitive sanctions – have diminished.

Nevertheless, these chances may not be experienced as such. They may be experienced as demands, and with some justification: when extreme expressions of social and psychological distance are banned and vanish, and contrasts in behaviour and feeling diminish, then respect and self-respect indeed demand a more individual articulation and profiling, including a demand for what is generally experienced as an inner authenticity and an authentic profundity. Increased sensitivity in these matters makes for a presentation of self that is soon experienced as artificial and superficial. At the same time, people find themselves more often in situations where they feel obliged to create and to endure differences, even contradictions between their emotions and their emotion management. In increasingly dense networks of interdependency, the art of obliging and being obliged, as well as the art of surmounting or escaping from these constraints, has become more demanding. In addition to a widening range of alternatives for behaviour and the expression of emotions, this process of informalization at the same time entails an increasing demand to manage emotions in more flexible and differentiated ways, to be able to negotiate in all kinds of situations, with all sorts of people, and to proceed though mutual consent.

In every new spurt of the civilizing process there is a moment in which most people have come to take the new ways of curbing for granted and more or less automatically live up to this expectation. At that time, the social compulsion to wear this 'mask' of emotion management has been transformed into 'second nature.' For most of the rest it is done 'secretly.' Norbert Elias once used the metaphor 'second nature' to indicate what had already happened to court aristocrats at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and he continued:

> The increasing compulsion to self-constraint opens new pleasures to them, new enrichments and refinements, in short new values, together with new oppressions and dangers. At any rate, self-control becomes for them a high personal value.[41]

As the longing for a simpler and more passionate kind of life intensified, simultaneously the function of self-control as a weapon in the status struggle has been reinforced, which means that respect, self-respect and identity have become more dependent upon this controlling capacity.

Informalization and the 'emancipation of emotions'

Until the 1950s and 1960s, provocations and challenges to sexual and violent emotions, indeed emotions in general, were predominantly viewed as dangerous. Expressions like 'to become emotional' still have the connotation of a lack of control over emotions, of being swept away by them. Expressions like these are reminiscent of this very danger *and* of the rigid social control that served to counter it. In a long-term process of *formalization*, expression, display and, at its zenith, even references to emotions, especially those that could provoke physical and sexual violence, were curbed and tabooed. Status anxiety – the fear of loss of face and status – particularly functioned as a motor in the transformation of social constraints into self-constraints. In state-formation processes, the use of violence was monopolized and settling contests and conflicts by violent means was restricted. This social constraint toward self-constraint went hand in hand with repressing and denying emotions and impulses that could possibly lead to outbursts of physical or sexual violence. As large groups remained for a long time poorly integrated into these nation-states, contrasts in emotion management remained large: many remained more or less removed from the dominant code of 'civilized' behaviour and thus kept the danger topical. Even when social constraints towards self-constraint reached more and more groups and this danger had thus become very small, 'civilized' people for a long time continued to be afraid of the danger and to avoid as much as possible "contaminating contact with the spiritually inferior and the repugnant"[42] – an example of status anxiety.

Through emancipation movements the possibilities for this avoidance-behaviour decreased. Eventually it became too embarrassing, unless it was done with an appeal to the increasingly important prerogative of 'privacy,'[43] and thus the dominant code for the avoidance of physical and sexual violence had become almost self-evident by functioning more or less automatically as part of the mutually expected self-constraints or 'collective conscience.' This was a necessary condition for a change in the dominant code towards a less rigid and more varied emotion management, for *informalization*. In informalization processes, the presentation of self and the styling of behaviour and relationships have become more informal, erotic, physical and emotional; the emancipation of the lower classes has run in tandem with an 'emancipation of emotions.' The latter was clearly demonstrated in impressionism and became the dominant trend in the *fin de siècle* and the Edwardian period. The 'roaring twenties' and the 1960s and 1970s showed strong spurts in the same direction. These spurts are blind social processes in which people increasingly force each other toward striking a more subtle and harmonious balance between all kinds of opposing motives and behaviour, like directness and tactfulness, simplicity and sophistication, compelling and being compelled, attracting and repelling, being charming and being daunting. In this collective change in self-regulation, behavioural and emotional alternatives have increased, standards have become more varied, but also more complex, which has intensified feelings of insecurity about producing and maintaining a gratifying and harmonious balance, one that to a certain extent surpasses or sublimates these tensions.[44] This insecurity is intensified by connected status anxieties: from fear of 'falling' many try to keep it 'secret' that they are dealing with balances and

balancing, pretending their self-regulation functions smoothly according to their ideal of an 'inner-directed Macho' or an 'inner-directed Amazon.'

As has been argued before, these changes imply that status competition has become more subtle and more intense, not that it has lost any of its importance, The motive to keep and maintain the social and psychological distances and differences between status superiors and inferiors has not lost any of its explanatory power, as is illustrated from the way in which some New Yorkers avoid using the subway. From this remnant of their far greater opportunities in former times of avoiding "contaminating contact with the spiritually inferior and the repugnant," Tom Wolfe generalizes: "in fact much of the status symbolism of New York grows out of the ways the rich and the striving manage to insulate themselves, physically, from the lower depths. They live up high to escape the dirt and the noise. They live on the corners to get the air."[45]

Trends toward formalization and informalization are likely to have been operative throughout history; there will have always been groups trying to enforce formal rules, and others trying to resist them or evade them. If one such group has a winning streak for any length of time, a corresponding phase of formalization or informalization will be dominant. In the long run too, one of these trends may be stronger than the other, corresponding to long-term phases of formalization or informalization. The long-term trend of formalization probably reached its peak in the 'Victorian Era,' to be followed in the twentieth century by a dominant process of informalization. More closely examined, in short-term phases of informalization and formalization a relaxation and differentiation of behavioural codes continued. Expressed photographically: the stiff studio poses of the 1940s and 1950s of serious looking people, dressed in their Sunday best, were replaced in the 1960s and 1970s by spontaneous *snapshots* of relaxed and smiling people, dressed according to (spare) time and place.[46] At the end of the 1970s, when opportunities for collective ascent on the social ladder declined and each individual became more dependent upon his or her own qualities in the status competition, people gave way more easily again to the incentive to show they were well off, and also *how* well off. In the 1980s (in addition to a continued appreciation of relaxed and informal behaviour), the fear of excessive familiarity and insufficient social distance strengthened, and the presentation of self became somewhat more serious and reserved, and many changed (back) from sweater and jeans into suit and tie – a return to old traditions, while integrating new ones: a formalization of earlier informalized behaviour.[47]

The 'soft look' bra, introduced in the 1970s, when many women had altogether given up wearing bras, may be taken as another, playful illustration of the same process. This bra supports the breasts, as did the old type of 'hard look' bra that was till common in the 1950s and early 1960s, without removing the image of 'free' flesh and the visual suggestion of nipples. This triplet – hard look bra, no bra, soft look bra – can be taken as another example of the formalization of earlier informalized behaviour.

The Sociology of Emotion Management

In processes of democratization, the rise in mutually expected self-restraints has

been accompanied by increasing curiosity about sex, violence and death, which in the course of centuries have been put behind the social and individual scene; the emotions involved are increasingly allowed – both individually and socially speaking – to re-enter consciousness. In the long-term process of informalization, a collective search for these hidden emotions and motives has been going on, and in this process emotions have gained acceptance as important guides for behaviour and knowledge, whereas before they were predominantly seen as a source of transgression and misbehaviour. In the long-term process of formalization, the view of emotions as dangerous dominated. Today, emotions are even seen as having a very important signal function – this was an insight of Freud – and their potential dangerousness is viewed and formulated much more strongly in terms of a balance. In 1950 Riesman still largely opposed 'inner-directedness' and 'other-directedness.'[48] Today, it is becoming more and more obvious that we are here confronted with a balance: the thing is to master the art of emotion management in such a way that 'domestic policy' and 'foreign policy' will stay in harmony,[49] or, in other words, that both the risk of losing the signal function of feeling and risk of losing the signal function of display are avoided.[50] Riesman's twin concepts now seem less appropriate to describe successive periods and their characteristic type of personality, since they appear to be closely related as the two synchronic, co-existing poles of an increasingly intensified tension balance. In this development, a growing number of people have become increasingly aware of the necessity of managing emotions and of developing a 'dramaturgical perspective', a perspective that focuses on differences and contradictions between emotions and utterances or displays of emotions in the presentation of self. The spreading of a dramaturgical perspective indicates a spreading of the ability to observe oneself and of the awareness that the managing of emotions is inescapable. Just as Freud's 'discovery' of 'animalic' emotions and motives occurred at the peak of their repression and denial, by analogy, the 'sociology of emotions' began to spread when rejection of repression and denial of emotions seemed to reach its height. According to Hochschild, the new perspective means that "the point of interest has moved inward. What fascinates us now is how we fool ourselves."[51] The now dominant mode of emotion management has apparently reached a strength and scope that enable people to admit violent and/or sexual emotions and impulses to themselves and each other, without provoking the fear of losing control and of having to give in to them. Only when most people are able to do this, when the level of Mutually Expected Self-Restraints has risen to the extent that the danger of being swept away by emotions has been brought under social and individual control, do experiments in loosening restraints stand a chance of becoming successful. Otherwise, the 'decontrolling of emotional controls' is not sufficiently 'controlled' and is thus too risky. That is precisely the tenor of the story about a kindergarten where children were allowed to take their 'weaponry' along. The arms race and fights did not reach the saturation point that the parents had hoped and waited for. Paul Kapteyn concludes:

> The increased tolerance and flexibility of adults towards the children's violence, this violation of a taboo, could only be understood and followed by the children when they had first become quite familiar with the taboo – when they had first learned what they later to some extent could unlearn.[52]

Here, the models of Piaget and Kohlberg apply, that is, the sequence in which children at first are pre-occupied with their own emotions and cling to the social routines of what they perceive as 'the done thing.' From the age of 11 or 12 onwards, role-taking and the balancing of their own feelings and the feelings of others become more generally possible. From then on, they may learn to individualize and improvise, that is, to choose their *own* strategy or procedure for *this* situation and in relation to *that* person. Thus, in this respect, in individual civilizing processes a similar structure can be discerned as in the civilizing processes of societies, in which the long-term process of informalization was preceded by a long-term process of formalization.

As long as processes of differention and integration continue to develop in the same direction and social and psychological bonds increase, the social and psychological tensions of these bonds will also increase and with them the intensity of the longing for natural, real, free, simple, spontaneous, authentic, relaxed and informal conduct. On the other hand, this very ideal is likely to be brought more strongly under the same individual and social constraints as the passions that may provoke physical and sexual violence. This may help curbing unrealistic expressions of this ideal. No matter how strongly the longing for a more simple life with little self-restraint intensifies, the function of self-regulation as a weapon in the status struggle will be simultaneously reinforced, and identity and self-respect will have become more dependent upon it. Becoming simple and innocent again is impossible anyway; the road back is blocked. Only ambivalencies and balances, like '*sophisticated* simplicity' or '*noble* authenticity' (*controlled* decontrolling) are open as realistic ideals – a price to be paid for peace and welfare. Emotions and impulses will increasingly be experienced as both dangerous *and* vital; dangerous because they may get out of control and bring the miseries of prison and asylum, and vital for their 'survival signal function' and as a source of pleasure. In a similar way, the presentation of self will also be more and more experienced as both a burden *and* a pleasure. Although feelings of ambivalence, insecurity and disorientation will to some extent accompany each new round in the process of self-distantiation, articulating and emphasizing one's distinctive features still seems to have become a sport and an art, and increasing numbers of people seem to have become more and more aware both that they have to put their minds and hearts into it, and of how it is to be done.

The rise of interest in the study of emotions, whether as a 'sociology of emotions,' a 'history of emotions' or in any other form, can be seen as a recent expression of the trend from the end of last century onward towards acknowledging the vital importance of emotions and emotion management. In order to live up to the promise of this study, nostalgic tendencies will have to be further controlled. Up to now, too many studies in this field have been directed towards a search for 'real' and 'authentic' emotions.[53] Such a nostalgic search neglects the fact that every single individual is born in a rather undifferentiated and pliable emotional condition. In the relationships within which they grow up, from the very beginning of their lives, all develop emotional impulses and counter-impulses that are more or less attuned to the dominant standards of behaviour and feeling of their society. This is the way in which they learn to articulate and

manage emotions and impulses; and for this reason, emotions are recognized for their vital 'survival signal function.' In order to clearly bring forward the indissoluble tie between emotions and emotion management, much could be said in favour of changing the symbolic expression of this kind of study from 'sociology (or history) of emotions' to '*history of emotions management*' and/or '*sociology of emotion management.*'

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ENDNOTES

I thank Stephen Mennell for correcting my English.

1. A.N.J. den Hollander, "Het Amerikaanse Landstadje in de romanliteratuur en in de sociologie." (undated): 38.

2. Cf. Cas Wouters, "The Sociology of Emotions and Flight Attendants: Hochschild's *Managed Heart*," *Culture & Society* 6 (1989): 95-123.

3. Cf. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959).

4. A. de Swaan, *Kwaliteit is klasse* (Amsterdam, 1985): 32/3.

5. Arlie R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart; Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley, 1983).

6. This development provoked insecurities and ambivalences *in* and *between* people. On the one hand, attempts at documenting a relationship between the balances of power or status and the lifestyles and tastes of upper and upper middle classes demonstrate this higher level of awareness of emotion management. On the other hand, these attempts have been branded as tasteless and cynical reductions, as attempts to discredit Beauty, Aesthetics and Authenticity, whereas studies of the 'culture of poverty' did not meet with such criticisms.

7. The term impression management seems to refer especially to the secret part of emotion management.

8. Tom Wolfe, *Move Gloves & Madmen, Clutter & Vine* (New York, 1976): 189.

9. Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders* (London, 1965): 29, 41, 105.

10. Cf. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 2 v. (New York, 1978); Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food, Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford, 1985).

11. Cf. Godfried van Benthem van den Bergh, *The Taming of the Great Powers* (Aldershot, 1990).

12. Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, Tim Newburn and Ivan Waddington, "Violent Disorders in Twentieth-Century Britain," in: George Gaskelland and Robert Benewick (eds.), *The Crowd in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1987).

13. Cf. Carol Z. Stearns and Peter Stearns, *Anger. The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History* (Chicago, 1986): 229.

14. Bram van Stolk and Cas Wouters, *Frauen im Zwiespalt. Beziehungsprobleme im Wohlfahrtsstaat* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989).

15. Cf.: 'the structure of fears and anxieties is nothing other than the psychological counterpart of the constraints which people exert on one another through the intertwining of their activities.' Elias 1982: 327.

16. George Bataille, *Les larmes d'Eros* (Paris, 1971).

17. *Rapport der regeerings-commissie inzake het dansvraagstuk* (The Hague, 1931).

18. P.H. Ritter Jr., *De Drang der zinnen in onzen Tijd* (The Urge of Senses in our Time) (Amsterdam, 1933): 152.

19. Wolfe, *Move Gloves & Madmen*, 162.

20. Marian van Hunnik, "Jongeren over cocaïnegebruik," *Jeugd en Samenleving* 19/8 (August, 1989): 500-513.

21. Paul Kapteyn, *Winkeldiefstal in Europees perspectief*, (Arnhem, 1989); J.J.M. van Dijk, P. Mayhew and M. Killias, *Experiences of Crime Across the World: Key Findings of the 1989 International Crime Survey* (Deventer, 1990).

22. Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Exitement* (Oxford, 1986).

23. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York, 1979).

24. Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death* (Baltimore, 1974): 13.

25. By thus touching upon this sensitive we-identity of Europeans, Khomeini has succeeded although most probably unintentionally, to change the second *World* War to some extent into a *European* War – an incident in and an indication of the process of global integration that is occurring.

26. Wolfe, *Move Gloves & Madmen*, 184-189.

27. Tom Wolfe, *The Pump House Gang* (New York, 1968): 169. The expression '*nostalgie de la boue*, or romanticizing of primitive souls' is explained as 'a nineteenth-century French term that means, literally, "nostalgia for the mud."' (Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic & Mau-mauing the Flak Catchers*, New York, 1970). The 'downward perspective' that characterizes this form of nostalgia (Cas Wouters, "Formalization and Informalization: Changing Tension Balances in Civilizing Process," *Theory, Culture & Society* 3 [2] [1986]: 1-18), was also often expressed in the 'quest for risks' manner. An example, again derived from Wolfe, is present in the group around Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), who invited and 'entertained' the Hell's Angels: "...it once and for all put Kesey and the Pranksters above the category of just another weirdo intellectual group. They had broken through the worst hangup that intellectuals know – the *real-life* hangup. Intellectuals were always hung up with the feeling that they weren't coming to grips with real life. Real life belonged to all those funkey spades and prize fighters and bullfighters and dock workers and grape pickers and wetbacks. *Nostalgie de la boue*. Well, the Hell's Angels were real life. It didn't get any realer than that, and Kesey had pulled it off,' Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York, 1968): 158.

28. This is a more sociological phrasing of the sentence 'The more the heart is managed, the more we value the unmanaged heart,' Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 192.

29. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, II: 113.

30. Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford, 1983).

31. The view expressed here, is an integration of Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York, 1982) and Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. In it the concept of childhood refers to a process in which the young learn to manage their emotions and impulses in such a way as to enable them to behave according to the dominant code of behaviour and emotion management of their society.

32. Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, *Culture Builders. A Historical Anthropology of Middle-Class Life* (New Brunswick, 1987): 60ff..

33. Joe Bailey, *Pessimism* (London/New York, 1988): p. 37; W. Lepenies, "Cold reason and the Culture of the feelings; social science, literature and the end of the Enlightenment," *Social Science Information* Vol 24, no. 1 (1989): 3-21.

34. Frits Staal, "Moeder vindt beter dat ik geen Sanskriet doe," *De Gids* (10) (1989): 771-792.

35. Fred Weinstein and Gerald M. Platt, *The Wish to be Free* (Berkeley, 1969): 224.

36. Weinstein and Platt, *The Wish to be Free*, 137-221.

37. In a study of the environmentalist movement in The Netherlands, Nico Wilterdink concludes about the romantization of 'nature,' as expressed in many forms of this movement: 'Romantic longings and ideas can thus be perceived as the expression of these feelings of discomfort, of resistance against the constraint to control emotions,' Nico Wilterdink, "Ideologie en 'het milieu'""*De Gids* 146/6 (1973): 411-429.

38. Cf. Dick Pels and Aya Crebas, "*Carmen* – or the Invention of a New Feminine Myth," *Theory, Culture & Society* 5 (1988): 570-610.

39. Cf. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK, 1983).

40. Bailey, *Pessimism*, 31.

41. Elias, *The Court Society*, 241.

42. Van Zutphen van Dedem, *Goede Manieren* (Good Manners) (Amersfoort, 1928).

43. Cas Wouters, "Developments in the Behavioural Codes between the Sexes: The Formalization of Informalization in The Netherlands, 1930-85," *Theory, Culture & Society* 4(2-3) (1987): 405-27; Wouters, "The Sociology of Emotions and Flight Attendants."

44. The balance is certainly lost if one thinks in terms of dichotomies, and proceeds by declaring one side of the balance as 'false' or 'a fraud:' "this hedonism is a fraud; the pursuit of pleasure disguises a struggle for power...Hedonism...originates not in the pursuit of pleasure but in a way of all against all, in which even the most intimate encounters become a form of mutual exploitation"; Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 125-7.

45. Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York, 1963): 297.

46. Warna Oosterbaan, article on photography in *NRC-Handelsblad* (December, 1988).

47. Wouters, "Developments in the Behavioural Codes between the Sexes."

48. David Riesman, with N. Glazer and R. Denney, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, 1950).

49. Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 294.

50. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 21.

51. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 192.

52. Paul Kapteyn, *Taboe, macht en moraal in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1950): 179.

53. Wouters, "The Sociology of Emotions and Flight Attendants."